

## **How to write a strong cover letter**

By The N.M. Department of Workforce Solutions

For the Journal

Your cover letter is the first impression you make before an employer sees your resume. You can have a strong, impressive resume, but if your cover letter is generic and lackluster you may be overlooked as a potential candidate.

The most important rule for cover letters is that you need to tailor it for every job you apply for and include a copy of your resume. The cover letter is a chance for the employer to quickly scan through your information for the specific key words they are looking for. They can quickly identify cover letters that have been mass produced for multiple job opportunities.

In order for your information to be consistent, update your resume before you begin writing cover letters. You do not want to refer to work experience in your letter and then it not be listed somewhere on your resume. Do not send resumes to employers without a cover letter.

Read the job description or posting carefully and highlight the main skills and experience the employer is looking for. It is important to understand the qualifications and requirements of the job position and how you can best meet their needs based on your experience and education.

There are some basic cover letter guidelines to keep in mind. First, your letter should be limited to one page. One inch to 1 ½ inch margins generally work well. For fonts, use a style that is professional and is between 10-12 point size. Twelve-point, Times New Roman is always a safe bet for professional correspondence. Your cover letter and resume should be in the same style for consistency and have the same headers.

Include your name, address, contact information, and the date at the top of your letter. The name of the employer and their address should also be listed as well. Include the name of the interviewer or your contact at the company whenever possible. Only if you do not have specific name, begin your letter with a salutation such as “Dear Sir or Madam.” Your subject line should be the specific title of the job opening or position that was advertised.

In the body of the letter, include the following information in paragraph form: the position you wish to be considered for, how you learned about the opening, why you are interested in working for the company, and what experience, education, and skills you would bring to the job.

You should know general information about the company and the type of work done there. Incorporate some of this information into the body of your cover letter. Referencing specific information about the employer will demonstrate that you have taken the initiative to learn more about the company on your own time.

You should type your name on the signature line and then sign all hard copies. Include an “Enclosure” line that lists if your resume, references, and transcripts are attached. Print on professional paper, but avoid glossy paper or bright colors. Finally, invest the time to have someone review your letter for grammar, punctuation and typos.

Your cover letter is your introduction to a prospective employer and writing a strong letter may gain the attention of the potential interviewer or applicant screener. An employer will be more inclined to take a closer look at your resume which brings you a step closer to getting an interview.

This is a regular column written by the N.M. Department of Workforce Solutions. For more information, go to [www.dws.state.nm.us](http://www.dws.state.nm.us).

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