



TOP 5 ASPECTS OF A KILLER COVER LETTER

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It's no secret that finding a job is challenging in the current economy. Statistics say the outlook for employment is slowly increasing, but numbers on a chart don't necessarily translate into real-world positions for those seeking work. It has become a job-seeker eats job-seeker market, and the only true tools the unemployed have are the traditional methods of presenting what makes them special: the cover letter, the resume, and hopefully, the interview.

The first step is the most important – the cover letter. It is the foot in the door in any [job application](#), the first impression you as a candidate give to a potential employer. It is also the thing that can send your application straight into the trash. Anyone who is looking for a new employee probably has a stack of [applications](#), many of them with similar qualifications as yours, and the only thing that is going to move you forward is that cover letter.

These are five top things an attention-getting cover letter absolutely requires in order to draw positive attention to you. Some of these might seem intuitive, but they are forgotten surprisingly often and can be instant application killers if not followed:

- 1. Make the Letter Job-Specific** – It may seem to save time and effort if you write a generic cover letter that focuses only on your resume and skills, or some statement of your experience. While these things should be included in your cover letter, it is important to individualize each one to the specific job for which you're applying, and give a brief explanation of how your skills and experience fit that position.
- 2. Keep it Brief but Informative** – Because the cover letter is the first – and maybe only – look a potential employer might take at your application, many job-seekers make the mistake of trying to cram as much information as possible into that single opportunity. Instead, provide a short statement of how your specific skills and experience are an ideal fit for the company, but keep it under one page.
- 3. Remember it's a Sales Letter** – This is a document that provides the first impression of you as a potential employee. Many applicants undersell themselves, or don't provide any indication that their personality or experience would profit the company. Think of the cover letter as a way of making yourself a product, and convince the reader you are a product they need. Be careful not to make it a biography, however, but rather a statement of why you would be an asset to them.
- 4. Do a Thorough Spelling, Grammar, and Punctuation Check** – Don't rely on spellcheck to do it, as they will often miss things and make mistakes that an educated human eye wouldn't. To make absolutely certain your cover letter is pristine, read it several times yourself. Read it out loud to see how it sounds to your ear. This is a good way to hear mistakes a tired eye might have missed. Finally, have another person read it over before you finally send it out, just in case.



- 5. Follow Up** – Your application is only one in a veritable wave of them, and it's very easy to get lost. If the hiring manager has made it to your letter, that's a good start, but it's imperative that you leave a lasting impression and open a door for further steps in the interview process. Thank the reader for their time and attention, then be certain to let them know specifically when you will contact them to follow up. Close with contact information including your phone number and email address so they can get in touch with you first if they choose. Follow up on your promise by calling or emailing the company in the time frame you specified, ask about the status of your application, and ask whether they need any further information from you.

What may be the most important aspect of writing a killer cover letter is to make sure it's not just a copy of your resume in prose form. It is an introduction that must grab the attention of the reader and make them want to move on to your resume, and most of all, to meet you face-to-face. The cover letter can make the difference between keeping you an unemployment statistic and achieving the job of your dreams.