

Liberty University School of Law

Center for Career & Professional Development

Cover Letter Tips

Never underestimate the importance of a good cover letter. You might have the best resumé ever created, but if your cover letter is sub-standard, the employer will never see it. Surveys show that 84% of legal employers believe a cover letter should accompany a resumé.* Here are some helpful hints for cover letter preparation.

- Use the same type and color of paper for the cover letter and resumé. White or slightly off-white is professional and preferred.
- Use matching letterhead for your cover letter and resumé. This gives your documents a very professional and consistent appearance.
- Use a 12-point type size and a professional font such as Times New Roman.
- Identify the position you are seeking in the “RE:” line above the salutation.
- Address your letter to a specific person, such as the hiring partner, a recruiting coordinator, or an attorney with whom you have some connection or to whom you have had an introduction. **DO NOT** address a letter “To whom it may concern.”
- Communicate that you have knowledge about the organization and the legal areas in which it specializes.
- Use professional language. Do not use contractions.
- Do not spend time or space describing writing samples or references. If a prospective employer wants these documents, they will be specifically requested.
- List any extensive writing experience or special applicable training.
- Describe how your gifts and talents will fit the purpose of the organization. Your focus should be on how you are prepared to contribute to the employer and why your experience and education make you well suited to do so.
- Your cover letter should be in Microsoft Word format. Save it as “Smith, John M. - Cover Letter,” not simply “Cover Letter.”
- In the last paragraph indicate that you will be contacting the employer soon to confirm receipt of the information and to set up a time to meet. Be sure to follow through.
- Thank the reader for his or her consideration.
- **DOUBLE-CHECK FOR SUBSTANCE, FORM, AND CARELESS MISTAKES**, then go back and check it again. Have someone else read it and check for grammar and spelling errors.

* Survey by Morris Associates, a Washington, D.C.-based outplacement firm, conducted of over 1,500 HR managers and executive recruiters.