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Five Tips for Writing an Effective Cover Letter

Since most job applications are now submitted online, it’s become difficult to show potential employers just how perfect you are for the job. How can you set yourself apart from the virtual crowd? Include a top-notch cover letter.

Your cover letter picks up where your resume left off, giving you the opportunity to detail your knowledge of the company, describe your personal accomplishments, and tell why you would be the best fit for the position. Simply put, a great cover letter helps your application stand out instead of getting lost in the shuffle.

It’s a weighty mission, so knowing how to write a good cover letter is of the utmost importance. Following are five ways to make your cover letter impressive:

- **Dot your i’s and cross your t’s:** Check and double-check to make sure you’re submitting everything correctly. Follow the instructions specific to the employer, and make sure your cover letter and resume are in the proper format.
- **Make it personal:** Avoid ubiquitous phrases like “To Whom it May Concern.” Instead, try to learn who the hiring manager is and address him or her by name. Familiarity might get you noticed, and at the very least, this shows that you did some research.

- **Reel them in:** Your first few sentences determine whether someone chooses to keep reading. Start out strong and focus on the position you're applying for and why and how you would be an asset to the company.
- **Keep it short and sweet:** Nothing derails a point like wordiness. Say what you have to say using no more than three or four paragraphs — and be concise. Avoid including irrelevant personal details; it's unnecessary and makes your cover letter sound unprofessional.
- **Get a second opinion:** Having someone proofread your cover letter and resume is always a smart move. Along with spotting typos, an objective eye can provide feedback for how well your cover letter reads. When you're satisfied with the result, make one final check to ensure you've included all the necessary documents before submitting.

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