

Cover Letter

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To give your job application the best possible chance of success you need to know how to write a relevant and concise cover letter. Take a look at our examples for inspiration.

What is a cover letter?

A cover letter is a document sent alongside your CV when applying for jobs. It acts as a personal introduction and helps to sell your application. A cover letter is necessary as it gives you the chance to explain to an employer why you're the best candidate for the job. You do this by highlighting relevant skills and experience; therefore you should always write your cover letter with the position you're applying for in mind.

Cover letters should complement your CV but not duplicate it. The general consensus among recruiters when it comes to the length of these documents is the shorter the better. Typically three to five short paragraphs, cover letters should not exceed one A4 page. If sending electronically, put the text in the body of the email rather than as an attachment, to avoid it being detected by spam filters.

Applications should always include a cover letter unless the job advert instructs you differently.

How to write a cover letter

Keep your cover letter brief, while making sure it emphasises your suitability for the job. It can be broken down into the following sections:

- **First paragraph** - The opening statement should set out why you're writing the letter. Begin by stating the position you're applying for, where you saw it advertised and when you are available to start.
- **Second paragraph** - Cover why you're suitable for the job, what attracted you to this type of work, why you're interested in working for the company and what you can offer the organisation.
- **Third paragraph** - Highlight relevant experience and demonstrate how your skills match the specific requirements of the job description. Summarise any additional strengths and explain how these could benefit the company.
- **Last paragraph** - Use the closing paragraph to round up your letter. Reiterate your interest in the role and indicate your desire for a personal interview. Now is the time to mention any unavailable dates. Finish by thanking the employer and say how you are looking forward to receiving a response.

How to address a cover letter

Always try and address your cover letter directly to the person who will be reading it. Bear in mind that you're more likely to receive a reply if you send it to the right person. Advertised positions usually include a contact name, but if not, it is worth taking the time to find out who the letter should be addressed to. You can do this by searching the company's website for details of the hiring manager or alternatively you could call the

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organisation to ask who you should address your letter to. Don't be afraid to do this, many employers will appreciate you taking the time and initiative to do so. If you're struggling to find a named contact you can use a general salutation such as:

- Dear Sir/Madam
- Dear Hiring Manager
- Dear Human Resources Director.

However, general greetings should only be used once you have exhausted methods of finding a named contact. How you sign off your cover letter depends on how you addressed it. If you include a named contact sign off 'yours sincerely'. If you use a general one finish with 'yours faithfully'.

Example cover letters

- [Sample cover letter](#) - Find out how to craft the perfect cover letter.
- [Speculative cover letter](#) - Speculative applications can sometimes be an effective method of creating a career opening. Discover what you should include in these types of applications.
- [Cover letter by a Masters graduate](#) - Discover how to sell your postgraduate qualification to employers.
- [Cover letter for a jobseeker with no experience](#) - Read all about how to promote yourself to an employer if you haven't got any directly related work experience.
- [Explaining a gap in your CV](#) - You must always explain large gaps in your CV and your cover letter is the place to do so. Find out how to go about it.
- [Cover letter by an international graduate](#) - If you want to work abroad, take a look at our cover letter of an international student applying for a job in the UK and apply these principles to the country of your choice.
- [Disclosing a disability](#) - You're not legally required to disclose a disability but if you'd like to do so our example cover letter will show you how.

6 tips for the perfect cover letter

With employers often receiving lots of applications for each vacancy, you need to ensure that your cover letter makes a lasting impression for the right reasons. Here are some tips to increase your chances of success:

1. **Be concise** - Ideally a cover letter should take up half a page of A4 or one full page if necessary. Read through the document and cut out any unnecessary words and sentences. Don't fill up available space by repeating what's already covered in your CV.
2. **Tailor to the organisation** - You should rewrite your cover letter every time you apply for a position in order to target the individual company. Sending out a generic letter for all applications rarely yields positive results and recruiters can spot your lack of time and effort from a mile away.

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3. **Proofread** - Never rely on a computer spellcheck program to pick up every mistake. Print off your cover letter and double-check for spelling and grammar errors before passing it to family member or friend to look over. Also make sure that your own contact details and the company name are correct.
4. **Format** - Presentation is important so you'll need to format your cover letter properly. Make sure the document is as uncluttered as possible, use the same font and size as you use in your CV and if you're sending it through the post or handing it in use good quality plain white paper to print it on.
5. **Identify your USPs** (unique selling points) - They're your unique selling points. Be positive about what you have to offer and clearly outline how your skills and experience meet those requested in the job description. Demonstrate why you're the perfect candidate.
6. **Include examples** - Back up the claims in your cover letter with real evidence or examples that show how and when you've used your skills and experience.