

# GET THE JOB

## The Best Cover Letters

Pair your resume's familiar facts and figures with a dash of personality

The paperwork submitted to a potential employer shouldn't be limited to the required qualifications and personal information. A well-written cover letter can tell hiring managers things a resume can't about your individuality and creativity.

### MAKE IT SPECIAL

As with most things these days, the internet offers a variety of sample cover-letter material. Some candidates also choose to create a single all-purpose cover letter, and simply reprint it for each new round of applications. But in a competitive market, cookie-cutter options like that will not help you stand out. Once you've gotten past the initial culling process in which those who do not have the proper qualifications are eliminated from contention, a smart cover letter could make the difference in whether or not you secure the all-important interview.

### DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Personalizing your cover letter isn't just about selling yourself. It's also about selling your ability to mesh with the job expectations and company cul-



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ture. So do your homework. Read over the job description carefully, and visit your potential employer's website. Check out their social media feeds, including company executive and manager posts on places like Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram. Try to align with their vision for the company, matching their keywords and tone. Make sure you address the hiring manager by name in

the letter. If possible, reach out by email or phone to ask relevant questions about the job beforehand, and mention that you spoke within the correspondence.

### WHAT TO INCLUDE

Cover letters should be kept to a single page, since busy hiring managers are unlikely to read any more than that anyway. The Society for Human

Resources recommends including two key elements: how your experience and your skills match the prospective job requirements, and why you're interested in the open position. Anecdotes help tell your story in a way that a resume never could. So, try to include one short example of how you've previously overcome a challenge that might be associated with this new job.

### THE RIGHT TONE

Avoid beginning with the obvious — like including your name and the position you're applying for. Instead, dive into an enthusiastic argument for your own candidacy. Avoid platitudes or humor, since both are tricky to land. Instead, be truthful, authentic and energetic. Give the hiring manager a reason to believe in you.