

# Writing a Cover Letter

## Purpose

It's important to understand that the cover letter is in most cases, the first piece of information about yourself that your potential employer will read.

From **your** perspective, the cover letter provides an opportunity to introduce yourself, highlight the key points from your resume, and be considered for a job interview. For speculative letters, where you are enquiring whether positions are available now or in the future, ensure you are specific about the kind of work you are looking for - not just any available position – and emphasize your key selling points.

From the **employer** perspective, the cover letter is often the first screening mechanism in the recruitment process, enabling them to quickly establish that the applicant meets the minimum criteria, and demonstrates an appropriate background to be competitive for the position – not every job applicant gets an interview. Put yourself in the employer's shoes; the cover letter should provide an active incentive for them to find out more about you in your resume.

## Formatting & Style

Remember, your cover letter may be one of tens or hundreds the employer may receive, so it's important that you format it in a standard business style, so that it's presented simply and concisely, and is easy to read. Meeting these standards should involve these features:

- 1 A4 page, typed using a simple 12 point font (eg Times New Roman, Arial)
- Plenty of white space (wide margins)
- Spell-checked and grammar-checked
- Sentences are well-constructed and not 'padded out'
- The tone is positive and straightforward
- Without slang, SMS abbreviations or casual terms

## Content

The content should reflect your written communication skills, your level of interest in the position, your knowledge of the organisation, and the relevance of your skills to the selection criteria of the particular job in question. These key selling points should be consistent with the details contained within your resume, and communicated by a series of well structured paragraphs. The content should also reflect your skills in synthesising evidence drawn from different sources and constructing consistent and well-supported arguments.

The content should include:

- Your address and contact details, the recipient's address
- Today's date
- A formal greeting to the relevant contact person
- The purpose of the letter, including details of the position (position title, reference number)
- Evidence of your interest in the position and the field
- Evidence of your research into the organisation

The content should **not** include:

- A simple list of your skills without any supporting evidence of **demonstrated** skills
- Sentences or phrases plagiarised directly off the organisation's website



## Typical Structure of a Cover Letter

Your Address  
Suburb State Postcode  
Your Telephone / mobile  
Email address

Date

Name of Contact  
Title (HR Manager etc.)  
Name of the firm  
Address  
Suburb State Postcode

Dear Mr...Ms... or if name unknown, Sir/Madam

### **Opening Paragraph**

#### ***The Fundamentals***

What's the purpose of this letter? Introduce yourself & explain why you are writing. If responding to a job advertisement, include the position title, and any reference number if applicable. If you're canvassing for potential employment, introduce yourself & your current career circumstances as concisely as possible, including any specialised professional interests and abilities.

### **Paragraphs 2, 3, 4/5**

#### ***Why do you want to work for this employer, and why should they want you? – A summary of your relevant study, skills and experience.***

It is essential that you demonstrate within these paragraphs the ability to gather together the most relevant information from a range of sources to state your 'claim' as a suitable candidate. Information that you should briefly cover includes your current or completed course, the planned finishing date, your major, specialisation or special interest, and any outstanding academic results.

Highlight the skills, expertise, qualities and employment experience you have included in your resume that you believe are most relevant to the requirements of the position. Make sure that you can demonstrate how you meet the selection criteria, and how it directly relates to both the current and future needs of the employer.

Include other factors that point to your possession of key general skills (skills such as communication, teamwork, initiative, self-management) through your experiences in voluntary or community activities, clubs and societies etc.

### **Closing Paragraph**

#### ***What do you want to happen next?***

Confirm that you have included your resume and any other documents requested. Finish on a positive note, thanking the employer for their time, & expressing interest in attending an interview.

Yours sincerely (if you have addressed them by their name) or  
Yours faithfully (if you have addressed them by their title)

(Place your signature here)  
Your Name

**Contact us**

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This Information was current at the time of writing and is intended as a guide only.  
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