

TIPS ON WRITING A COVER LETTER

1. Don't Regurgitate Your Resume

Instead of just repeating yourself, use your cover letter to describe additional details that you weren't able to squeeze onto your résumé and expand on why you're the perfect fit for the company.

2. Think Not What the Company Can Do for You

A common cover letter mistake is talking about how great the position would be for you *and you*. Frankly, hiring managers are aware of that, what they really want to know is what you're going to bring to the position, company.

3. Clearly Show What You're Capable Of

Beyond explaining what you've done in the past, show hiring managers what you can do in the future. "Determine the key requirements and priorities for this job, and make it instantly clear to the reviewer that you can deliver the goods on these key things," says Jenny Foss, job search expert and founder of JobJenny.com. "Consider crafting a section within the letter that begins with, 'Here's what, specifically, I can deliver in this role.' And then expand on your strengths in a few of the priority requirements for that role."

4. Showcase Your Skills

When you know you have the potential to do a job, but your experience doesn't fit the position, focus on your skills instead. Do not showcase what you lack that they may be asking for.

5. Highlight the Right Experiences

Not sure what skills and experiences you should be featuring? Use the Job description to pinpoint skills and qualifications they are looking for.

6. Think Custom, Not Canned

Companies want to see you're excited about the position/company, which means creating custom letters for each position applied for. "When a recruiter reads, ... 'I am so excited to apply for the open position at your company, where I hope to utilize my skills to progress in my career,' he or she immediately recognizes it for what it is—a stock cover letter that you've mass-distributed to every place in town," says Muse career expert Katie Douthwaite.

7. Write in the Company's "Voice"

Cover letters are a great way to show that you understand the environment and culture of the company and industry, so, always keep in mind who will be reading your cover letter, and tailor it. Spending 5-10 minutes reading over the company website before you write can be a great way to get in the right mindset to get a sense for the company's tone, language, and culture, all things you'll want to mirror as you're writing.

8. Don't Let Your Fear of Bragging Get in the Way

Get used to writing about yourself and don't be afraid to really highlight attributes you have that set you apart.

9. Do Include the Hiring Manager's Name

Use the person's first and last name, including a "Mr." or "Ms." (e.g., Mr. Jack Smith). Never use "To Whom it May Concern" or "Dear or Sir or Madam"—nothing could be more generic (not to mention archaic). Do research online to attempt to find the appropriate person to address it to. If all else fails, address it to an executive of the company or an individual in the Hiring Department. Cover letters should feel warm and personal.

10. Edit, Proofread and Edit

We shouldn't have to tell you to run your letter through spell-check, but here's an even better step: Have a career advisor look at it. The more eyes that scan your document, the better chance you have of catching mistakes.