

Your cover letter works with your resume but paints a more complete picture of you and how you are a tremendous fit for that job and that employer. Because you want to tie yourself to both the job and the employer, your cover letter should be different not just for every type of job, but for every position you apply for. Keep it brief; it should be no more than one page, perhaps a total of four paragraphs. And remember:

- At the top of the page, use the same format for your name and contact information that you used on your resume. Two lines down from that, put the date; two lines down from the date, put the name and mailing address of the person to whom you are addressing the letter; two lines down from that, put the salutation:

Bob Smith
9876 Main Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301
Phone: (503) 555-4567
E-mail: bob.smith@gmail.com

August 28, 2012

Ms. Jane Doe
Human Resources Manager
Spacely Sprockets
1234 Spacely Drive
Salem, Oregon 97305

Dear Ms. Doe,

- In the salutation, address your letter to a specific person. If the posting doesn't give the name of the person doing the hiring, check the company website for the name of the human resources manager or the company president. Having a person in mind can help you take a warmer, more personal tone than simply addressing it "To Whom It May Concern"
- Start with a hook – get them interested in reading the rest of the letter! You can do this by talking about why you're interested in that type of work, or why you've wanted to work for that company, or that a person they know and respect suggested you contact them about the job. Be personal, be specific, include some detail. Get them interested, but get to the point rather quickly. Then finish the first paragraph with why you're writing, what you're applying for: "This makes me the ideal candidate for a position as telephone banker at Wells Fargo."

Hook Example 1) A job at McDonald's? I'm lovin' it! Ever since I was old enough to realize what tastes good, trips to McDonald's have brought joy into my life. The chance to help others have the same happy experience makes me an ideal candidate for the position of crew member at the Lancaster Drive McDonald's.

Hook Example 2) Ten years ago, we had to put my grandfather in a senior center. He and I were very close so I visited him often. At his bedside, I saw these people who hadn't known him before he moved in, and who didn't know our family, being so careful to make sure my grandfather was safe and comfortable; I decided I wanted to do that for someone someday. That experience will make me committed to being an outstanding caregiver at Sunny Seniors Retirement Home.

Career Center
Career Services | CWE | OST
Bldg. 2, Rm. 115, Salem
503.399.5026
careercenter@chemeketa.edu

Hook Example 3) Ask a person how they've been treated when they called their bank to resolve a question about their account, and many will talk about how they were given the runaround or treated rudely. I've been through that with another bank, and my desire to keep others from experiencing a similar call will make me an outstanding telephone banker for Wells Fargo.

Hook Example 4) During a recent business technology seminar at Chemeketa Community College, my instructor, Mr. James Johnson, spoke of how Allstate Insurance was on the cutting edge of office practices. At the conclusion of the course, Mr. Johnson had high praise for the skills I had displayed and suggested I contact you about possible employment in Allstate's Salem office.

- Your cover letter can illustrate how the skills and experience in your resume will make you the ideal employee for the position. Don't just repeat what's in your resume; work in examples of how you've demonstrated the skills that are outlined in the job posting. And think of transferable skills – the things they want that you may have used in a very different job. You want to start painting the picture in the employer's mind about how you are going to make them a more profitable or more effective organization because they hired you:

Example 1) My four years working behind the counter at KFC gave me the opportunity to serve customers from all backgrounds. This experience making customers feel like valued guests means that from my first day at Wells Fargo, I'll help create the welcoming, comfortable atmosphere that keeps patrons coming back for repeat business. You want your tellers to market Wells Fargo's products to consumers; that KFC position also made me comfortable with upselling, and I was consistently able to entice customers into boosting the dollar value of their order and feeling good about it.

Example 2) As the manager of a grocery store for almost 10 years, I had to have a keen eye for detail, work with complex sets of numbers and keep in mind overall strategies that would enhance the long-term success of the store. As an accountant at Roadhouse Restaurant, this knowledge of how a business owner or manager must think will help in tracking revenue and expenses with an awareness of the benefits and dangers situations may present.

- In addition to telling how you are a good fit for the specific job, tell how you are a good fit for the employer. Do some homework on the employer and use it in this section; finding their "Mission Statement" or "Statement of Values" will be particularly helpful.

I am eager to become part of Firestone's commitment to making auto care as environmentally friendly as possible through use of non-toxic materials and recycling. I have worked to make my own footprint on the world as small as possible and am excited by the chance to do so at work as well; every action I take working at the downtown Auto Center will contribute to this important goal.

- Finish with something nice and confident – but not too cocky – that lets the employer know you expect to be contacted regarding the job. Perhaps something along the lines of: "This is an exciting opportunity and I look forward to discussing it with you."

A place on the telephone banking staff at the Wells Fargo Salem Call Center is a chance to help the bank's customers meet their financial needs as part of an outstanding team of professionals. I look forward to discussing this opportunity with you.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

Remember – your cover letter is a fantastic opportunity to highlight the individual characteristics that make you the perfect person for a job. Just tell the employer why you're going to be their next great employee!

