

Cover Letter Checklist

Name _____

Date _____

Format and Structure

1. Return Address	Yes	No	
Your Street Address			
City, State Zip			
Country		No	N/A
No blank line or one blank line			
2. Date	Yes	No	
Month Day, Year (e.g., June 10, 2007)			
Three blank lines			
3. Inside Address	Yes	No	
Formal and full name (e.g., Mr. Adam Jones Ms. Agatha Jones)			
Job Title (on same line as name or on line below name, depending on length)			
Company Name			
Street Address			
City, State Zip			
Country		No	N/A
One blank line			

4. Overall Format	Yes	No
Block style		
Left justification throughout		
5. Salutation	Yes	No
Formal and last name with colon (e.g., Dear Mr. Jones: Dear Ms. Jones:)		
One blank line		
6. Paragraphs – three to four (body of the letter)	Yes	No
No indentation (except for bulleted lists)		
Single-spaced within paragraphs		
Double-spaced between paragraphs		
One blank line		
7. Complimentary Close	Yes	No
e.g., "Sincerely,"		
Three blank lines		
8. Signature Block	Yes	No
Handwritten signature (in the 3 blank lines)		
Typewritten name		
One blank line		

Mechanics

Grammar?	Yes	No
Standard grammar used?		
Agreement errors avoided? (singular/plural)		
Verb tense inconsistencies avoided?		
Do sentences make sense?		
Spelling?	Yes	No
Perfect?		
Company and contact name correct?		

Punctuation?	Yes	No
Standard punctuation used? (commas, colons, semi-colons, hyphens)		
Standard, consistent capitalization used?		
Standard apostrophe placement used?		

First Impression

Negative Features	Positive Features
The letter is too long (or too short).	Letter fits nicely on one page.
The paragraphs are long and uninviting.	Long paragraphs are broken up logically and perhaps even include bullet points in the body paragraph.
Typeface is too hard to read because it is small or sans serif (like Arial) or poorly printed.	Cover letter looks crisp and inviting.
The first sentence does not grab the reader's attention. It sounds cliché or generic. (e.g., "Your company is known for its...").	First sentence is specific and original. It shows real insight into the company's issues. (e.g., "I know your company's #1 goal in the next year...").

Content

Negative Features	Positive Features
Reason for writing is unclear.	You clearly articulate who you are and why you are writing (e.g., state specific position or role within the organization).
It is unclear why you want this job.	You clearly state why you want this job.
I can't tell if you are a good match. You focus too much on your personal goals and skills without tying them into my company's needs.	You highlight skills and experience that match directly with my company's needs. You clearly present your features and how they can benefit my company.
I have to guess what action you are requesting.	You articulate a requested action clearly and professionally.
I don't believe you really know my company.	You show true insight into my company's issues and needs.
I don't learn anything from your letter than I can't get from your résumé.	Your letter complements your résumé, offering new and pertinent information.
I feel your letter could be sent to another company with only a few revisions.	You have tailored your letter to me and my company.

Style

Negative Features	Positive Features
I have to work too hard to understand parts of the letter.	I can understand this letter fully the first time I read it.
Your meaning is hidden by choppy sentences and paragraphs.	Your transitions are appropriate and useful.
Your meaning is buried in passive voice and weak verbs.	You use active voice and strong verbs.
Your meaning is lost because of padded sentences, repetition, complex phrases, or business jargon. (<i>Common problem phrases: "There is/There are"; "in order to"; "the fact that"; "this/that/these/those" with no noun following.</i>)	You use plain, precise, professional English.

Tone

Negative Features	Positive Features
I find your tone either too familiar or too formal.	Your tone is professional and courteous.
I am left with a poor impression — or perhaps no real impression at all — of who you are.	You have shown me that you are both creative and capable.
I find the letter impersonal.	You have left such a strong impression of your personality on me that I want to meet you in person.
I see no real enthusiasm from you for this job.	You have left me in no doubt of your passion for this job.