

# Writing a Cover Letter



## Grade Level:

 11, 12

## Domain:

 College & Career Exploration

## TIME:

 60 Minutes

This lesson is designed to help students learn about cover letters and how cover letters can help them when searching for a job.

## Objectives

*Students will:*

1. Learn about cover letters.
2. Understand the basic structure of a cover letter.
3. Analyze what to include in and exclude from a cover letter.
4. Create a cover letter.

## MEFA Pathway Activities

- My Resume

## Materials Needed

- Internet connection

## Vocabulary

- Objective
- Cover Letter

## Future Ready Skills

- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Persuasion
- Problem Solving

## PART 1

### CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

Have students log in to MEFA Pathway and click on **My Resume** under the *About Me* tab. If students do not currently have a completed resume within their MEFA Pathway account, allocate 10-15 minutes for students to fill out the sections within **My Resume** to create a new resume. Make sure students have written an objective and added qualifications, work experience, education, honors and awards, activities, skills, and certifications that they want to appear on a resume.

Next, explain to students the purpose of a resume.

## PART 2

### APPLYING INFORMATION

Now that students have a completed resume, introduce cover letters. Ask the students if they have ever heard of a cover letter and what they think it entails.

Explain to students that a cover letter:

- Is a one-page document that introduces a job seeker's work history, professional skills, and personal interest in applying for a job
- Is a potential employer's first impression of the applicant
- Can be one of the most vital parts of an application
- Will vary depending on who the audience is and the type of job being sought

Generally, cover letters should be short but to the point and include the following: content tailored to the recipient/organization, relevant skills and achievements, and enthusiasm for the position and organization. Be sure to exclude: repetition of your resume, negative comments, and salary expectations.

Now that students have an idea of what a cover letter is and the types of information to include, explain that a cover letter has three essential parts:

1. An opening: expresses interest in the job.
2. A middle: explains why an applicant is right for the job.
3. A closing: restates an applicant's interest in the job, describes what documents accompany the cover letter, and notes how an employer can reach the applicant.

## PART 3

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### EVALUATING INFORMATION

#### Exercise A

As a class, have students identify whether the sentences below belong in the opening, middle, or closing paragraph of the cover letter, or if they don't belong at all.

Use the answer key at the end of this lesson for the discussion.

- I have included with this letter a copy of my resume. I can also provide you with references from past receptionist jobs.
- I saw your advertisement online for a receptionist position at your office. I am very interested in the job.
- I enjoy working with the general public and having a friendly, positive attitude, and can represent the company well.
- I had to move back home to take care of sick family. I really need this job for the money.

#### Exercise B

Below is a job posting that a fictional student named Naomi found in her local newspaper:

Receptionist for local hair salon needed. Applicant must be computer literate, comfortable working with the public, and highly organized. Previous receptionist experience preferred, but not required. This job is full time and includes benefits and great pay. Applications without a cover letter will not be considered. Please send cover letter and resume to [info@receptionistjob.com](mailto:info@receptionistjob.com).

As a class, have students identify whether the phrases below belong in Naomi's cover letter and the reasons for their answers.

- Proficient in computers
- Previously worked as a receptionist
- Lives with her boyfriend and brother
- Enjoys dressing professionally
- Maintains a friendly, caring, and positive attitude in stressful situations
- Have professional phone etiquette
- Does ballet on the weekends

## PART 4

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### **CRITICAL THINKING/CREATIVE APPLICATION**

Now that students have an understanding of cover letters, students should create their own cover letter. Have students write a three-paragraph cover letter for the job posting in Part 3. Remind students that they will need to include an opening, middle, and closing paragraph.

## Writing a Cover Letter Answer Key

### Part A

1. *I have included with this letter a copy of my resume. I can also provide you with references from past receptionist jobs.*

Belongs in the Closing Paragraph: This sentence brings the applicant's cover letter to a close as well as refers to the resume the applicant included.

2. *I saw your advertisement online for a receptionist position at your office. I am very interested in the job.*

Belongs in the Opening Paragraph: The opening paragraph introduces the applicant to the employer and also allows the applicant to express interest in the job.

3. *I enjoy working with the general public and having a friendly, positive attitude and can represent the company well.*

Belongs in the Middle Paragraph: In the middle paragraph, the applicant can describe to the potential employer qualities that make him or her the best person for the job—essentially what the applicant brings to the table.

4. *I had to move back home to take care of sick family. I really need this job for the money.*

Does Not Belong: This kind of personal information generally is not needed or appropriate to include in a cover letter.

## Writing a Cover Letter Answer Key

### Part B

#### 1. *Proficient in computers*

Yes, as most of her responsibilities might include work on a computer, Naomi should mention her computer proficiency as well as any computer programs that she's familiar with.

#### 2. *Previously worked as a receptionist*

Yes, if Naomi has past experience in this work it should be mentioned in her cover letter.

#### 3. *Lives with her boyfriend and brother*

No, Naomi's housemates are not relevant to the cover letter.

#### 4. *Enjoys dressing professionally*

No, a potential employer will most likely find out if Naomi dresses professionally within the interview.

#### 5. *Maintains a friendly, caring, and positive attitude in stressful situations*

Yes, as Naomi is going to be greeting clients, and as most jobs have the possibility of stressful situations, it is helpful to know that Naomi can handle stress with a positive attitude.

#### 6. *Has professional phone etiquette*

Yes, as a receptionist, Naomi will most likely be spending a majority of her time taking calls so this characteristic should be included.

#### 7. *Does ballet on the weekends*

No, while this is a fun activity to learn that Naomi enjoys, it is not relevant to the job unless the job is at a dance studio.