



# A Guide to Cover Letter Writing

## What is a cover letter?

A cover letter is a professional letter demonstrating the value you bring to the organization, highlighting how your experiences will benefit the employer, and explains how you are the ideal candidate for the position.

## What is the purpose of a cover letter?

The **purpose** of a cover letter is to **complement your resume and help you obtain employment.** Similar to your resume, the cover letter is a first impression of who you are. The content of the letter is tailored in such a way that explains to the employer how your experiences and skills fit the job for which you are applying. In other words, it's a chance for you to sell yourself for the job and tell your story.

## Do you need to make one?

Yes. Most professional positions require applicants to submit a cover letter and resume as part of the application process. We encourage you to tailor your cover letter for each position, as job requirements and desired skills may be different.

## Important Tips:

A cover letter is a **one page** document that is different for every position to which you apply.

- Never start your cover letter with "My name is..."
- Be a storyteller to draw in the reader.
- Read the position description and research the organization website to find key points you may wish to include in your letter.
- Use the same heading (name and contact information) as on your resume.
- Use the same fonts and font size in both your resume and cover letter. This sends a non-verbal message to the employer and visually begins to create your personal brand.
- Unless otherwise instructed, always save your cover letter as a PDF to preserve formatting and allow anyone to open it.



### **Madison College Career and Employment Services**

1701 Wright Street, Madison, WI  
53704

Truax D1624  
608-243-4598

[careerandemployment@madisoncollege.edu](mailto:careerandemployment@madisoncollege.edu)





# How-to Write a Cover Letter: Step-by-Step Guide

## 1. Prepare your document and heading

---

Open a new Microsoft Word document. Ensure that you are using size 10-12 point font, depending on the font style. Stick with simple font styles such as Arial, Calibri, Verdana or Cambria. **The font you use on your resume should be the same font you use for your cover letter.**

Make sure your cover letter is within 0.5-1.0 inch margins. *For help changing margins, see How-To Write a Resume guide.*

Your cover letter heading should have the same heading you used on your resume. This heading should include your name, address, phone number, and email address. *For help create a heading, see How-To Write a Resume guide.*

## 2. Address the letter to the employer

---

To properly address the employer, include the following:

- Date letter is being sent
- Mr./Ms./Mrs. Name of contact person (if there is one)
- Title of the contact person (if there is one)
- Name of organization
- Street address, city, state, zip
- Dear Mr./Ms./Mrs. ( last name of contact person or 'Hiring Manger' if no contact), followed by a colon

<p><b>Wolfie Wolfpack</b> 1701 Wright Street, Madison, WI 53704   608.243.4598   <a href="mailto:WWolfpack@madisoncollege.edu">WWolfpack@madisoncollege.edu</a></p> <p>May 5, 2018</p> <p>Mr. Donald Duck Vice President, IT American Family Insurance 6000 American Parkway Madison, WI 53783</p> <p>Dear Mr. Duck:</p>
--

## 3. Write an opening and introduction paragraph

---

Use this first paragraph (3-4 sentences) to explain why you are writing. Since this is the first thing they read, try to capture their attention by developing an opening statement that is personal, informative, and grabs the reader's attention. Be a storyteller.

Dear Ms. Prince:

I recently learned about the Social Media Specialist position on the Wisconsin TechConnect website and believe my experience and education make me the ideal candidate to contribute to Large National Marketing Corporation in this role. Through my research, I noticed Large National Marketing Corporation is not currently utilizing Twitter to market business or services. With my social media knowledge and experience, I will expand your social media marketing with Twitter and other tools.

#### Additional suggestions:

- Name the position for which you are applying
- Mention where you heard about the job
- Bring up any previous conversations you had with your reader (i.e. at a job fair)
- Consider posing a question that zeros in on a high-need area for the employer
- Make strong, assertive statements to gain the employer's attention (see *How-To Be Assertive* on page 4 for assistance)
- Close the paragraph with a comprehensive statement that describes the body of the letter and makes a strong claim about your candidacy

## 4. Write 2-3 body paragraphs

The body of the cover letter (the argument) should describe the most important qualifications to show why you are a good match for the job and the company. Similar to your resume, use key words from the job description for help. Demonstrate your knowledge of the company (products, services, or special projects) and why you are interested in working for them. Don't include statements that say what the company or job will do for you; this letter is about the value **you bring** to the company.

