

# Nonacademic Cover Letters

The purpose of a cover letter is to introduce yourself and demonstrate the fit between your background and the advertised position. The cover letter is more than a summary. You need to make a persuasive argument on your ability to succeed for the organization.

## THE BASICS

A cover letter must accompany and be tailored to each application you submit. Try to address to the individual named in the job posting or use “Dear Hiring Manager.” Most letters should be one page long, though in some cases (based on position and industry) a two-page letter is appropriate in order to best demonstrate your skills. Show off what you have accomplished and impress with your ability to write articulately. Remember, this is a writing sample; it must be good. Proofread and run spellcheck!

## TIPS

- Articulate your fit and focus on what you will bring to the position and organization—not why you need or want the job.
- Show enthusiasm for the position!
- Imagine yourself as the hiring manager—what would you be looking for?
- If you have permission to mention a contact with the company, do so early in the opening paragraph.
- Answer any questions the employer might have. For example, “When will you complete your degree?” and, “Are you willing to relocate?”

## WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT

### Opening Paragraph

The first paragraph is your introduction to the employer.

- Refer to the specific position for which you are applying.
- Include a thesis statement, outlining the specific reasons why you are applying for this job, at this company, and what makes you an excellent candidate. Do not regurgitate their website.
- Briefly highlight what skills and strengths you possess, both technical and interpersonal, and how they will be beneficial to the role. Provide details in body paragraphs.

## **Body Paragraphs**

- Make certain that you address requirements and desired skills outlined in the job posting.
- Mirror language in the description and demonstrate knowledge of the company and what they do. Show that you have done your research.
- Provide brief, specific examples to demonstrate your skills and experience—do not simply repeat your resume.

## **Conclusion**

Use the concluding paragraph to reinforce your interest and enthusiasm.

- Indicate what you would like to see as next steps. For example, state that you look forward to learning more about the opportunity.
- Thank them for their time and consideration.
- End with professional closing such as “Kind Regards,” “Sincerely,” or “Best” and your full name.

## COVER LETTER SAMPLE

### IMA SAMPLE

imas1@illinois.edu | 217.222.2222

September 28, 20XX

100 Allen Lane  
Urbana, IL 61801

Dear Hiring Manager:

I am excited to apply for the position of Web Application Developer for Web App, Inc. My working knowledge of website creation and design, familiarity with several coding languages and database creation, along with strong analytical, problem-solving, and communication skills make me a great fit for this position. I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to use my skills and abilities to help support the Web App, Inc. team and contribute creative web-based innovations.

I first discovered my aptitude for programming as I began my graduate career in Neuroscience at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I studied the brain and cognition in healthy older adults by utilizing functional magnetic resonance imaging to investigate areas of the brain involved in particular human behaviors such as multi-tasking. I was responsible for programming several cognitive tasks used in our experiments using MATLAB and E-Prime, a psychology software tool. I also learned to create Bash scripts in UNIX to optimize data management and analysis. These experiences allowed me to gain a strong understanding of the logic behind building and debugging programs and highlighted my abilities to learn quickly, adapt, and problem solve effectively in various software environments – all skills that will allow me to contribute immediately at Web App, Inc.

For the past three years, I have worked at the Biotechnology Tech Services (BTS) office. Two of my greatest accomplishments in this role were the re-design of the BTS website and the creation of the BTS database. For both projects, I consulted with the director to determine the required functionality and general look and feel desired. For the website, I used Adobe Illustrator to design a new office logo and developed a new look for the site by teaching myself how to modify the CSS and PHP to achieve the required functionality and appearance. I also incorporated our new design into the BTS monthly e-newsletter by creating a custom skin for our email service, and I continue to update and manage both the website and monthly e-newsletter.

The BTS office also required major reorganization and digitalization of the client registrations and records to increase efficiency. I created a relational database within Microsoft Access to track active clients, invoices, and service information. I also helped troubleshoot any software or hardware issues on both Mac and Windows machines. These experiences will allow me to bring a strong understanding of design and data structuring to the position.

Furthermore, I gained strong project and time management skills through implementation of several workshop series and collaboratively organizing the Biotechnology Tech Services expo. I also developed strong verbal communication skills through my teaching experiences and presenting workshops. I also developed and improved my interpersonal skills through interactions with professors, company representatives and our diverse client population. I am a team player and believe I can contribute and thrive in the small collaborative environment of Web App, Inc.

I look forward to the opportunity to interview for this position and further discuss how I will support and promote the efforts of the Web App, Inc. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Ima Sample

## COVER LETTER SAMPLE

Dear Hiring Manager:

I like puzzles. Sorting through fragments of information and strategically matching smaller pieces together to produce a larger, clearer picture energizes me. That is why I was particularly excited to learn about the position of Data Communication Specialist at Non-Profit Organization. I am confident that my combination of analytical skills, advanced education in information science, and passion for collaboratively solving problems prepares me to make an immediate contribution to the team at NPO.

My analytical skills were honed while interning at Technology Company. As part of a business analysis project, I was tasked with designing and building tailored visuals to convince external clients to partner with the company. To do this, I collaborated with a cross-functional team to identify opportunities for new business partnerships that could grow the Technology Company. I then developed compelling data visualizations to demonstrate the benefit of these new business alliances for external audiences. By identifying relevant data and using them to create clear graphics, I crafted a compelling message that was easily understood by my audience and contributed to the company's larger mission.

While obtaining my Master's degree in Information Science at the University of Illinois, I engaged in intense research on specific data analytics and storytelling methods. Throughout this experience, I regularly collected, examined, and presented data to colleagues to make persuasive arguments. For example, I investigated persistence rates for first-generation college students in the state of Illinois and used R to create graphics displaying emerging trends. Presenting these findings required professional communication skills and the ability to use storytelling techniques to move from my research to advocacy and action.

I am motivated by finding solutions. Each dataset I encounter is an opportunity for me to look for patterns, make connections, and explore new ways to create compelling and clarifying messages. My career goal is to use my skills and passion to demonstrate how information can be used to solve real-world problems. I believe this mindset is essential to meet the challenges of this position, and I am inspired by the opportunity to support the mission of Non-Profit Organization and its stakeholders.

It is my hope that we may meet in person to discuss how my ability to solve puzzles can benefit your organization. Please feel free to contact me via phone or email anytime. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to your response.

Best,

My Name  
myname@email.com  
(555) 555-5555