

STANDARD COVER LETTER FORMAT

“Contact information copy/paste from top of resume”

Date of Writing

Full Name of Individual, Title [try to avoid To Whom it May Concern at all costs!]

Organization

Street Address

City, State, ZIP

RE: “Position Title” [can be used in place of “Dear...” if a name is not available]

Dear Ms., Mr. or Dr. [Name indicated on job description]:

Opening Paragraph: This is your chance to introduce yourself and explain your interest in the position. You may also mention how you heard about the position and briefly outline your strengths that fit with what the position requires, as well as what you know about the company.

Main/Selling/Strengths Paragraphs: The objective for the central part of your letter is to develop the reader’s interest in you, leading the employer to look at you more closely through an interview. Here you will highlight your specific qualities, skills, or experiences that match you up with the position. The key here is learning to narrate what appears in condensed form on your resume. Somewhere, whether at the beginning or near the end of this section, it is a good idea to explain what it is about the job that attracts you, commenting not only on how you are qualified, but also what you can do to further the mission or bottom line of the organization.

It may help to think about the strength paragraph in terms of categories or competencies. If you gather from the job description and your research that the employer wants someone who is organized, has good teamwork skills, why not make these the focus of your paragraphs? Cite specific examples in your experience to illustrate your qualifications. It’s not enough to just say ‘I have good teamwork skills’ – you’ll want to say ‘Teamwork is a strength of mine, which is important in this role because...’ or ‘that will benefit me in the role because...’. Always try to connect what you’re highlighting back to why it matters to the employer.

If you have no directly related experience, use this section to point out your skills and explain how these apply to the job requirements. If you can show you understand the nature of the position and can do the work, you may offset your lack of experience.

Closing Paragraph(s): Reiterate your interest in the position and state who will take the next action. Tell them that you look forward to hearing from them or that you will call on a specific date. Reassert your confidence in your ability to meet the demands of the position. Finally, indicate that you would be interested in speaking with them further about the position and that you will provide more materials (work samples, letters of recommendation, etc.) upon request.

Sincerely,

(Your Signature)

Your name, typed

DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC COVER LETTER

Directions: Obtain the position description of a position in which you are interested. Carefully read the description. In the left column, list verbatim what the position description says is needed. In the right column, list what you bring to the table (your evidence, experience, knowledge, skills, abilities, etc.)

What the job description said is needed... (listed word-for-word)	What I'll bring to the table... (my evidence; my experience; my knowledge, skills, & abilities)
Example: <i>Evidence of Communication skills</i>	Example: <i>Blog presence. Presented research paper at state symposium.</i>