Seek answers to the following questions:

1. How can I show I am qualified for this position and that I'm a good match for the organization?
2. What have I done that illustrates these qualifications?
3. How do your career interests and experiences fit with the organization?
4. What specific examples of my accomplishments can I share to show the employer how my skills will transfer or apply to the job?

As a student at Madison College, I had the opportunity to engage in many learning opportunities that broadened my knowledge about veterinary medicine and the unique needs of each animal. My education provided technical skills and knowledge regarding medical terminology, animal diseases, and pharmacology techniques, as well as how to assist in many laboratory procedures for hematology. This essential knowledge will serve as an important foundation for my work at Verona Emergency Animal Hospital.

In addition to my education, I had many hands-on opportunities to put these skills to use, such as when I was an Animal Caretaker and a Pet Admission staff. Not only was I providing care to animals, but also supporting the needs and concerns of their owners. As a pet owner myself, I am very compassionate for the worry and sadness many owners feel when their animal is in need of medical attention. I use this personal perspective to put myself in owners' shoes and provide them calming remarks and comfort while I care for their animals. The skill of compassion will be beneficial when working at an emergency animal hospital, as owners are often even more worried in emergency situations.

## 5. Write your closing paragraph

---

Your cover letter should end on a summarization of why you are the ideal candidate, identify your next steps in contacting the employer, and thank the employer for their consideration.

- Indicate the next step by stating when you will follow-up with the employer. **If you include this kind of statement, you must follow through as stated.**

UW Hospitals and Clinics will benefit from me as an employee because I have great passion, I'm up for any challenge that comes my way, I care about all individuals, and I'm a fast learner. I look forward to the possibility of discussing the position in more detail during an interview. I will follow up in one week to check the status of my application. Thank you for your time and consideration.

## 6. Sign the letter

---

Your letter signature should include 'Sincerely,' your signature (or a font that looks like it), and your name. Be sure to leave lines in between each of these.

- If you state in your letter that you have enclosed or attached your resume, include the word 'Enclosure' or 'Attachment' at the end of your letter.

Sincerely,

*Wolfie Wolfpack*

Wolfie Wolfpack

Enclosed: Resume

## How-To Be Assertive

---

As a job applicant, you're not just applying for a job, you are competing for a job. Your cover letter and resume are intended to prompt an action from the employer, making the process very competitive. Because of this, it is suggested that an individual be confident and assertive in what they are saying. But what is being assertive?

Being **assertive** is a balance between being aggressive and being passive; it is standing up for yourself, but not at the expense of others. For some people, this might mean not being so harsh and bold. For others, it means stepping up and asking for what you want. Your cover letter is a great place to start being assertive.

Here are examples of statements that **are not assertive**:

*"I believe I have the qualifications you are looking for."*

*"I think I could be an asset for your organization."*

Here are examples of statements that **are assertive**:

*"I have the qualifications you are looking for."*

*"I will be an asset to your organization because..."*

By changing a few words, your statement can go from seeming uncertain about whether you are qualified, to being sure that you are qualified.

Don't become overly assertive! Sometimes being too assertive can come across as arrogant instead of confident. See these examples below:

*Bad Example 1: You won't find a better person for the job. I guarantee I know the financial challenges facing your industry better than you do, and I can solve your budget problems. At my last position at National Bank, I saved the company \$10,000 and I can do the same for you.*

*Good Example 2: I am aware the financial challenges facing this industry today. Reduced demands for products and tougher competition from lower-cost overseas manufacturers are forcing U.S. companies to take a long look at their budgets. From my experience at National Bank, one of my greatest strengths is finding practical ways to trim budgets. For example, I was asked to find \$10,000 in budget savings for my department at National Bank. By asking tough questions and doing some in-depth research, I was able to uncover that amount with no adverse effects on department operations.*

Example 2 does a great job citing accomplishments in relation to the demands of the job, and how that demand related to a concern in the company. In other words, the paragraph markets the writer's skills by addressing more directly what's in it for the employer. Example 1, however, may come off as obnoxious. The text does not link the accomplishment with the qualification for the job, nor does it address company needs.

