

# Writing a Cover Letter

Proving You are the Perfect Candidate

# What is a Cover Letter?

- Your cover letter is your formal introduction. It includes more detailed information about yourself & showcases your personality.
- It is a '**MUST**' with your resume.
- It is meant to complement your resume, not repeat it. Think of a cover letter like the sibling to your resume - related, but they have different features.
- It expresses your interest in a position and generates interest in you as a candidate.
- It is the first read document and allows you to focus the employer's attention on skills and experiences that directly relate to the position.
- Some employers expect a cover letter, others do not. Your best bet is to be proactive and send one; it may make you stand out from a crowd.

# Cover Letter Purpose

The cover letter accompanies your resume and its purpose is to generate interest and get you an interview! It should be:

- Brief and Interesting
- Limited to one page, 3-4 paragraphs
- Should demonstrate a match between the employers' needs and your qualifications
- Should be job specific, not generic
- Should give an employer reasons to hire you
- Should showcase your communication skills and writing ability

Before writing your cover letter, take some time to brainstorm and develop a list of reasons why you are the ideal candidate for the job.

# Writing Letters Using AIDA

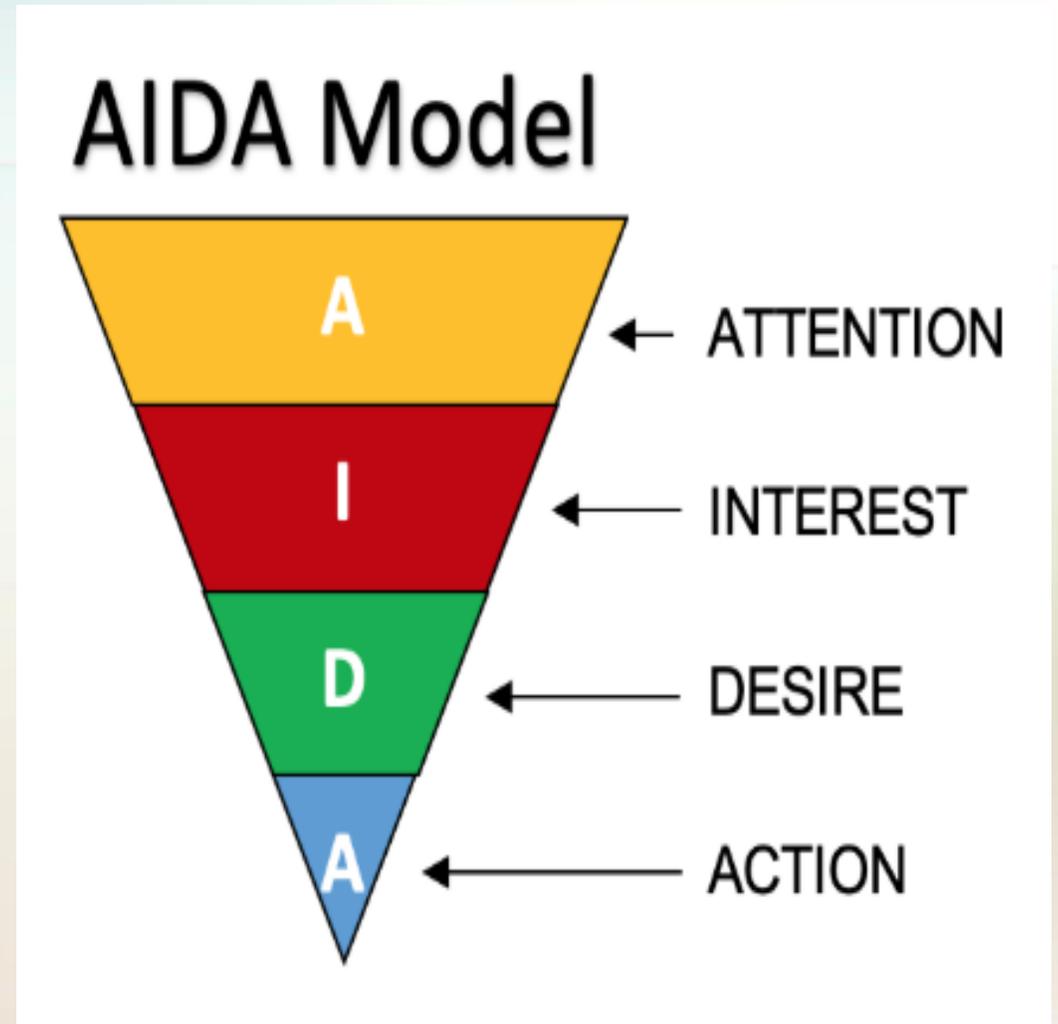
Most people have difficulty drafting cover letters.

