

# Cover Letter Tips

Cover letters are a critical component to a successful job search. They introduce your resume to an employer and are often the first thing they read. It is essential that your cover letter reflects your experience, skills and what you have to offer the employer in a concise, professional format.

## BASIC GUIDELINES

- Cover letters should be limited to one page (3-4 paragraphs). They should be in 12 font and have no smaller than one inch borders.
- Address cover letters to a specific person rather than a department or a generic title. Be sure to spell the name(s) correctly. If it's not possible, then address the letter to what the advertisement states (i.e. Selection Committee, etc.). If addressing the letter to a woman and you are not sure of marital status use Ms.
- Always write in a professional and formal manner – no slang or abbreviations. Use standard business letter block format with a colon after the salutation.
- Print your cover letter on nice paper (use the same paper as your resume).
- Be sure to have someone proofread your cover letter before sending it. Check for accurate spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation.
- If possible, use networking sources to introduce yourself in the opening paragraph of your letter. (Name of person who referred you.)
- You may use a similar cover letter format for multiple jobs. However, you must change each letter to match the position in which you are applying.
- Highlight how your skills match those of the position. State clearly why you are qualified and the best candidate for the job, but don't overstate.
- If there is something in the "required qualifications" that is not on your resume, a cover letter would be the place to mention it (i.e. required to travel or have a valid WA driver's license).
- Make sure your cover letter will "get you noticed". Use specific examples and be personable.
- It is also appropriate to mention why you are interested in working for a particular company. Talk about company policies, successes, or values that impress you. This will show you've done your homework!
- It is important to mention your involvement and leadership skills. Emphasize activities, leadership positions, and accomplishments as well as honors/awards and any other special skills. Employers want to know that you have initiative and can work collaboratively.
- In the closing paragraph, show your interest and desire to talk with them further or hear from them soon. Thank them for their time and consideration.
- Keep copies of everything you submit so that you can follow up.
- Include your contact information either in a heading (same as your resume), in the closing paragraph, or after your signature (under your typed name).

*Don't forget to check the sample cover letters online at [www.business.wsu.edu/carsoncenter](http://www.business.wsu.edu/carsoncenter)*