# Wolfie Wolfpack

1701 Wright Street, Madison, WI 53704 | 608.243.4598 | WWolfpack@madisoncollege.edu

---

May 5, 2018

Mr. Donald Duck  
My Favorite Insurance  
1010 Insurance Way  
Madison, WI 53783

Dear Mr. Duck:

As a Sales Associate with a strong background in successful help desk support and diagnostic technical skills, I would welcome the opportunity to join your IT team at My Favorite Insurance. I have extensive technical support experience from a broad range of professional and administrative positions that can contribute to your organization's plan. In addition, with exceptional customer support capabilities, I will offer a level of resourcefulness that will make a real difference to My Favorite Insurance's success.

In my previous role as a sales associate at Best Buy, I found that I thrive in a fast-pace environment where deadlines are a priority and handling multiple projects is a norm. I enjoy the challenges that come with diverse customers, and will work hard to achieve similar objectives at My Favorite Insurance.

You will find my resume enclosed for your review. Some of my key strengths and accomplishments include:

- Over three years of experience with students and business clients providing high-level support, building strong customer relationships, and addressing the long- and short-term needs of the customer
- Results-oriented site supervision and project management capabilities including scheduling, staff management and strategic planning
- Received an average of 3.9 out of 4 stars on customer satisfaction surveys
- Excellent organization, time management and communication skills with the flexibility and experience required to adjust to rapid changing scheduling and shifting priorities
- Critical thinker who can learn new systems quickly, with current competencies with CompTIA's A+, Microsoft Office, and contact management software
- Quickly recognized as capable of more responsibility, and promoted to Sales Associate manager, taking on the responsibilities of managing staff members, solving the most difficult cases and collaborating with neighbor Best Buy Locations

My administrative skills and practical knowledge are well suited to the goals of My Favorite Insurance. I would welcome the opportunity to expand upon my experiences in an interview. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

***Wolfie Wolfpack***

Wolfie Wolfpack

Enclosure: Resume

# DAFFY DUCK

---

Daffyduck@gmail.com | 300 Alexander Ave, Reedsburg, WI 53959 | 608.243.4598

---

October 20, 2017

Ms. Charlene Prince  
Director of Personnel  
Large National Marketing Corporation  
1234 Henry Street  
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Ms. Prince:

I recently learned about the Social Media Specialist position on the Wisconsin TechConnect website and believe my experience and education make me the ideal candidate to contribute to Large National Marketing Corporation in this role. Through my research, I noticed Large National Marketing Corporation is not currently utilizing Twitter to market business or services. With my social media knowledge and experience, I will expand your social media marketing with Twitter and other tools.

I will graduate with my Associate's Degree in Marketing from Madison Area Technical College in December. My education includes a number of courses that frame my knowledge of social media, including Advanced Social Media Campaigns and Social Media Principles. Both of those classes provided me the opportunity to develop a social media campaign for the Volunteer Center, a student organization on campus. The campaign included analyzing where students prefer to receive content in order to market volunteer opportunities to the campus community. As a result, volunteer events were well attended and many students used social media to share their experiences which has expanded our market and social media followers by 200 students. My social media knowledge will be very useful as a Social Media Specialist, as I now understand the most important factors of social media use and how to use them most effectively.

In addition to social media experience, my role as the Vice President of the Madison College Marketing Club provided the opportunity and experience to work with teams of individuals and act as a leader. One of my responsibilities as the Vice President was to facilitate executive board meetings and distribute projects among board members. In order to do this, I had to know team members' abilities, interests, and expertise in order to properly gauge instructions and delegate tasks. As a Social Media Specialist, I will work with other individuals to achieve tasks where my experience as a team member and leader will be most helpful.

Large National Marketing Corporation will benefit from my combination of social media knowledge and team-oriented experience. I appreciate your consideration and review of my attached resume. I will contact you in a one week to check the status of my application.

Sincerely,

*Daffy Duck*

Daffy Duck

Attachment

# PINK PANTHER

panther@madisoncollege.edu

---

1701 Wright Street, Madison, WI 53704 | 608-243-4598 | LinkedIn.com/pinkpanther

---

May 8, 2018

Hiring Manager  
Verona Emergency Animal Hospital  
100 Verona Road  
Verona, WI 53593

Dear Hiring Manager:

On my 5<sup>th</sup> birthday, all I asked for were animals. My family lived on a small farm and my love for animals started at a young age. That birthday I received a puppy, a goat, and a few chickens. Ever since then, I've spent as much time as possible around animals, caring for them in sickness and in health. This animal experience and passion is why I am interested in advancing my career. My career goal is to continue caring for those I am passionate for, especially as a Veterinary Technician at Verona Emergency Animal Hospital.

