

How to write a captivating cover letter

A covering letter is essential when applying for jobs. It emphasises your key experiences and highlights why you are the right candidate for the role. These tips will help you to write a covering letter which will get you noticed by employers.

Presentation:

Layout – Write your address in the right hand corner of the letter. Leave a line and then include the date. Follow a standard letter format, spacing your paragraphs evenly.

Length – Your letter should be less than one page of A4 in length, ideally half a page.

Font – Use a suitable font such as Arial and font size no bigger than 11.

Style – Your CV and covering letter should be in the same style so they look like a package.

Things to remember:

- ✓ **Keep your covering letter clear and concise** – Do not ramble about all of the experience you have. Expand on the most relevant sections of your CV, mention how your skills meet the job specification and demonstrate why you are suitable for the job.
- ✓ **Provide Evidence** – Don't just say 'I have excellent communication skills.' Back this up with examples from your past experience. If you have statistical evidence, include it.
- ✓ **Check your spelling** – The covering letter demonstrates your writing style so make sure yours is good. Check, double check and triple check for any spelling or grammatical mistakes. (We did that on purpose)
- ✓ **Address your letter to an individual** – If possible; address your covering letter to the person recruiting for the job. This shows that you have done your research, and it is not a generic application.
- ✓ **Do your research** – Before you write your covering letter, research the company and the job you are applying for. Demonstrate that you have taken an interest in that particular company.
- ✓ **Keep a copy** – If (or should we say when) you get invited to an interview, you will be asked questions based on your covering letter, so ensure you keep a copy to help you prepare.

On the day:

Paragraph 1 – Your first paragraph should be short and to the point and explain why you are writing.

- State what position you are applying for
- Where you saw the vacancy advertised
- When you are available to start work

Paragraph 2 – The second paragraph should explain why you are suitable for the job.

- Include your professional and academic qualifications relevant to the role
- Summarise your strengths
- Refer to the main skills listed in the job description and how you meet the criteria

Paragraph 3 – Emphasise what you can do for the company.

- What experience you can bring to the role
- Incorporate your research about the company
- Why you want to work for the company and why you are interested in the role
- Expand on pertinent points in your CV

Paragraph 4 – Keep this paragraph concise.

- Reiterate your interest in the role and why you are suitable
- Thank the employer for considering your application
- Finish with a positive close and indicate you would like to meet with the employer for interview

Signing off

- If you named a person in your opening remark, sign off with 'Yours sincerely'
- If you start with 'Dear Sir / Dear Madam' end with 'Yours faithfully'

Presentation:

Do not recycle your cover letter – It is obvious when you have written a generic covering letter which you have sent off to every company.

Tailor it specifically to the role and the company – Expand on the competencies highlighted in the job specification.

The Cogent Skills team would like to wish you good luck. If you have any questions about writing a covering letter please get in touch and we'll be happy to help.

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