How to Write a Legal Cover Letter for Law Firms (With Examples)

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In the competitive legal job market, a well-crafted cover letter is your opportunity to stand out from the crowd.

Whether you're a law student, recent law graduate, or experienced legal professional, this post will help you with your legal cover letter writing. We've started by providing sample cover letters for legal positions below and will then guide you through the essentials of writing a compelling cover letter for law firms.

How to draft a law firm cover letter

Reviewing cover letter examples is one thing, but how do you write one? By following the standard etiquette and structure—and then personalizing it—you can draft an effective cover letter. First, let's review some best practices for legal cover letters:

Cover letter etiquette

While the content of your cover letter will differ between employers, these points of etiquette should not.

- **Don't skip it.** The first—and potentially most important—element of legal cover letter etiquette is just writing one. While job sites and hiring portals may state "Cover Letter Optional," disregard this, it is always best to send a cover letter.
- **Review the law firm. Review its practice areas, recent casework, and attorney profiles. This will give you insight into what the firm values and the type of work it does.**
- **Be concise.** The hiring manager is likely receiving dozens, or maybe even hundreds, of cover letters a day. Respect an employer's time by getting straight to the point. Long legal cover letters may also indicate an inability to achieve quick and succinct results.
- **Match their tone.** Write as if you've already been hired for the role. It's subtle, but an employer will appreciate this personal touch.
- **Prioritize the employer.** Don't include unnecessary details about your life that won't impact how you'll perform the job.

- **Don't recycle legal cover letters.** Be original. It's time-consuming work, but it'll show your potential employer your dedication.
- **Triple-check it. You should avoid spelling and grammatical errors at all costs. Given the highly competitive nature of the legal job market, you don't want to be passed up over a simple error.**

Addressing cover letters for lawyers

To whom it may concern: Always take the time to find the correct contact. When writing cover letters for law firms, it's a common misstep to dedicate so much time and attention to the body of the letter that you overlook the basics—like who and how you're addressing the letter.

Here are some best practices for addressing your legal cover letter:

- **Know who you're speaking to.** Do your research and be specific. Address your cover letter to the person responsible for hiring at the firm you're contacting, like the senior partner or hiring manager. If you don't have this information, the law firm's website might come in handy, or you can contact the law firm's human resources department for guidance.
- **Be careful with salutations.** Mistakes in the salutation are a sign that you'll miss details, which won't bode well for your chances of impressing your potential employer. If you're certain of the recipient's preferred gender-identifying language, you can write the salutation as "Dear Ms." or "Dear Mr."; however, if you aren't certain (and don't make assumptions) or you don't want to use gender-identifying language, drop the "Ms." or "Mr." and write out the person's full first and last name.
- **Double-check your spelling.** People will always notice if you spell their name wrong, and there are multiple ways to spell even common names. Ensure you start on the right foot by getting the basics right.

Introductory paragraph

In your cover letter's opening paragraph, you have two main goals:

1. Introduce who you are.
2. Explain why you'd be a good fit for this particular firm.

In the first paragraph, include details about:

- **Who you are.** Are you currently a law student? Are you an associate at a law firm?

- **Who you know.** Mention any referrals or mutual acquaintances right away.
- **Why you'd be a great fit for the firm.** Include specific reasons—you're looking for a way to create connections with the senior partner or hiring manager.

Main cover letter body

The body section of your cover letter is your chance to shine—and to concisely summarize exactly how you meet the requirements in the job description.

In one or two paragraphs, give a high-level overview of your legal education and experience to show:

1. **Why you want to work for this firm.** Elaborate on what makes you genuinely excited about the firm—whether it is an area of interest you've specialized in, the firm's reputation or mission, or past experiences that will make you a uniquely good fit.
2. **Why this firm should hire you.** Make clear connections between your qualifications and aspects of the role you're applying for. If there is a job posting, look closely for key attributes that the firm is looking for, and then detail how you meet those expectations.
3. **Why you're a good fit for the firm's culture.** Law firms aren't only looking for candidates with the right legal skills— they're looking for individuals who will fit in with their culture. This is where you can discuss what you admire about the firm and how your values align with theirs.

Highlighting your qualifications

Above all else, ensure your legal cover letter highlights your skills. Relevant qualifications for a law firm cover letter include:

- Past legal work experience or positions.
- Community service roles.
- Academic or research specializations.
- Publications.
- Relevant awards you've received.
- Your personal background.

