# What Is a Cover Letter and Why do you need one?

A person wearing a white shirt

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# What Is a cover letter?

A cover letter is a one-page document addressed to the interviewer or hiring manager that includes your contact details, the role you are applying for and further detail surrounding the information in your cv. cover letters should highlight your interest in the role and expand on your skills and experiences that make you best suited for the position.

within the cover letter, you should align your qualifications, relevant skills and previous experience clearly to the job description to emphasise that you have done your research into the role and are keen to join the team.

# Why do you need a cover letter?

Your cover letter is a must-have for any job application, as it provides the hiring manager with more information about how you can fit into the role and how you can contribute to the team. It also helps the candidate develop a better understanding of their capabilities and why they should be hired.

# How to Write a Cover Letter

A person wearing a white shirt

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When it comes to job applications, it always surprises me how many people underestimate the importance of a good cover letter. They tend to think of it as an add-on, and focus most of their attention on their CV/resume.

Although these are important, a key part of getting your application noticed is a persuasive cover letter. If you want to give yourself every chance of success read on to find out how to write the perfect cover letter.

# Identify who to address It to

Most people address their letter to ‘Dear Sir/Madam’. There’s nothing wrong with this but writing to a named individual will make it more personal and show you’ve put in extra effort. You might find the details of who to address your letter to in the job advert or person specification for the role, but if you’re unsure contact the company to find out who will be reading your letter. Avoid sending an email to ask this as there’s a high chance it will go unanswered. Instead, pick up the phone, and get confirmation of the person’s title too (e.g. Mr, Mrs, Miss, etc.).

# Choose your opening.

Most people use a variation of “I am writing to apply for the position of … as advertised on... website.” If you want something a bit different you can highlight your number of years’ experience or current role if this is relevant. As a rule of thumb, if you have something worth highlighting mention this early on in your letter rather than saving it until later.

Some people open their cover letter less traditionally in order to make their application stand out, but this comes with risks. Think carefully about your audience – a less traditional opening may work particularly well in the creative industries, but may not suit others, such as finance or law.

# Answer the following 3 questions

Just like a CV/resume, a good cover letter will be tailored to the role and company you are applying for. To do this, you need to cover three key questions (the order you do this in is up to you):

# 1) Why do you want to work for (Employer Name)

You should always include a paragraph in your letter explaining what interests you about the company. Make these reasons personal – don’t just say you’d like to work for a company because its listed in a top 100 list of employers. Why were they ranked in the top 100? What does this tell you about them and what they might be like to work for? Why do you want to work for a company like this?

# 2) Why are you Interested in the role?

This is another critical question to address. A few factors you may want to consider are: the job duties, responsibilities, scope of the role, impact or development opportunities. Identify two or three reasons why you are applying – any more than this and you won’t be able to provide an adequate level of depth.

# 3) Why you?

The answer to this question should be the main focus of your letter. You need to outline your suitability for the role here, i.e. show how you match what the employer is looking for. This doesn’t mean going through each and every competency required, but picking a handful of the most important ones, whether experience, skills or knowledge. If the employer has listed competencies under ‘Essential’ and ‘Desirable’ use this to guide you on what to cover.

It’s really important this part of your cover letter is persuasive, and not just a descriptive overview of your background and skills. A good technique is to choose three competencies you know the employer is looking for and focus on these.

A few useful phrases to use in this section of your letter are ‘I understand you are looking for someone with strong relationship-building, teamwork and organisation skills. As you will see from my CV I…’ or ‘My experience working with … will be particularly valuable in the advertised role, as I can...’ It’s really important you show your awareness of what the employer is looking for and that you have considered how you match it. You then need to briefly evidence these competencies by mentioning specific job roles, projects and/or key responsibilities.

# Get the ending right

Most candidates use the final paragraph of their cover letter to thank the recruiting manager for reading their application. You can also use it to give the employer essential information, for example if you are about to go on holiday and won’t be available for interview from a

certain date. If you would like to disclose to the employer that you have a disability, you can also do this in the final paragraph.

Your cover letter is nearly done, now all you have to do is sign off. Use ‘Yours Sincerely’ if you know the name of the person you are sending the cover letter to. If you don’t and your addressing your letter to ‘Dear Sir/Madam’) you need to use ‘Yours Faithfully’. Remember to then add your name underneath.

# Get the ending right

With email being the most popular way to submit an application these days, you have two options – to send your cover letter as an attachment or to copy and paste the cover letter into the body of the email.

If you’re applying for an advertised position it’s often a good idea to send it as an attachment; this will make it easier for the recruiting manager to find your application once they’ve collated everyone else’s. If you choose to do this remember to include your full name in the file name so the employer can easily find it once after downloading. If you’re approaching a company speculatively (i.e. when there is no position being formally advertised) putting the body of the letter (without the addresses) in the email itself may be more impactful.