**Writing a General Cover Letter**

**Directions:** You are going to be writing a cover letter. Follow these steps below as you prepare your cover letter that should accompany your resume. For the sake of this assignment, you can “pretend” you are applying for a job, maybe you actually are applying for a job or college and need this, or you can write a more general cover letter such as “I am writing this cover letter to accompany my resume for an assignment in my English class.” Please also look at the samples provided.

**Step 1. Address Your Cover Letter Properly**

* You only get one chance to make a great first impression with the hiring manager, so it’s critical that you address your cover letter properly.
* Although you’re using a general cover letter, a generic and impersonal greeting could damage your chance of getting a call back.
* Properly formatting the hiring manager’s contact details and using the correct salutation will show the hiring manager that you did your research and are excited for the job opportunity.

Here are the steps on [how to address a cover letter](https://resumegenius.com/blog/cover-letter-help/how-to-address-a-cover-letter):

* List your contact details — including address, phone number, and email — and the company’s, as well as the current date.
* Find out the name of the hiring manager.
* If you can’t find their name, search on LinkedIn, check the company website, or try calling the office manager or receptionist and ask.
* If all else fails, there’s nothing wrong with starting your email with “Dear Hiring Manager,” but it should be your last choice.

**Step 2. Match Your Cover Letter to Your Resume**

* All jobs — even if they’re within the same industry — will likely have different required qualifications, skills, and experience.
* To increase your chances of success, you should adjust your cover letter according to the position you’re applying to.
* An easy way to do this is to weave the skills or qualifications from the job posting into your generic cover letter.
* Furthermore, it’s important that when you write your cover letter, you use a matching resume style.
* Having a mismatched [cover letter and resume](https://resumegenius.com/blog/cover-letter-help/cover-letter-vs-resume) looks unprofessional and can be jarring for the hiring manager. It’s a simple fix, but double checking that the style of your cover letter and resume match before you send them out will make your application look put-together and professional.

**Step 3. Lead With a Strong Opening Paragraph**

* Hiring managers typically must-read hundreds of cover letters every day, so it shouldn’t come as a surprise that they may skim through your cover letter. But if they read any part of it thoroughly, it’ll likely be the first paragraph of your cover letter. That’s why having a convincing introduction in your general cover letter is key to locking down an interview.
* Your introduction doesn’t need to be elaborate. Provide a little personal background, explain how you found the position, and indicate that you’re excited about the opportunity.

**Step 4. Highlight Your Soft Skills**

* Employers are always looking for candidates who have great [interpersonal skills](https://resumegenius.com/blog/resume-help/interpersonal-skills), are adaptable, creative, and collaborative — no matter what industry you work in.
* That’s why soft skills are an excellent thing to add to a general cover letter. Regardless of the position, these traits are highly applicable and are sure to impress hiring managers.
* Highlight a handful of your stronger soft skills, and your general cover letter will be ready to go for nearly any position.