

# CareerAdvisor

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## Create your cover letter

A compelling cover letter can be the gateway to getting the job interview. Review the checklist below to assess whether your cover letter is up to snuff.

### Less is more

Is my cover letter less than half a page?

Yes

No

If your answer is yes, great. Move on.

If your answer is no, look at the guidance below and work on editing it down.

Don't try to cheat by adjusting font size and margins — this will take real editing of the words on the page!

### Address for success

Is my cover letter addressed to a real human being?

Yes

No

If your answer is yes, great. If applicable, state your connection to this person in your opening paragraph.

If your answer is no, then do your research to find an appropriate point of contact. If you absolutely can't find a name, move into the body of the letter rather than including "To Whom it May Concern" as your salutation. That phrase will make you look like an amateur.

### Open with a bang

Does my opening paragraph...

Include what appeals to me about the opportunity?

Yes

No

Grab their interest?

Yes

No

Show I've done my homework?

Yes

No

State why I think this is a good fit?

Yes

No

If you can't answer with a strong and bold "yes" to each of these, take a moment to revisit what you've written using the tips on the next page.

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The first sentence should say who you are, the job you're pursuing, and why you're excited about it/how you heard about it. Go beyond the snoozer of "I'm John Doe and I'm applying for the job of accounting associate."

The next sentence should highlight the most relevant skills and experience from your resume which make you great candidate for this position. Don't overdo it and rehash what's on your resume. If they like your cover letter, they'll read your resume with interest.

Convey a sense of excitement about the position and company. The reader will be able to sense if you've done your homework. Share why you're interested in the job, and demonstrate your understanding of what the company does and why you're a good fit.

Use your own voice. Don't use words and phrases that you'd never use during a conversation. This one pager should be professional and sound like you.

## Ask for what you want

<b>Does my cover letter end with a call to action and ask for an interview?</b>	Yes	No
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If yes, great. Move on.

If no, fix it. The whole point of the cover letter is to get you in the door for an interview. If you don't ask for it, you won't get it. Consider one of two techniques:

- State when you will contact the person in the letter to set up an interview.
- Make yourself available for them to contact by including your email and phone number. Keep in mind you can still reach out to them after a little time has elapsed.

## Check and double check

Is my resume...

On good quality paper?	Yes	No
In a readable font?	Yes	No
In standard business format?	Yes	No
Free of typos and grammatical errors?	Yes	No
Signed with a good quality pen?	Yes	No

If "no" to any of the above, fix it!

Even if the content of the cover letter is perfect, you can sink your ship with poor quality paper, a hard-to-read font, sloppy formatting, or a signature in a blobby or half-dead pen.

It's okay to have the cover letter reflect the true you, but think twice before going with neon green paper and an old English script font. Let your personality come out in your words versus being too gimmicky with the visual aspects of your cover letter. You can never go wrong with neutral colored paper and standard fonts.

No matter what, proofread your cover letter more than once and consider having someone else look at it with fresh eyes. There is no excuse for a typo.

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## Sample: Jane Smith



Jane Smith

123 Main Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19101  
Jane.Smith@internetprovider.com  
111.222.3333

June 11, 2014

Ms. Ann Brown  
Recruiting Department  
ABC Company  
101 Market Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19101

Dear Ms. Brown:

Your recent posting for the position of client service associate at ABC Company sounded like a good match with my interests and strengths. In my Business Management class at University of Anywhere, we read a case study on your social media marketing approach, and I was most impressed with the innovative culture at your organization.

I am completing my senior year at the University of Anywhere and will receive my bachelor's degree with a double major in Marketing and Technology in December, 2014. As you can see from the enclosed resume, I've pursued my interests in both fields through part time employment and campus volunteer activities. I've worked on projects at 123 Company where my skills in data management, business analytics, and social media marketing have effectively contributed to achieving goals by growing the customer base. On campus, I led my sorority's online alumni fundraising campaign and used social media to increase our donation sources. The quantitative skills I've developed will give me an extra edge as a first-year client service associate, and I'm eager to bring my passion for technology and social media marketing to ABC.

Thank you for your consideration. I will follow up with a phone call early next week to arrange a meeting with an ABC representative.

Sincerely,  
*Jane Smith*

Jane Smith

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## **Notes**