Quick Content Tips for Cover Letters

There are four basic parts to a cover letter: heading, introduction, argument/body, and a closing. Here are some tips on what to include in each section:

Heading

Provide your contact information.
Include the date you are writing the letter.
Include the address of the company.

Introduction

Greet the specific person you address the letter to.
State the position you are applying for and where you heard about it.
Name drop if you have a good connection.
State why you believe you are a strong candidate, including 2-3 key qualifications that you will address in the rest of the letter.

Argument/Body

Tailor cover letter for each job application.
Focus each paragraph on one qualification.
Give specific examples to prove where you got these skills and how you have used them before.
Tell a story; do not just list your skills.
Refer to your resume; do not repeat it.
Do not use contractions.

Closing

Close with a strong reminder of why you are a good candidate.
Request an interview in some way.
Provide contact information.
Thank them!
Sign your name and print it underneath.

Quick Formatting Tips for Cover Letters
Remember that the basic format of a cover letter follows that of a business letter. As you design the page, think about the following:

Length
Keep to one page!
Write one paragraph of introduction, one-three paragraphs to prove your skills, and one paragraph to conclude.

**Spacing**

Single-space your cover letter.
Leave a space between addresses and dates in the heading.
Leave a space between your heading (contact info) and greeting ("Dear...").
Leave a space between each paragraph.
Leave at least three spaces between your complimentary close ("Sincerely," and typed name.
Sign your name in ink between your complimentary close and typed name.

**Margins and Alignment**

Use standard margins (one-inch margins, usually).
Can use smaller margins (to about 0.7-inch) as long as you are consistent on all sides.
Center your letter in the middle of the page.
Align all paragraphs to the left of the page. (You can also indent the first line of each paragraph, but that is not used as often.)

**What should I do before sending off my cover letter?**

In order to provide the most professional image of yourself to potential employers, you want to have a polished resume with no mistakes. Here are some final tips to get this professional look:

Proofread the cover letter after a few hours or days (improve sentences, grammar, typos).
Give your cover letter to friends, professors, and/or colleagues for proofreading and suggestions.
Come see your local writing specialist to offer any help that may be needed.