Using the AIDA model will help you structure your cover letters.

AIDA stands for Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action.

Each letter will serve as a paragraph in the cover letter.

The model helps you to put yourself in the mind of an employer.



# AIDA

**Attention-** Your goal in your opening paragraph is to grab the reader's attention. You can share an impressive example of something you have accomplished that relates to the desired position, tell a story that showcases your passion for the position you want.

**Interest-** Now that you have the reader's Attention, you need to maintain their Interest. This will be your 2nd paragraph. Turn the focus on the employer, but still sell yourself. You need to appeal to their needs.

**Desire-** You need to create a Desire for your employment. This will be your 3rd paragraph. Determine the major points the employer is addressing in the job description, then follow up with specific examples of how you have accomplished tasks related to those major points.

**Action-** In your closing paragraph, you want to compel them to take Action to reach out to you! Put the ball in their court, provide options for contact.

# Types of Cover Letters

Use the cover letter as a way to express to your potential employer what it is about the position that appeals to you and why you want to work for them. It is a great way to highlight why you are the “Perfect Candidate”.

There are 3 types of Cover Letter Formats:

- The Paragraph Cover Letter- written in traditional paragraph form.
- The Specific Needs Cover Letter- rather than writing it out in paragraph form, you go straight to what the employer is looking for and address each item with your own matching qualifications using a dual column format.
- The ‘Shopping List’ Cover Letter- rather than doing a two column comparison or a story style paragraph, you list out exactly what the employer is looking for and respond with your own matching qualifications.

# The Paragraph Cover Letter

This is the most common form and allows you to engage the reader with a story-telling style using 3-4 short paragraphs.

First paragraph is your introductory paragraph. Use it to tell the employer who you are and why you are writing to them. List the specific position you are applying for and how you heard about it.

Second and third paragraphs are all about the skills, abilities, and knowledge you have that is specific to the job you're applying for. Make sure you highlight how perfectly your attributes match who they are looking for.

The final paragraph is your conclusion. Wrap up the letter by thanking them for taking the time to read your letter and considering them for the position. Include how you can be contacted as well as your plans to follow-up with them.

# The Specific Needs Cover Letter

This letter is a little bit different from the paragraph letter. You still start out with your introductory first paragraph, and wrap up with your final concluding paragraph. The real difference is how you format the middle of your letter. Instead of relating in paragraph form how you meet the qualifications, you address each one in turn.

## **You're looking for:**

An event planner with 4+ years of experience

Someone who can handle a variety of party sizes

Someone skilled in maintaining a set budget

Someone who works well under pressure

## **I bring to the table:**

Six years of practical hands on experience as a Senior Event Planning Director

Over one hundred successfully organized events ranging in size from intimate family reunions for ten people all the way up to a political fundraising gala with over 1000 attendees.

The ability to successfully negotiate with a wide variety of vendors, promoters, and caterers in order to guarantee client satisfaction while staying within budget.

An ability to anticipate as well as problem solve while maintaining composure and professionalism.

# The 'Shopping List' Cover Letter

Just like the previous two letters, you start out with your opening paragraph and close with the same concluding paragraph, but like the specific needs letter, it's the central paragraph that's a little different. Rather than doing a two column comparison or a story style paragraph, you list out exactly what the employer is looking for and respond with your own matching qualifications.

