

Writing Letters

Letter writing has a long and glorious history. Not so long ago, letters were used to invite people to parties, introduce people to each other, and conduct business. Today most of our letter writing is done through e-mail or texting, but occasionally you may want to send a formal letter to someone. Some types of formal letters include a letter of reference, a letter of complaint, a letter to request information, or a **cover letter**. A cover letter is a letter you would send to an employer you would like to work for. You would send it along with a **résumé** (a summary of your work experience and qualifications). In this lesson, you will write a formal cover letter.

Let's look at one possible format for a formal letter.

Your street address
Your town, state, and zip code

Today's date

The **recipient's** name
The recipient's street address
The recipient's town, state, and zip code

Dear [the recipient's name]:

The first paragraph of the letter is the introduction. Why are you writing? Do you want to request information? Do you want to apply for a job?

The second paragraph of the letter explains in detail the reasons why you are writing. If you want information, what exactly do you want to know? If you are applying for a job, why do you think you are the best person for the job?

The third paragraph of the letter asks for an action. Send me the information. Hire me for the job.

Sincerely,
Your signature
Your printed name

Writing a Cover Letter

Now, let's see what a cover letter looks like when we follow that format. It is **persuasive**. That means you are trying to convince the employer that you are the best person for the job. You will send it with your résumé.

1234 Main Street
Any town, Any State 45678

Today's date

Mr. Jose Smith
Brock's Farms
2233 Brock Road
Any town, Any State 45678

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am sending this cover letter and résumé to apply for the job of farmhand for Brock's Farms. I saw the ad in the local newspaper. I have many skills which will make me a good employee.

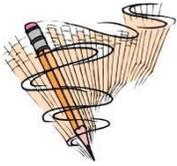
You are looking for someone who can work weekends and I have been working weekends for the last five years at Jasper's. I would be happy to continue working weekends. I also have ten years of experience working as a farmhand. I can milk cows, fix fence, feed calves, hogs, and other animals, drive both small and large farm vehicles, and know about equipment safety. With these skills I will be able to work wherever you need me.

I would be a talented and useful farmhand on Brock's Farm. Please call me at 555-234-9876 to set up an interview so we can talk about my skills and how I can help you. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and look at my résumé.

Sincerely,

John Doe

John Doe



Your Turn

You see a job advertised in the newspaper. You want to apply for the job so you call the company. They tell you to send in a résumé and a cover letter. What do you do now? A cover letter follows the same format as the example you just read. A cover letter tells the employer that you are the best candidate for the job. Following is a notice that you saw in your local newspaper. You want to send in a cover letter and résumé for the job. Let's complete a good cover letter.

Wanted: Crew boss for ten employees. Must be able to speak Spanish and work holidays and weekends. Knowledge of farm equipment a plus. Need at least five years of farm work experience. Send résumé to Watson Farms.

You know you would make a great supervisor because you have all the skills listed in the ad. You speak Spanish. You already work holidays and weekends. You have worked with all sorts of farm equipment. You have ten years of farm experience. In addition, you have worked with all sorts of animals. You have also helped plant and harvest many different crops. Now you have to persuade this employer that, in your **opinion**, you are the best man or woman he could hire for the job.

The Beginning

Use this format to start your letter.

- Write your address in the top left corner.
- Skip a space and write today's date.
- Skip two lines and write the recipient's name followed by his or her address.
- Skip two lines and then write *Dear* and the person's name. Note: Always try to write Mr./Ms./Mrs. followed by the person's name. If you don't know the name, write *Dear Hiring Manager*. This is the called the *salutation*.

Write On! Letter Writing Made Easy

The Introduction: Paragraph One

In the Introduction, you want to tell the person why you are writing. In a cover letter, you want him to know that you are applying for a job. When you write your first paragraph, follow the list below. Write three complete sentences.



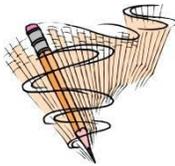
Check it Out!

All About Sentences, in the Reading on the Move lesson series can also help you with writing your cover letter.

Find it on the Internet at

www.migrant.net/migrant/publications/index.htm

1. Tell the recipient what job you are applying for and the name of the company that has the job offered.
2. Tell where you saw this job advertised or how you heard about it.
3. Say that you are the right person for the job based on several reasons.



Your Turn

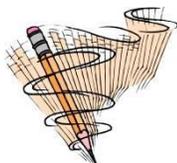
On the following lines, write the first paragraph of the cover letter you are going to send for the job posting on the previous page.

The Body: Paragraph Two

This is the most important part of the letter. The body tells the recipient about your reasons for applying. You are explaining **WHY** you think you are the best person for the job. In this case, these reasons were listed:

- You speak Spanish.
- You already work holidays and weekends.
- You have worked with all sorts of farm equipment.
- You have ten years of farm experience.
- In addition, you have worked with all sorts of animals.
- You have also helped plant and harvest several different crops.

Tell the employer about your skills. Then tell him **WHY** you think those skills will help his business. Use linking words like *because*, *for instance*, *so*, and *in order to*. For example, you could write “I have been speaking Spanish since I was a child, so I will be able to communicate easily with your Spanish-speaking workers.”



Your Turn

Pick three skills from the list above. Write two sentences for each skill you picked. Write one sentence describing the skill. Write the second sentence describing how that skill can help the employer.



Check it Out!

Hey, What's the Point in the **Reading on the Move** lesson series discusses the main point and may help you in writing your cover letter.

Find it on the Internet at

www.migrant.net/migrant/publications/index.htm

Letter Writing Checklist

- My opening tells the recipient the job I am applying for.
- The body gives good reasons why I am the best choice for the job.
- I give my contact information in the last paragraph.

Writing Traits Scored in this Lesson

	Great Job 5 points	Almost There 3 points	Keep Working 1 point
Sentence Fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences start in different ways. • Sentence length varies. • The piece flows smoothly when read aloud. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some sentences start in different ways. • Most of the sentences vary in length. • Most of the paper flows smoothly when read aloud. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are too many short sentences. • All sentences start the same way. • The writing does not flow smoothly.
Conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences are complete. • Punctuation and capitalization are used correctly. • Spelling is correct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences are complete. • Capital letters and periods are used. • Spelling is mostly correct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences run together. • Punctuation and capitalization are inconsistent. • Several words are misspelled.

Words to Know

cover letter: a formal letter written to a possible employer

résumé: a summary of your work experience and qualifications

recipient: the person reading your letter

persuasive: convincing someone to agree with your opinion

opinion: your thoughts and beliefs on a certain subject

