

HOW TO CREATE A COVER LETTER

The cover letter is your introduction to the employer on paper or via email. It is designed to accompany a resume when you apply for a job. The goal of the cover letter is to tell the employer why you are appropriate for this position and why they should review your resume for further consideration. Write the letter to sell yourself for the particular job you are seeking. Identify your experience, education, and skills that are most directly related to that job. Highlight items covered in your resume but **DO NOT** repeat your resume. You want the employer to **READ** your resume so only give the most important pieces of information from your resume, written in concise sentences that tell the **SHORT** story of you. Continue to use the key words from your resume to focus on your skills.

A cover letter should be no more than one page. You **MUST INCLUDE**:

- WHAT position it is you are applying for
- How you found out about the position
- Why you want to work for **THIS** company
- Why you are the **RIGHT** person for the job
- How your education and area of study fit with the position
- How your past experience has prepared you for this position (focus on **SKILLS**)
- How to contact you

COVER LETTER FORMAT (See sample)

Be sure your letter is individually tailored for the job (**never a form letter**) and **addressed to the contact individual by name** (call and find out the name if you do not know it), including his or her correct job title, company name, and address. As a last resort, use the title given on the job description such as "Dear Intern Coordinator" but please do **NOT** use "To whom it may concern". Write in your own words in a conversational style with short sentences.

Start with an introduction paragraph, followed by two or three paragraphs covering your education and experience, emphasizing the skills you have that match the position.

Close with a summary statement about your qualifications and interest and a request for action (ask them to contact you). Include **BOTH** your phone number and email address as forms of contact and end with a "thank you" for consideration. Remember to sign the letter and try to send a hard copy when possible with an original signature. When online applications are preferred, try to use an electronic signature or scan a copy of your letter with a true signature.

Send the signed original, laser printed, on the same quality paper stock as your resume, in a **9" x 12" envelope**. Always keep a copy of your signed originals for your records.

When emailing your application, you can put the cover letter in the body of you email and attach the resume **OR** you can attach both the resume and cover letter. If you attach both, use something like, "Please see the attachments as my application for the policy analyst position."

Format

Your Present Address
City, State, Zip Code

Date

Mr./Ms. Name of Individual
Job Title of Individual
Company or Organization Name
Street Address or P.O. Box Number
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. _____:

The first paragraph indicates why you are writing. State the position you are applying for and how you learned of it. Emphasize what you offer to the employer related to the position you are seeking (not what they can do for you). Cover letters are usually three to five paragraphs long, centered on one page, and written in a conversational style with short sentences.

The middle paragraphs highlight the most significant information the employer will find when they read your resume. Briefly state your qualifications. Describe your education, highlighting your specialized training, related courses, and class projects.

Describe your work experience, activities, and skills which are related to the job you are seeking. Provide specific examples of accomplishments and situations where you demonstrated job related skills. You may also add information about your experiences or personal work characteristics not listed on your resume.

Summarize your qualifications and interest in the employer. Close the letter with an appropriate request for action. (Ask the employer to contact you and provide your phone number, OR indicate when you will contact them to arrange a mutually convenient time to meet.) Thank the employer for their consideration.

Sincerely,

(your signature in black ink)

Printed Name

Sample

February 2, 2009

800 N. Pinckney St. #103
Madison, WI 53703

Congressional-Executive Commission on China
242 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Attn: Ms. Judy Wright

Dear Ms. Wright:

Please accept the enclosed information as my application for the summer internship with the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) that is advertised on the La Follette Career Development Webpage. I am currently a candidate for a Master of International Public Affairs degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a focus on international development. My particular interest in institutional and political reform in China and my past work with human rights issues fit well with CECC's work and mission.

As shown on my resume, I have already had significant experience with China. I graduated from Lawrence University in Appleton Wisconsin, double majoring in History and East Asian Languages and Cultures. My work focused on the history, culture and politics of China. I have also had substantial Chinese language training, including two separate terms of study in Mainland China. My coursework in the Masters program at the University of Wisconsin has focused on additional work in Chinese politics, corruption and good governance, economic policy analysis, and statistical methods. Studying and working in China for two years has helped me understand the Chinese culture. I also tested into 4th year advanced Chinese for next year and have very good reading ability in particular.

My six years of work experience has primarily been in the private sector, including a law firm, a telecommunications firm and a commercial real estate company. I have also done several internships with non-profits. While these positions do not relate exactly to the kind of work done at CECC, I am certain they have given me a large set of research, organization and communication skills, as well as a strong client service ethic, which should easily translate to capably handling the day-to-day aspects of the internship. Since I have had no formal training for any of these previous positions that I worked in, I have had to meet the challenge of absorbing each industry's methods and culture on the fly. In each instance I believe I was successful and am confident I can do the same with CECC. The key has always been to be flexible and open to new opportunities. I very much look forward to the possibility of being a positive contributor to CECC's mission.

I would greatly appreciate an opportunity to learn more about the position. You can reach me by phone at 608-555-1111 or by e-mail at ssmith@wisc.edu. I appreciate your giving me the time and consideration for this position.

Sincerely,

Sue Smith

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