As a student at Madison College, I had the opportunity to engage in many learning opportunities that broadened my knowledge about veterinary medicine and the unique needs of each animal. My education provided technical skills and knowledge regarding medical terminology, animal diseases, and pharmacology techniques, as well as how to assist in many laboratory procedures for hematology. This essential knowledge will serve as an important foundation for my work at Verona Emergency Animal Hospital.

In addition to my education, I had many hands-on opportunities to put these skills to use, such as when I was an Animal Caretaker and a Pet Admission staff. Not only was I providing care to animals, but also supporting the needs and concerns of their owners. As a pet owner myself, I am very compassionate for the worry and sadness many owners feel when their animal is in need of medical attention. I use this personal perspective to put myself in owners' shoes and provide them calming remarks and comfort while I care for their animals. The skill of compassion will be beneficial when working at an emergency animal hospital, as owners are often even more worried in emergency situations.

I have both educational and practical experience working with animals and am familiar with the responsibilities of a Veterinary Technician. I will be a great addition to the Verona Emergency Animal Hospital. I can be contacted at the number or email above and look forward to hearing from you. I will contact you in one week's time to check the status of my application. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Pink Panther*

Pink Panther

Attachment: Resume

12/2017 8

January 18, 2018

Ms. Lola Bunny  
Designs 4 You  
1234 Park Street  
Madison, WI 53073

Dear Ms. Bunny:

I am interested in the recently opened position of a Graphic Design Assistant in your esteemed company. Mr. Bugs Bunny, who I worked with in the past at Designs 4 You, apprised me of this position. With an Associate's degree from Madison College in graphic design and four years of design experience, I am an ideal candidate for this position.

For the last four years, I have been a graphic design assistant with Mad-Designs. During my time there, I had the opportunity to develop and hone my skills in different areas of web designing. Because of these experiences, I am proficient in various types of graphic design work, including website templates, logo creation, marketing materials like flyers, brochures, and book covers.

Additionally, I have experience working with different design software including:

- AutoCAD
- Adobe CS Suite
- CorelDraw Graphic Suite
- Dreamweaver
- Flash
- InDesign
- Quark
- Other 3D imaging software such as Maya, 3DS Max, Blender, Cheetah 3D and Flux

My practical, cost-effective solutions and understanding of clients' recommendations allows me to be the most successful designer possible. My focus is on developing solutions that are visually appealing and in alignment with the vision and values of my clients. Some of my notable accomplishments include:

- Conceptualized and executed a successful online advertising campaign for an international company
- Created highly popular logos for 10+ local companies, all of which have returned for additional assistance
- Redesigned the cover page of Madison College's newspaper

Attached with the application is my resume that provides details about my education, work experience and professional achievements. I look forward to talking with you further about this position. I will follow up in two weeks to check the status of my application. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Daisy Duck*

Daisy Duck

Attachment

# WOLFIE WOLFPACK, RT(R)

1701 Wright Street, Madison, WI 53704 | C: (608) 243-4598 | wolfpack@madisoncollege.edu

---

December 12, 2018

Mr. Daffy Duck  
Human Resources  
University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics  
100 Hospital Road  
Madison, WI 53704

Dear Mr. Duck:

As a child, I always wanted to have a super power. I always wanted to help people. Becoming a radiology technician opened up a whole new world for me. Not only was I able to help people, but I suddenly had the super power of x-ray vision. Going to work knowing I can use technology and my strong problem solving skills to help others in need is extremely satisfying. This is why I am interested in your Radiologic/Laboratory Technician position.

My clinical experiences allowed me to apply what I learned in the classroom to real situations. I learned that getting the correct position isn't always done in the way described in the textbook, and at times, I had to be a creative problem solver. The need to manipulate the view of the machine to make the patient comfortable and still get the correct picture is critical and an exciting part of the job for me. I found that some of the most valuable skills required to be successful with patients are empathy, compassion and patience. All of these skills, in addition to problem solving, will allow me to provide the most comprehensive care to patients at UW-Hospitals and Clinics.

