

Your cover letter works with your resume but paints a more complete picture of how you are a tremendous fit for both that job and that employer. Because you want to tie yourself to both the job and the employer, your cover letter should be different not just for every type of job, but for every position you apply for. Keep it brief; it should be no more than one page, and the following four-paragraph format works well.

Some guidelines and tips to keep in mind:

- **CONTACT INFORMATION, SALUTATION:** At the top of the page, use the same format for your name and contact information that you used on your resume. Two lines down from that, put the date; two lines down from the date, put the name, title and mailing address of the person to whom you are addressing the letter; two lines down from that, put the salutation:

Bob Smith
9876 Main Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301
Phone: (503) 555-4567
E-mail: bob.smith@gmail.com

August 28, 2019

Jane Doe
Human Resources Manager
Spacely Sprockets
1234 Spacely Drive
Salem, Oregon 97305

Dear Jane Doe,

- In the salutation, address your letter to a specific person. If the posting doesn't name the person doing the hiring, check the company website for the name of the human resources manager or the company president. Having a person in mind helps you take a warmer, more personal tone than addressing it "To Whom It May Concern"
- **FIRST PARAGRAPH:** Start with a hook – get them interested in reading the rest of the letter! You can do this by talking about why you're interested in that type of work, or why you want to work for that company, or that a person they know and respect suggested you contact them. Be personal, be specific, include some detail. Get them interested, but get to the point quickly. You can also mention how you learned about the job. Then finish the first paragraph with why you're writing, what you're applying for: "This makes me the ideal candidate for a position as telephone banker at Wells Fargo."

Hook Example 1) A job at McDonald's? I'm lovin' it! Ever since I was old enough to realize what tastes good, trips to McDonald's have brought joy into my life. The chance to help others have the same happy experience makes me an ideal candidate for the position of crew member at the Lancaster Drive McDonald's that I saw posted on CraigsList.

Hook Example 2) During a recent business technology seminar at Chemeketa Community College, my instructor, Mr. James Johnson, spoke of how Allstate Insurance was on the cutting edge of office practices. At the conclusion of the course, Mr. Johnson had high praise for the skills I had displayed and suggested I contact you about possible employment in Allstate's Salem office.

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Hook Example 3) Ask a person how they've been treated when they called their bank to resolve a question about their account, and many will talk about how they were given the runaround or treated rudely. I've been through that with another bank, and my desire to keep others from experiencing a similar frustrating call, plus my customer service experience and business education, will make me an outstanding telephone banker for Wells Fargo.

Hook Example 4) Ten years ago, we had to put my grandfather in a senior center. He and I were very close so I visited him often. At his bedside, I saw these people who hadn't known him before he moved in, and who didn't know our family, being so careful to make sure my grandfather was safe and comfortable; I decided I wanted to do that for someone someday. That experience and my current nursing coursework will make me an outstanding caregiver at Sunny Seniors Retirement Home, and I'm thrilled to respond to the position you posted on Chemeketa CareerLink.

- **SECOND PARAGRAPH:** Illustrate how the skills and experience in your resume make you the ideal person for the position: basically, connect the dots for the employer. Don't just repeat what's in your resume; work in examples of how you've demonstrated the skills that are outlined in the job posting. And think of transferable skills – the things they want that you may have used in a very different job. You want to start painting the picture in the employer's mind of how you will make them a more profitable or more effective organization because they hired you:

Example 1) My four years working behind the counter at KFC gave me the opportunity to serve customers from all backgrounds. This experience making customers feel like valued guests means that from my first day at Wells Fargo, I'll help create the welcoming, comfortable atmosphere that keeps patrons coming back for repeat business. You want your tellers to market Wells Fargo's products to consumers; that KFC position also made me comfortable with upselling, and I was consistently able to entice customers into boosting the dollar value of their order and feeling good about it.

Example 2) As the manager of a grocery store for almost 10 years, I had to have a keen eye for detail, work with complex sets of numbers and keep in mind overall strategies that would enhance the long-term success of the store. As an accountant at Roadhouse Restaurant, this knowledge of how a business owner or manager must think will help in tracking revenue and expenses with an awareness of the benefits and dangers situations may present.

- **THIRD PARAGRAPH:** In addition to telling how you are a good fit for the specific job, tell how you are a good fit for the employer. Do some homework on the employer and use it in this section; finding their "Mission Statement" or "Statement of Values" will be particularly helpful.

Example) I am eager to become part of Firestone's commitment to making auto care as environmentally friendly as possible through use of non-toxic materials and recycling. I have worked to make my own footprint on the world as small as possible and am excited by the chance to do so at work as well; every action I take working at the downtown Auto Center will contribute to this important goal.

- **FOURTH PARAGRAPH:** Finish with something nice and confident – but not too cocky – that lets the employer know you expect to be contacted regarding the job. Perhaps something along the lines of: "This is an exciting opportunity and I look forward to discussing it with you."

Example) A place on the telephone banking staff at the Wells Fargo Salem Call Center is a chance to help the bank's customers meet their financial needs as part of an outstanding team of professionals. I look forward to discussing this opportunity with you.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

Remember – your cover letter is a fantastic opportunity to highlight the individual characteristics that make you the perfect person for a job. Just tell the employer why you're going to be their next great employee!



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