

What is the purpose of a cover letter? It's an opportunity to market your capabilities, demonstrate your writing skills and provide a few applicable career highlights. It provides an incentive to the employer to read your resume and follow up for an interview.

The question of whether a cover letter is needed is an important one. With the increase in online recruiting and social media they have become less important and may someday become unnecessary; but we are not there yet.

So, when should you provide a cover letter? When asked for a cover letter, you should provide one. When given the opportunity in an online application to upload a cover letter, do! For professional and senior level positions you should expect to write one. However, most entry level jobs do not require one.

Cover letters typically consist of 4 areas:

1. **Greeting:** Address it to the appropriate person. Research and find out the name of the hiring manager or leader of the department if possible.
2. **Opening:** Be engaging and write a personal opening paragraph that explains why you are writing and how your skills are a perfect fit for the position.
3. **Hook:** Match your skills/experience to the position you are applying for and show your capabilities in those areas through concrete examples from your own experience and qualifications. This can be done with bullet points or a short paragraph. If you know something about an issue or the culture you can also include points that support your fit for the organization.
4. **Call to action:** Thank them for their time and invite them to review your resume for more details on your relevant skills and accomplishments. Conclude by asking for an interview, your willingness to meet and your contact information. If the job posting requests that you include your salary requirements include it. This request helps the employer determine if your salary needs are compatible with the wages for the position you are seeking, so you don't need to provide a complete salary history. For example, your response might be, "My salary requirements are in the low to mid-fifties, depending on the total compensation package." This will usually satisfy the employer's request.

A cover letter should be short and to the point. Remember your resume is there for the details and to support what your cover letter states.

See the sample templates:

- Cover Letter Template 1
- Cover Letter Template 2
- Cover Letter Template 3

See the Cover Letter Samples, Resource 2-12