

Cover Letter Guide

PURPOSE: Your cover letter is as important as your resume; it is a one page, 3-4 paragraph “cover page” for your application, that is often read first and plays a vital role in your search for an interview. It also serves as an example of your writing; thus it should be clear, brief, written in a business letter style, and without grammatical errors. The content must be interesting and grasp the employer’s attention enough to want to read your resume. You may be surprised at how time-consuming it is to draft a good cover letter.

THREE MAIN TYPES:

- **Personal**—Most effective. These letters are sent to people you have met or with whom you have a mutual acquaintance. These letters should start with the sentence: “_____ recommended that I contact you.”
- **Targeted**—Next best thing! These letters are based on your research of the employer, and are individually tailored. It should incorporate the information from your research to demonstrate your knowledge of the firm and how you have the skills needed for the position.
- **Mass Mailers**—Least desirable. These are generic letters, except for the name and address of the employer, with a very low rate of reaching the goal of an interview.

OPENING PARAGRAPH

State 1) the position you are applying to, 2) how you learned about it (i.e. Lincoln Law School of Sacramento Job Database or through a referral etc.), and 3) your interest for the job.

BODY PARAGRAPHS

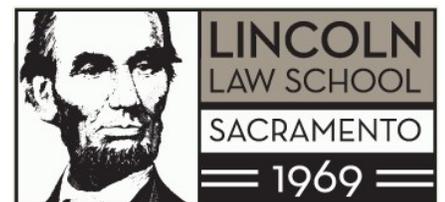
Expand on why you are qualified for the position. Convey your relevant experience (academic and practical) and how/when you gained that experience (this is not a list of previous experiences/positions, thus you should not repeat what’s on your resume). Explain how these skills will allow you to effectively carry out the responsibilities listed in the job description. Think of what makes you a good candidate and convince the employer that they will benefit from hiring you. Demonstrate your knowledge of the firm and what they do/are known for.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH

Sum up your strengths. Include an action item that moves the process forward. Thank the reader for their time and consideration, and express your enthusiasm for an interview to discuss the opportunity in the near future.

*** Be careful with wording: you don’t want to be overconfident by conveying that you expect an interview, but instead you want to be assertive by letting the employer know you want to meet with them to discuss why you are a good fit for the position.**

*Example cover letter on reverse side



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Date ← **Must be date of submission**

Full Name of Targeted Individual [if an attorney, include “ , Esq.”]

Complete Title (if applicable)

(If no direct contact, write “Dear Hiring Manager”)

Entire Name of Firm or Organization

Address

Re: (subject) - This line will only be necessary if you are going to state the vacancy number or other required reference in the text of the letter. ← **Only if mailing**

Dear Mr. / Ms. / Judge/Hiring Manager:

Opening Paragraph. Be concise in explaining: (1) Who you are (e.g., “I am a student at Lincoln Law School of Sacramento...”); (2) your objective (e.g., “and am writing to apply for a summer associate position with [firm name].”); (3) briefly, your qualifications for the position (“I have a demonstrated interest in corporate law...”); and, if applicable, (4) the name of a contact (“Mr. Alexander suggested that I contact you directly...”).

Heart of the Letter. This section should be no longer than two paragraphs and should convey relevant: (1) experience (academic and practical); (2) credentials (overall grades and/or upward trend); (3) accomplishments (academic [undergraduate and/or law school], or job-related); (4) honors and awards (academic, military, civic, etc.); (5) critical reasoning, research and writing skills (acquired before and during law school). **If you are responding to a job posting, you should include key words or skills described in the posting for a more targeted cover letter.** (“During my tenure as ___, I have become a professional and tactful communicator with experience interacting with people from diverse backgrounds.”). Because most employers consider cover letters to be indicative of the author’s research and writing abilities, as well as telling of his/her level of commitment to the subject organization, they expect perfection and a personalized approach.

Closing Paragraph. (1) Briefly reiterate your qualifications (“With my extensive knowledge in corporate law, I am confident I can quickly get up to speed in this position.”); (2) indicate the materials you have included for their review; and thank the reader (“Thank you for your time and consideration in reviewing my application materials. I look forward to speaking with you in person about how my skills can be an asset to [firm name].”).

“Sincerely,” “Best Regards,” or “Kind Regards,”

Signature in black or blue ink

Typed Name

Cover Letter Checklist

- ✓ Contains no spelling or grammatical errors
- ✓ Does not exceed one page
- ✓ Clearly states what I’m applying for and how I heard about it
- ✓ Focuses on my relevant skills to the position
- ✓ Demonstrates I’ve researched the employer and/or the position I’m applying to
- ✓ Is addressed to the hiring manager (or selection committee)
- ✓ Is a good reflection of my writing abilities
- ✓ Does not restate the experience on your resume-- focus instead on how your skills match the job description