

THE PERFECT LEGAL COVER LETTER

Sometimes it is difficult to know what belongs in a cover letter. To take some of the confusion out of it, compare a cover letter to a movie or a book. The best movies and books are compelling, make us think without being over our heads, and are only as long as they need to be. The same is true of a cover letter. Effective cover letters come in all shapes and sizes. As with a resume, the length and content of your letter should be dictated by how much you actually need to tell the person you are writing to. Some resumes speak for themselves and do not require a lengthy cover letter. If you feel, however, that your resume does not fully showcase your potential, despite having fleshed out your experience and strengths as much as possible, then you might require a longer letter to get your point across. While your resume should contain everything that's vital to your candidacy, there are some things that just cannot be fully expressed by a resume alone. An effective cover letter will step in where your resume leaves off and further highlight your strengths and diminish your weaknesses.

1. The Five Qualities of a Fantastic Cover Letter:
2. It briefly addresses "who you are" and "what you want."
3. It highlights your most relevant experience and skills.
4. It tells employers what you can do for them.
5. It delves into any attributes that cannot be explained in full on your resume.
6. It addresses any "red flags" that will be raised by your resume.

Your cover letter should never exceed one page. Within that limit, the length of your cover letter should be dictated by how much you absolutely need to say. If you need four paragraphs to convey pertinent information, so be it. If you need only two sentences, so be it.

As a general rule, if your resume is fairly long, your cover letter should be fairly short, and vice versa. You do not want to bombard someone with a lengthy resume and then have him/her read a long letter on top of it. If your resume is long, let your experience do the talking. On the other hand, if your resume does not have much to say, then your cover letter probably needs to explain why.

Follow these rules, and you'll be able to write a cover letter for any situation.

- Keep it brief - the longer your explanation, the more defensive you'll sound.
- Avoid negative words - you do not need to tell the employer what you do not offer to convey what you do offer.
- Be optimistic - give the employer the impression that you are eager and ready to move on to bigger and better things.
- Back up your claims - do not just say you exhibit a quality or characteristic; give evidence that supports that you do.