

Cover Letters

Cover letters are **PERSUASIVE LETTERS**.

The words you use to describe your qualifications are the keys to a successful letter.

Concentrate on what you can do for the employer. Don't fill the letter with ways the position will help your career! The employer is interested in a candidate that shows a commitment to the work they want done. **Your cover letter should describe what you can give, not get.** Use words like "contribute", "offer", "add value".

Select examples of your experience, abilities, or accomplishments that communicate your suitability for the position or organization. To determine which strengths to include, ask yourself...

1. Does this example demonstrate show how I solved problems? Be direct, tell HOW you will solve problems?
2. Are there concrete facts/numbers to substantiate claims?
3. Is this a subjective claim? It shouldn't be!
4. Is the skill or quality ESSENTIAL to the job you are applying for? Answer is always YES! If no, don't use.
5. Does the letter show how well you know the organization to which you are applying?
6. Use your imagination to make the cover letter interesting. Put your personality in the letter. Write as if you were talking to the reader in a natural conversation tone. **Don't use the tone of a research paper.**

Salutations:

If no name is provided, consider the following options:

- Dear Sir or Madam:
- Dear Organization
- Dear Title, i.e., "Dear Migration Manager" or "Dear Marine Policy Supervisor"
- Eliminate salutation and go directly to first paragraph.

Openings:

Avoid standard openings which are B-O-R-I-N-G! Be creative. For example:

- In the summer of 20XX, I found myself, more often than not, laying face down in the sand in the middle of the night at the rear-end of a nesting female leatherback sea turtle, with my hand just under her cloaca. As a research assistant with Ocean Spirits, Inc. on the beautiful island of Grenada, I was lucky enough to witness over and over again the spectacle of a nesting turtle—the tedious process, the exhausting steps from emerging, to body-pitting, to digging, to camouflaging. I have never had more respect for a fellow creature of this Earth.
- Over the past 18 months, I've inventoried bats, surveyed northern spotted owls, and ran the Boston Marathon. These activities have sharpened my attention to detail, honed my use of GIS and GPS tools, and taught me that few things beat the exhilaration of never giving up when the task seems impossible.
- Many kudos on your sustainable development work! I just completed reading the article in Green@Work magazine on Time, Inc. Your common sense strategy to "provide economic rewards for environmental leadership" is exactly what's needed to show organizations that environmental issues represent opportunities for smart businesses.
- Advocacy. Cleaner Environment. Innovative thinkers. Scientific Analysis. Safer World. Union of Concerned Scientist's tenet. My dream organization. During the past three years, I have developed a versatile skill set through non-profit and government sector experiences that make me a competitive candidate for the transportation program coordinator vacancy you seek to fill.
- As an energy resources consultant and an economic analyst, I have managed large scientific datasets and conducted rigorous data analysis with consistent accuracy and beneficial results. Here is a list of my qualifications as they relate to your requirements for the Energy Policy Analyst position:

- After spending the past five years gaining hands-on conservation experience and building solid economic analysis skills, I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to discuss your needs for the Conservation Analyst position posted on your website.
- With my extensive training in sustainable forestry management and natural resource planning, I offer the experience you requested on the ecojobs.org website.
- Energy, youthful optimism, and the ability to bridge the gap between international needs and local realities are the qualities that I would bring to Conservation International's global marine conservation strategy as the Melanesian Marine Conservation Specialist.

Closings (hint: request an interview)

- I know how busy you must be during this time of year, but I would appreciate a few minutes of your time. I will call you during the week of (date) to discuss employment possibilities.
- I would appreciate an interview at your earliest convenience, and will telephone for an appointment within the next few days.
- I would like to talk with you about my interest in (position title) and (name of organization), and will telephone your office within the next few days for an appointment.
- I will call your office for an appointment within the next few days unless I hear from you sooner.
- Let me discuss this with you in detail, I will be available for an interview within the coming week.
- Your recruiting materials and website information have convinced me that a position with (organization) provides an opportunity to apply my knowledge and experiences in renewable energy technologies and to continue my learning through interacting with the professional team members you have assembled.
- A personal interview would be mutually advantageous and would like to suggest (date). Please let me know if we can arrange an interview for that date.
- I'm interested in discussing with you some of the valuable contributions I could make to (organization). I'll call you in a few days to learn more about your current needs. Feel free to contact me at (phone number).
- I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss in greater detail the contribution I would make to (organization). Please contact me at (phone number) to arrange a meeting.
- I would like to meet with you at your convenience, to discuss the possibility of a mutually beneficial employment partnership. You can reach me at (phone number). I am looking forward to hearing from you. Happy Holidays.

Cover Letter Evaluation

Your letter is likely to be received by someone who only has a few seconds to read it. Therefore, it must make a good first impression. Evaluate the quality of the organization and content of your letters by responding to the following evaluation criteria.

Characteristics

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Immediately grabs the reader's attention | yes | no |
| 2. Presents the most important ideas first | yes | no |
| 3. Expressed concisely, avoids long rambling sentences | yes | no |
| 4. Relates to the readers interests and needs | yes | no |
| 5. Persuades the reader to take action | yes | no |
| 6. Free of spelling, grammatical, and punctuation errors | yes | no |
| 7. Incorporates the active voice | yes | no |
| 8. Avoids negative words and tones; uses positive language | yes | no |
| 9. Employer-centered rather than self-centered | yes | no |
| 10. Includes specific information on your skills, strengths, accomplishments, interests, and goals | yes | no |
| 11. Includes examples of your productivity and performance | yes | no |
| 12. Stresses benefits the reader will likely receive from you | yes | no |
| 13. Sentences and paragraphs flow logically | yes | no |
| 14. Expresses enthusiasm, energy, and fire | yes | no |

All NO characteristics should be re-written so the answer will be YES.