The cover letter is often the first impression a potential employer gets of you. This letter usually has one of two purposes: to get an interview, or to get a job. If written correctly, the letter should interest the potential employer to read your resume and schedule an interview with you.

This section contains guidelines that will help you to make a professional, well-written cover letter.

Presentation of the Cover Letter

- Write either a three or four concise paragraphs.
  - Three paragraph format:
    1) Identify yourself, your purpose, and the reason you want to work for the company.
    2) Relate specific qualifications to the job opening.
    3) Thank them for their time, tell them a resume is attached or enclosed, and tell them you will contact them in one week if it is mailed or three business days if it is emailed.
  - Four paragraph format:
    1) Identify yourself and your purpose – establish a connection.
    2) Relate specific qualifications to the job opening.
    3) Express confidence and enthusiasm.
    4) Thank them for their time, tell them a resume is attached or enclosed, and tell them you will contact them in one week if it is mailed or three business days if it is emailed.

- Use a conservative color of high-quality paper.
  - Off-white, or ivory
  - Letter size only (8 ½ x 11 inches)
  - 24+ pound bond or ivory laid paper
• Use a professional typeface in an appropriate font size.
  ▪ Body = 10-12 point font
  ▪ Arial, Bookman, Fritz, Helvetica, Soutane, Times New Roman
• Print the cover letter in black ink on an excellent printer.
• Try several different colors of paper to see which looks the best.
• Make the cover letter look clear, easy to read, well-organized, and professional.

**Tips for Writing a Cover Letter**

These tips will help your cover letter make the employer want to read your resume.

**Do:**

• Use proper English.
• Use short sentences.
• Personalize each letter.
• Write in first person voice.
• Write more than one draft.
• Use simple, common words.
• Maintain a professional tone.
• Use action verbs instead of passive verbs.
• Proofread the letter several times, then have three other people proofread it.

**Remember:**

A hiring professional can tell a lot about you by the way that you write.
Never give a cover letter with errors to a potential employer. Show them that you know how to be professional.

**Tips for Writing a Cover Letter** (cont.)

These tips will help your cover letter make you look competent and professional.

Don’t use your cover letter to simply rewrite your resume.

Take the opportunity to show that you have the abilities needed to perform in the position.

**Don’t:**

- Send a form letter.
- Try to use a gimmick.
- Try to be funny or cute.
- Forget to sign the letter.
- Use abbreviations or slang.
- Make spelling or typographical errors.
- Start most sentences with the word “I.”
- Include any personal references or demands.
- Call attention to weaknesses or shortcomings.
• Use obvious comparisons or overused clichés.
• Write anything that makes you sound desperate.
• Include photos or any type of personal information.
• Give unrelated career goals, experience, or awards.
• Have corrections on the letter. (If you make a mistake, redo it!)
• Cite incorrect information about the company or your qualifications.