For example, consider a job posting that describes their ideal candidate as someone with personal injury litigation experience, excellent communication skills, and who works well both independently and as a part of a team in a fast-paced office environment.

If you were applying for this role, your cover letter's body paragraphs might detail your past personal injury litigation experience and specific examples of how you've successfully communicated within a team and in a fast-paced environment.

Remember: Be specific, but keep in mind that **this is not the place to restate your resume**—if you can grab the hiring manager's attention here, they will read your resume for those details. Your cover letter is where you can entice the reader to move on to your resume by providing context and highlighting how your experience lines up with what's needed for the role.

For tips on writing a standout lawyer resume, read our blog post here.

Concluding paragraph

Finally, your concluding paragraph is where you'll succinctly wrap the cover letter up, close the loop, and leave a positive impression. In your closing paragraph, be sure to:

- **Say thank you.** Gratitude can make a difference, so always thank the reader for their consideration.
- **Express enthusiasm:** Reiterate why you're excited about the opportunity.
- **Assert your next steps.** It's fine to clearly outline how and when you will follow up on your application, rather than waiting indefinitely for an answer. And, if you say that you'll follow up at a specific time, be sure to do it—and hold yourself to your word.
- **Provide relevant contact details.** Let the reader know how to reach you by phone or email, if these details are not already outlined in your letter's header.

Legal cover letter sample templates

Lawyer cover letter example template:

Paralegal cover letter example template:

Legal Administrator cover letter example template:

Additional legal cover letter examples

If you're feeling overwhelmed when drafting a cover letter for law firms, don't worry. Seeing a legal cover letter example can give you the confidence to write your own. Below, we've compiled some sample cover letters for legal positions, covering different backgrounds and levels of experience.

- Cover letter examples for summer associates and interns, Columbia Law School.
- Cover letter examples for 1L – 3L students, Harvard Law School.
- Cover letter examples for 1L – 3L students, Yale Law School.
- Cover letter example for applying to an immigration law firm by a recent graduate with previous paralegal experience.
- Cover letter example for applying to a Big Law firm, Boston University.
- Cover letter example for an IP lawyer with 11 years experience, Monster.
- Cover letter example for a litigation attorney with 12 years experience, My Perfect Resume.
- Cover letter examples for applying for private sector roles, Yale Law School.
- Cover letter example for seeking a summer judicial internship, University of Georgia School of Law.

Berkeley Law also provides an excellent guide for legal cover letters.

You can start by using one of these examples as inspiration when structuring your cover letter and what you may want to highlight. You can also take insights from these sample cover letters for lawyers—insights you can apply to your own cover letter when following our tips below.

Top 5 legal cover letter writing tips

The legal industry is rapidly evolving, and job hunters need to set themselves apart to get hired (unless, of course, you decide to start your own law firm).

If you're applying for a job as a lawyer, whether it's a traditional position or a legal work-from-home job, here are five tips to make sure your cover letter lands at the top of the pile.

1. Make it personal

Perhaps the most important tip for writing cover letters for lawyers is to make it personal.

Many of your competitors have similar education and professional experience, so being generic is a fast track to being forgotten (it's also a pretty big no-no to send in a legal cover entirely generated by AI).

Use a personalized cover letter to showcase the unique reasons why you're the best candidate. **Show that you know the person you're writing to, and highlight any connections.** If that isn't possible, you can always write about the firm to show that you've done your research.

2. Prioritize the positive

When writing a lawyer cover letter, focus on what you have to offer. Regardless of why you're looking for a new job, you bring a unique mix of attributes to the table. Highlight these attributes, whether they're your:

- Skills
- Experience
- Passion
- Other legal careers
- Relevant work experience

If you're a law student or recent graduate, you may not have a long legal career to highlight. However, you can still note strengths like technology skills that make you an asset.

To a hiring law firm, being tech-competent and familiar with certain cloud-based tools like Clio could be an advantage that sets you apart from other candidates.

For example, more and more law firms are adopting artificial intelligence (AI) tools to help them run their practices more efficiently, with the most recent *Legal Trends Report* finding that the vast majority of lawyers are using some form of AI in their practices. With this in mind, lawyers up-to-date with AI technology may stand out for hiring law firms.

