

## PROCESS FOR WRITING A COVER LETTER

### Preparation

Gather the following documents. You will reference these documents in order to generate the substantive content of the cover letter.

- Your resume
- The position description for the job to which you are applying
- Information obtained through independent research on the organization's purpose, mission, and/or major activities

These documents may also be helpful.

- Your performance reviews or appraisals
- Your previous relevant awards

### Structure of the Cover Letter

The first and last paragraphs of the cover letter follow a specific formula and require minimal original content. The second paragraph and optional third paragraph offer an opportunity to show how your experience will benefit the hiring organization.

#### Header, Date, Address Block, and Signature Block (at end)

See the cover letter example for an appropriate format for the header.

#### Introductory Paragraph

Include the following, as applicable, in the following order.

1. Concise statement introducing yourself (*i.e.*, how you would describe yourself professionally). [One sentence.]
2. Brief statement of your intent in writing the letter (*i.e.*, that you are expressing your interest in employment with the organization, with reference to the specific position). [One sentence, perhaps combined with the first.]
3. Concise general statement regarding the areas in which you have subject-matter expertise and/or your relevant skills set(s). [One sentence.]
4. Statement expressing enthusiasm for the opportunity to apply your knowledge and skills in furtherance of organization's purpose, mission, and/or major activities. [One sentence.]

#### Second Paragraph and Optional Third Paragraph

Include the following, as applicable, in the following order.

1. Describe, in broad and general terms, the nature of your professional or academic work that is commensurate with requirements/skills listed in the job posting. To do this, you should compare your resume, performance reviews, and awards with the description provided in the job posting and identify commonalities. Focus on the most important aspects of the position you are seeking. [One or two sentences.]

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2. Describe the insight, skill, experience, and/or knowledge that you gained as a result of your work. Emphasize any outcome that was beneficial for the person or organization for which you were performing the work. [One or two sentences.]
3. Conclude by describing how the insight, skill, experience, and/or knowledge you gained will benefit the hiring organization by enabling it to achieve its purpose, mission, and/or major activities. [One sentence.]

### Concluding Paragraph

1. List the additional documents, if any, that are included as part of your application package. [One sentence.]
2. Include a statement regarding your availability for an interview. Consider mentioning your willingness to travel or participate in a virtual interview. [One sentence.]
3. Provide your contact information again (email address and phone number). [One sentence.]
4. Thank the contact for considering your application. [One sentence.]

### Pro Tip

Review the job posting again and highlight any key words, terms, or phrases that stand out and/or that are unique to the position. Incorporate those key words or terms into the text of your cover letter where appropriate.