

# HOW TO WRITE A COVER LETTER

The **cover letter** is a companion to your résumé. The cover letter is often the first thing that the employer sees, so it is important to make a great first impression and keep the reader engaged.

## GENERAL TIPS

- Always write a cover letter to accompany your résumé (unless the job posting specifically asks you not to).
- Always use business letter formatting, with appropriate fonts (Arial, Calibri, Cambria, and Georgia are great choices) and spacing. Use 12 pt. font.
- As a best practice, the contact header at the top should match your résumé (so it looks like a cohesive package).
- Your cover letter should not be overly long. Keep your cover letter short and concise, between 250 to 400 words.
- Always do your homework BEFORE you apply for a position. Read the job description thoroughly and take the time to research the organization. Try to understand what the company is looking for, what their culture is like, what new projects or products they are working on, etc. Knowing some of this information will help you write your résumé and cover letter and will help you if you are called for an interview.
- Always create a new cover letter for each position you are applying for, tailoring to the job description.
  - Do not simply repeat what is already on your résumé.
  - Use the cover letter to provide extra information that might not fit in the résumé or items that you want to emphasize about yourself.
  - Rather than focusing on what you are looking for, remember the What's in it for Me? (WIIFM) principle. Employers have specific things that they are looking for and you want to provide the answer as to why you are the best candidate. Tip: Starting every sentence with the word "I" does NOT convey the proper emphasis on their needs.
  - Think of your cover letter as a mini-sales presentation about yourself.
- The tone of your cover letter should be professional, but slightly more conversational than the résumé itself.

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## Need Assistance?

Schedule an appointment with one of our Career Coaches in the **Office of Career Education** through [Handshake](#) or by calling (304) 696-2370.

# MARCO MARSHALL

Huntington, WV 25705 • 304-696-2370  
career@marshall.edu

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Date

Vanessa Davies  
Human Resources Manager  
ABC Medical Center  
227 Main Street  
Huntington, WV 25705

Whenever possible, address the letter to the first name of the individual making the hiring decision (people like to read their own names and using first names “hooks” the reader). It is also acceptable to use “Ms.” Or “Mr.” but avoid using “Sir or Madam.” If the name of the individual is not known, use “Dear Hiring Manager,” “Dear Human Resources Manager,” or “Dear Hiring Committee.”

Dear Vanessa:

In the **first paragraph**, make an **unforgettable introduction**. Begin with a powerful introductory sentence that states what position you are applying for and exhibits your passion for the role and the company. Remember, you only have a few seconds to engage your reader, so avoid generic statements such as “Please accept this letter as my application to...” Also, do not restate your name (it is already at the top of the page). Rather, mention *why* you want to work for the company and what makes the company unique to you. You can also mention how you learned about the position. If someone who works for the company encouraged you to apply, you can drop a name, but this is optional.

In the **second paragraph**, explain how your expertise and skills are the perfect match for the position and organization. Briefly highlight what you consider to be your most significant career or academic accomplishments and tie those accomplishments back to the position. The most common mistake job seekers make is focusing too much on their own reasons for wanting a job. Remember, to view the cover through a “marketing lens” – you want to explain why you are the solution to what the company is looking for. Use numbers to tell the story whenever possible.

In the **last paragraph**, include a strong call-to-action for an interview. End the letter on a positive and friendly note, thanking the reader for their consideration.

Sincerely,

Marco Marshall

# MARCO MARSHALL

Huntington, WV 25705 • 304-696-2370  
career@marshall.edu

Date

Hit Enter 4 times

Hiring Manager  
ABC Companies  
456 Mainstreet  
Charleston, WV 25301

Hit Enter 2 times

Dear Hiring Manager:

Hit Enter 2 times

After learning about the growth of ABC Companies has enjoyed in the past year at the Marshall University Career Expo, I became very interested in the Digital Marketing position with your company. ABC Companies' commitment to growing the economy of rural West Virginia is something that especially resonates with me, as I have been very involved with local initiatives to bring jobs back to my hometown. Knowing that I am passionate about digital marketing and analytics, Richard Curry, who serves as Director of Innovation for ABC Companies, strongly encouraged me to apply for the Digital Marketing position.

Please be assured that after you review my résumé, you will find that I am a well-qualified digital marketing specialist eager to build and promote campaigns that drive interest amongst potential buyers. My coursework at the Brad D. Smith Schools of Business has prepared me to be competitive with the latest industry trends. During my recent internship at XYZ Company, I had the opportunity to target more than 50,000 potential clients and contributed to a conversion rate of 43%. I believe that my intensiveness would benefit your current advertising campaign efforts.

I would very much like to speak with you about this opportunity. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you have. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Hit Enter 2 times

Sincerely,

Hit Enter 4 times

Marco Marshall