

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

April 6, 2010

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

City of Madison – Planning Division
Suite LL 100, Municipal Building
Madison, WI 53703
Attn: Mr. Brad Murphy

Dear Mr. Brad Murphy:

Please accept the enclosed information as my application for the summer internship with the Planning Division that is advertised on the University on the Department of Urban and Regional Planning Career Development Webpage. I am currently a candidate for a Master of Planning degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a focus on land use planning. My particular interest in New Urbanism and form-based zoning codes and my past work with land conservation issues fit well with the Planning Division's work and mission.

As shown on my resume, I have already had significant experience with land use planning and policy. I graduated from the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, majoring in Urban and Regional Planning with a minor in Spanish. My work focused on New Urbanism, Smart Growth, and land conservation techniques. I have also had substantial Spanish language training, including two separate terms of study in Madrid, Spain. My coursework in the Masters program at the University of Wisconsin has focused on additional work in environmental planning, site analysis, and statistical methods. Studying and working in Spain for two years has helped me understand the land use practices of Europe. I also tested into 4th year advanced Spanish for next year and have very good reading ability in particular.

My three 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 the Planning Division, 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 the Planning Division. 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 the Planning Division'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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