

COVER LETTERS: WHAT ARE THEY?

The Purpose:

A cover letter should do more than just introduce your resume. It is an excellent way to personalize your application packet. When possible, each cover letter should be addressed to the individual who will be conducting the interview. A cover letter allows you to reveal information about yourself specific to the job you want. You should include items such as how you found out about the job, and why you are a qualified applicant.

DO I NEED ONE?

Probably. A cover letter should be used in the following situations:

- Anytime an application packet or resume is mailed to an employer
- When you want to make a good impression on an employer, no matter what kind of job you are seeking

It is not always necessary to have a cover letter for entry level jobs, first time jobs for youth or when an employer asks specifically for an application or resume only.

Cover Letter Strategy

- Use the employer's job description or ad to learn the language of the company.
- Research companies that you would like to work for.
- Send out a generalized cover letter highlighting your qualifications and simply change the address to each company.
- 70% of job openings are not advertised in the paper or at employment agencies. This strategy will help you reach a portion of these job openings.
- Keep a record of where you sent your letters and follow up to find out hiring procedures.

Information to Exclude:

Reason for Job Search
Explanation of Employment Gaps
Compensation & Job Hopping
Lack of Experience/Education
Physical Handicap/Serious Illness

Cover Letters Should Be:

- Short and easy to read, eye-catching
- No more than one page, preferably three or four paragraphs
- A brief highlight of your skills and/or experience, just enough for the reader to want to move on to the resume
- Free of spelling, typing, and grammatical errors
- Positive and upbeat

Remember:

This is your time to shine. Highlight your most positive qualifications.

Why Use A Cover Letter?

Why write a cover letter?

- A cover letter is a professional way to round out an application package.
- Many employers will notice if a cover letter is not attached.
- Not having one will put you at a disadvantage when competing against others for employment.

Will a cover letter introduce new information about your qualifications that are not on the resume? Sometimes

Do most employers spend much time reading cover letters? Usually Not, but they notice if you've included one.

*Additional resources and/or workshops may be available. Please check with our Resource Specialist.