

Four Steps to a Fabulous COVER LETTER

#1

Pre-Work

Review the job description closely and circle keywords or phrases that resonate with you. Compare the circled skills and keywords to accomplishments or responsibilities found on your resume. This will help you find direct examples of actions or achievements that prove you are qualified for this role; these are the experiences to focus on.



Find a personal connection with the organization's mission, culture, industry, or leadership. You can look on the company's website, visit www.glassdoor.com, Vault, Handshake, LinkedIn, and many other places to learn what the company values and who it serves. This will help you articulate why you want to work there.



#3

Write it Out

Put your pre-work into action and write it out! Utilize this framework for your paragraphs:

INTRO: Who are you, and why are you interested in the position? How did you learn about the role? What do you know about the company that makes you believe you're a good fit?

BODY: Choose 1-2 specific experiences you've had and connect them to the skills or responsibilities found in the position description. Relate your past accomplishments to this future role. Emphasize what you have to offer versus what you hope to gain.

CLOSING: Restate your interest in a new way and summarize why you are a good fit for the company and the role. Provide a strong closing that includes how best to contact you.

Pay attention to flow, tense, tone, and transitions. The first cover letter is the most difficult to write, but you'll get better with practice. The goal is for your message to stick with the recruiter, so make it easy to follow and hard to forget.

#2

Format

You've done your research. Now it's time to outline your letter. Your letter should follow a business letter format (single-spaced, block paragraphs, with no indentations) and include these components:

- Your Resume Header
- The Date
- Company Address
- Salutation
- Opening Paragraph
- 1-2 Body Paragraphs
- Closing Paragraph
- Signature



Your cover letter will most likely include only 3-4 total paragraphs. Like your resume, it should be no more than one page in length. Begin thinking about the content and stories you'll include in each section.

Use a professional and easy-to-read font (ideally the same one used for your resume). Calibri and Times New Roman are both safe options. Additionally, be sure to always save your final version as a PDF to preserve your formatting.

#4

Check the List

Now that you've done the hard part, double-check to ensure that you have included all of the most important components for an awesome cover letter.

Review the next page for a helpful checklist and make certain that your cover letter really speaks to the recruiter and effectively presents your candidacy for the position.



Cover Letter Format Guide

Resume Header

Today's Date

(Ms. or Mr.) Name of Recruiter
Title of Recruiter
Company Name
Company Address
City, State Zip

Dear (Ms. or Mr.) Name of Recruiter or Dear Hiring Manager,

Intro

Your opening sentence should create interest on the part of the reader—write something about yourself that stands out. Next, tell the employer why you are writing the letter, the exact title of the position you are applying for, as well as your background information (major, year, university). Give information to show your specific interest in the company. Do you have similar values? What appeals to you about their mission statement? If you have any personal connections, this is the place to include any company contacts you communicated with. In your last sentence, be sure to road map the rest of your letter and mention that what specific skills you will discuss.

Body

Your middle paragraph(s) should expand on the specific skills mentioned above to strengthen employer interest. Use one or two meaningful stories from your academic background, work experience, or involvement in activities that will show the reader why you should be considered as a candidate. Be as specific as you can about the skills you have that match the position but remember to show them, not tell them. Expand on what you have mentioned in your resume. If the employer is looking for a candidate with leadership skills, prove to them that you are a leader with active language and details. You may show your leadership experience by, for example, discussing how you coordinated an event for 200 students with a committee of 12, etc. Don't list all of your accomplishments, duplicate your resume, or make the reader try to guess what you would be interested in or how you are uniquely qualified. Tell the employer what you can do for the organization and why this particular organization interests you. It is very important to offer value to the employer, so that it what you should end with!

(The body of the cover letter may be anywhere from one to two paragraphs depending on the relevant content you would like to include.)

Closing

In your closing paragraph refer to your enclosed resume and ask for action. Express your unique interest and reinforce how your qualifications match the position. Be flexible to their schedule and encourage them to contact you at (phone number) or (email), but do not mention interviews—they will reach out to you if you are a qualified candidate. Lastly, be sure to express your gratitude and appreciation for considering you.

Sincerely,

[Your signature – if you are printing]

Type your name here

123 N Main Street
Madison, WI 53706

January 1, 20XX

Company Name
180 Commerce Avenue
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Recruiting Committee,

I am an analytical thinker with exceptional quantitative skills and a strong academic background. I have conducted and presented economic research on a variety of topics and have professional experience in a client-facing role as an economic consultant. I am pleased to submit my application to be considered for your *Analyst* position. My experience in economic consulting and my passion for economics combined with my leadership experience make me an ideal candidate.

One of the reasons why I love economic consulting is because it is an opportunity to research and present creative economic answers to real-world problems. While working as an intern for the consulting firm Economics, Inc., I analyzed and modeled financial data in Microsoft Excel and Stata, conducted market research and literature reviews, and wrote reports for our team. This experience gave me exposure to the challenges of translating real world problems into economic questions and I found that my solid preparation in microeconomics and econometrics has contributed significantly to my team's performance.

