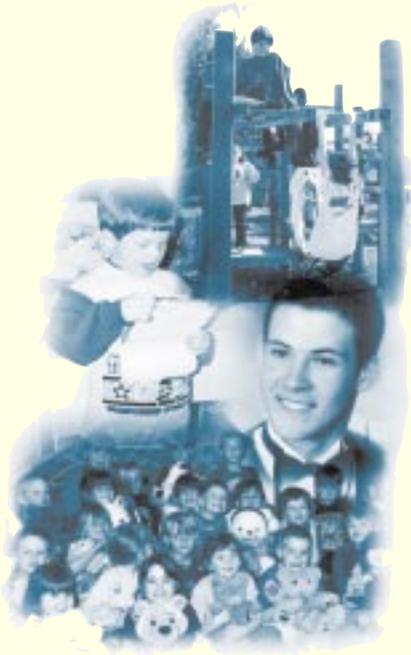




## Mission

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The Chignecto-Central Regional School Board is a diverse, progressive, student-centered learning community. We are committed to developing creative, confident and responsible global citizens who will anticipate and embrace the challenges of the future. We will inspire our learning community by enriching the quality of educational opportunities in a safe learning environment with high expectations.



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# Writing Effective Cover Letters

Presented by:  
Chignecto-Central Regional School Board

In partnership with:  
The Nova Scotia Teachers Union

*Who  
Needs a  
Cover Letter?*



*Everyone who is  
sending out a resume  
needs a cover letter!  
It does not matter if  
a cover letter was  
mentioned in the  
advertisement, it is  
expected that you  
will write one.*

## **Activity No. 1 - Introduction to Cover Letters**

*What are the main purposes of a cover letter ?*

- 1 *Formal introduction*
- 2 *Highlight Informationn*
- 3 *Facillitate an interview*

*What are the major components of a cover letter ?*

- 1 *Reference to advertisement*
- 2 *Comparison of requirements & qualifications*
- 3 *Salary requirements (optional)*
- 4 *Interview request*
- 5 *Statement of appreciation*

*“Your cover letter is the first thing an employer sees when you send out your resume. Experts on job hunting say the purpose of a resume is not to get you a job, but to get you an interview - but the only way you’re going to get an interview is if your resume is read.”*

*Anonymous*



## **Cover Letter Rules & Guidelines**

- 1- Address your cover letter to the person who can hire you
- 2- Write in your own words
- 3- Show that you know something about the company/ organization
- 4- Use appropriate language (Depending on the type of company/organization you are applying to)
- 5- No spelling or typing errors! (Read it backwards!)

## **Tips on the Style of Your Cover Letter**

- 1- Use Active Voice
- 2- Avoid “I” Overkill!
- 3- Use verbs rather than adjectives
- 4- Other Tips
  - Write short sentences and paragraphs
  - Avoid words like believe, hope, feel and know
  - Use confident words such as contribute and success
  - Save a copy of every letter you send out for follow-up purposes
  - Your cover letter should *never* be longer than one page

# Cover Letter Model

Your address  
Street, Apt  
City, Province  
Postal Code  
Date

Name of Contact Person  
Title  
Organization  
Street address  
City, Province  
Postal Code

Dear (name of contact person),

## Opening Paragraph

The first paragraph of your cover letter should indicate why you are writing and capture the readers' interest. Make sure you have a strong opening line to make the reader want to continue reading. The job for which you are applying and how you learned about it should be presented here. If someone referred you to the organization/company, make sure you mention it.

## Body Paragraph

This is the part of the cover letter where you want to identify all your skills that are relevant to the position for which you are applying. Recognize the skills required for the position and state how you have strengths and skills in these areas. Give examples of achievements you've made and how they relate to the position. This is also the time to comment on your knowledge of the company/organization and why you are interested in becoming part of their team.

