



## Tips for Writing a Cover Letter

**By: Elizabeth Dow, Pharm.D., BCPS, BCOP & Nick Messinger, Pharm.D., BCPS, BCACP, CDE**

A cover letter is an essential part of your personal brand. A well-written cover letter can strengthen your candidacy and increase your odds of landing an interview. Your cover letter, like you, should be unique. Creating a separate, targeted cover letter for each job application is worth the extra time and effort. Below are some tips to writing a cover letter that will hopefully lessen some anxiety.

A great place to start is by thoroughly reviewing the job description and comparing them to an outline of your achievements. In other words, how does your CV/resume demonstrate you are adequately prepared to assume the responsibilities of the position with success? Next, when you begin to draft your cover letter, divide it into three main parts: an introduction, body, and closing which are described below. All of this should be contained within one page.

The introduction paragraph should include how you came about applying to the organization. Did you receive a referral from a colleague? Did you learn about the company from CareerPharm? Did you meet with company representatives at a national meeting? Include these specific points in your opening paragraph.

Moving on to the body of the cover letter, this is where it is important to pin point the exact skills and qualifications that make you a viable candidate. A mistake to avoid includes outlining your entire job history as recruiters can view this in your resume or CV. If you are agonizing over the cover letter because you cannot come up with relevant content for this section, then you may not meet the qualifications and you should strongly consider not applying for the job.

As you begin to draft descriptive body paragraphs, make sure to include specific examples of how you are qualified for the job and what you can contribute to the organization. A few things to avoid discussing include writing about your interest in the position and reasons the job is perfect for you. You want to convey your message on why you should be invited for an interview to the recruiter. For example, if the job description states "must be willing to lead and nurture a team of pharmacists and technicians to meet performance and behavioral expectations" make sure you describe the ways in which you are qualified to do that. You do not have to answer every item from the job description in the body, rather, get an overall sense of the critical skills desired for the position and focus on those. Convey a positive vibe and focus on quality instead of quantity. Also, if you lack experience in a listed requirement, it may be minor or something you can learn on the job; be cautious not to emphasize a skill or skills you need to develop.

The closing is your wrap-up paragraph where you can summarize what you bring to the table and why your particular skills will benefit the company. Keep it short and sweet. Close with a request to follow-up at their earliest convenience.

Finally, the overall cover letter should be formatted like a professional letter. Follow directions and avoid colored fonts and italics. This is an opportunity to sell yourself and show you are different from any other candidate. Inject your personality into your writing. Use active words that show pride in your accomplishments and a sense of confidence in your ability to do that job you're applying for. Be professional and courteous, but be distinct.