

Anatomy of a Cover Letter

Hard Copy Cover Letter

Length

- Keep it brief! Four short paragraphs in one page is the ideal length of a cover letter

Paper Size

- Use 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper

Paper Color

- White and ivory are the only acceptable colors for a cover letter

Paper Quality

- As with resumes, standard, inexpensive office paper is generally acceptable for most positions
- If you are applying for an executive or top level position, however, you may want to invest in heavier, more expensive stationery such as ivory laid

Typing and Printing

- Always type your cover letters
- Fonts: Serif fonts, Times New Roman, Bookman, Century, Garamond, or Palatino
- Align paragraphs flush left with a ragged right margin
- Double space between paragraphs; do not indent the first line
- Be sure to proofread your letter before sending it out

The Envelope

- Use standard, business size (#10) envelope
- The address on the outside of your envelope should match the address on the cover letter
- Include the recipient's full name and title preceded by Mr. or Ms.
- Always type your envelopes using the same font as your cover letter
- *Handwritten addresses are unprofessional*



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Ten Key Ingredients of Successful Hard Copy Cover Letters

1. The return address

- Type your return address and phone number in the top left-hand corner of your letter; do not include your name. Avoid using abbreviations (St., Ave., Blvd., etc.) in the address of your cover letters. You may abbreviate the states using US Postal Service guidelines (FL, not FLA., for Florida; MI, not Mich., for Michigan, etc.)

2. The date

- Skip two lines from return address
- Flush left
- Write out the date in full; do not use abbreviations.

Example: January 12, 20__

3. The addressee

- Flush left
- Skip 2 lines from date
- Ms. or Mr. – **person's name correctly spelled**
- Formal Title (if any)
- Name of Company
- Company address

4. The salutation

Skip 2 lines

Dear Mr., Mrs. or Ms., followed by the individual's last name and a colon.

In cases when you do not know the name of your addressee, such as when you are responding to "blind" advertisements, it may be necessary for a general salutation.

Avoid

Gender specific salutations such as "Dear Gentlemen," or "Dear Sirs"

Less desirable

"To whom it may concern," and "Dear Sir or Madam"

Preferable

"Dear Hiring Manager," "Good Morning"

5. First Paragraph

Keep the first paragraph short and hard hitting

- State immediately and concisely the position for which you wish to be considered and what makes you the best candidate to fill this particular job opening

Example: I am writing to apply for the Real Estate Sales Associate position advertised in *Real Estate Weekly*, December 20, 2012. I am interested in contributing my real estate expertise to Global Properties.

6. Second Paragraph

- **BRIEFLY** expound on the contributions you might make to this company, and show how your qualifications will benefit this firm.
- Specifically discuss one or two of your skills that will meet the qualifications required by the job.

Example: In addition to my strong background in mathematics, I offer significant business experience, having worked in a data processing firm, bookstore, and a restaurant. I am sure that my courses in statistics and computer programming would prove particularly useful in the position of Trainee.

7. Third Paragraph

Describe your interests in the corporation.

- Subtly emphasize your knowledge about this firm (**result of your own research efforts**) and your familiarity with the industry.
- You should present yourself as eager to work for any company to which you may apply.

Example: I am attracted to City Bank by your recent rapid growth and the superior reputation of your economic research department. After studying several different commercial banks, I have concluded that City Bank will be in strong competitive position to benefit from upcoming changes in the industry

8. Final Paragraph

- Specifically request for an interview
- Include your phone number and the hours you can be reached, or indicate that you will follow up with a phone call within a few days to arrange an interview at a mutually convenient time.

Example: I would like to interview with you at your earliest convenience. I am best reached between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday at (617) 555-5555.

9. The Closing

- Skip two lines after the final paragraph
- Align it to your return address and date (toward the right hand side of the page).
- Keep your closing single: “Sincerely”
- Skip 4 lines (enough to allow for your signature)
- Type your full name as it appears on your resume. Your typed name should align with your closing
- Sign above your typed name in blue or black ink!

10. The Enclosure line

- If you are enclosing a resume or other materials with your letter, include an enclosure line, flush left, at the bottom of the letter.

Example: Enc. Resume

RESPONSE TO A CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENT (PRINT)**(Administrative Assistant)**

178 Green Street
Encru, MS 38842
(601) 555-5555
csmith@email.com

November 1, 20__

Pat Cummings
Office Manager
Any Corporation
1140 Main Street
Chicago, IL. 60605

Dear Mr. Cummings:

Your October 30 advertisement in the Jackson Review calls for an Assistant with a background rich in a variety of administrative skills, such as mine.

As organized and detail-oriented individual with five years' experience in administration, I believe my qualifications match your requirements. My strengths also include independent working habits and superb computer skills. As an Administrative Assistant at Lambert Hospital, I was in charge of all computer support, word processing and database, spreadsheet, and administrative functions. My duties included all purchasing equipment maintenance, daily office operations, supervising of staff and volunteers, and coordinating various projects with staff and outside vendors.

I am attracted to Lambert Hospital by your recent re-organization into a cancer research hospital and the superior reputation you enjoy in the community. I have concluded that Lambert Hospital is in an excellent position to become one of the best hospitals in the United States and perhaps the world.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this position with you at your convenience, as it sounds like an exciting opportunity. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at the above listed phone number or at csmith@email.com.

Sincerely,

Chris Smith

Enc. Resume

Resource: The Adams Cover Letter Almanac
