

How to Write a Strong Cover Letter

Why write a cover letter?

A CV or resume only explains all your previous **academic training** and **professional skills**.

A Cover Letter:

- Summarizes **how** that **academic training** and **professional skills** **will directly benefit them**.

Often, employers only skim the first paragraph, so Diana's paragraph is a summary of:

- What she brings to the table (experience & skills)
- Why she wants the job (desire)

This includes her:

1. **Academic training**
2. **Professional skills**
3. **Desire**

The rest of her cover letter gives detailed evidence about her claims in her first paragraph. It also follows the order of her summary paragraph.

1. **Academic training/ 4 years of clinical experience**
2. **Interpersonal & language skills**
3. **Desire**

Note that the text focuses on examples and language about what she is able to do for the employer. For example: "My training enables me..."

Isn't this a long letter?

A cover letter can be 1-4 paragraphs. A briefer letter would only include the first "summary" and last paragraph.

Do employers really read cover letters?

Yes. The real question isn't if, but **when** do employers read cover letters? Think about how you sort through a stack of information. First, you'd probably skim the CV/resume and first paragraph of the cover letter, to sort candidates into 'yes', 'no' and 'maybe' piles.

The second time through, you'd read everything closely to whittle down your 'yes' pile to 3-5 strong candidates to interview. But what if there were 6?

Here's when a cover letter is most valuable: it makes your argument about how you can contribute to their organization, and why you want the position. Those without cover letters have to hope that the employer can figure that out. It might be the edge you need!

Sample Cover Letter Dissected

Dear Dr. Peyton,

I am writing in response to the Nurse Practitioner job posting for Marin Community Clinics on the OCPD nursing job board. I was thrilled to see this opportunity as I have a strong commitment to working with diverse patients from underserved communities. As a recent graduate from the University of California, San Francisco's FNP program, I have four years of clinical experience in hospital and community clinic settings, and have used my Spanish language skills in a medical capacity. As a bilingual resident of Marin county for fifteen years, I am committed to helping serve the health care needs in my community. I believe my combination of multitasking, teamwork, health education counseling and communication skills would make me a successful addition to your team.

I've honed my multitasking, teamwork and health education counseling skills through various clinical experiences. For instance, while working as part of an interdisciplinary team at La Clinica de la Raza in Oakland, I addressed a wide range of issues facing diverse uninsured and low-income patients of all ages, thus my training enables me to help patients manage chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, chronic pain and also provide sexual health counseling to name a few. I worked closely with social workers and Physicians on treatment plans, continuity of care and referrals for patients who needed ongoing specialized or emergency care. I was consistently recognized by my supervisors for my efficiency, collaboration and ability to create trust with patients and their families. At Zuckerberg SF General Hospital I worked in a fast paced emergency department triaging patients, conducting patient interviews, and proposing diagnoses while also finding time to serve as an Educator and Program Manager for Bay Area Women's Services. Coming from an underserved uninsured community myself, I feel immense satisfaction in helping people obtain peace of mind through providing preventative holistic healthcare that includes patients in the decision-making and is multiculturally competent.

I have also worked hard to build my bilingual medical language skills. For example, I have extensive experience working in collaborative, interdisciplinary teams at the Elder Care and Tom Waddell. In both settings, I used my Spanish language skills in a medical capacity, sometimes even serving as the translator between the patient/caregiver and the staff. These experiences have taught me how to address patients and care givers professionally and respectfully, discuss their concerns, and manage their frustrations.

What I cherish most about my role as a clinician is working in collaboration with other health professionals, patients and care givers to address complex health issues with both clinical and educational tools. My professional goals include working in a community- focused clinic helping underserved populations realize better health outcomes. The opportunity to apply my skills and experiences at Marin Community Clinic is an exciting prospect. I can be reached at 123.456.7890 should you have any questions. I wish you the best in your search.

With regards,

Diana Prince, RN
University of California, San Francisco Family
Nurse Practitioner, Candidate c/o 20x

Sample Cover Letter

Ms. Jackie Peyton, DNP, GNP, RN
Marin Community Clinics
Marin, CA 94903

Aug 10, 20xx

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