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## Cover Letter Best Practice Format

You will get differing opinions about the importance of including a cover letter with your resume, but my point of view is that you should always include one, unless you're specifically directed not to. The reason for this is simple: if a hiring decision maker expects you to submit one, great, you'll have it covered. If a hiring decision maker *does not* expect you to submit one, they'll just ignore the letter and it won't hurt you. However, if you *don't* submit a cover letter to a hiring decision maker and they *do* expect to see one, then your application/resume will likely be put in the 'no' pile.

The purpose of this article is to help you compose your cover letter. There are different approaches to writing cover letter but if you have a "best practice" format in your job search tool box, you'll be prepared to submit an application with a cover letter and resume in a timely manner. Remember, Career 3D's mission is to reduce your overwhelm with the job search process, and one of the best ways to do that is to be prepared!

Here are some tips to keep in mind when composing your cover letters:

- This "best practice" format includes a straightforward 3 paragraph approach, but provides flexibility.
- Always customize your cover letter for the specific position you're applying for.
- Use the Career 3D [Action Word List](#) to help you vary your sentences.
- Do not include any information on your cover letter that is not on your resume. Your cover letter is only meant to highlight items already found on your resume.
- Note: The blue boxes are meant to give you additional information about that section – do not include in your cover letter.

To your success!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda".

Brenda Cody, M.S.

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720.213.8743

**First Name Last Name**  
123 Main St. City, ST 12345  
123.456.7890  
yourprofessionalemail@provider.com

*The top of your letter should be the same as your resume so it appears as a cohesive unit. Use your full mailing address. Best to use your cell phone #, so potential employers only hear your voice. Make sure you have a business-like email address.*

Submittal Date

Company Name  
Company Street Address  
Company City/ST/Zip Code  
Attn: Name of person

*Always try to get the name of the person receiving your submittal. Do not address to "To Whom it May Concern" or "Sir/Madam". If you don't have a name, leave off the 'Attn' and 'Dear' lines and simply start the letter.*

RE: Name Job Title/Position and/or Job Requisition Number, if known

*The best way to grab the reader's attention is to have your letter well laid out so it is easy to read. Short words and paragraphs work best. Make sure to double-check your spelling!*

Dear Mr. or Ms. [Last Name of Person],

In the opening paragraph you need to answer for the reader: Why are you writing to them and why should they care. Start with a sentence that will entice the reader to keep reading: drop the name of the person who referred you, quote a relevant article or industry statistic. Do mention the position you're applying for, where you heard of the opening and why you're interested in the organization and/or the position. You can also include 1 or 2 appropriate pieces of information about you.

The second paragraph should highlight your experience and accomplishments as it relates to the key requirements of the position you're applying for. You want to create a link between what the job requires and your qualifications for doing the job. You can lay it out for the reader in bullet format or in sentence form.

- You require \_\_\_\_\_ and I have \_\_\_\_\_.
- You require \_\_\_\_\_ and I have done \_\_\_\_\_.
- You require \_\_\_\_\_ and I have done \_\_\_\_\_.

*The only goal of your cover letter is to get the reader interested in your resume. Don't repeat your resume, simply highlight the items you think are most important.*

In the next paragraph, make it clear you want to meet with them (i.e. ask for the interview) to learn more about the position and to discuss how you can add value to their organization. State where, when and how they can contact you. If you have a name and contact information, you can also let them know you will follow-up with them at a certain point if you have not heard from them. Be polite and close by reminding them of the value you could provide to their organization.

Sincerely,

Your Signature  
Your Typed Name

Enclosure: Resume