

### **Three Steps for Writing the Perfect Cover Letter**

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century cover letter should focus first and foremost on the company it's directed to. Gone are the days where you could spend a few paragraphs detailing your own accomplishments. Today, you need demonstrate a genuine interest in the company and prove you know how to help it. That's easier said than done, especially when you're trying to distinguish yourself among dozens of other candidates while keeping your letter short enough to read in 10 seconds. Follow these three steps (in three paragraphs) and you will be on your way to writing the perfect cover letter.

**Step 1: Hook your reader's interest in the first paragraph.** A dreadfully boring entrance that begins with, "It is with great interest that I write to apply for the position of..." is a great first line for losing the reader's interest. Instead, open with a professional but bold statement that catches the reader's eye. Here's a fun opening with a pitch, "Looking for a dynamic social media guru? Look no further."

You also have to state why you are so interested in this particular position or organization. You must give specific reasons as to why this organization is so great. Look on their website, google them, follow them on LinkedIn, and find out as much information as you can about them. Then tell the reader what impressed you the most.

**Step 2: Pick two or three skills from the job description, prove you have them, and tell the reader how you're going to help them.** Identify the top few qualities the company wants in an applicant. Then use your cover letter to demonstrate you have those skills, giving examples as to how you've used them in the past and how you'll use them to make a difference. While doing this, use numbers and statistics to back up your claim. You want to present yourself as a results-driven go-getter.

Remember, you should never rehash anything word-for-word from your resume. You can reference specific examples from your resume; but you should take them one step further to state why those examples are important and beneficial. This paragraph should be the meat of the letter and the most compelling.

**Step 3: Write a strong closing that will make the reader want to call you back.** The first sentence of your last paragraph is your chance to drill in any final key points that will sell yourself to the reader. Don't waste this space beginning with a sentence like, "Based on these qualifications and my skills, I would be a great addition to your company." You have to be specific! What skills and what qualities do you have that this organization cannot live without? Once you do that, you then state your next steps for follow up. Be forward and be direct. "I look forward to scheduling an interview with you so we can discuss how I can help you thrive in your mission to provide quality healthcare to all citizens of America." State you next step of wanting an interview and put the focus on how you can help the organization. When they read this, they will be sure to give you a call back!