Gather background research on the organization, and direct your letter to a specific person if possible. Use “Dear Hiring Committee” if you don’t have a contact name.

State why you’re writing. Mention the job and organization by name. Identify what interests you and highlight how you can add value.

Focus on why you’ll be an asset to the employer, not how you’ll benefit from the job. You want to reinforce that you’re qualified and suitable for the specific position.

Use detailed examples to highlight your accomplishments and demonstrate your qualifications. It’s not enough to say that you have the competency; employers want specific evidence of how and when you’ve used it.

Tailor your cover letter to the job posting. Address the responsibilities of the position as well as the necessary skills.

Be concise. Avoid summarizing your résumé or using extraneous words like “as my résumé shows”. Use fewer words and make each statement count.

Use professional language, correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. Avoid starting every sentence with “I” or using negative statements. Use the ACTION VERBS LIST resource to use diverse verbs.

Be yourself. Use a writing style that’s clear, straightforward and genuine. The organization will be surprised if you’re different from the way you portray yourself in your cover letter.

Be aware of the tone that your letter is setting. Does it match the type of candidate the employer is looking for? (E.g. If the organization wants someone with energy and confidence, make certain that your letter conveys this).

Thank the organization for considering your application and express your interest in hearing about the next steps.