

Cover Letter Writing

A cover letter is about FIT, about identifying the match you see between your skills and qualifications and the employer's needs. Simply regurgitating your CV in sentence form is a missed opportunity; instead your cover letter should focus on the key reasons you are a good candidate for this particular position. Your CV is an outline, your cover letter should bring it to life! Before you sit down to write, ask yourself what you would like the employer to know about you, why you want the job, and why you think they should hire you.

There are multiple ways to set out information in a cover letter. In general, your introductory paragraph should give some context for your application (who are you and why you are writing) as well as providing a glimpse into your motivation. If someone referred you to the posting or the organization, you may mention their name. It can be helpful to end your first paragraph with a clear and specific "thesis" which explains exactly why you are a good fit. In the body of your letter you then back up your assertions with additional details and examples which draw connections between your background and the skills/experience the employer is seeking. Conclude your letter with a little more information about your motivation to work for this company/industry, and thank the reader for their time and consideration.

TIPS

Keep your letter concise and limited to one page. This likely means you cannot talk about everything, so don't try. Rather, your job is to synthesize the information, focusing on the key elements of your application.

It is always preferable to address your letter to a specific individual. Contact the receptionist or HR department to see if they can provide you with the name of the appropriate person. If need be, you may start your letter using a salutation such as "Dear Sir or Madam" or "Dear Hiring Committee" or "To Human Resources".

Avoid writing one generic cover letter for use in all your applications. Employers can tell. As much as possible, your letter needs to be TAILORED to each position/employer/industry.

Research the industry, employer and position for which you are applying. Your cover letter should demonstrate that you know something about the organization and articulate how you are a good fit.

PROOFREAD your letter extremely carefully. Try reading it from bottom to top, or reading out loud to detect errors more easily. Ask friends, family, classmates or a career advisor to review it. Aim for a confident, factual tone. Highlight your achievements/experience, but don't embellish. Don't be afraid of sounding excited about the opportunity! Keen is good.

Sample Cover Letter

Sally Green

123 Lala Street • CITY • Quebec • H9X 2E6
 firstname.lastname@mail.mcgill.ca • 514-123-4567

August 7, 20xx

Ms. Kate Jordan
 Personnel Manager
 Human Resources Department
 Community Board of Health
 203 Main Street
 Mistissini, Quebec G0W 1C0

Re: Application for Health Educator position

Dear Ms. Jordan,

As a Bachelor of Arts and Science graduate of McGill's Biomedical and International Development program with a particular interest in working with an aboriginal population, I was immediately drawn to your advertisement on the CaPS myFuture website. I am confident that the combination of my academic background, my clinical and research experience in hospital settings, and my passion for working with children and expectant mothers makes me an ideal candidate for this position.

During the course of my degree I have pursued a number of electives in First Nations and Inuit Studies and would welcome the opportunity to work directly with an aboriginal population and make a difference within the community. My Arts and Science degree covered many facets including biochemical and human behavioral sciences, community nutrition and research development, and included internships with a strong practical component, which allowed me to put my skills and knowledge to use in a variety of clinical settings in developing countries.

The Community Board of Health works in both a hospital and community setting, and is participating in an on-going research project on preventative medicine within a northern aboriginal community. Two of my recent internships were in hospital settings, where I gained valuable experience and honed my communication and presentation skills while providing health education to individuals on topics such as HIV/AIDS, diabetes and hygiene education for children and expectant mothers. In addition to my health education duties, I participated in research on preventative care for pregnant women, several of whom were aboriginal.

I would welcome the opportunity to apply my skills and experience with the Cree Board of Health, and to contribute to increased health awareness in northern Quebec. Thank you in advance for your review and consideration of my application, and I look forward to your response at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,
 Sally Green

Providing your contact information in a header that matches your CV makes your application look professional and cohesive.

Subject line indicating the position you are applying for.

Specific "Thesis" explaining why you are a good fit for the position.

If you are sending your letter electronically, write a brief email indicating your Cover Letter and CV are attached.

Introductory sentence providing some information about you and context for your application.

Each paragraph provides evidence of your past experience that fits the new position.

Making the link between their activities and your experience is a good way to show motivation

Signature