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3 must-haves when writing a cover letter



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Applying for jobs can get daunting. With updating your resume, finding open positions, signing up on career sites, and applying for jobs, there's still a chance you'll never hear back from hiring managers or agencies. One way to set yourself apart is a well-written cover letter.

“Cover letters should not rehash the resume but act as a supporting document in your application,” said Melanie Denny, resume expert and president of [Resume-Evolution](#). “Your resume is a detailed account of your work history and the cover letter serves as an introduction of who you are professionally.”

Not all jobs require a cover letter, but if you have the chance to include one, you could increase the likelihood that you'll stand out versus those that don't include one. The key to cover letters? The more you write, the easier they become. Here are some top tips.



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Cover letter must-haves

Not all cover letters are the same; what you write depends on the industry and the type of job you're applying for. But there are some things you should include — and some things you should leave out.

Keep it short

Cover letters don't need to be long; around 250 words is enough, Denny said.

“Recruiters and hiring managers don't have much time, so keep it brief,” she said.

“Three short paragraphs should do the trick.”

The first paragraph should grab the reader’s attention and tie you to the company and position you’re applying to, Denny said. The second graph should include unique or interesting information about your work history that’s in line with what the open position calls for. The last paragraph should be a closing, requesting an interview, or ways to follow up with you for more information.

Keep it original

General cover letters are just that: General. That means they won’t be beneficial.

“Your goal as the job seeker is to ensure that you are conveying the most relevant information to a potential employer, so they can easily see how you'll be a great fit,” Denny said. “A general cover letter may not be able to achieve this, so try to incorporate something about the company so they know it was written specifically for them.”

It's extra work, but when a job calls for a cover letter, include something specific that helps you stand out from the crowded pool of applicants.

Keep it clean

With a short letter, there are things you can leave off. For instance, you don't need to include how you found the open position or job posting.

“These openings don't work because they sound cookie-cutter and boring,” Denny

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