

Work Search Activity 5: Writing Your Cover Letter

FOR THE TEACHER

Introduction

In this follow-up activity to **Work Search Activity 4: Cover Letter Basics**, students build on their knowledge of effective cover letter writing and create their own cover letters in response to a job posting. Students then review and evaluate other students' work, which helps to ensure that they recognize and understand successful strategies for cover letter writing. As well, the activity allows students to see how their peers present qualifications, skills, and abilities that they may also possess.

Setting the Stage

We strongly recommend completing **Work Search Activity 4: Cover Letter Basics** prior to completing this activity. Classroom discussion can focus on what students have learned about the purpose and characteristics of cover letters. Ask students what skills, characteristics, or achievements they would like to highlight in their cover letters.

This is a three-part activity. Students will need time to research jobs, write a rough draft of their cover letter, type up a final draft, and evaluate other students' cover letters. This activity may take place over the course of **two 50-minute classes**.

Cover letters are tailored to specific job postings, so students will need to find a suitable posting for this activity. They can use the **Job Search** tool to find postings that interest them. (If the tool is not activated at your site, please speak to your school's Career Cruising Administrator.) To reduce the amount of time needed for this activity, you can collect job postings for students to use or create your own job ad requesting applicants for the position of "Student" in your class.

Starting the Program

Go to www.careercruising.com. Enter your personal My Plan username and password in the spaces provided, and click on **Log In**.

Work Search Activity 5: Writing Your Cover Letter

Page 1 of 7

PART A: FIND A JOB POSTING

Sign in to Career Cruising using your personal My Plan username and password. Click on **Employment** to access the **Job Search** tool.

You can search for a suitable job opening by position title, keyword, or company name. Although you are not actually applying for the job, you will need to find a position that closely matches your current level of experience and skill. If you cannot find a suitable posting, ask your teacher for assistance.

1. What is the title of the position?

2. What is the company's name? What is the name of the hiring manager or contact person?

3. What are the education and/or experience requirements for this job?

4. What skills and/or characteristics are required for this job?

5. What other requirements or important details are mentioned in the posting? (e.g. *Must have own car.*)

PART B: COMPOSE YOUR COVER LETTER

Use the guide on the following page to help organize and format your own cover letter in response to the posting. Remember what you learned about writing cover letters in the **Employment Guide!**

Work Search Activity 5: Writing Your Cover Letter

Page 2 of 7

COVER LETTER GUIDE

Your name
Address
Phone number
Email address

Date

Hiring manager's name and job title
Company name
Company address

Re: Job Reference, if provided

Greeting (addressed to the hiring manager, if possible),

Opening Paragraph: CAST THE HOOK. Snag the reader's attention with your introduction. Name the position you are applying for and where you saw or heard the advertisement. If applicable, include a reference to the person(s) you spoke to about the organization. This section should be more about the employer than about you, so do your research. Briefly sum up why you are interested in working with the organization, and the specific way(s) in which they would benefit from hiring you. Remember, despite the many technologies used in today's workplaces, people still hire people. Use your cover letter to reach out professionally to the hiring manager, person to person.

Middle Paragraph(s): REEL IN THE LINE. Draw the reader in. Don't simply duplicate your resume in full sentences. In one to three paragraphs, offer a few well-chosen, concise examples of your skills and experience. Tailor your cover letter to the position, matching your qualifications to the requirements outlined in the job posting. The cover letter is a space to highlight what your resume can't convey, such as personal traits and work habits, writing style, and what you will contribute to the organization. Give the reader a glimpse of the passionate, committed person behind the words.

Closing Paragraph: MAKE THE CATCH. This paragraph confirms the next steps in the hiring process that either you or the manager will take. Thank the reader for taking the time to consider your application. Indicate that your enclosed or attached resume contains further details of your qualifications. Mention your desire to discuss the position in an interview. Indicate when you can be reached, as well as any follow-up actions you will take (for example, phoning to arrange a mutually convenient time to meet).

Sincerely,

Signature

Your Name

Enclosed/Attached: Resume

Work Search Activity 5: Writing A Cover Letter

COVER LETTER CHECKLIST

- Include your contact information
- Include the company's name and address
- Include the date
- Use an appropriate greeting
- Address your cover letter to a named individual
- Mention the position you're applying for
- State where you saw the job posting
- Express interest in the company and position
- Explain why you would be a valuable addition to the company
- Ensure each paragraph has a strong opening sentence
- Group your points by theme
- Repeat key phrases and skills from the job posting
- Highlight your strongest qualifications
- Talk about your skills in the context of the position
- Include only information that is relevant to the job
- Use examples to illustrate your points
- Demonstrate that you have researched the company
- Encourage the hiring manager to contact you for an interview
- Project confidence and enthusiasm
- Use simple business language
- Use action verbs
- Keep your cover letter to one page in length
- Format your cover letter as a standard business letter
- Vary your sentence structure (*e.g. don't use too many "I" statements*)
- Include only true information about yourself
- Proofread carefully for spelling mistakes

SUMMARY – YOUR VIEWS

1. What was the most difficult part of writing your own cover letter?

2. Which parts of your cover letter might stand out to a hiring manager and make you memorable?

3. Overall, what kind of a first impression do you think your cover letter makes?

Work Search Activity 5: Writing A Cover Letter

PART C: PEER REVIEW

In this part of the activity, you will review another student's cover letter. Remember to be fair and helpful in your feedback.

Read the writer's cover letter carefully, but **do not look at the job posting** that the writer is responding to. Based on what you see in the writer's cover letter, answer the following questions:

1. What is the title of the position?

2. Where did the writer find out about the job opening?

3. What company is doing the hiring? What is the hiring manager's name?

4. What skills, characteristics, education, or qualifications are required for the position?

5. What did you learn about the company from this writer's cover letter? Has the writer researched the company?

Work Search Activity 5: Writing A Cover Letter

Page 6 of 7

6. Why does the writer want to work for the company? Why would the writer be a valuable addition to the company?

7. How would you describe the writer's confidence in his or her qualifications? Is the writer enthusiastic about the position?

Now, read the job posting that the writer is responding to.

8. How easy was it for you to answer the questions about the posting using just the writer's letter as a reference?

9. Overall, how well do you think the writer did linking his or her qualifications to the requirements listed in the posting?

10. What is the strongest part of the writer's cover letter?

Work Search Activity 5: Writing A Cover Letter

Page 7 of 7

11. In what other ways does the cover letter meet the cover letter criteria checklist? (e.g. standard business language is used; the cover letter has been proofread for errors, etc.)

12. What advice would you give the writer for composing cover letters in the future?

Once you have reviewed, revised, and typed a final version of your cover letter, be sure to upload the document to the **My Files** section of **My Plan**. You can use this cover letter as the starting point for future cover letters you create.