Welcome to Create a Custom Cover Letter with Walden career services. I am Katy coming to you from the career service center, located in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

To accomplish the mission we deliver cutting edge, global career resources and services and promote applied learning as an essential component of proactive career management.

In this webinar today we will cover a few important topics.
Why cover letters are important and the purpose they serve.
What to include in a cover letter.
Ways you can use your cover letter to showcase your qualifications.
Cover letter resources you can find on the career services website to help you develop your letter.

We hear many students and alumni say the cover letter is the most difficult part of the job search process. So what is your main challenge with writing a cover letter? Please type your answers in the question box.

We have one person saying they have not done one before. Ever. Customizing it to the position in a professional way, how to differentiate from other candidates. Do not know what needs to be included. Tailoring it to match the job specifications. Never done one. What information does it really need to have without inputting too much information? Not sure what it should include.

Awesome, these are all great questions to have. I hope that we will be able to cover all of those today in today's presentation.

The main reason for a cover letter is to introduce yourself to an employer and set yourself apart from other candidates who do not include a cover letter in their application. This is your chance to talk to the employer in a way that your resume does not. And it is also an opportunity to show off your writing skills. Write a letter directly to them and tailor your information to the position it and organization specifically.

Be clear in why you are interested in this specific position. Why are you a great fit? How can you benefit this organization with your skills and experience? Are there problems you know you can help them solve?

To entice the reader to want to learn more, ensure you communicate that you have the relevant skills and experience, but do not repeat all of your compliments and experience verbatim from
your resume.

Finally, ask for the interview. Asking for the interview and telling them how and when you will follow up tells them that you are dedicated and disciplined in your approach.

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The key to a great cover letter is tailoring it to each and every job posting and organization. The employer wants to know how you can provide value to them and what makes you a good fit. It is a process.

The first step is to review the position requirements and the job description. Does the job description focus on problem-solving or analytical skills? Do they require a specific number of years’ experience in a certain functional area? While reviewing, make notes of keywords or highlight areas that show high portions.

Research the company. Is it a large or small company? What does their website say about the culture? Do they value collaboration between areas? Match your skills to the qualifications of the position. Write strong achievement or skill statements using the CART framework. Finally showcase your brand in your cover letter. When thinking about your brand, ask yourself, what are my strengths? What makes me stand out from other applicants?

*We have a quick question, What are CART statements? We will come to that pretty soon.*

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Here are general tips we recommend. Aim for no more than one page, with 3-4 paragraphs maximum. Remember your goal is to entice the reader to want to learn more about you and call for an interview. Margins should be 1 inch on all sides. Font size should be standard, 11 to 12 point font in Ariel, Times New Roman or the same font as your resume to help brand you. Utilize simple and concise language. You do not need to cover complicated or in-depth information. Simply let them know your main qualifications and how you can add value to their organization.

Finally, always double check spelling and grammar. Run your cover letter through Grammarly and have someone else read it to catch those things you may not.

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Here is a sample cover letter template in standard business letter format, and outlines what to include in each paragraph. In the intro paragraph, you want to immediately state why are you writing the letter? This is to apply to a specific position. Also include how you found out about the position. Especially if you were referred by someone. In one sentence summing up why you are a good fit.

The body paragraph is the most difficult section. It should be two or three paragraphs maximum. Here, you want to briefly communicate your most relevant accomplishments as they relate to the company and your target position. Provide examples of your accomplishments and how they will benefit the company or organization.
Avoid repeating your resume verbatim as you are speaking directly to them. Remember your cover letter is also an opportunity to showcase her soft skills, such as your communication skills.

In the closing paragraph, make sure you state your interest in setting up an interview. How you can be contacted and how and when you will follow up.

Now, let's look a little more closely at what to include in each paragraph. We will cover some examples from a variety of Walden programs.

As a recap, with your introduction paragraph, you want to introduce yourself and capture the employer's interest. Express interest in one position. Even if there are multiple positions within the same department, you will need a separate cover letter for each, indicating your strengths for that particular position.

Include how you heard about the position, especially noting any referrals or contacts who pointed you towards the position. In one or two sentences, tell them who you are and why you are interested in that position.

Here is a good example of an introduction paragraph for a student who is applying for a faculty position in higher education. Notice that our student identified who the Program Director is for the position they are applying for and addresses the Program Director by last name. The first paragraph clearly states what position the cover letter is for and briefly states the main skills the student brings to the table.

Now onto the body paragraphs.

Communicate your most relevant accomplishments and give examples of the accomplishments. Remember to show, and not tell. You don’t want to state, “I have this skill”. Instead of saying “I have excellent communication skills” you need to give examples of those skills. You will want to be more specific in what the skill means for that position or employer.

Again, this is a great opportunity to describe your soft skills in action and avoid repeating your resume verbatim.

We are going to look at two formats of body paragraphs. One is this bulleted format you can see here in the brackets. This is a nice and easy way to highlight your qualifications. Again, you can see the intro paragraph here and an intro to the bullet points.

This student is applying for a position as a Project coordinator and should focus on project management knowledge and skills that are relevant to that position. Notice the quantifiers. Five years of project coordination experience and executive administration and the $500,000 budget
managed. The student also uses strong action verbs here to describe the experience and chooses information that is relevant to the position.

We do have a question. Can you give more examples of soft skills?

So, reliability, time management, presentation skills, critical thinking, or leadership. The things that are more widespread or can be used by multiple fields.

Great question, thank you.

The second type of body paragraph is your standard paragraph form. Here, this public health student is highlighting their knowledge of the public health field which could be through their academic program volunteer experience, or transferable skills from another field.

