

# Writing a Cover Letter for a Job Application: The Basics

You may need to write a cover letter as part of a job application. It is a piece of professional correspondence and as such it should be clear and direct. For many job applications, the cover letter should be no more than a page, but in some careers two pages are expected. Follow the conventions of your field/the kind of job you are applying for. Ask your professor or industry professionals if you don't know. The cover letter should include:

- your address (perhaps with other contact info in a letterhead; Microsoft Word offers letterhead templates you can use)
- the date
- the recipient's address (make sure it is accurate)
- a salutation (for example: Dear or To Whom It May Concern)
- an introductory paragraph stating your purpose for writing. This first paragraph states why you are writing, how you heard about the position, and something brief about why you are qualified. Tips:
  - o A brief list of reasons why you are qualified is kind of like a thesis statement and should structure the organization of the paragraphs that follow.
  - o Use some of the wording from the job ad.
- well organized body paragraphs highlighting your qualifications. These correlate to the qualifications and experiences listed more briefly in the resume. Tips:
  - o Think of these paragraphs as the evidence of the claim you make in the first paragraph.
  - o Offer some more detail, like examples, for each qualification you highlight.
- a closing paragraph thanking the recipient for their attention and wrapping up
- sign off (Sincerely,)
- your signature and contact info like phone number and email address if these aren't in a letterhead
- a list of enclosed documents as applicable

See the sample letter on the next page and the [Resume and Cover Letter Guide](https://www.bowiestate.edu/files/resources/resume-and-cover-letter-guide.pdf) from the BSU Career Development Center at <https://www.bowiestate.edu/files/resources/resume-and-cover-letter-guide.pdf>.

1234 State Street  
Bowie, MD 20715

{ Your address can be placed here, centered, or located in a custom letterhead.

{ Two line spaces between your address and date.

May 20, 2020

{ Two line spaces between date and recipient's address.

Dr. Michael Becker  
Writing Center Coordinator  
Bowie State University  
14000 Jericho Park Rd  
Bowie, MD 20715

{ Recipient's address goes here. Try to find out the name of the person you should address the letter to.

{ Two line spaces between address and salutation.

Dear Dr. Becker,

{ Salutation here.

Paragraph 1 gets to the point of why you are writing. For example: I write to apply for the position of Writing Center Consultant advertised on the BSU Department of Psychology listserv. My qualifications include two years of tutoring experience, fluency in Spanish, the ability to learn quickly, and excellent written, oral, and interpersonal communication skills.

Body paragraphs each say something about your qualifications. Each one should focus on a qualification or set of qualifications. Think of these paragraphs as a place to highlight what you might not get to say in as much detail in a resume. Give brief descriptions of what you have done and why it qualifies you for the job you're applying for. For example: As a Writing Tutor with the Prince George's Community College Writing Center and a Psychology Tutor with the BSU PRISEM Center, I tutored undergraduate students in introductory courses and earned consistently good reviews from tutees, especially for help with study skills and organization.

No matter how many paragraphs you have, the last paragraph sums up your application and thanks the reader for their attention. For example: My resume is attached and I can be reached at the below contact information. I hope to hear from you soon. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

{ Sign off here.

*Maya Johnson*

{ Your signature here.

Maya Johnson  
mjohnson1234@students.bowiestate.edu  
(301) 234 5678

{ Your typed name plus additional contact information to reach you here.

Enclosed: resume

{ List any enclosed documents, like your resume, here.

The Writing Center- Smith Vidal Literacy and Language Center- MLK 204- 301-860-3720

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