# How to Critique a Cover Letter

A cover letter allows you to indicate why you should be contacted for a personal interview. We recommend that you always include a cover letter with a resume.

When reviewing a cover letter, look for the following components:

**HEADING** (same header used for resume, including name and contact information)

**TODAY’S DATE**

**MR./MRS. EMPLOYER’S NAME** (If you don’t have one, get one!)

**TITLE**

**COMPANY NAME**

**ADDRESS**

DEAR MR./MRS. EMPLOYER:

**FIRST PARAGRAPH**: This paragraph immediately tells the employer the position for which you want to be considered and should never exceed three sentences. You will want to state:

* Why you are writing and which position you are applying for.
* How you heard of the position, particularly if it was through a mutual contact, but make sure the recruiter has a positive relationship with this person.
* Show from your research why you are interested in this position or organization. Do not ramble. You want to make a fast connection. Imagine that you have 10 seconds to grab an employer’s attention face-to-face; now translate this onto paper. All-encompassing statements will not work.

**SECOND PARAGRAPH**: This paragraph tells the employer why you are a qualified candidate for the position to which you are applying. Highlight (2-3 points) some of your most relevant experiences and provide specific examples of your accomplishments and/or abilities. Keep in mind:

* You can use your resume to come up with some specific examples, but NEVER reiterate passages from your resume word-for-word.
* Relate your experiences to the job and tell the employer what you can do for him/her. It’s not all about what you think is important. Certainly you think your background is impressive, but will the employer?

**FINAL PARAGRAPH**: This paragraph is short—usually no more than four sentences—and should refer to your enclosed resume. You should also use this paragraph to request an interview and thank the employer for his or her time and consideration. Be sure to let the employer know how he/she can contact you.

Sincerely,

*Your Signature*

Your Name

Enclosure(s)

**Additional Tips to Consider for an Exceptional Cover Letter**

* Research the company and the specifics about the position so you can tailor your letter to the needs of the organization.
* **Do not** use contractions (I’d, didn’t, don’t, it’s).
* Make sure that your grammar, spelling, and punctuation is **perfect**! Proofread, proofread, and proofread again!
* Keep your letter concise and avoid rambling. Think of it as a focused news story that tells the employer only relevant information and important facts, as opposed to an in-depth feature story that goes into great detail and contains too much “fluff” or irrelevant information.

**Cover Letter Examples**

**Terry Rothers**

2234 Washtenaw Ave. Ypsilanti, MI

734-487-5642 troth@emich.edu

January 12, 2013

Joseph Ornstein, Ph.D., Director

The Creative Years

491 9th Street

Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Dear Dr. Ornstein,

Learning can be a fun and rewarding experience for both the adolescent and the facilitator, which is why I am responding to your ad in the July 23 issue of the Bay News for a part-time Teacher Assistant. I hold an Associate in Applied Science in Early Childhood Education and am currently a student at Eastern Michigan University pursuing a Bachelor of Art in Elementary Education.

Your opening stands out from other schools I’ve entertained due to the unique way that art and music are incorporated into the learning process. This position offers the opportunity I’ve often dreamed of, integrating my formal music training with my love of children. Additionally, you will find that I am capable of meeting your other qualifications, including:

* Team Player: I understand that my role is to support the teaching staff with daily operations, including materials and meal distribution, arrivals and departures, toileting, and other related functions.
* Creative Activities: As mentioned above, I am formally trained in classical and folk guitar and would welcome staff collaboration on the best utilization of this talent. While at Heartshare, I introduced a popular project in which children made kaleidoscopes from household objects and materials.
* Parent-Staff Relationships: I understand the importance of fostering a family-friendly environment where together parents and staff operate in the best interest of the child.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss program needs and will contact you early next week to schedule a convenient meeting time. You can reach me at 734-XXX-5642. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Terry Rothers

Enc.