When submitting an application or resume for a job, you should always include a cover letter (unless specifically told not to include one.) A cover letter allows you to highlight a particular strength, emphasize your interest in the position, and tell a little more about yourself. Do this all in a straightforward manner; like resumes, people want to be able to get through the letter quickly. This is especially important when using e-mail.

Parts of a Cover Letter
Name and Address
Make every attempt to address the letter to the hiring manager for the position. If the position is in a search laboratory, then address it to the PI. The Human Resources office should be able to share with you the name of the specific contact.

Opening Paragraph
Tell the reader for what position you are applying, and how you learned about the position.
Example: Please accept the attached resume as an expression of my interest in the Research Associate II position posted on the Research Industries website. Dr. Robert Smith, associate professor at The Ohio State University and my current supervisor suggested that I apply for the position.

Body
Tell why you are qualified for the position. If there is a job description available, specifically state how you meet or exceed the qualifications listed. This is also the section to highlight a skill that you may not have been able to fully explain in the resume.
Example: This position is an excellent fit with my education and experience. I currently serve as a student research associate in the laboratory of Dr. Robert Smith in the Arthur G. James Comprehensive Cancer Center at The Ohio State University. My primary duties including monitoring the progress of cultured cells, entering detailed data in a spreadsheet, and following published research protocol. Your position description requests a candidate who has significant experience in research. My 18 months of experience has prepared me for such a position.

Closing
Reiterate your interest. Explain how you will proceed. Comment on any special circumstances that may be questioned by the reader. If you don’t tell, they will assume. Thank the reader.
Example: Thank you for your time. I hope to hear from you as the interview process continues. While my current residence is in Columbus, Ohio where I will finish my undergraduate degree in June 2009. I am relocating to the Los Angeles area immediately after graduation.

Tips
1. This isn’t the time to beat around the bush. Be sure your letter clearly states “I want THIS job.”
2. Proofread, proofread, proofread.

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