My passion for econometrics and microeconomics motivated me to pursue an Economics major at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I have extensive academic experience in applied microeconomics and econometrics. For example, last fall I wrote an original empirical paper in which I analyzed dynamic pricing in the NFL ticket markets. I used a large dataset from eBay online auctions and I developed the identification strategy and methodology to determine if fans were willing to pay a premium if the home team won the previous game. In addition to the regular curricula for economics students, I have also taken programming classes in the Computer Sciences Department.

I work well independently but I am also enthusiastic about working as a part of a team. As a leader in my program, I co-founded *student club* and have enjoyed working with others to create professional experiences and career opportunities for my peers. Being the President of *the club* has been a challenging and exciting adventure that has allowed me to grow personally and to develop time-management, communication and leadership skills.

I would like to reiterate my passion for *economic consulting* and my keen interest in being a part of the team at *Company Name*. My educational background and professional experience in economics consulting combined with my leadership and teamwork experience within the *student organization* make me an ideal candidate for a position in your Chicago office. Please contact me by phone or email with any questions.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Student Name

Cover Letter Brainstorm



SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

A. What is the position you are applying for?

(Example: Please consider my application for the _____ position.)

B. What is your year in school, what are you studying, and where?

(Example: I'm currently a junior studying Economics with a certificate in Global Health at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.)

C. What excites you about the position or company? Why are you interested in this field or industry?

(Example: I'm particularly interested in Bucky Badger Consulting due to _____.)

D. Have you talked to or networked with someone at the company? What did you learn from them?

Name drop if appropriate!

(Example: I had the opportunity to speak with Rebecca Blank, a current Analyst, at the information session held on campus and was excited to learn more about the culture at Bucky Badger Consulting.)

E. Why should they hire you? Why are you a good candidate for this position? Try to think of 3 strengths that relate to the job qualifications/description.

(Example: My strengths in _____, _____, and _____ make me qualified for this position and will allow me to quickly contribute to the continued success at Bucky Badger Consulting.)

SECTION 2: BODY PARAGRAPHS – TIME TO PROVE AND ELABORATE ON YOUR STRENGTHS!

F. Strength/qualification #1: When did you apply this skill or how did you gain it? Give an example. This could be from work experience, classes/projects, or involvement.

Strength #1: _____

When did you use it (Setting/situation): _____

What did you accomplish, achieve, or learn with the strength/skill?:

(Example: I've had the opportunity to build my analytical skills through completing rigorous courses like econometrics and statistics and serving as Fundraising Chair for Economists Rock Student Organization. Our goal was to raise \$500 and through analyzing previous years fundraising efforts and surveying student organization members, I presented a plan to hold fundraiser events at 2 of our

member's favorite campus restaurants. I'm proud to say the research and analysis paid off, because we exceeded our fundraising goal and raised over \$800.)

- G. Strength/qualification #2: When did you apply this skill or how did you gain it?** Give an example. This could be from work experience, classes/projects, or involvement.

Strength #2: _____

When did you use it (Setting/situation): _____

What did you accomplish, achieve, or learn with the strength/skill?: _____

- H. Strength/qualification #3: When did you apply this skill or how did you gain it?** Give an example. This could be from work experience, classes/projects, or involvement.

Strength #3: _____

When did you use it (Setting/situation): _____

What did you accomplish, achieve, or learn with the strength/skill?: _____

- I. What aspects of the job will you be able to do well because of these strengths/skills? Look at the position description!**

(Example: These skills will allow me to excel at _____ and _____ as an intern at Bucky Badger Consulting.)

SECTION 3: CONCLUSION

- J. Restate your strengths (Why are you awesome?) AND/OR another reason you are excited for the position/company.**

(Example: I'm excited to bring my _____, _____, and _____ strengths to your team.)

- K. IF YOU ARE AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT APPLYING FOR US JOBS, explain your work authorization.**

Check out the "Employment" section on the ISS webpage to learn more: <https://iss.wisc.edu/>

(Example: As an international student, I can get work authorization to complete an internship in the US through my F-1 student visa and would not require sponsorship for this role.)

- L. Refer to your enclosed resume, mention the best way to contact you, and express your appreciation.**

(Example: Attached is my resume outlining my experience in more details. I would welcome the opportunity to interview and the best way to reach is me is at bucky.badger@wisc.edu or 608-123-4567. Thank you for your time and consideration.

- M. Wrap it up!**

(Example: Sincerely, Bucky Badger)

Cover Letter

CHECKLIST

Is your cover letter awesome? If you can check all of these boxes, it probably is.

- Business letter format has been followed (as described on the previous page).
- Why you're interested in the position and why you're a strong match for the company.
- Connection between your relevant skills and accomplishments to the requirements of the position description.
- Additional skills or qualities you will bring to the position and the organization; what value are you adding to the team?
- Your cover letter is not a duplicate of your resume (you didn't reference every experience), but instead discussed 1-2 relevant stories.