

HOW TO WRITE A COVER LETTER

Web Source: <http://www.how-to-write-a-cover-letter.com/>

After you write your cover letter, pass it along to as many different faculty as you trust, solicit their advice, be prepared for conflicting advice, and most importantly, be prepared to write and rewrite the letter many times. There are three things to keep in mind as you write your letter:

1. Make every word count.
2. Keep hitting your audience with what makes you different without being overbearing or telling lies.
3. Establish a voice.

Remember that the cover letter is the **single most important document** of your job search. It's the document that will get you an interview and an audience for your writing sample, and it's the document to which the committee will return after you have interviewed. A hastily written letter is unlikely to get attention, and since it's time-consuming to apply for jobs, don't bother unless you're prepared to spend some time on your cover letter. Start working on this letter during the summer before you begin your job search. It can easily take several months to write, and you will need to pass it along to people many times before it's complete.

Below, we will show you **how to write a resume cover letter**.



Paragraph one: introduction. Mention the job you're applying for and where you saw it advertised. Since your *curriculum vitae* will give information about your degree (where and when), dissertation director, fellowships, prizes and so on, you don't need to mention them in your letter. Doing so takes up valuable space in the letter and, more importantly, marks you as a graduate student. Try to sound like a professional, someone who has already put graduate school behind you. The selection committee will look at your *vitae* and see all these details in a more readable format. The same goes for areas of specialization.

Paragraph two: dissertation. Don't bother with the director's name; it's in the *vitae*. So is the list of publications that came out of the dissertation. Don't use the letter to recapitulate anything that's in the *vitae*, except the title of the dissertation. This paragraph is critical. Try to convey the main idea of your project, the originality of your work, the writers you cover, and the approach you take. One nice detail of a chapter will give readers something to hold onto. You may also address future research in this or a later paragraph.

Paragraph three: teaching experience and philosophy. Mention your philosophy, perhaps a brief example of how you put it to work, and special courses you would like to teach.

Paragraph four: final paragraph. Tell what you have enclosed, whether a dossier is on its way, how the school should get one if it needs one, whether you will be available at MLA (which you should). Don't spend too much time thanking them.