Cover Letters

What They Are, What They Do, and How to Create One

What is a cover letter?

A cover letter is a **formal letter you write and send to an employer**.

You send this letter, along with your resumé, to an employer when you respond to a "help wanted" advertisement or when you would like to indicate your interest in working for a company or organization.

What does a cover letter do?

A cover letter provides a brief opportunity for you to introduce yourself to an employer and to explain why you are enclosing your resumé.

Cover letters are often addressed to the specific person and/or the department connected with the actual job you seek. Making sure your letter (and resumé) arrive at the right location is important!

Addressing Your Letter

When responding to job announcements, be sure to **find out which person or department at a company or organization should be contacted**. Any letter beginning with "To Whom It May Concern" might not be received by the proper person (and, in some cases, it could make for a very poor first impression).

Some workplaces have a "Human Resources Department," where you can speak with someone about available job positions (now or in the future). Other places might simply have a "director," "manager," or some other person responsible for hiring.

Larger companies and organizations might have several such persons in charge of different departments.

Taking the time to determine the most appropriate person or department to contact will involve some calling around or a trip to your library, which can help you locate telephone numbers and mailing addresses, but it is almost guaranteed to be time well spent!

Examples of Cover Letters

Before attempting to write a cover letter, you might want to see some examples to get some ideas on how you might go about creating yours. In the **650.14 area of our non-fiction collections** you will find books on resumés and cover letters. A librarian will be happy to show you where to look. You can also visit websites providing cover letter tips and examples through Thrall's own website: **www.thrall.org/jobs**

Typing, Printing, and Saving Your Cover Letter

Thrall provides free access to word processors. If interested, please inquire at Reference.

Once finished using a word processor, you can print one or more copies of your cover letter. Printing costs $ .20 per page at Thrall. To print, click **File** then **Print** in the word processor. Click "OK" when ready. You cannot use your own paper.

You can also "save" your cover letter onto a **USB flash drive**.

USB flash drives can hold hundreds to thousands of files. USB drives are sold at various stores. Our **Reference Department** also sells USB drives.

To save your file, click **File** then **Save As**. Give your file a name (such as **coverletter.doc**). Be sure to **save your file as a "Microsoft Word 97/2003/XP" (.doc)** as any other format might not be readable by other persons.

Another way to keep your cover letter file available when needed is to mail a copy of the file to your own e-mail account. Once there, you can always retrieve your cover letter and print it out whenever necessary.

If You Have to E-mail Your Resumé and Cover Letter…

Sometimes you need to send your resumé to a person or employer website through e-mail. If you do not have your own e-mail account yet, ask for our free e-mail account guide at Reference.

Once you have established your own e-mail account, begin a new message and get to the point you are ready to send your file, look for the **"Attach"** or **"Add Files"** button or link on your e-mail page. Once you find it, go through **"My Computer"** in the **File** box to find your USB flash drive **(E:\ or F:\ or G:** on most computers). Highlight **your resume file**, then click "OK" to add it to your message. Next, finish writing your message accompanying your resumé file and click **Send** when you are ready.

The message accompanying your resumé is your cover letter, so be sure to keep it professional, and directed to the proper person or department.

Some Final Suggestions…

Never keep your resumé or cover letter only on a USB drive! Always keep a printed copy somewhere in case your USB drive ever gets damaged or lost.

Check all spelling and grammar. Have someone else proofread your work if at all possible.

No clip-art, fancy fonts, or colors: keep everything simple and professional looking.

Remember to use standard terminology when describing previous jobs and job titles.

Plan to update your resumé and cover letter as necessary, and allow yourself extra time to do that.

Remember to take advantage of all the free services and resources available at your library! You can use a library's free books and videos to learn new skills and expand your career options!

Best of luck with your job search!