



# Co-op Programs Office

Cover letters are a necessary introduction explaining who you are, and why you are enclosing a resume. Cover letters should always be included as part of your application to any job, unless stated otherwise by the employer.

## Included in this tip sheet

- 1 **Pre-Writing Analysis**
- 2 **The Format**
  - Introduction
  - The perfect candidate
  - The organization
  - Conclusion
- 3 **Etiquette**

Employers use cover letters to assess your written communication skills, organizational skills, and accomplishments. They can also be used to assess your focus and career-oriented goals.

## Pre-Writing Analysis

Review the job posting and look for:

- Competencies: knowledge, skills, abilities and attributes that account for success on the job
- Business objectives or goals
- Industry words (key words)

## The Format

Starting at the top of the page, state the following:

- Date
- Employer Information
  - First & Last Name
  - Position Title
  - Full Company Mailing Address
  - Address to a Specific Person (Dear Ms. Smith)

---

The average North American searches for 9 months before landing a job because their cover letter blends them into the crowd.

---

### Paragraph 1: Introduction

State the position you are applying for (quote the job code/number if instructed) and why you are writing. Mention where and when you saw the job advertisement. Provide your current employment or education status in one sentence.

### Paragraph 2: You're the Perfect Candidate

This section provides evidence that you exhibit experiences that match the employer's needs. Specifically state how your accomplishments have benefited a previous employer (Reducing costs, waste, or breakdowns, increasing productivity, improving customer retention, etc.) and how they relate to the top two or three business objectives, skills or competencies outlined in the job posting. Communicating in these terms will put you on the same wavelength as an employer and set you apart from the majority of other applicants.

### Paragraph 3: The Organization is Perfect for You

State how the organization's goals, mission, philosophy and/or business practices are similar to your personal background, values, goals or objectives. Defining this relationship is an important element for employers: it proves that you have done your research and have drawn a parallel between your interests and those of the organization. It demonstrates your "fit" with the organization.

As a general rule, employers are interested in WHY you want to work for them: if you are not interested in the company, don't apply.

If you are applying to an anonymous employer, state what it is about the industry that appeals to you.

### Paragraph 4: Conclusion

In your closing paragraph, express your interest for an interview. Thank the reader for their time and consideration and provide them with your contact information.

## Etiquette

- Address your letter to a person – the person with the ability to hire you. If you don't know that person's name, phone the employer to find out – and get the correct spelling. In the case of an anonymous employer, refer to the person by their job title, such as "Dear Personnel Manager:"
- Type the letter unless a hand-written letter is specifically requested
- Limit the letter to one page unless an in-depth or detailed letter is requested: a longer letter will do more harm than good
- Double-check spelling and grammar: Errors will land your resume in the garbage bin
- Customize your letter to each job: a generic cover letter will not get you an interview
- Use the same colour and texture of paper for your cover letter, resume, and envelope
- Use the same font style and size for both your cover letter and resume
- Thank the recipient
- Sign your name legibly in black ink to match the text. Remember, your signature says something about you; a hasty unreadable scrawl says "I don't care"
- Remember: A cover letter is a business letter, and you should treat it as such by demonstrating your professionalism through your written communication

---

**Set your cover letter apart by keeping it simple: It is your job to make the employer's life easier.**

---