

Elements of the Genre

In their resumes and cover letters, job seekers do the following:

- *Introduce themselves as applicants.*
 - » *Cover letters.* This is usually the first communication a job applicant will have with a potential employer, so it's important for writers to present themselves as competent and engaged. See the letter by Julia Nollen in [Guided Reading: Cover Letter & Resume](#) for an example. Nollen provides context for why she's applying for the job she's writing about.
 - » *Resumes.* Writers provide their names and objectives at or near the top of their resumes, highlighting the details that would be highlighted in a traditional, face-to-face introduction. Think about how you normally introduce yourself to people; you probably say something like "Hi, my name is John. I'm a student at XYZ College." A resume communicates the same information.
- *Refer specifically to the position they're applying to.*
 - » *Cover letters.* So that readers can instantly identify which position the writer is applying for, writers need to state the specific job title and reference number (if applicable) near the beginning of the letter.
 - » *Resumes.* Writers need to tailor their objectives to the position they are applying for. This is probably the most important thing to keep in mind each time you apply for a job. Your resume should be a flexible document that you revise as needed for different audiences.
- *Explain why the job and organization are appealing.* The cover letter should be personalized for the specific job and organization being applied to. Candidates applying for a position with Red Rocks Community College, where Amy teaches, would do well to mention something in their cover letter about their experience with or appreciation of the community college mission. This shows that they share values with the organization.

WRITE

When you are interested in a job, do you research it before applying for it? If so, what things do you look for? Have you ever included any of that information in your cover letter? What are some ways that including these specifics could assist you in your job search? Answer these questions on paper.

- *Organize content so it's persuasive and reader-friendly.*
 - » *Cover letters.* Cover letters usually begin with a reference to the position being applied for and a brief summary of the writer's qualifications. One to three paragraphs elaborating on qualifications follow, and then the letter closes with a request for an interview.
 - » *Resumes.* Job seekers typically organize their experiences either chronologically, working backward from their most recent employment experiences, or according to skill sets, such as by listing all their project management experience under one heading and then all their budget management experience under another. Writers should think about the job they are applying for and which organizational pattern will best highlight their qualifications.
- *Present a clear argument about their qualifications.*
 - » *Cover letters.* Writers summarize their qualifications in one or two sentences near the beginning of the letter. They specify the experiences that make them ideal candidates for the job.
 - » *Resumes.* Resume writers continue building their arguments by listing specific experiences that illustrate how qualified they are for the position. A student applying for a position might list relevant classes he or she has taken.
- *Make connections between the cover letter and resume and between different personal experiences.* In their cover letters, applicants refer to the specific experiences listed in their resumes. They draw connections between those experiences and the qualifications that the employer has noted in the job listing. If the job listing states that candidates need to have strong customer service skills, the applicant should address that in her letter. A cover letter is also a good tool for showing relationships between seemingly unrelated experiences or tasks. If an applicant has worked as a swim coach and a café manager, she might say that these jobs tied together because they allowed her to develop as a communicator and a leader.
- *Use concise language.* A cover letter should be no more than one page long. The purpose of the cover letter is not to tell the entire story of the writer, but to whet the appetite of the reader. A resume should also be limited to one page until the applicant has at least ten years' experience in a particular field. You can provide your list of references, writing samples, or other portfolio of work separately from the resume.
- *Request an interview.* Cover letters should end with a polite direct request for an interview, such as "I would welcome the opportunity for an interview and hope to hear from you."