

CMG Cover Letter Checklist

Convey a “story” about your value-add that draws the reader in...

Purpose: Create interest in the recruiter and prime them to read your resume.

- [Phase 1: Before you start](#)
- [Phase 2: While you are drafting and iterating](#)
- [Phase 3: Post-review check-list](#)

Phase 1: Before you start

A cover letter is *not* a resume in paragraph form

- ❑ Refrain from regurgitating resume bullets in paragraph form!
- ❑ The opportunity in the cover letter is to bring some color to your skills and experience by adding details you aren't able to include in a resume.
 - ❑ WHY are you excited, passionate, committed, etc.?
 - ❑ WHAT are some details that help draw in the reader and make your experience compelling to them? A pivotal moment, a time of high impact, etc.

Phase 2: While you are drafting and iterating

Take a step back. Is your cover letter inviting?

- Does the visual layout draw someone in or overwhelm with too much text?
- Make sure there is visual “spaciousness,” otherwise the brain will unconsciously “turn away” from too much text

Take the POV of the recruiter who may look through hundreds of cover letters.

- Know your audience.** What’s the story that will be compelling for your audience? What’s the impression you want to leave?
- Opening**
 - Who are you? What do you want? WHY them? What can you share so they want you?
 - How can you start your cover letter in a refreshing way to draw the reader in immediately?
 - Do you have a personal connection to the mission/company/product?
- Body**
 - 1-2 paragraphs that communicate your main message about your value as a candidate in a way that’s compelling. See below.
- Ending**
 - Close with a strong statement that reflects your skill, interest, and excitement that is more than a repeat of what’s already been stated.
 - Another reason WHY them
 - Another reason WHY you
 - “Thank you...look forward to next steps” etc.

Strategy for the “body” of your cover letter

Pivot to different non-adjacent roles

- ❑ Emphasize transferable skills
- ❑ Demonstrate how you’ve used transferable skills to create impact in a context similar to the role/organization you’re applying to

Pivot to different industry, similar role

- ❑ Since your skillset will be similar, consider focusing on different elements to demonstrate your “fit” as a strong candidate
 - ❑ **Culture**
 - ❑ Demonstrate HOW you’re a fit through an example (story)
 - ❑ **“Superior Motivation”**
 - ❑ Demonstrate WHY this is your purpose, WHY you are motivated, WHERE motivation comes from, and WHAT compelling impact you’ve had
 - ❑ **Cross-industry innovation or unique transferable experience**
 - ❑ What value do you bring that is less common
 - ❑ **An idea or vision for future possibility that might interest them**

Is your contribution and value immediately clear to someone who has no idea about your background?

- ❑ Every line is high value real estate. Include only what is compelling and relevant to the role you’re applying for. “Kill your darlings.”
- ❑ Get rid of industry jargon and use language from your target industry/roles.
 - ❑ Don’t include names of companies or organizations that have no meaning to the reader. It may be more effective to describe in simple words what the organization actually does.
- ❑ If you’re pivoting, use language of new role/industry to describe past experience.
 - ❑ For example, if pivoting from finance to product management in Tech, consider framing past experience building financial models as building financial “products” and “processes”

Phase 3: Post-review check-list

Take a step back. Is your cover letter format inviting, and your content clear and compelling?

- Make sure there is visual “spaciousness,” otherwise the brain will unconsciously “turn away” from too much text
- Scan your cover letter quickly, which is how a hiring manager or recruiter will be reviewing it. Is your passion behind WHY you are seeking this role clear? Have you sprinkled in brief examples that help your skills, impact, and value-add come alive?
- Seek feedback about your cover letter from people who have worked in the role/industry you are targeting, or are working in it currently.