**Fairfax Virginia Career Works Center Cover Letter Writing Tips**

The purpose of a cover letter is to capture the attention of the employee and make them want to read your resume. This is where you sell your skills and experience and express your interest in the position. The cover letter is a great change to highlight achievement that make you an ideal candidate for the job. **Do not simply cut and paste information from your resume.**

Always send a cover letter with your resume unless the job listing specifically says not to do so. Do not use the same one for each job. You will need to write a targeted letter for each position.

**Content**

**A cover letter should:**

* Be tailored to the specific position, company, organization, or recruiter to which you are applying.
* Show whatyou offer to the employer and how you will add value to their company.
* Highlight your strengths, transferrable skills, and qualifications.
* Use a clear and concise professional tone from start to finish.
* NOT use contraction words.
  + **Example 1: They are** instead of **They’re**
  + **Example 2: I am** instead of **I’m.**

**A cover letter should include the following sections:**

* Header and greeting
* Include the date, your name, and your contact information.
* Address the letter to a specific person whenever possible. If you cannot find an individual's name, use the job title of the recipient (Example: Office Manager), "Human Resources," or "Search Committee." Do not address your letter to a business, department, or "To Whom it May Concern."
* Opening and introduction
  + Explain who you are and your reason for writing, including how you found out about the position. Use the first paragraph to express your energy, enthusiasm, skills, education, and work experience that would contribute to the success of the company.
* Body
  + Sell yourself! Reveal why you are the perfect and unique match for the position. Note why you have applied to their specific company and briefly summarize your talents, experience, and achievements.
* Closing
  + Thank the person for taking the time to read your letter. Use an appropriate closing, such as “Sincerely.” Tell the employer how you plan to follow-up.

**Format**

**A cover letter should:**

* Use size 11 to 12-point font (with exception to your name) and no more than two styles. The best fonts include Calibri, Cambria, Garamond, Arial, Times, and Time New Roman.
* Follow block styling, aligning paragraphs to the left side. Do not indent paragraphs.
* Use single spacing within paragraphs and double spacing between paragraphs.
* Use a three-paragraph format (introduction, body, and closing).
* Include your signature (either manual or electronic). If you sign a hard copy scan it and attach as a PDF file.