

APPLICATION/COVER LETTER TIPS

A covering letter along with your curriculum vitae, application for employment and educational qualification, is a way of introducing yourself to potential employers and explaining your suitability for the desired position.

It is the first impression in which the prospective employer is able to be informed of the applicant, as well as assess competency to executing the duty prior to employment. Although some organisations may not require a covering letter, it is however, important for it to be presented.

A covering letter shouldn't be more than one page. It's only meant to be a summary of the information you put in your CV, so remember to keep it brief.

You need to be as specific as you can about your skills and qualities and how they match the job or company's needs.

To begin, include both the employer's and your contact information.

Your contact details on the top right-hand corner should include your:

- Address
- City and Code
- Contact number
- E-mail address

Make sure you will be able to answer the number you give. Don't give your landline number if you're not going to be home to answer it.

Use a line break and include the day's date on the right.

After the date, enter the contact details of the company on the left hand side:

- the name of the person you're writing to
- their position or the name of their company
- their contact details

If you're having trouble finding this information you can call the company to ask who you should address your application to.

Avoid addressing the recipient as "To whom it may concern" rather use the name of the human resource/department manager as it shows you have researched the company.

Beneath the greeting, write the subject of the post which you are applying for.

Body of the letter

In the introduction of the letter briefly state why you are writing the letter, explain which vacancy you are applying for and where you saw the job advert.

Mention that you have enclosed your CV.

In the following paragraph you need to explain how the employer will benefit in employing you, making reference to previous experience, stats and accomplishments. Concentrate mostly on your personality traits *i.e.* strong leadership qualities and problem solving skills etc.

Specify what draws you to the job and industry, when you first became interested in them and why you are interested. Explain why you have applied to them specifically; mention what sets them apart from their competitors. It is important to make it clear you have done your research and understand the role you are applying for, the company principles and what they are looking for.

Point out your qualifications, experience, skills and competencies. If mention is made of any specific skills required within the job advert, make sure you express how you will meet all of them.

When drafting a cover letter, try to not use the word "I", for example "I have..." "I believe..." "I am...", too often.

Use this opportunity to tell the employer something different from your CV. In essence, all that you mention has to speak beyond your CV, reflecting the human aspect of yourself without exaggerating. Maintain professionalism and honesty when writing a covering letter especially since this will be the basis of your employment.

Give the employer a convincing reason why you are best suited for the job and why they absolutely must hire you.

If you have been applying for vacancies in other organisations do not mention it here. Although there is possible assumption, always give the impression that you really need the job.

Never cut and paste portions of your CV in the covering letter. Instead, re-word what is written in your CV whilst ensuring that the covering letter is short and straight-forward.

Conclusion

In concluding your covering letter, always end on a happy note: thanking them for their time and state, "I look forward to discussing my application with you in further detail" or "I look forward to discussing my skills, competencies and values in greater detail".

Indicate your availability for an interview.

Always proofread your covering letter to ensure that there are no errors that may disqualify you from a possible interview.

As traditionally practised, use "Yours sincerely" to sign off. Only in cases where you had greeted the individual as "Dear Sir/Madam" do you use "Yours faithfully".

Ensure that you leave enough space for your signature then beneath add your title, name and surname.