

Covering Letters

Here are some useful tips on writing covering letters. Make your covering letters as user-friendly as possible. Ensure what you are offering in terms of "unique selling points" stands out. Writing a letter is not always as straightforward as might be supposed. It is worth taking time to create the best possible impression. By the time the letter has been read, the employer will have been influenced by the way it has been written, as well as by its content

How to Write a Good Covering Letter

Always send a covering letter with your CV. This is an opportunity to tell an employer a bit about you and draw their attention to your skills and experience, as stated in your CV. Never refer to any information which isn't backed up in your CV.

Before you write your covering letter, do a bit of research. If possible get hold of some company information – annual reports and brochures. You can phone and request these. If you know anyone in a similar field, talk to them, get some inside information and use it to your advantage.

In your letter :

- Enter your full address and postcode followed by your telephone number and e-mail in the top right hand corner
- Always write to a named person and include their job title. If necessary, phone the company and find out who to address it to (especially if it's a speculative letter). If the advert says write to e.g. Chris Williams, address your letter to Dear Chris (never make assumptions – could be male or female)
- Begin the letter with an attention-grabbing opening that shows motivation – access the company's website.
- Don't write more than one page of A4. Three paragraphs are usually enough.
- Be direct – tell them why you are writing and what you could bring to the job. Why the employer should consider you rather than anyone else. This is your chance to sell yourself.
- Use your CV to tell them a bit about your background, emphasising relevant skills, qualifications and experience. Stress your enthusiasm, willingness to learn, hardwork, travel, ability to work as a member of a team, under pressure and to meet targets etc.
- Why are you interested in them? What is it about the job and/or that particular company which interests you?
- The final paragraph should stress your availability for attending an interview.
If you addressed the letter to Dear Mr/Mrs/or first name then use Yours sincerely. If you don't have a name, start with Dear Sir/Madam and end with Yours faithfully.

If you are sending a speculative letter, your research on the organisation should have clearly identified a role that you can apply for and the most relevant person to receive your letter. You should also make it clear in the letter what you wish to achieve – a summer work placement, a work shadowing opportunity, a permanent post etc. Make sure you finish by telling them that you will get back in touch with them to discuss this further, preferably stating a date – then make sure you do it.

- Remember a job advertisement provides only very limited information about the Employer and the role. Your challenge is to look behind the actual words, analyse the employer's needs and match your skills and experience to the criteria required. Check out company website for more information.
- One of the most common reasons for applications being rejected at the first sift is that the reply instructions have not been followed.
- Remember to keep copies of all the letters and CVs you have sent.