

# Cover Letters

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Cover letters are an important aspect of application materials because they are often the first impression an employer will have of you. Below are some basic guidelines to make your cover letter concise and compelling. However, always be sure to tailor your cover letter to the field and position you are applying for.

## Research the Company and Position

Cover letters should be tailored to each job; do not just write a generic cover letter and send it with every application. Research the company you are applying to. Find their mission statement. Search for the specific traits that are valued in this company or position. Consider what kind of employees they need, and address your cover letter to the person who will see it.

## Explain Your Qualifications

While the resume is a general list of your skills and experiences, the cover letter is your chance to highlight the traits and tools you have developed from these experiences in greater depth. Using your research on the company, determine which of your experiences illustrate the skills, traits, and qualities that make you a strong candidate for this job.

## Be Aware of Tone and Voice

Many job applicants make the mistake of sounding either too pretentious or too casual in their cover letters. You want to find a balance between a professional and a natural tone. Avoid using overly complex words to impress the reader, but also stay away from slang and other informal words. Likewise, avoid excessive jargon specific to the job you are applying for.

## What to Avoid

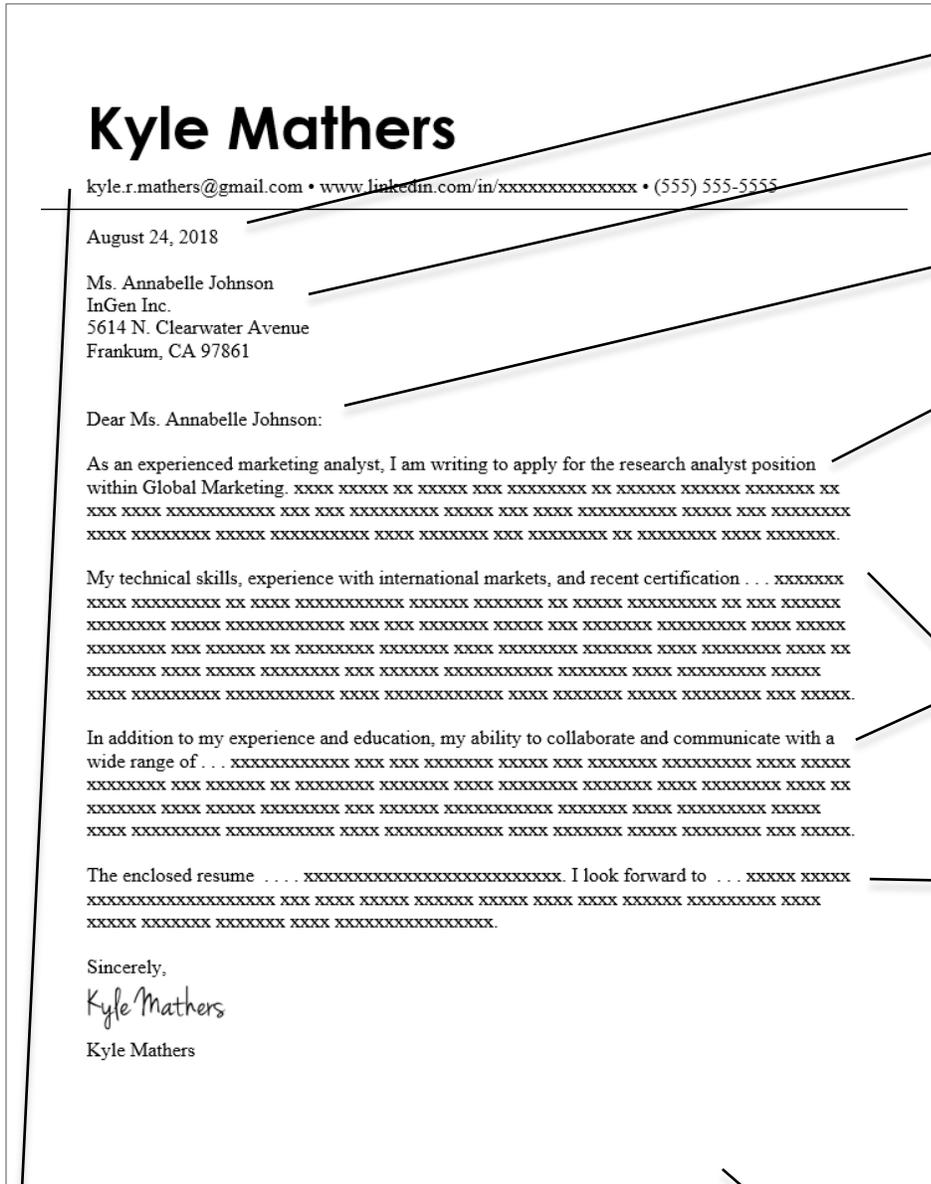
- Mentioning anything about salary; you can address this matter later, during an interview.
- Talking negatively about yourself, even jokingly. Instead, show your potential employer that you are confident and have the required skills.
- Using vague, cliché, or over-generalizing terms. Your statement should be clear and unique.
- Listing only the same information found on your resume.
- Inflating the truth or lying about your qualifications. Be accurate in your representations of yourself and your abilities and experience.

## Revise and Edit the Letter

After you have completed a first draft, step away from your cover letter before reading it again. When you come back to it, make sure your ideas are clear, and look for spelling and grammar errors. Then have someone else look over it to help you catch mistakes you did not see.

## Formatting and Content

Cover letters have a specific look and format. Below are a few general guidelines about what content to include and different examples of what a cover letter's formatting could look like.



Make sure you include your own **contact information**. This can also be done by using the same header as on your resume. Before sending, save your cover letter as a PDF file to preserve formatting. Label the document appropriately and send it from a professional email address.

Keep your cover letter to **one page** and use **block style formatting** (do not use indentations, but include a space between paragraphs).