## Closing Paragraph

This is the place to indicate that you would like to set up an interview. Ask for one and then identify the next step. (The next step could be that you will contact them on a designated date) Or... you may just want to state that you are available for a personal interview at his/her convenience. Make it easy for the person to contact you. Include your phone number and times you can be reached. It doesn't matter if this information is already on the resume - list it here again)

Sincerely (etc.),

(Your signature)  
Your name typed

Enclosure

*"A resume without a cover letter is like an unannounced salesperson showing up at your door. If you are going to let in a perfect stranger, you at least want to see their credentials. This is exactly what a cover letter does--it introduces you, a total stranger, to the reader. It must be compelling, personable, and brief. It needs to specifically relate to the position in question. Remember you only have eight seconds to convince the reader to invite you in."*

--Barbara B. Vinitzky and Janice Y. Benjamin, (*From the book 'How to Become Happily Employed'*)

## Mailing Your Cover Letter

### Snail Mail



If you're using snail mail consider sending your resume and cover letter in a 9 x 12 inch envelope. The presentation of your document is cleaner and more professional when it is not wrinkled from folding.

### Fax & E-mail



If the employer requests a fax or e-mail, feel free to use it. However; if fax or e-mail is not requested it is best to send your documents snail mail or even drop it off. A fax or e-mail can often be of low quality, therefore putting you at a disadvantage when your resume is compared to others.

## New Ideas!

- A) The Postcard Technique**
  - To ensure you get a response
- B) The Testimonial Technique**
  - Including a quote, name and phone number
- C) The PS (postscript) Technique**
  - Hand written; most marketable attribute

## Activity No. 2 - Focusing on an Educational Cover Letter

Your address  
Street, Apt  
City, Province  
Postal code  
Date

Name of Contact Person  
Title  
Organization  
Street address  
City, Province  
Postal Code

Dear Mr.

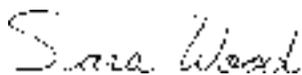
Please accept my letter of application for the position of mathematics teacher at New Horizons High School. Your advertisement, which I viewed in the Chronicle Herald, is very appealing to me.

My student teaching experience has enabled me to develop a special rapport with the age group that I enjoy most: high school students. As co-advisor of the Computer Club during my practicum, I also gained administrative and organizational skills that enhanced my perspective and my commitment to the extra-curricular component of the secondary school experience.

As a student at Rainbow University, I have excelled in extra-curricular activities such as basketball. I am also a real "people person," and enjoy kids.

I am especially interested in the New Horizons School District because of its demonstrated commitment to quality education, as evident by the favourable student/faculty ratio and state-of-the-art classroom technology. I will call you tomorrow at 2 pm to further discuss what I can do for you. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Sara Wood

Enclosure

*For each paragraph discuss and record...*

*What's wrong?*

*What's right?*

*How can you improve/rewrite the paragraph?*

Paragraph #1
Paragraph #2
Paragraph #3
Paragraph #4

## Tips to Remember:

- 1) *Avoid comparisons and cliches, as they will distract from your letter's purpose. ("I am a people person" or "Teamwork is my middle name".)*
- 2) *Your career goals should be related to the position you are applying for.*
- 3) *Be careful not to waste your space! Cover letters must tell why you are suited for a particular position in a short amount of time. (Don't say things that are not relevant to the specific job opportunity.)*
- 4) *Stay away from sending out form letters - PERSONALIZE - IT'S KEY! (Tailor each cover letter to the specific job opportunity - shows interest and effort.)*
- 5) *Don't let your stationary distract from the contents of your cover letter (White and ivory are the only acceptable colours for cover letters).*
- 6) *Write in the first person.*
- 7) *Avoid "amusing" anecdotes. You want to present a professional attitude.*
- 8) *If you are talking about the organization, make sure your facts are correct!*
- 9) *Sound determined, not desperate!*
- 10) *There is no need to send personal photos!*
- 11) *Don't be modest but don't go overboard either.*
- 12) *Don't misrepresent yourself, they'll find you out sooner or later.*
- 13) *Demanding statements can put the potential employer on the defensive. Remember to ask for an interview, not to demand one.*
- 14) *Make sure the qualifications you spoke about in your cover letter are present in your resume.*
- 15) *Leave personal information out, unless it is relevant.*
- 16) *Make sure there are NO grammatical errors!*
- 17) *Remember to sign your cover letter - yes some people forget!*
- 18) *Focus on telling the employer what you can do for them in your own words.*
- 19) *Keep a copy of your letter for reference.*
- 20) *Seek advice & have someone else edit (read it backwards).*
- 21) *Use appropriate text (Times New Roman is good) and font size (at least 11, not over 12).*



**Notes:**