

The Nurse's Cover Letter Guide

How to write it — plus a full worked example

A cover letter is your chance to connect your experience to THIS unit and THIS employer. It should complement the resume, not repeat it. Keep it to one page, four short paragraphs, same header and fonts as your resume (this kit gives you a matching cover-letter template so they look like one set).

The four-paragraph structure

1. Opening: name the position, who you are in one line, and one specific reason this employer/unit appeals to you.
2. Proof: two or three of your strongest, quantified accomplishments that map to what the posting asks for.
3. Fit: the human side — mentorship, teamwork, patient advocacy, reliability — backed by a brief example.
4. Close: a warm, confident call to action and a thank-you. Keep it short.

Do and don't

- DO address a real person when you can find one ('Dear Ms. Whitfield'); 'Dear Hiring Manager' is an acceptable fallback.
- DO tailor the opening line to each posting — this is the one edit that matters most.
- DON'T restate your whole resume; pick the 2–3 most relevant wins.
- DON'T exceed one page, and keep paragraphs to 3–4 lines.

Worked example (experienced ICU RN)

Dear Ms. Whitfield, I am writing to apply for the Critical Care RN position on your cardiovascular ICU. With 8+ years of high-acuity ICU and cardiac step-down experience — the last four as a charge nurse and preceptor — I bring the bedside judgment, calm under pressure, and mentorship your unit is known for.

In my current role I care for up to three ventilator, CRRT, and post-op cardiac patients per shift at 98% adherence to hourly assessment standards. I led a CLABSI-reduction initiative that drove central-line infections from 2.1 to 0 per 1,000 line-days and held zero infections across three years. As charge nurse for a 24-bed ICU I cut admission turnaround from 45 to 28 minutes.

Beyond the numbers, I am the nurse families remember and new grads seek out. I precepted 14 residents and retained 13 of 14 at one year, and raised HCAHPS nurse-communication scores from the 62nd to the 88th percentile. I hold CCRN certification and serve as an Epic super-user, so I ramp quickly and help the team document accurately.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss how my critical-care background and leadership can support your team and patients. Thank you for your time and consideration; I look forward to speaking with you. Sincerely, Marisa J. Coleman, BSN, RN.