

A Cover Letter is **Not**:

- A reformulation of your résumé.
- Informal.
- Difficult to read and understand.



An Exceptional Cover Letter:

- **Is concise (to-the-point and well-written).**
- **Communicates your successes.**
- **Tells the truth.**
- **Makes you stand out.**



Purpose of a Cover Letter

- A cover letter introduces yourself and entices the employer to read your résumé – make a good first impression
- Should compliment your résumé (not duplicate it)
- Makes sure your résumé goes to the correct person at the company
- Highlights your relevant skills
- Tells an employer why you're interested in working for them
- Addresses the employer's needs
- Helps land an interview

The Meat and Potatoes

- Heading
- Salutation (Greeting)
- Introduction
- Skills and experience
- Conclusion
- Closing



Before You Begin: *Know Yourself*

What **interests, experiences, skills, achievements, and values** do you want to showcase?

- Your cover letter highlights your most relevant experiences for the position you are applying.

Before You Begin: *Know the Employer*

Keep the employer's perspective in mind - **how do you add value to his/her organization?**

- **Research** the industry, **know the organization** well, and **draw connections** between yourself and your employer.

Heading



- Your full name and contact information at top
- The date (month day, and year) you are dropping off, emailing, or mailing the letter
- List the company's name and mailing address
- Address the letter to a specific person, using their proper name and job title (e.g. Ms. Jana Smith, Manager)
- Subject Line: include Job Reference Number if required, or position being applied for, or "Potential Employment Opportunities"

Salutation (Greeting)



- Most cover letters begin with:

Dear [addressee],

- Include the contact person's title and last name (exclude first name)

– E.g.:

Dear Ms. Smith,

- Don't know who this is going to? As a last resort, choose something like: *Dear Sir/ Madam, Dear Hiring Committee, To Whom it May Concern*

Body #1: Introduction

- Who are you?
- Why are you writing to the employer?
- Refer to the specific position you are applying for
- Explain how you heard about position
- Mention reference or mutual acquaintance to show connection. Example: *Mr. Owen Thomas in your department recommended I apply for the Graphic Designer position for which I am extremely well qualified.*



Body #2: Your Skills and Experience

- Overview of relevant skills
- Select your key skills, experiences and achievements and convincingly illustrate how they can be an asset to the employer
- What do you have to offer the employer?
- Draw connections between your skills/ experiences to the job description
- **DON'T REPEAT YOUR RÉSUMÉ**

Conclusion

- How will you follow up on your application?
Telephone, email, in person?
- Express your willingness to be interviewed
- How, when, and where can the employer reach you? Confirm your preferred contact information
- Thank the reader for his/her time and consideration!
- Mention enclosed résumé
- Make sure to follow through on your promises

Closing



- Sign off with: Sincerely, Yours truly, Regards, or another formal closure
- Be sure to sign in ink after you print the letter

Cover Letter Mistakes

- **DON'T** send out a generic letter – tailor to each job
- **DON'T** waste space – get to the point
- **DON'T** repeat what's in your résumé
- **DON'T** include salary requirements



Cover Letter Tips

- Letter should be brief (maximum 1 page), formal, and concise
- Format/design should be simple, clean, and consistent
- Align all text to the left and use a legible font size
- Target and tailor your letter to the requirements of a specific position
- Take time to describe your “personal brand” – unique skills and strengths that make you attractive to an employer
- Focus on the employer’s needs, not your needs
- Indicate how you will contribute to the company
- Use related industry terminology
- Be energetic; use powerful words

More Tips

- Proofread, proofread!
- Find out the name of the person doing the hiring and spell their name correctly!
- Sell yourself - don't be modest!
- Use good quality 8.5x11" white paper
- Allow plenty of time for delivery
- If emailing, use Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF file format, and include a brief note that the cover letter is attached to the email



Example Email

Subject: Graphic Designer Position

Dear Ms. Thomas:

Please find attached my application for the Graphic Designer position you advertised on the McGill CaPS website. I have enclosed both my résumé and cover letter.

If you encounter any difficulties, or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 514-987-6543.

Thank you for considering my application.

Sincerely,

Max Richards

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

LISA SHAW

3600 MCTAVISH, MONTREAL, QUEBEC, H3H 1H1
(514) 323-3200 - LISA.SHAW@MCGILL.CA

January 10th, 2008

Disney Corporation
321 Magic Kingdom
Orlando, Florida
98765 USA

Re: Potential employment opportunity

Dear Sir or Madam.

As you and your team prepare to bring the International 2008 Women's Softball Jubilee to the Disney Sports Complex, you will be seeking people with good organizational and networking skills. I am one of those people and am highly interested in augmenting the team's operation in a legal or management capacity.

My legal experience has been mainly in government and environmental law, while my academic background has been primarily in international law and communications, with an emphasis on broadcasting and public relations.

During diverse internships as an Archivist, Law Clerk and workshop Instructor, I have developed organization and networking skills, a talent for efficiently gathering information from government officials, and written sources. I have also proven my ability to work well with clients on various projects and in various languages (English, French and Spanish).

I know I would be an asset to your team and look forward to discussing this exciting opportunity with you. Should you require any additional information prior to me contacting you, please call or email me directly. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lisa Shaw

Top 10 Skills in Demand

1. Strong verbal and interpersonal communication skills
2. Self-motivated, Self-starter
3. Team player
4. Sound academic achievement
5. Analytical and conceptual skills
6. Strong written communication skills
7. Flexible and adaptable attitude
8. Problem solving skills
9. Energy and enthusiasm
10. Professional ethics

