Your cover letter is the first document a prospective employer typically views. Use this document to promote yourself to them and entice them to read your résumé. The ultimate goal of both your cover letter and résumé is to get you an interview.

There are typically 3-4 paragraphs or sections within a cover letter. Try to keep to one page or less.

The first section is used to capture the employer or recruiter’s attention. It may include information such as:

- Mention the position you are applying for and how you found the position (job search engine, company website, reference, etc.)
- Information about the company you have found through research and/or why you are interested in the position or company (e.g. industry leader in innovation, outstanding reputation for customer service, leader in preserving the environment, well known for having the best warranty on their products, etc.)

The second and possibly third sections or paragraphs include details about you as a candidate. This is your opportunity to explain why you are the perfect match for the opening. These paragraphs may include information about:

- A specific experience from a co-op or internship that you have had
- A particular project that you developed for a class
- Related experiences, knowledge (for example, coursework)

Only elaborate on one or two items with more detail that way an employer will want to look at your resume and possibly contact you to schedule an interview.

The final section will include action you will take and the action that you wish the employer to take. For example:

- “I appreciate your review of the enclosed résumé. I will call next week to see if you need any further application materials from me for the sales opening.”
- OR, “Thank you for considering my credentials for your sales position. I would be happy to come in to talk with you about the contributions I could make at ABC Company.”

Your action statement can prepare the hiring official for a follow-up phone call to confirm receipt of your application, to ask and answer questions, and/or to explore a mutual interest in meeting to dialogue about your qualifications and how they can meet a need within company.

To view sample cover letters, go to our resource page.