



General Guidelines for Letters

- Use the “letterhead” you created for your resume, so all fonts and margins match the resume. Format your letter in a standard business letter format with paragraphs justified along the left margin and add a double space between paragraphs. Letters may also be sent as the body of an email message. AVOID form letters or carelessly resubmitting a letter without personalizing it to the company and job.
- Tailor your letter to the specific job and organization. Research the company and show how you fit the job and their culture.
- Always direct your letter to a specific person, preferably an individual with hiring authority. This information is often available by calling the organization’s receptionist. Be sure to spell his/her name correctly and use the proper title.
- Address specific qualifications the employer is looking for by connecting experiences from your resume to the job description and expand by giving details or examples to demonstrate your qualities. Do not “rewrite” your resume but highlight key qualifications.
- When answering an advertisement, cover all the points requested in the exact order outlined.
- Convey enthusiasm for the position and set a positive tone.
- Use simple and direct language. Be as concise as possible. Refrain from using slang and abbreviations.
- Use self-descriptive action words that personalize your resume.
- Ask others to proofread your letter for grammar, punctuation, spelling and typographical errors. One error could mean elimination.
- A common mistake is to spend a lot of time talking about yourself and your skills/qualifications. It is important to put the emphasis where it belongs – on the employer and his/her needs. How will you contribute to the company?

Joe Spartan

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Use the “letter head” you created for your resume

Date

Employer Name, Title *(It is critical to address your letter to the appropriate person)*
 Department/Organization
 Address
 City, State Zip

Dear Ms./Mr. _____: (If asked to submit to a department rather than a person, use “Dear Hiring Manager”)

Opening Paragraph: Your opening paragraph should be creative and catch the employer’s attention. Name the position and the company. State why you are interested in the employer and the position for which you are applying. Indicate how you learned about the position. Demonstrate your knowledge of the employer – show the employer that you have done your homework! Begin to connect the dots about what you have to offer and how you will fit the company and job. **Avoid beginning the first sentence of this paragraph with the word “I”.**

Middle Paragraph(s): Stress what you can contribute to the organization. Highlight particular experiences and abilities (not just responsibilities) that relate to the position for which you are applying. Do not duplicate the specific information already outlined in your resume. You may separate information into multiple paragraphs. For example, you may have a paragraph discussing your education and how you are prepared for the job. You may also write another “middle” paragraph highlighting your previous work experiences and the skills that are transferable to the job you are seeking. You may also address gaps in your employment history or other information relevant to the job. **Avoid beginning the each of these paragraphs with the word “I”.**

Closing Paragraph: This paragraph should serve as a summary of the letter, a call to action (i.e. a request for an interview), and a “thank you” to the employer. The paragraph may look like this: “I am confident that my (name specific skills) skills and education will be an asset to the (name the job) job at (name the company). I would welcome an opportunity for an interview to discuss my interest and qualifications with you. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you for your consideration.”

Complimentary Close (Sincerely, Sincerely yours, etc.)

Your Name Typed

Enclosures: 2 (indicate number of items enclosed other than the cover letter or name the items enclosed)