

Cover Letter Guide

A cover letter is a way for you to sell your specific skills that relate to a specific job and also sell why you want to work for that particular employer. So you need to pull very focused things from your resume-not just restate all of your experiences. It is also important that you do a little research into the employer and make sure it is a good fit. A cover letter may change for each position you apply for and whenever possible you should find a specific person to address the letter to.

Most candidates don't mail their cover letters and resumes now. It is more common to either email your cover letter (as the body of the email message) and attach your resume or to upload your cover letter and resume into a Application Tracking System, like CBA Connect.

There are two different types of cover letters-**solicited and unsolicited**.

A **solicited cover letter** is written in response to a specific job description-something posted on CBA Connect, FutureLinks, CareerBuilder, etc. Use key bullets to reflect skills and experiences that match those listed in a job description. This makes it easier to read.

An **unsolicited cover letter** is written to an employer that might not have a position posted but it is an employer that you have a strong interest in working for. It can also be used if you receive, through your contacts, the name of someone that might be looking to hire someone. In an unsolicited cover letter, you want to make it clear what type of position you are looking for, your academic background and why you are interested in that particular employer, beyond that you need a job!

It is common to forget this is a formal letter and not follow proper letter writing techniques. You should include your mailing address and email on the top left part of the page, then the date and finally the name and address of the person the letter is going to. Most times you won't have a specific contact person to address the letter to. You have two options: either call the employer's HR office and ask who the cover letter should be addressed to or use "Dear Hiring Department Representative:".

If you are emailing your cover letter and resume to an employer, use the body of your email as your cover letter and attach your resume.

Remember, your cover letter should be one page-it is the highlights of your skills and experiences.

There is a table on the following page that explains how to write each letter effectively.

Outline of each type of letter

	Solicited Cover Letter	Unsolicited Cover Letter
First paragraph should include:	<p>The name of the position you are applying for and where you found it.</p> <p>Your academic background and year in school, i.e., junior marketing major with a professional writing certificate.</p>	<p>What type of position you are looking for: an internship, a parttime professional position, a fulltime position. List your academic background and also if you were referred by a specific person-family member, friend from school, etc.</p>
Second paragraph should include:	<p>A demonstration of how you possess the skills and experiences they are looking for-match to what is listed in the job description. Use bullets to make it easier to read.</p>	<p>What your key skills and abilities are. Since you don't have a job description to match this section to, you need to identify your most developed skills and also think of the top skills this employer may be looking for.</p>
Third paragraph should include:	<p>Why you want to work for that particular employer. Has it been a longterm goal? Are you a loyal customer who buys/uses their product? You are looking for an opportunity to work with an employer who is seen as an leader in their industry.</p> <p>You need to sell the fit!</p>	<p>Since there might not be a position available, you really need to sell yourself to the employer. Why should they give you an opportunity with them? Mention things similar to the solicited cover letter: it has been a longterm goal to work for them, you are a loyal customer familiar with their products, believe in their new initiatives, etc.</p> <p>You need to sell the fit!</p>
Last paragraph should include:	<p>Thank them for their time and attention. Mention that you will be following up with them in x number of days.</p>	<p>Thank them for their time and attention. Mention that you will be following up with them in x number of days.</p>

For additional assistance in writing cover letters, be sure to see CBA Career Services for daily walk in hours.