

ATS-Friendly Cover Letter Checklist

Use this checklist **before submitting any job application** to ensure your cover letter is ATS-safe, readable, and recruiter-ready.

STEP 1: ATS BASICS (FOUNDATION)

- I understand that my cover letter will be scanned by ATS before a human sees it
- My goal is relevance and clarity, not design or creativity
- I avoided graphics, icons, charts, tables, and text boxes

STEP 2: JOB DESCRIPTION & KEYWORDS

- I copied the **exact job title** from the job posting
- I identified **core skills and tools** mentioned in the description
- I noted common action verbs (e.g., manage, analyze, coordinate, teach)
- I naturally included relevant keywords in my cover letter
- I did NOT stuff keywords unnaturally

STEP 3: ATS-SAFE STRUCTURE

- My cover letter follows a simple structure
- Header is plain text (Name, phone, email, location)
- I used a clear greeting (e.g., Dear Hiring Manager)
- Body contains **3–4 short paragraphs only**
- Content flows from introduction → experience → value → closing

STEP 4: OPENING PARAGRAPH CHECK

- I mentioned the **exact job title** in the first paragraph
- I clearly stated why I am a strong match
- I included at least **1–2 relevant keywords** early
- My opening avoids generic phrases like “I am writing to apply...”

STEP 5: BODY PARAGRAPH OPTIMIZATION

- I linked skills directly to real tasks or results
- I included relevant tools, systems, or methodologies
- I used numbers or impact where possible

- My content complements my resume (does not repeat it word-for-word)
- My tone is professional, direct, and clear

STEP 6: FORMATTING & FILE TYPE

- Font used: Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman
- Font size is between **10.5 – 12 pt**
- Text is left-aligned
- Line spacing is single or 1.15
- No emojis, colors, or special symbols
- File format is **.DOCX** (or PDF if explicitly allowed)

STEP 7: FINAL ATS VERIFICATION

- My cover letter keywords match my resume keywords
- Job title is consistent across resume and cover letter
- My file name is professional and specific

Correct file name example:

FirstName_LastName_JobTitle_Cover_Letter.docx

FINAL CONFIDENCE CHECK

- This cover letter can be read cleanly by ATS software
- A recruiter can quickly understand my value
- My letter is tailored for THIS job—not generic
- I am confident it will pass ATS screening

 **If all boxes are checked, your cover letter is ATS-ready.**

Print this checklist, keep it on your desk, or save it as a PDF—**and never submit a weak cover letter again.**

ATS COVER LETTER SELF-AUDIT SCORECARD (0–100)

Use this scorecard **after writing your cover letter**. Be honest—ATS systems are.

[1] STRUCTURE & READABILITY (25 POINTS)

- Single-column, no tables or text boxes (5 pts)
- Clear header with name, phone, email (5 pts)
- 3–4 short paragraphs only (5 pts)

- Standard font (Arial, Calibri, Times New Roman) (5 pts)
- Left-aligned, clean spacing (5 pts)

Subtotal: ____ /25

[2] KEYWORD & ROLE ALIGNMENT (30 POINTS)

- Exact job title used in opening paragraph (10 pts)
- Core skills from job description included naturally (10 pts)
- Keywords align with resume keywords (5 pts)
- No keyword stuffing or repetition abuse (5 pts)

Subtotal: ____ /30

[3] CONTENT QUALITY & RELEVANCE (25 POINTS)

- Opening paragraph shows immediate relevance (5 pts)
- Skills are linked to real tasks or experience (10 pts)
- Industry-specific terminology used correctly (5 pts)
- Content is tailored for this role, not generic (5 pts)

Subtotal: ____ /25

[4] TECHNICAL & SUBMISSION SAFETY (20 POINTS)

- File format is .DOCX (or PDF if allowed) (10 pts)
- Professional file name used (5 pts)
- No images, icons, headers, footers, or graphics (5 pts)

Subtotal: ____ /20

✓ FINAL SCORE: ____ /100

🔍 HOW TO INTERPRET YOUR SCORE

- **85–100** → ATS-Strong (Excellent submission)
- **70–84** → ATS-Safe (Minor improvements needed)
- **50–69** → ATS-Risky (Likely ranking issues)
- **Below 50** → ATS-Fail (Rewrite before submitting)

 *If your score is below 85, revise before applying.*
