

# Framing Your Story:



## 10 Questions to Guide Your Cover Letter

A great cover letter communicates that you are knowledgeable about the organization and the field, and gives evidence that you have the skills, knowledge and growth potential to do the role well. Rather than simply restating information provided in your resume, your letter should expand upon or tie together the experiences detailed in your resume, clarify why you (the applicant) and the employer are a mutual fit, and demonstrate your confidence and enthusiasm for the job.

An effective cover letter is written with the audience in mind, using relevant terminology and examples, and appropriate formality of tone. The writing must be clear, concise, and free of grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors.

Remember that your cover letter and resume are meant to get you to the next step of the hiring process: the interview. Think of these documents as tools to generate interest and begin a conversation with the prospective employer.

**When applying to a job, it usually isn't sufficient to say that you *can* do the role –  
Strive to show what will help you be a *great fit* for the role.**

Your answers to the following questions will give you background context for your cover letters:

1. For what job are you applying?
2. What are 2-3 things that interest or excite you about this job opportunity, this organization, and this field/industry?
3. Summarize the organization, its work, and its clients/customers/products. What is its purpose or mission?
4. What aspects distinguish this organization from its peers?
5. What are the specific skills and knowledge the employer seeks for this role?
6. How have your prior experiences influenced your interest in doing this kind of work?
7. In what ways have your accomplishments during your prior experiences (extracurricular, volunteer, work, other) prepared you for this role?
8. What skills or knowledge gained from your academic studies will carry over into this role?
9. In what ways might you be uniquely qualified for this job?
10. How will the company/organization benefit from hiring you?

A cover letter should be kept to 1 page, typically 4-5 paragraphs long (single spaced). As such, your letter may not directly address every one of the questions above in the letter, though it will likely touch upon most of these items and suggest that you have considered the remaining elements.