3. Get to the point

Legal cover letters are not the place to be long-winded, and droning on will almost certainly have the opposite effect of what you're going for. **Keep cover letters for attorneys short, to the point, and persuasive—the trick is to be memorable and limit yourself to one page.** Because you want to make a lasting impression on a single page, it's also a good idea to check your cover letter's sentence structure. Do you start all of your sentences the same way? Are they all the same length? Ensure there's some variety so your reader stays engaged.

4. Set the right tone

Tone matters. While what you say in a cover letter for lawyers is obviously important, it also matters *how* you say it.

No matter what type of legal job you're applying for, you always want to convey a professional tone. However, depending on the law firm you're applying to, using a personal tone may work to your advantage. **Tailor your tone to match the law firm you're applying**

to.

For example, if you're writing a Big Law cover letter, you'll want to err on being more formal. For a smaller local law firm? Check their website and match the tone to demonstrate your familiarity with their firm

5. Proofread

There is zero room for typos or grammatical errors in cover letters for lawyers. With so much competition for legal jobs, don't give hiring managers a reason to eliminate you. Take the time to carefully proofread your cover letter yourself, and consider enlisting someone else to proofread your cover letters as well.

Common mistakes to avoid in a legal cover letter

Even the most qualified legal professionals can undermine their applications with easily avoidable missteps in their cover letters. To maximize your chances of making a strong impression, steer clear of the following common pitfalls:

- **Overexplaining your resume.** Your cover letter should complement, not repeat, your resume. Focus on adding context, highlighting specific achievements, or drawing connections to the role—don't simply rehash what's already listed.
- **Using generic templates.** Hiring managers can spot a copy-paste job instantly. A generic or formulaic letter suggests a lack of genuine interest. Always tailor your letter to the specific firm and role.
- **Focusing too much on yourself.** It's easy to slip into talking only about your own goals, but law firms want to know how you'll contribute to their team. Frame your experience in terms of what you bring to them, not just what the job brings to you.
- **Neglecting tone and formality.** Casual language, humor, or overly enthusiastic phrasing can come across as unprofessional—especially in legal settings. Match your tone to the firm's culture while maintaining a polished, respectful voice.
- **Failing to proofread.** Legal work demands precision, and a typo in your cover letter raises red flags about your attention to detail. Always proofread carefully and, if possible, ask a trusted colleague or mentor to review it as well.

By avoiding these common mistakes, you position yourself as a thoughtful, detail-oriented, and strategic candidate, exactly what law firms are looking for.

Final thoughts on how to write a legal cover letter for a law firm

In a crowded legal job market, there's no better way to outshine the competition than an excellent legal cover letter. Ensure you're putting your best foot forward with your future employer by:

- **Making it personal.** At every step, customize your cover letter to the firm you're applying to—from the tone to the specific skills you detail.
- **Keeping it brief.** Cover letters for lawyers are a one-page summary to let the hiring manager know that you're a candidate they should talk to further. You want to give them enough information to draw them in, but not overwhelm them and risk losing interest.
- **Showcasing your strengths.** Focus on the positives, and don't be afraid to highlight how your past experiences make you uniquely qualified.

While finding a new legal job in a competitive market isn't exactly easy, staying resilient and adaptive will lead you to success. By crafting a great cover letter, you're more likely to be noticed in this—and any—job market.

And, no matter what job you're applying for, knowing technology can help set you apart—both when job hunting and once you're working at your new firm. If you're a law student and want a head start, you may be able to get free Clio access via Clio's Academic Access Program (CAAP) at your law school. Learn more about CAAP here.

Frequently asked questions

Do law firms read cover letters?

In a competitive job market, hiring managers at law firms read cover letters to help determine which candidates may be the best fit. A well-written legal cover letter can entice the reader to review your resume—and, hopefully, invite you for an interview—by showcasing how your experience and skills align with the role.

About Clio

Clio is the global leader in legal AI, powering legal work across the profession, from law firms of every size to corporate legal teams, government agencies, and courts. Its Intelligent Legal Work Platform unites the business and practice of law, connecting the people, information, and processes behind legal work. Clio's AI brings the context together with legal sources drawn from Clio Library, a growing collection of more than one billion legal documents. Over 400,000 legal professionals in more than 130 countries rely on Clio to run their legal world. Learn more at www.clio.com.