

How to Write a Strong Cover Letter for Employment

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**.
- Explains **desire** – why you want the job.

Often, employers only skim the first paragraph, so Miley'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 opening paragraph.

1. **Academic training/Health related experience**
2. **Customer service/teamwork/coordination skills**
3. **What she enjoys and would bring to the position**

Note that the text focuses on examples and language about what she can do for the employer. For example: "My teamwork and multitasking skills were strengthened...".

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 Ms. Yeoh:

I was very pleased to see the recent pharmacist position (#12345) at my local Safeway store in Antioch. Safeway's holistic approach, focusing on preventative care and coordinated efficiency appeals to me. As a fourth year pharmacy student at UCSF, I have several years of health related experience in hospital settings and demonstrated experience working in fast-paced, community pharmacy and retail settings. My customer service skills have been honed by working with diverse populations. I am highly self-motivated teamwork oriented multitasker. I have much to offer the Pharmacy department at Safeway.

My teamwork and multitasking skills were strengthened in my clinical rotations and internships at both retail and hospital settings. For instance, as a pharmacy intern at Walgreens and UCSF, I worked with a variety of interdisciplinary teams on everything from accurately preparing and dispensing medication to coordination of daily operations, all while troubleshooting issues that came up with patients, insurance and colleagues. What I enjoy most about my work is patient education: helping patients and caregivers understand how they can take steps to take care of their health. As a Pharmacist at Safeway, I would endeavor to bring my attention to detail, and patient counseling skills to help those in my community.

My customer service and communication skills were honed while working as a technology troubleshooter at the Genius Bar at the high volume San Francisco Apple store for two years. That experience has taught me how to address clients professionally and respectfully, discuss their concerns, and manage their frustrations. While the Apple staff could not always solve the problem, I learned that the goal is always to have a positive exchange, and leave customers with a positive impression. I was recognized for this ability, and awarded with the Genius of the Month award, given to staff to acknowledge consistent excellent customer service.

I would welcome the chance to bring my coordination, teamwork and customer service skills experience and philosophy to my neighborhood pharmacy. Many of my colleagues have spoken highly of Safeway's recent technological upgrades and focus on prevention and patient education. The chance to contribute to my local community as a Pharmacist at Safeway is very exciting. Please feel free to contact me at 123.456.7890.

Sincerely,

Miley Cyruss

Sample Cover Letter

Miley Cyruss
1234 Heroic Trio Drive
San Francisco, CA 94114

Ms. Michelle Yeoh
Safeway
14 Famous Action Stars Way
Antioch, CA 94114

June 1, 0000

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