

## Cover Letter Tips: Top 7 Suggestions for a Great Cover Letter

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At some point after refining your resume, networking, and finding suitable vacancies, you need to actually apply for jobs. Your cover letter introduces you and your resume to the recruiter. It thus needs to make an impact and create interest, both in reading your resume and in meeting you in person.

1. **General formatting:** Keep your entire application uniform. Use the same font, text size, margins and paper as in your resume. Keep the cover letter brief – try to fit it on a single page. Use plain English – avoid stuffy phrases and jargon. Include a subject line with job title and competition number (the recruiter may be hiring for dozens of positions, and this will help sort applications).
2. **Salutation:** Use the recruiter or hiring manager’s name. This is often given in online postings; if not, contact HR and ask for the recruiter’s name. Better yet, ask if you can speak with the person responsible for the position, and ask some preliminary questions about the role. Address your letter to “Dear Mr./Ms. Surname” (no first names unless you know the person well).
3. **Tailor:** Recruiters can tell when you’re using a standard cover letter and just changing contact information and minor details. Take the time to create an original letter – it shows!
4. **Link to the job:** Create a positive impression with a “[disruptive](#)” opening paragraph. Describe what attracts you to the organization and role. Be specific. Note items from your research, like upcoming projects, awards, or mentions in news articles. If you’ve met before, jar the recruiter’s memory with a recollection of that meeting. If you have connections in the organization, and mention impressions gained through them. Tell how you found the position (helpful as the recruiter may be tracking effectiveness of advertising media).
5. **T-format Skills Paragraph:** Use a modified “T-format” to describe your skills (see [this link](#) for a good explanation and example). Doing so helps you include key words naturally (scoring points on automated screening software). It also helps focus skills so you don’t include unnecessary information, and makes it easy for a recruiter (especially if they’re inexperienced) to assess you objectively. Use exact terminology from the posting, don’t be too wordy, and don’t simply restate what’s in your resume.

Reviewing the job posting, I see an excellent match between the position requirements and my background and skills. To summarize:

- **One year’s accounts receivable experience:** I have been in my current role with Zeta Logistics for almost a year, with responsibility for monthly receivables of \$3 million. In my previous position with Omega Construction, I oversaw monthly payables totaling \$750,000.
- **Intermediate or higher skills in Microsoft Office:** Two years ago I completed an intensive MS Office program, including advanced Word, Excel and Access. I use Excel, Word and Outlook intensively in my current role.

6. **Strong ending:** Be positive and assertive about your expectations. Show a sense of excitement over an opportunity to meet to discuss what you offer the organization. If you’re available for interview or to start at short notice, state this here. If you’re open to relocating, note this as well. Include your contact email and phone number. Don’t forget to sign your letter.
7. **Proof read:** Check names. Check addresses. If you’ve done any cut-and-pasting from previous letters, make sure you have the position, company name and other details right. Check spelling. Double check. Triple check. If emailing your letter, don’t forget to attach your resume. Send.

Once you’ve completed each application, file your cover letter and resume along with the original job posting for referral if and when you are contacted for an interview. A spreadsheet of applications can also keep you organized and help remind you of details when you are receive follow-up calls.