



# Cover Letter Guide

## What is the purpose of a cover letter?

The purpose of the cover letter is to demonstrate the value that you bring to the organization, highlight how your experiences will benefit the employer and explain how you are the ideal candidate for the position. Tell your story.

## Important Tips

- The cover letter should not be a template nor look or sound like anyone else's.
- The cover letter is not about you, it is about the value you bring that meets the employer's needs.
- The cover letter provides a writing sample and will demonstrate your written communication skills.
- The cover letter is a business letter and should follow formal business letter format. Use the same letterhead (name, address, phone, email) as used in your resume. Keep the fonts and font sizes also the same in both documents. This sends a non-verbal message to the employer and creates your brand.
- Unless instructed otherwise, save your cover letter as a PDF to preserve formatting and allow anyone to open it. If possible, save your cover letter and resume as one document and name it *Your Name, Application Materials.pdf*. If sending via e-mail you should attach your cover letter, resume, and include a short introductory e-mail referring to your attached application materials. Most importantly, follow the instructions provided by the employer.
- With electronic cover letters, a touch of color may be acceptable for your industry, but don't overdo it. However, do not include anything that moves.
- Try to find out specifically who will be receiving your letter. Do not use "to whom it may concern." Look in the position description, the company website, or call and ask the company directly to find out who you should address your letter to. If you really cannot find out whom, use "Dear Hiring Manager."
- Never start your cover letter or state the sentence, "My name is..."
- As a current Madison College student, the Writing Center's talented and experienced writing staff are also available to assist you. Visit their website at [madisoncollege.edu/writing-center](http://madisoncollege.edu/writing-center).

**Please Note:** This Reference Guide was created by Career and Employment Center (CEC) staff at Madison Area Technical College. It is intended to be a guide and may not be all-inclusive to meet your specific needs. If preparing these documents for a class, be sure to follow the directions given by your instructor. For additional assistance or to make an appointment, contact us: [careerandemployment@madisoncollege.edu](mailto:careerandemployment@madisoncollege.edu) or (608) 243-4598 or at Truax Gateway A1003.

# **What to Include in Your Cover Letter**

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**Heading and Salutation:** Your address or your letterhead (copied from your resume)

Date

Name of contact person

Title

Name of organization

Street address

City, State, Zip

Dear (contact name):

**Opening and Introduction:** Why are you writing? Capture interest! Customize!

- Know what is important for your industry
- Use strong opening sentences to gain the employer's attention
- Name the position that you are applying for
- Do not make any errors – remember this is an example of your work
- Tell the employer where you learned about the position (i.e. personal referral, Wisconsin TechConnect™, or the company website) – make the connection!
- Pose a question that zeros in on a high-need area for the employer
- Close the paragraph with a comprehensive statement that describes the body of the letter

**Body:** Sell yourself! Demonstrate the evidence that makes you the ideal fit!

- Use your statement to organize one or two body paragraphs in the order you want to explain them
- Use key words from the job description; pay attention to details and sell yourself
- Prove that you meet the position requirements with examples of your education and experiences
- Emphasize the benefit you will provide this employer based on your experience and what you know about the employer's needs
- State the skills and strengths you will bring to the job and parallel those needed for the position
- Give examples of your accomplishments and how they will transfer or apply to the position
- Demonstrate your knowledge of the company (products, services, or special projects) and why you are interested in working for them
- Discuss how your career interests and experiences fit with the organization

**Assertive Closing:** Summarize. Identify your next step. Ask for an interview!

- Rephrase your statement and summarize what makes you the ideal candidate
- Request an interview at his/her convenience. Include how you can be reached, e.g. phone and e-mail
- Initiate the next step by indicating when you will contact the employer to follow-up instead of waiting for them to contact you. Be certain that you follow-up or accept the consequences for not doing so.
- Thank the employer for his/her time and consideration

Sincerely,

(sign your name here)

Type your name here

Enclosure or Attachment (depends if the resume is enclosed or attached)

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

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### ***What is a cover letter?***

A cover letter accompanies your resume, and acts as your introduction to the employer.

