

# Writing a Cover Letter



A cover letter is one-page document typically sent with a resume to provide additional information about an applicant. Employers often use cover letters as a way to screen applicants and to determine which candidates they would like to interview; therefore, you want to make sure your cover letter makes the best impression on the person reviewing it.

A cover letter should always be tailored for each position to which an applicant applies, and address: 1) why a candidate wants to work at a particular organization and 2) how their work experience and skills match the job requirements for the specific position they're seeking.

## How to Format a Cover Letter

**Alignment and Spacing:** A cover letter should be written in business letter format, which is left justified and single-spaced with a return after each paragraph.

**Date:** Dates are traditionally written on business letters as "Month XX, 20XX."

**Internal Address:** Skip down two lines from the date, type the name and title of the person to whom the letter is addressed. Follow with the employer and address. Example:

Jane D. Boss  
Director, Publication Division  
Association of Historians of American Business  
123 Wall St.  
New York City, NY 00011

### Salutation:

- Skip down two lines from internal address
- A formal salutation is personal title and family name: Dear Ms. Jones, Dear Dr. Smith, etc.
- If you do not have the name of an individual, use a title such as "Dear Hiring Manager"
- Salutations always end with a colon in business letters (e.g. "Dear Mayor Rodriguez: ")

### Body of the Letter (the 3 Paragraph Model):

1. **Purpose:** State the position for which you are applying and why you are interested in the position and organization. Include something that will catch the reader's interest in you as a candidate.
2. **Marketing:** Select several qualifications you meet and highlight, in more detail than on your resume, how your experience and skills have prepared you for the position.
3. **Next Steps:** Close by expressing your enthusiasm for the position and interest in meeting to discuss how you can contribute to the organization.

### Closing and Signature:

- "Sincerely" or "Respectfully," followed by a comma.
- Skip one line, insert a jpeg of your signature (or type your name in a font that has a handwriting appearance), and then skip another line
- Type your name

**Enclosure:** Skip two lines and type either "Enclosure" or the abbreviation "Encl." (because you will be enclosing your resume, or other materials).

*Sample Cover Letter*

**Laila Alexander**

414-987-6543  
laila.alexander@gmail.com

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May 16, 20xx

United Way of Greater Milwaukee  
Attn: School Program Coordinator Hiring Manager  
5001 N. Sherman Boulevard  
Milwaukee, WI 53211

Dear Hiring Manager:

Please accept my application for the School Program Coordinator (574-983) position at United Way of Greater Milwaukee that was recently advertised on the *Jobs that Help* website. I have two years of experience working in Milwaukee area youth programs with children and teens ranging in age from 6-21, and am currently seeking full-time employment. Growing up in Milwaukee, I relied on programs, such as those offered by the United Way, to form positive relationships with adult role models and peers. Therefore, I was excited to learn about the School Program Coordinator opening, which would allow me to continue to work with urban youth.

I recently graduated with a B.A. in Psychology from Alverno College. Through my program, I've developed strong knowledge of child and adolescent development, as well as case management skills. In addition to my academic preparation, I've completed 2 internships with area youth programs: the Teen Parent Program through the Glenfield School District and We Care Youth Shelter in Milwaukee. At both organizations, I worked with at-risk teens, assisted them in identifying and accessing community resources, and instructed them in life skill areas. My experience also extends to elementary school aged children. I worked as an Academic Assistant at the Clark Community Learning Center, where I facilitated after-school activities with children ages 6-12 that promoted social and interpersonal skill development. I'm confident that my experience working with at-risk children of all ages has provided me with the qualifications to be successful at United Way of Greater Milwaukee.

I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you regarding my youth development experience and how it has prepared me to contribute as a School Program Coordinator. I can be reached at 414-987-6543 or [laila.alexander@gmail.com](mailto:laila.alexander@gmail.com). Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Laila Alexander*

Laila Alexander

Enclosure