

South Dakota Teachers as Advisors Lesson Plan

Cover Letters

Grade Level	12 th Grade
Goal/Objective	Students will learn to complete a cover letter.
Minimum Time Required	30 minutes
Materials/Resources	How to Write a Cover Letter handout (attached) Cover Letter Do's and Don'ts handout (attached)

Step by Step Instructions:

1. Review key points from the handout “How to Write a Cover Letter.”
2. Review key points from the handout “Cover Letter Do’s and Don’ts.”
3. Have the students write a cover letter for a job that they would like to apply for at some time.

Domain/Standard	Career Development
Academic Standards	Language Arts Writing Indicator 1: Students are able to use appropriate content, organization, form, and style in technical, business, creative, and personal writing.
Employability/SCANS Skills	Basic Skills
Assessment Rubric	Letters
Credits for sources:	TEAM – Louisiana Department of Education

How to Write a Cover Letter

The heading on your cover letter should be business-like. Include your street address, city/state, and current date in the upper left corner.

Next, include the name, title/position, company/business, street address, city/state of the person whom the letter is being sent. Each of these should have their own lines.

A simple opener like, "Dear Mr. Ewing" is standard format.

Three paragraphs in the body of the letter will be sufficient if each paragraph has a specific purpose. Consider the following questions to answer in each paragraph.

Paragraph 1: Why are you sending your resume? Ad in the paper? Which newspaper? What day? Word from a friend? Who was it? Spoke to someone with the company on the phone? What position are you inquiring about?

Rules: Be brief, no longer than two sentences, be very specific about facts and details.

Paragraph 2: Why do you want the job? What qualities do you have that give you an edge on the job? How do you stand out from others applying? What can you contribute to the business?

Rules: Be creative, sell yourself, use 3-5 short sentences, try not to repeat the information on your resume'.

Paragraph 3: Ask for the interview! Include daytime phone numbers where you can be reached. Mention that your resume' is included. Let the employer know that you will be calling with the next week to set up an appointment. Follow through with your promise!

Finish your cover letter with a simple closing like "Sincerely." Skip a few lines and type your name. Between the two lines sign the letter. Below your typed name type "Enclosure." This lets the potential employer know that there is more to your correspondence than a letter.

Cover Letter Do's and Don'ts

Do:

- Address your letter to a specific individual.
- Explain why you are writing and how you learned about the job.
- State your qualifications using brief statements.
- Use action words to highlight what you can do.
- Emphasize what you can do for the employer rather than what he/she can do for you.
- Draw attention to specific parts of your resume' that relate to the job available.
- Give date(s) you are available for interviewing.
- Be enthusiastic!
- Sign each letter.
- Follow up the letter and resume' with a phone call to confirm that they have received it.

Don't:

- Use "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Sir or Madam" to start your letter. If contact person's name is in doubt, call to find it out.
- Overuse the word "I," especially to start each paragraph.
- Feel you have to fill the page; 3 or 4 paragraphs is plenty, provided they're well written.
- Use overused phrases or clichés.
- Change fonts or letter style in the letter; save those for the resume' (in limited doses).
- Send out a duplicated letter; it shows insincerity and lack of preparedness.