

# WRITING PROFESSIONAL COVER LETTERS

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Whenever sending a resume to an employer, it should be accompanied by a letter of application, also known as a cover letter. The purpose of the cover letter is to introduce yourself to the employer and identify relevant skills and experiences. Strong communication skills are needed in all fields of work, regardless of major or industry, so it is critical that candidates for employment be able to demonstrate professional communication skills by composing well written cover letters.

## Tips for Writing Effective Cover Letters

- ◆ Both printed and electronic versions should follow standard business letter format, and a printed cover letter should include your hand-written signature.
- ◆ Be concise. Your letter should be no more than 3-5 paragraphs, and should fit on a single page (8.5"x11").
- ◆ Make sure the font and paper (if a printed copy) of your cover letter match your resume.
- ◆ Each letter should be customized to match a specific position or organization. Do not send a generic "form letter" with your resume.
- ◆ Whenever possible, the letter should be addressed to a specific person, and the appropriate salutation/greeting is "Dear (first name) (last name)" or "Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. (last name)" or other title, if known. Do not use the title "Mrs." unless the individual has previously identified herself that way. If you do not have a contact name, then use "Dear Human Resources Representative" or "Dear [company name] Representative" for the salutation. Do not use "To Whom It May Concern," or "Dear Sir/Madam."
- ◆ Be sure to proofread every letter for typos and grammatical errors. Have others review your letters, too, to evaluate them for clarity and check for errors.

## COVER LETTER FORMAT

1234 Main Street  
Green Bay, WI 54301  
September 24, 2XXX

First Name Last Name  
Title  
Organization/company name  
Street address  
City, State Zip

Dear First Name Last Name:

### **Opening Paragraph**

- Identify the position for which you are applying, or the type of position you are seeking.
- Mention how you learned about the position (name of contact, where it was posted, etc.)
- Why are you interested in this position/this organization?

### **Middle Paragraph(s) (one to three)**

- The purpose of this section of the letter is to match yourself to the position.
- Focus on your related skills, education, and experience. What can you **do** for this organization?
- Be positive in content, tone, word choice, and expectations (i.e., do not come across as negative or pessimistic, and do not focus on what you are lacking).
- Group similar items together in a paragraph. Examples of paragraph themes include: skills, work and internship experience, education, or personal qualities.
- If a job posting has listed specific skills, identify how you have demonstrated those skills.

### **Closing Paragraph**

- Reiterate your interest or enthusiasm for the position.
- Indicate that you would like the opportunity for an interview.
- Identify what kind of follow-up is expected (e.g., "Please contact me at 920-465-2163 ...").
- Thank the reader for his/her time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Your Name

*Note: A handwritten signature should appear after "Sincerely" with "Your Name" printed below it if you are sending a hard copy letter.*