



Preparing your cover letter

A cover letter is your introduction to an employer. It should be error-free and concise (about 3-4 paragraphs and no more than one page). If possible, address it to the actual hiring authority. When applying for jobs at Cornell through the on-line system, you will find the contact information if you click on the title of the position for which you wish to apply.

Indicate the position (and job posting number if applicable) for which you are applying and state why you think you are a good candidate for that position. You can highlight points on your résumé, but do not just repeat the résumé. Use this opportunity to be specific about how your skills and experience meet the employer's needs. Emphasize why you are right for the job, not why the job is right for you.

If you are applying outside Cornell, research the company on the internet or through the local Chamber of Commerce to find out as much as you can about it. You can better address how you may fit the needs of the company if you know something about it. Also, any information you get will be helpful should you have an interview opportunity.

Make a list of the required skills and qualifications (Be sure to carefully read the position description). Use this list as you write your letter to demonstrate your matching qualifications by describing relevant transferable skills and experiences from jobs, courses, volunteer experiences and campus activities.

Additional tips

Personalize letters: If necessary, call the organization to learn the name of the appropriate individual and verify the correct spelling.

Be positive: Avoid apologizing for strengths you lack. Rather, accentuate the strengths and qualities you have.

Tell the employer how you can be reached: Provide a phone number or e-mail address that you check several times each day. If your email address includes any words other than your name, be sure that it is in good taste.

Relocating: If you are applying for an Ithaca area job but have an out of town address, mention that you already plan to relocate to the Ithaca area and indicate when.

Proofread: Remember that your computer's spell check cannot identify grammatical mistakes. Have someone (other than you) proofread your letter. ~~If you are word processing multiple letters, be sure to change customized statements to avoid the embarrassment of using names from a previous version.~~