

## Cover Letter-Writing Tips By Heather Wright

Although a resume may top the list of documents required for a job application, it is often not the only important item that job seekers must produce. Oftentimes, employers will require applicants to submit a cover letter highlighting one's relevant skills and work experience that make an applicant an outstanding candidate. While discussing these attributes in just a few paragraphs can seem daunting, here are some suggestions that may make the process run more smoothly.

### 1. Research:

- Before beginning your cover letter, consider researching the company/organization, as knowledge about a potential employer can be valuable during the application process. Company culture, values, and expectations of employees can be important to keep in mind when writing a cover letter. If you are interested in a position, try to find out as much as you can about the company, its mission, and the people it serves. For example, while all administrative assistants may have similar duties, someone working at a law firm may need to possess specialized knowledge that differs from what one working at a medical office or school may need to know.

### 2. Heading:

- It is wise to double check that your contact information is correct. If you choose, you may also create a letterhead that matches that of your resume.
- If possible, include the name, job title, and work address of the person reading the cover letter. If the job announcement does not provide this information, try to do some digging online and see if you can find the name of the person to whom the position reports.

### 3. Organization:

- Following the heading, a cover letter (typed using block format) typically includes at least a few paragraphs. Paragraph organization is as follows, though there may be some variation:
  1. Identify the position for which you are applying and the qualifications you possess that are stated in the posting.
  2. Discuss your background. This could include your field of study, work experience, and what you've accomplished professionally.
  3. Highlight the relationship between what you've done throughout your professional experience to how you could utilize your skills in this particular position.

4. Before closing, reiterate your interest in the position and a few applicable skills you possess. It's also a good idea to state that you look forward to hearing from the addressee soon.

(Adapted from *Business Communication, 5th ed.* by Kitty O. Locker and Stephen Kyo Kaczmarek)

#### 4. Content:

- Since the “meat” of a cover letter is only a few paragraphs, you want to make sure that everything you choose to include is relevant and helps make your case. What required experience and skills are listed in the job announcement?
- Nowadays, many employers use software designed to search resumes and cover letters for certain key phrases. If possible, utilize some of the same “buzzwords” used in the job posting when describing your skills, to increase your chances of making it past any filters.
- When discussing what you have done on the job, be specific. For instance, if being a team player is important, consider explaining how you have worked as part of successful teams in the workplace and what you were able to accomplish.

#### 5. General tips:

- Be sure to proofread. You want to ensure your cover letter is error-free, as any grammar or spelling errors, run-on sentences, or other issues may stand out to a potential employer. After proofreading it, ask someone else (including a writing consultant, if you like) to read over the letter as well. Sometimes, someone else may catch something you missed.
- While skills you discuss may not necessarily vary much from cover letter to cover letter (if you are applying to similar positions within the same field), you should craft a new cover letter with each application rather than only changing the heading. Companies and organizations vary in their goals, services, and cultures, so your cover letter is your chance to show what you've done and how you can contribute to this organization specifically!

Use the sample cover letter on the following page to help you develop and organize your own.

Anita Career  
123 South Street  
Burlington, NC 27215

Juana Hire  
Human Resources Manager  
Alamance County Medical Clinic  
123 Main Street  
Burlington, NC 27215

June 20, 2016

Dear Ms. Hire,

I would like to join the Alamance County Clinic in providing unsurpassed health care experiences to my community. I believe that I would be an excellent candidate for the clinic registrar position you posted July 21, 2016 on Monster.com. I am very interested in this position, and as my résumé indicates, I have demonstrated all of the required skills either in my coursework or during employment.

Highlight relevant experience/skills and identify the position.

I am a recent graduate of Alamance Community College with an A.A.S. in Medical Office Administration. In addition to the associate's degree, I have earned their Health Care Clerical and Medical Coding, Billing, and Insurance certificates. Every semester that I have attended Alamance Community College, I have been recognized for academic performance, maintaining a GPA of 3.88. In addition, my participation in a work study program as an administrative assistant in the Writing Center has proven to be very rewarding in that it has reinforced my written and oral communication skills.

Highlight relevant education, especially if you are a recent graduate.

In conjunction with my recent education, my experience in retail sales and laboratory work has also prepared me for this position as clinic registrar. The customer service skills I gained in retail sales will carry over to the process of registering new patients. The precision methods I learned in the lab will be useful in this position as well, since avoiding error is an imperative in a medical setting. I respect the reputation for quality medical care that Alamance County Medical Clinic maintains, and the care that I bring to my work will help to protect and enhance that reputation as I grow with that community.

Make the connection between past experience and future potential.

I look forward to interviewing with you and personnel from the clinic. I can be reached at either the cell phone number or the email provided. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Reiterate your interest and thank the reader for their time.

Sincerely,

Anita Career  
Enclosure: Résumé