

Reading

[What is a Cover Letter?](#)

[Cover Letters From Hell](#)

[Kairos and the Cover Letter](#)

In terms of format, cover letters tend to be much more predictable than resumes. In most cases, standard business letter format is the best way to go (here are [some quick formatting tips](#) if you don't know what that means). The opening paragraph introduces you, the next paragraph or two goes into detail about your experience and qualifications, and the final paragraph reiterates your strengths and interests and thanks the reader for their time.

The cover letter is one of the best ways to differentiate yourself from other, similarly qualified candidates. Strong, clear writing is an asset in any field, and will be just as impressive as any other technical skills you may have. The best advice I can give you for the cover letter is to focus on a single experience that you've had, either at a previous job or in your college coursework, that you think has prepared you for this new job. Generally, you would talk about this experience in the second (or body) paragraph, although the exact position may differ for each student.

Beyond that, make sure to articulate why you would like to work for *this* particular company. What do they do, what sorts of projects do they work on, what sorts of resources do they have, that make you excited about working for this specific company?

Another quick hint: always try to address the letter to someone specific, by their full name (Dear Firstname Lastname). People who receive dozens or hundreds of applications tend to appreciate it if your materials seem tailored to their specific organization. A little web research should help you figure out who is responsible for hiring at the company you wish to work for. If not, "Dear Human Resources Director," or "Dear Hiring Committee" may do. "To Whom It May Concern" is an absolute last resort. "Dear Sir or Madam," is not appropriate at all.

By the way, "Dear," in these situations tends to be the most polite salutation. It does not, as some may fear, indicate that you are in love with the person you are writing to.

"Sincerely," is good general-purpose valediction. There are many others ("Best," "Cheers," "Regards") but "Sincerely" will always get the job done.