

Career

Development Toolkit



Why write a cover letter?

The cover letter that accompanies a résumé can be as effective as the résumé itself — and perhaps even more so! Industry standards suggest résumés be kept to one page. For many candidates, this can limit their ability to expound on their marketable skills, or details about academic or professional awards and recognition. A cover letter can help!

The cover letter is what sets you apart from the competition. It gives you the opportunity to expand on experiences that are merely mentioned as bullet points on the one-page résumé. In other words, this is your justifiable opportunity to “brag.” It may feel uncomfortable but promoting yourself is one of the necessary pains of job hunting! Employers are inundated with hundreds of applications and résumés for review. It’s YOUR job to articulate your many skills and talents that set you apart from the competition.

“The Three Cs” of Cover Letters

On the next page is a simple three-step approach to writing an effective cover letter. We call this process the “Three Cs”. An impactful cover letter will:

Connect the Dots between your goals and the organization to which you are applying;

Be Customized to demonstrate why you are a good fit for the specific position;

Close strong to leave the employer wanting to learn more about you... by extending an offer to interview!



Reach out to your OOD counselor to see how Ohio College2Careers can assist with your cover letter needs.

Your school’s Office of Career Services is also there to help!

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The Three Cs of Cover Letters

Connect the Dots

This will require a bit of research! One way to set yourself apart from other candidates is to connect the dots between the information you have about the employer and why you want to work there. This is good information to include in the first paragraph of the body of your letter. Visit the employer's website to research the company's mission statement and values. You can use this information to open your cover letter, explaining to the employer that you are interested in working for them because of something you learned on their website. For example, if the website mentions that the employer provides time for employees to volunteer during work hours, then you could express that you are looking for a workplace that gives back to its community. You can also connect the dots for the employer if your reason for applying to that organization is not obvious. For example, you can state that you are planning to move if the employer is not in your city.

Customize

Customization is extremely important when writing a cover letter. Align your education and/or work experience with their needs using keywords from the job description. Remember, this is your time to talk specifics. While it's perfectly acceptable to have a couple of universal statements regarding your skills, your cover letter must never be considered a "one size fits all" document. The cover letter is also a great place to include applicable numbers and data. For example, if an employer is searching for someone with particular experience, you could mention your previous success rate in that area. Notating quantifiable successes will certainly make you stand out as a star candidate!

Close Strong

First **AND** last impressions are crucial. Finish strong. Your closing should include a brief recap of relevant skills (connecting those dots again) and how they will be useful in that position. If you are a new graduate with little to no experience in your chosen field, make sure to highlight transferable skills that will aid your success in the new role. You can pull upon summer or part-time work experiences, for example.

It's also acceptable for new graduates to acknowledge their desire to learn from existing talent at the company. In other words, walk the fine line of being "braggy" without coming off as arrogant and/or inflexible. It is good for employers to know you are willing to learn and have some level of humility. Lastly, end the letter by thanking them for consideration and the hopes to discuss the position further. Don't feel compelled to end with a generic statement like, "Please feel free to reach out to schedule an interview"... they know you want an interview and have your contact information. You've said all there is to say, now, play it cool.