### ***Can I send a general cover letter?***

No. Just like your resume, you must tailor your cover letter for each position. It should be specific and targeted. While you may create a general “master letter” to work from, you must rewrite parts of it each time you send it out. Emphasize the value you provide to a specific employer and position. This will be different for each employer and position. Research the company and include the findings in your cover letter. Provide a connection to you and the organization. Do you know someone who works there? If yes, find a way to include his/her name. Are you familiar with the company through your own personal experience? (i.e. As a customer of XYZ Coffee Shop, I appreciate the excellent customer service and perfectly made cup of coffee made freshly and specifically to my request.)

### ***When should you send a cover letter?***

A cover letter should always accompany your resume. Unless the prospective employer stated in the position description not to do so, always include a cover letter.

### ***How long should a cover letter be?***

A cover letter is typically one page, is three or four paragraphs, and includes an introduction, body, and closing. It should be tailored for your profession.

### ***Am I just repeating what I stated on my resume in paragraph form?***

No. Your cover letter should complement, not duplicate, your resume information. Draw connections between your experience and how you meet the requirements for the position. It should be in your voice and expand upon your skills and abilities as they related to the position. Read your cover letter outloud and listen to how it sounds. It should be written in a way that you would be willing to read it to the hiring manager. Does it sound like you?

# Wolfie Wolfpack

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

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October 12, 2015

Ms. Karen Kregg  
Technology Solutions  
User Support Services  
1234 US Highway 151  
Madison, WI 53704

Dear Ms. Kregg:

I recently learned about the Change Specialist opportunity from William Sue. Through research I discovered Technology Solutions seeks an individual who can provide excellent service in the User Support Services department. After seven years of customer service and IT-support experience, I believe my client-centered approach and project leadership experience make me an excellent candidate for this position.

Technology Solutions will benefit from my current experience working with customers to select technology at Best Buy and as a Technician at Wolfpack Techies where I helped clients understand technical jargon. Through personal research and education, I developed technical knowledge and spent free time ensuring customers understood how their hardware and/or software operated allowing them to utilize it to the fullest. Additionally, my experience leading projects for Wolfpack Techies proves my ability to collaboratively plan, coordinate, make decisions, and communicate effectively.

My client-centered service attitude and ability to lead projects makes me a great fit for the Change Specialist position with Technology Solutions. I am eager to learn more about this opportunity and I am available for an interview at your earliest convenience. I can be reached at [wwolfpack@madisoncollege.edu](mailto:wwolfpack@madisoncollege.edu) or 608.243.4598. Thank you for your consideration and review of my attached resume. I will follow-up with you in two weeks to check on the status of my application materials.

Sincerely,

*Wolfie Wolfpack*

Wolfie Wolfpack

Attached: Resume

**Sample Cover Letter  
Business Format**

1701 Wright Street  
Madison, WI 53703

October 12, 2015

Ms. Charlene Prince  
Director of Personnel  
Large National Bank 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 Bank Corporation in this role. Through my research I noticed Large National Bank Corporation is not currently utilizing Twitter to market business or services. With my social media knowledge and experience, I will be able to expand your social media marketing with Twitter and other tools.

I will graduate in December with my Associate's Degree in Marketing. My education included a number of courses that frame my knowledge of social media. In my Advanced Social Media Campaigns course I developed a social media campaign for the Volunteer Center, a student organization on campus. The campaign included strategies to market volunteer opportunities to the campus community. Through analysis of where students prefer to receive content, I discovered that most students utilize Facebook and Twitter. As a leader in the Volunteer Center, I implemented what I learned in my assignment to publish creative content on both Facebook and Twitter to engage students in Volunteer Center events. As a result, our events were well attended and several students used social media to share their experiences, which has expanded our market. In just one year, 200 students started following the Volunteer Center on Twitter and 170 students engaged with us on Facebook.

Large National Bank Corporation will benefit from my combination of social media knowledge and experience in the Social Media Specialist position. Enclosed is a copy of my resume with additional information about my qualifications. Thank you very much for your consideration. I will contact you in the next week to ensure that you received my email and resume and to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

*Ima Jobs*

Ima Jobs

Enclosure: Resume