

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

MODULE 12



COVER LETTER CHECKLIST

Your cover letter (also sometimes referred to as a letter of introduction, letter of application, or employment letter) is a vital part of your job-search correspondence package. Think your cover letter is ready to be seen by employers? To be sure, use this checklist to guarantee that you've written the most dynamic (and powerful) cover letter possible.

Appearance and Inclusion of Vital Information:

1. Is it an original letter rather than a mass-produced copy?
2. Is the letter in a standard business-letter format?
3. Is it clear where the employer can reach you during business hours?
4. Is the letter neat and attractive?
5. Have you enhanced the letter's reader-friendliness through use of bullets or other special formatting?
6. Is it no longer than one page?
7. Have you signed your name boldly and confidently?

Writing Style:

1. Is every word spelled correctly? Is all grammar, syntax, punctuation, and capitalization correct? Is the letter free of typographical errors?
2. Does the letter tell why you are writing, as well as grab the reader's attention in the first paragraph?
3. Have you used action verbs?
4. Is the letter concise and to the point?
5. Does it avoid such clichés as "I have taken the liberty of sending my resume enclosed herewith"?
6. Have you avoided such phrases as "I feel" and "I believe," which tend to weaken and dilute the statements you make about yourself?
7. Is the letter sharply focused? Have you avoided needless detail and autobiographical ramblings?

Tone and Appeal to the Reader:

1. Is it confident without being arrogant?
2. Is it interesting?
3. Does it project the image of a person the employer would like to get to know better?
4. Have you read it from the employer's perspective?

Avoidance of Major Cover-Letter Mistakes:

1. Is it addressed to a named individual (unless it is a response to a blind ad)?
2. If it's a response to a blind ad, is the salutation non-sexist?
3. Have you left out everything negative?
4. Is it specific? Have you spelled out what kind of job you're looking for?
5. If it's in response to an ad, does the letter speak to the requirements of the position?

6. Have you told the employer what you can do for the company rather than what the company can do for you?
7. Have you requested action and told the employer you'll call for an appointment?
8. Have you used caution with "willing to learn" statements so the employer isn't reminded of training time and expenses?
9. Have you avoided pleading for favours or sounding desperate and "willing to do anything?"
10. If you're a recent grad, have you avoided over reliance on an academic frame of reference?
11. Have you avoided rewriting/rehashing your resume in your cover letter?
12. Have you avoided describing your personal objectives in vague terms?
13. Have you avoided listing hobbies or interests unless relevant to the position?

Enhancing the Value of your Cover Letter as a Job-Search Marketing Tool:

1. Have you added more credibility to the value judgments you make about yourself by attributing them to a professor or former employer(s)? For example, "My former employers can attest that I am a motivated hard worker."
2. Have you taken advantage of your networking contacts by referring to someone the employer knows?
3. Have you presented your Unique Selling Proposition?
4. Have you listed accomplishments?
5. Have you quantified and given examples of accomplishments that demonstrate your skills wherever possible?
6. Have you demonstrated your knowledge of the company you're writing to?
7. Have you ensured that your letter is not too inadequate and doesn't depend too much on your resume to do the work for you? Have you elaborated on your qualifications, transferable skills, and your fit with the position?