In addition to my Associates Degree in Radiography, I have been a coach for the last five years, and although a completely different industry, I can apply many experiences to my new career. As a coach, I worked with many diverse individuals and families, effectively communicating with a variety of people with different learning abilities, while remaining flexible and using critical thinking and problem solving skills. As a radiographer, clientele is unexpected and diverse, making flexibility and openness to different individuals, key skills to hold.

UW Hospitals and Clinics will benefit from me as an employee because I have great passion, I'm up for any challenge that comes my way, I care about all individuals, and I'm a fast learner. I look forward to the possibility of discussing the position in more detail during an interview. I will follow up in one week to check the status of my application. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Wolfie Wolfpack*

Wolfie Wolfpack

Enclosed: Resume

## How-To Send Professional Emails

---

What you say in an email reflects your ability to be professional, further solidify your personal brand, and make a good impression. Follow these steps to ensure you write a professional email:

- 1. Have a professional email address and check it daily.** If you do not have a professional, appropriate email address, now is a good time to create one that you can use for job searching. A simple and appropriate email address is your first and last name (example: [wolfiewolfpack@gmail.com](mailto:wolfiewolfpack@gmail.com)). Your school email address is also considered professional and appropriate. The email address should match the one on your resume.
- 2. Attach your files.** Similar to your email address, name the file you send (such as your resume and cover letter) something appropriate and concise. While it is important to have several versions of your resume to send out to specific jobs, don't make it obvious by naming the file, "resume for job 1." Instead, use your last name and first name, as it will be helpful to the employer. Be sure to save your documents as PDF's to ensure they can be read and not altered. (example: Wolfie Wolfpack Cover Letter.pdf).
- 3. Email subject.** The subject of your email should be concise but also specific. Sometimes employers state in their job posting an email subject or a job reference number they want included in the subject email. Be sure to follow all instructions listed. If there are no specific instructions, simply list the job position in the subject line.
- 4. Email body.** Never leave the body of the email blank when submitting your application. Think of the body as a "mini cover letter" since it is the first thing the employer will read and it should interest them to learn more about you and your application. Keep the message in your email concise; too much writing can be overwhelming and most of what you want to say will be in your actual cover letter. If the application does not require a cover letter, the email is your opportunity to sell yourself. Again, your message should be brief, but you can share key points to peak the reader's interest (see example on next page).
- 5. Close and signature.** Similar to your cover letter, you should end the email by thanking the employer for their consideration, stating how they can contact you, and when you will follow up. Consider creating a professional signature on your email, that way your contact information is there and easily readable. A signature can include your name, email address and phone number.

Example:

### **Daisy Duck**

daisyduck@madisoncollege.edu

608.243.4598

Example email where a cover letter is required:

To: [employer@company.com](mailto:employer@company.com)

Subject: Veterinary Technician Position

Dear Hiring Manger,

Please see the attached documents for a copy of my resume and cover letter for the Veterinary Technician position.

I am a recent graduate of Madison College's Veterinary Technician program and have more than four years of experience working as an animal caretaker. My experience makes me a great fit for the position.

I look forward to speaking with your regarding my application.

Regards,

Pink Panther

608-243-4598

[pinkpanther@gmail.com](mailto:pinkpanther@gmail.com)

Example email where a cover letter is not required:

To: [employer@company.com](mailto:employer@company.com)

Subject: Veterinary Technician Position

Dear Hiring Manager,

Please see the attached document for a copy of my resume for the Veterinary Technician position.

I have had a passion for animals since I was a child. When I was 5 years old, my parents gave me animals as a birthday present. I've cared for my dog, goat and chickens since, helping them through times of sickness and playing with them in times of health.

My experience both as a student of Madison College and as an animal caretaker for the last four years, has provided me technical and professional communication skills. As a lifelong pet owner myself, I am very compassionate for the needs and concerns of pet owners, especially in emergency situations. I see this skill being very useful and beneficial to both pets and the owners at your facility.

Thank you for your time and consideration reviewing my application materials. I will follow up in one week to check the status of my application. I look forward to speaking with you then.

Regards,

Pink Panther

608-243-4598

[pinkpanther@gmail.com](mailto:pinkpanther@gmail.com)