

Cover Letters

An Essential Part of the Job Search

Elyse Pipitone, LCSW

You have a strong, up-to-date resume and an impressive reference list. Do you really need to add a cover letter to your job search portfolio? YES! While a resume gives a quick snapshot of your work history and skills, your cover letter illustrates how your experience and skills are the perfect fit for a position – while letting your personality and enthusiasm shine through.

Writing an initial cover letter can be a time-consuming process that many jobseekers dread. But once you create a cover letter template using the tips below, you can tweak it to fit the job description of any position. And that is an important point: you need your letter to be personalized and targeted for each position. An employer can identify a generic, one-size-fits-all cover letter a mile away.



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Additionally, a cover letter is not a repetition of your resume;

employers want to see how your qualities and accomplishments specifically match their job requirements, and that your personality is a good “fit.” A cover letter should be less than one page long. Here is the formula, using a fictional middle school social worker position as an example.

Step 1: Introduction

Tell the hiring manager what position you are applying for, how you learned about the job, and why you should be considered

“Dear Hiring Manager: I am applying with great interest to your clinician position at ABC Public School that was posted on Idealist.org. I have the skills you are seeking, including strong therapeutic and clinical skills and experience in a school setting.”

Step 2: Describe How Your Skills Match the Qualifications and Requirements Outlined in the Job Description

“I have nearly five years of experience working with middle school-aged children with learning disabilities, including providing art therapy. You ask for experience partnering with families, schools, and the community, and I have done this effectively at the XYZ School, including organizing community meetings.”

Step 3: Provide an Overview of Your Work Style and Personality, as it Applies to the Job Description and Employment Setting

“I am a caring social worker that is passionate about working with adolescents. I have strong oral and written communications skills and I am technologically savvy.”

Step 4: If the Job Description Asks for Salary Requirements/Expectations, Give A Dollar Range

Do this only if requested

“Based on my understanding of the job responsibilities listed in your posting and the value and experience I will bring to your school, I am seeking a salary range of \$50,000-\$55,000.”

Step 5: Conclusion

Wrap up with a statement showing your enthusiasm for the job and your “call to action”

“I welcome the opportunity to join ABC School and to help make a difference in the lives of the students you serve. I look forward to discussing my qualifications in more detail. I can be reached at (857) 123-4567.”

Before You Send the Cover Letter, Stop and Review:

- Do a spellcheck of the document. Be sure to also spell the name of the company, and the hiring manager (if their name is provided), correctly.
- Double check that you have included all information the job description requires. For example, if it asks for salary expectations or a writing sample, include it. Failure to do so could disqualify you from further consideration. 🎯

Do you have a job search question you would like answered? Need help with your resume, cover letter, or job search? What other career topics would you like to see addressed in Social Work Voice? Let me know at epipitone.naswma@socialworkers.org.