If you're making a career transition, the transferable skills are those skills you have gained from previous experience the transfer into other positions, those can be your communication skills, leadership skills, organization skills, technology, and project management skills.

Now on to the closing paragraph. Here, you want to make sure you ask for the interview. That is the purpose of the cover letter and resume on that initial application, to land the interview. You want to briefly conclude by indicating a strong interest in the position and enthusiasm in setting up or scheduling an interview to speak further with them. Thank them for reviewing your materials and state how you will follow-up, and when.

Here is a nice closing paragraph from a student in the human services field applying for a case management position. The student states their interest in meeting with employer to further discuss qualifications and experience. The employer is invited to use the email and phone provided by the student in the header, but you can also list your preferred contact method here individually. The paragraph also states when there will be follow-up regarding the position.

So, now that we've looked at each paragraph of a cover letter, let's talk about how to write strong accomplishment statements to highlight in your letter.

Here in Career Services we recommend the CART framework. The CART framework is an easy formula to use when writing your accomplishments.

CART stands for:
Challenge- What was the Problem?
Action- What did you do to solve the problem? Did you initiate it?
Result- Who or what was impacted and how?
Tie-in to what you can do in the future?
Quantify whenever possible. For example: number of people served? Processes improved?
Another effective tool for identifying your best qualifications for the job is to create a T-style skills match table. As an example, our applicant brings many transferable skills into the business operations analyst role from her experience in customer service. She also brings knowledge from her academic program.

To help create accomplishment statements for cover letter, she can use this table to match her qualifications. Through specific examples we identified a clear match. So here, the student provides a specific example of how she reviewed and analyzed business metrics and processes. She analyzed and monitored quality, service for inbound and outbound calls and recommended improvements to the quality assurance manager. Next she indicates how she improved systems and processes by quantifying her results. Improving departmental efficiency by 20% through training, coaching and process improvement initiatives.

She not only tells but also shows her teamwork and collaboration skills by indicating she has supervised a team of 23 service representatives. Finally she tells them how many years of experience she has at a bank center or call center by telling them she has 3+ years of call center experience about where she was promoted to supervisor based on stellar performance, leadership and collaboration.

For more cover letter resources, visit the Career Services website. The Career Services Center website can be accessed from your student portal or by going directly to careercenter.waldenu.edu.

OptimalResume is our career management tool with five modules to help you build resumes, CVs, cover letters, and career portfolios; and practice interviewing skills. You can access OptimalResume from the Career Services website, or by going directly to waldenu.optimalresume.com. OptimalResume’s Resume Builder is a tool which assists you in crafting professional-looking documents. Even though it is called Resume Builder it will still assist you in formatting your document and gives you an idea of section titles. There are over 100 samples for you to review and use, including CV samples. We currently have over ____________ students and alumni using the OptimalResume system!

We do have a question here. I have been a stay-at-home mom, do you recommend pulling those skills in? I am not sure how to apply that as you suggest.

I think it would depend on what you are applying for and what your experience is. Maybe if you’ve been volunteering or on the PTA, those would be great experiences to pull in. So I highly recommend scheduling an appointment to go through your experience individually.

Any other questions?
How do you deal with interruptions and work history? That would probably be more of a question for the resume to show that. In your cover letter, you are mostly focusing on what skills you to bring. You do not always have to address an interruption. You can if you think it would be a serious concern. But I think it would depend on why there was an interruption in work history. That is a case-by-case basis so I recommend scheduling and individual career services appointment, which you can do through your portal.

You can work on your cover letter with the help of a career services advisor by scheduling an appointment through your myWalden portal. Prior to an appointment we recommend you watch Discover Career Services to become familiar with our services. You can do this by viewing Discover Career Services in our archived webinars gallery, or by registering for a live webinar from our main Career Services website.

We have a great question. What if you are applying to an organization in which you do not have a specific contact person to address? Also, what about stating follow-up in this case?

That is a great question. In many cases, you can find out who the contact person is or hiring manager, sometimes you can call the organization and find out who to direct the cover letter to. Sometimes it will be just be a hiring committee so you can address hiring committee or hiring manager if you cannot figure it out. But all efforts to figure it out will help you in that process.

Stating follow-up in that case, you can always call the organization and ask to talk to human resources just to know what the timeline is for that position or candidates have been contacted so you can always just say that last paragraph, I plan to follow-up with your organization here within one or two weeks. Depending on how quickly one follow-up on that. You can usually tell if there is a closing date and when that closing date is if you want to follow-up right after that.

Here is another question. Can a cover letter be tailored to applying for a practicum? Yes, absolutely. We actually have cover letter templates within Optimal Resume for practicum. For at least the majority of those programs so that you can tailor those.

Do I need a cover letter for a CV? A CV is similar to a resume and I would include a cover letter, if nothing else it helps you stand out against someone who did not do a cover letter and expresses your interest in the organization. I think a cover letter can only help even though situation so I would still include them.

Any other questions for right now? What if the company is not hiring but you want an opportunity when they do? That's a great question. You could do a cover letter that is a little more general, just talking about that organization, their mission, their values and how you would fit in with them. And then letting them know what your experiences been, what your skills are,
and your strengths. And then submit that to them. You will not be able to upload it to a specific position, but if you had managing director or someone within the organization or human resources that you could submit it to, it would show your initiative.

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Connect with us by joining the Career Services LinkedIn Group
Follow us on Twitter
Subscribe to our YouTube channel
Join us on Facebook
Read Walden Student success stories on our blog
And use the features on the OptimalResume system.
Also remember, you can access all of our resources on our website careercenter.waldenu.edu

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