**Experience** - With over six years of practical hands on experience as a Senior Events Planning Director I have been responsible for successfully organizing and coordinating hundreds of events.

**Attention to Detail** - During my time, I've organized and executed events ranging in size from small intimate gatherings all the way up to political fundraising galas for over 1000 guests. No matter the size or budget, I approach each event with the same level of dedication.

**Ability to Remain within Budget** - I am comfortable working with both budgets and guests lists to ensure client satisfaction. I am also skilled at negotiating with vendors, venues, entertainment, security, transportation and promoters and am proud of my ability to secure economical solutions for my clients without sacrificing quality.

**Ability to Work Well under Pressure** - I am confident in my crisis management skills as well as my ability to anticipate potential problems before they arise. I am creative in my approach to problem solving and cool under pressure.

# Formatting the Letter

Your cover letter should follow the same rules as when writing any professional business letter:

- Single space your letter with double space between paragraphs.
- Use a font that matches your resume, stick to the classics (Ariel, Verdana, Helvetica, Calibri, & Times New Roman).
- Set margins to 1 inch on all sides, to allow for printing.
- Always use 8 ½ x 11 paper size. If printing out the cover letter (or resume), use a higher quality paper in a light or neutral color. This helps convey professionalism.
- NEVER go over one page! The letter should fit neatly on one page without crowding.

# Headings and Greetings

## Applicant Information

Your Name  
Your Address  
Your City, State Zip Code  
Your Phone Number  
Your Email

## Single Space

Date

## Employer Information

Name  
Job Title  
Company  
Street  
City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,

# Paragraph Cover Letter Example

**Remember:**  
Your Resume is  
all about You!  
Your cover  
letter is all  
about Them!

**Karl Jones**

123 Main Street, Anytown, CA 12345 - 555-555-5555 - karl.jones@email.com

September 1, 2018

Aaron Lee  
Director  
Acme Communications  
123 Business Rd.  
Business City, NY 54321

Dear Mr. Lee,

I am writing to apply for the position of Media Relations Assistant Manager, which I saw advertised on Medialobs.com. Acme Communications is a fast-moving global institution and an outstanding communications pioneer, now poised to guide the direction of print journalism. I believe that my extensive experience in media makes me an ideal candidate for this position at your company.

As a recent graduate of the State University, I have a significant background in media. As a media major, I held multiple internships, including Media Relations Coordinator Intern at XYZ Company. I also served as president of the Media and Marketing Club at school. We successfully developed and pitched an advertisement campaign for a local nonprofit, which helped increase donations to the nonprofit by 22 percent.

You state in your job listing that you are looking for someone with strong writing skills and an attention to detail. Throughout all four years of college, I worked part-time as a copy editor for an online journal. This job required great attention to detail in writing and editing. I would love to bring my editing skills to a position with your company.

These strengths, combined with deep and varied academic, internship, and employment experience, have prepared me to make a strong and immediate impact at Acme Communications.

I am excited about the opportunity to join the Acme Communications team as it moves to the center of the print media conversation. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Karl Jones (signature hard copy letter)

Karl Jones

# Cover Letter Mistakes to Avoid

- *Rewriting your resume*- use your cover letter to let the employer get an insight into who you are and what you can bring to the business.
- *Focusing on just you*- the idea here is to show how you're going to add value to the business and what you can provide in terms of skill, knowledge, and service.
- *Not researching the company*- take the time to research the company you're applying for, taking note of how they communicate with people, what their mission and values are, and what they stand for.
- *Retelling your job history*- instead, highlight your achievements in each role and how they can best serve the company.
- *Not perfecting your content*- proofread for grammar, punctuation, and spelling mistakes.
- *Writing a book*- keep things short and sweet, under a page, broken into nice paragraphs.

# Resources

Free printable Cover Letter templates

<https://templates.office.com/en-us/simple-cover-letter-tm00002108>

Download Free General Cover Letter Template- Word

<https://www.samplewords.com/cover-letter-template-general/>

Microsoft Word also offers free Templates for Resumes & Cover Letters