

GET THE JOB

Avoiding Cover Letter Mistakes

They may feel old-fashioned, but a well-crafted cover letter could mean the difference between being employed and unemployed.

MAKE IT UNIQUE

It's tempting to craft one catch-all letter, proof read it, then simply copy and paste the same content over and over to multiple possible employers. You may also find yourself applying for more than one job at a time, and standardizing the letter can seem like a great stream-lining idea. But you won't be differentiating yourself or highlighting the parts of your background that might improve your candidacy.

Hiring managers can get the nuts and bolts of your career path from the resume itself. Your letter should put all of that in perspective as it relates to this particular position, while showcasing you as a person — rather than just another applicant.

LANGUAGE IS IMPORTANT

Always use conversational, first-person language in a cover letter. Mention how you were alerted to their vacancy,



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and why the position is attractive to you. At the same time, focus on using words

like “we” and “us.” It may sound counterintuitive, but cover letters can't be all about

the candidate. You'll never be able to completely avoid using the word “I” — and you

shouldn't. But cover letters tend to be better received if you make them more about how you'll integrate with the company.

Do a bit of research into their values, projects and mission statement, then focus on how you'd like to further those goals. Including your thoughts on these initiatives shows a dedication to becoming a committed, engaged employee. Remember to customize every letter by integrating as many of their job-announcement keywords as possible.

DISPLAY ORIGINALITY

Let's face it, there aren't many ways to bring a spark to the average resume. The document is really only there to share employment details, not to show off your personality. That's where a cover letter can set your application apart.

Take a more anecdote-driven approach. Offer insights into your own motivations, what inspired you and how that fed into your desire to become a leader, collaborator and mentor at their company.

The goal is to tell your story in a brief but engaging way. Hiring managers are likely shifting through many cover letters, and being yourself is one way to stand out.