

Cover Letter Checklist



HEADER

- My header is at the top of the document, but not in the header section.
- My header contains my name and contact information (phone number, email address).
- My phone number is correct, I have voicemail setup on my phone and there is space in my mailbox to receive messages.
- My email address is correct, professional (name and/or initials) and utilizes a .com or .ca domain. It does not contain any inappropriate terms or expressions and does not reveal my year of birth.
- My header includes a customized URL/hyperlink to my complete and active LinkedIn profile.
- My header is visually appealing and distinctly formatted.
- My header matches the design/format used on my resume.



DATE

- My cover letter is dated (the day I send the letter).

EMPLOYER CONTACT DETAILS

- My cover letter is addressed to a specific person.
- If the job ad does not include the recipient's name, I have tried to find it by researching the company website, Google, LinkedIn, asking my network, and/or calling the company.
- If I was unable to find the hiring managers name, my letter is addressed to the Hiring Manager, Selection Committee, or Human Resources.
- Contact details include the recipient, their position, as well as the organizations' address, phone number and an email address.

SUBJECT LINE

- My cover letter includes a clear subject line, including the job title (exactly as it appears on the job posting), and the job/competition/requisition number (if available).

SALUTATION

- My cover letter greets a specific person, e.g., Dear Firstname Lastname.
- If I was unable to find the recipient's name, my cover letter greets the Hiring Manager, Selection Committee, or Human Resources.
- My cover letter does not use gendered titles/honorifics (e.g., Mr., Ms., Miss., Mrs.).
- My cover letter does not use generic greetings, e.g., 'To whom it may concern' or "Dear sir/madam".

BODY PARAGRAPHS

- My cover letter is targeted to the role and the employer.
- My cover letter highlights the value I can provide to the employer.
- My cover letter presents accomplishments related to the job's main duties and requirements.
- My cover letter reinforces but does not repeat information presented on my resume.
- My cover letter highlights connections to the company (e.g., values, contacts, work/volunteer experience, etc.).
- My cover letter addresses any red flags or potential concerns for an employer (e.g., employment gaps, changing careers, applying for jobs in a new city, etc.).
- My cover uses a personal and professional tone.
- My cover letter does not use any buzzwords or catchphrases.
- My cover letter contains 3-4 paragraphs.
- My cover letter is one page long (maximum).
- I did not use a cover letter template or copy/paste text from sample cover letters on the internet.

CLOSING

- My cover letter uses an appropriate closing (e.g., Sincerely, Regards, Kind regards, Best regards, Warm regards, Thank you).
- My cover letter does not use an inappropriate closing (e.g., Cheers, Ciao, Peace, Love, God Bless, or Yours Truly).
- My cover letter does not contain phrases or messaging such as "I hereby certify that all information provided in this application is correct, accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge".
- My cover letter does not contain a digital signature.

FORMAT, STRUCTURE & EDITING

- My cover letter follows business letter structure.
- My cover letter is formatted to match my resume (e.g., font, spacing, alignment, colors, etc.).
- My cover letter text is aligned to the left (not justified across the page).
- My cover letter is written in grammatically correct sentences.
- I have reviewed and proofread my cover letter, and my cover letter has been reviewed by a knowledgeable and trusted contact (e.g., industry professional, HR professional, career coach, etc.).

ADDITIONAL

- My cover letter is saved using a clear file name.
- My cover letter is attached as a separate document (unless otherwise instructed).
- My cover letter is not copied and pasted into the body of an email.

COVER LETTER OVERVIEW

BODY PARAGRAPH 1:

Most cover letters start by introducing the candidate, what job they are applying for and where they found the posting. This is predictable and uninteresting. Try starting your cover letter by explaining your motivation, i.e., why do you want THIS job, with THIS organization? What makes the role or the organization unique? What aspect of the posting stood out to you? Be as specific as possible.

BODY PARAGRAPH 2:

Most cover letters focus on the applicant, highlighting why the job would be good for them and their careers, and echo details on the resume. This is obvious and repetitive. Try shifting attention away from you and your past to the employer and your future together. What can you do for them? How can you help them? What value can you provide? Be as specific as possible.

BODY PARAGRAPH 3:

Most cover letters make generic claims and empty promises. This is vague and unexciting. Try building on what you wrote in paragraph two by presenting your approach, or plan of action to deliver on the job and provide specific value to the employer. To achieve X [value highlighted in paragraph 2], I would Y [steps you would take; first... second... third...]. Be as specific as possible.

BODY PARAGRAPH 4:

Most cover letters end with a standard closing. This is a missed opportunity to share important information with the employer. Try ending your cover letter with an intelligent, memorable closing comment. You can also provide details employers need to make hiring decisions; e.g., addressing red flags, confirming eligibility for employment, equity statements, or salary expectations. Remember to ask for an interview and thank employers for their consideration.

Firstname Lastname
204-204-1234 | email@email.com | LinkedIn Profile | City, Province

Day, Date, Year

Firstname Lastname
Position
Employer
Address
Phone
Email

RE: Position you are applying for (include job number, if available)

Dear Firstname Lastname,

Body Paragraph 1 – Why do you want this job?

- E.g., why are you interested in this job?
- E.g., why are you interested in this organization?
- E.g., why are you interested in this industry?
 - Highlight intrinsic motivators, e.g., satisfaction, enjoyment, fulfillment.
 - Avoid mentioning extrinsic motivators, e.g., pay, bonuses, benefits, prestige.
- If available, highlight connections to the employer, e.g., shared values, shared network contacts, work placements.

Body Paragraph 2 – How can you help the employer?

- E.g., what problems can you help address or solve?
- E.g., what tasks can you help perform?
- E.g., what goals can you help achieve?
- Research the following: job ad, company website/social media, present/past employees, network contacts, employer reports/publications, Glassdoor, Google News.

Body Paragraph 3 – What will you do to help them?

- E.g., what steps will you take?
- E.g., how would you approach the work?
- E.g., what experiences will you draw upon?
 - Highlight new examples or accomplishments (do not repeat what is on your resume).

Body Paragraph 4 – Summary and Thank You

- Re-emphasize your interest in the opportunity.
- Request an interview.
- Respond to any employer questions posed on the job ad.
- Include employment equity statement, if applicable.
 - For employment equity purposes, I self identify as [a women, Indigenous, a person with a disability, a member of a visible minority].
- Thank the employer for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Name