

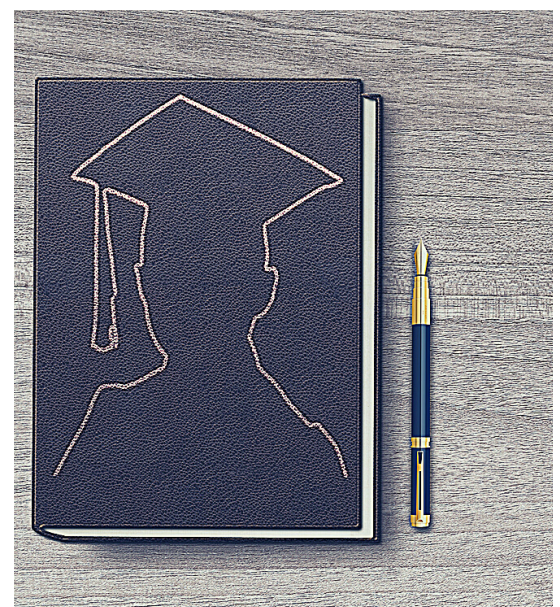
COVER LETTER



Top cover letter tips

- Keep the language friendly but formal
- Think about how you would speak to an employer at interview.
- Be positive! Use action words but don't lose sight of your own style.
- Avoid repeating key words or phrases.
- Always end on a positive note. You can end by reaffirming your enthusiasm or your suitability.
- Check your letter several times, and then get a friend to check it, then go away and check it again later.

"A COVER LETTER IS A ONE-PAGE DOCUMENT THAT IS SENT AND READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH YOUR CV. IT HIGHLIGHTS RELEVANT SKILLS AND ACHIEVEMENTS."



Cover Letter

1. What is the purpose of a cover letter?

The cover letter is a chance for you to highlight the skills and achievements which are especially relevant to that particular employer. It will be a brief summary of your experiences to date, tailored to the competencies that are required by the employer. It is also a chance for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the organization to which you are applying and your motivation for working there. Some recruiters will also use your cover letter to assess your written communication skills.

2. What needs to be included in a cover letter?

Recruiters expect you to show that you match the position. The secret of writing a good cover letter lies in using your qualifications and experience to show that you are the best person for the position. One way of going about it is to begin your cover letter by focusing on your relevant achievements: academic, extra-curricular, work experience and other interesting aspects of your life. Then move on to focus on the employer, why you are applying for the job, including some interesting and relevant facts about that organization. Show them that you are capable of thinking clearly and you are a motivated, proactive learner.

3. How long should the cover letter be?

Where possible, follow the employer's instructions and any advice offered by them. If this is not available, something around 400 words is about right and certainly not more than one page of A4 paper.

4. What type of language should I use?

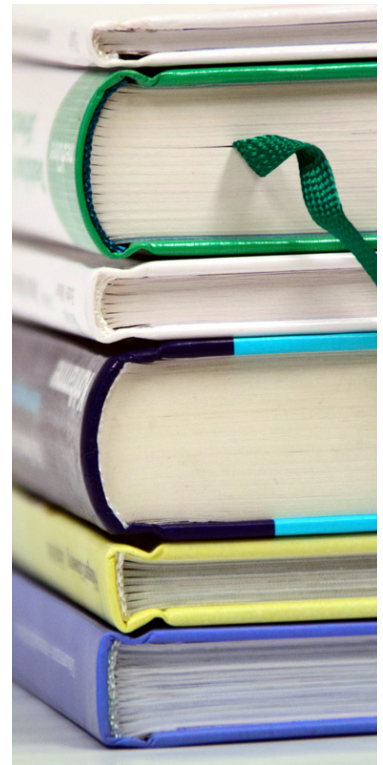
Aim for short, sharp sentences that make for concise, gripping paragraphs, which are good for busy recruiters who can't spend a long time reading each application.

5. What is the correct layout of a cover letter?

In general, cover letters are one side of typed A4 and are set out like a formal business letter. Have a look at the examples on websites to see how this is done. The letter should be about three to four paragraphs long with each separated by a single line.

6. How should I address my cover letter?

Your name and address should be clearly shown at the top, right-hand corner of the letter. Don't think that because this information is on your CV you don't need to put it on the cover letter. Pages can become separated easily.



Cover Letter

7. How do I know who to write to?

It's usual to reply to the name used in the advert or application pack. If a name is not given, call the organization and ask for a named individual who deals with recruitment. We strongly advise that you address your cover letter to a named person. Do make sure you use the correct spelling of their name. If you are not able to find a named individual, you can use "Dear Sir/Madam". The correct greeting in a business letter is always formal. It normally begins with "Dear" and usually includes the person's last name and title, i.e., Professor, Dr, Mr, Ms etc. If addressing a female, does the job advert specify whether they are Mrs, Miss, or Ms? If it doesn't say then it is best to use Ms.

8. How do I sign off?

The standard convention is that if you address the letter to a named individual, sign off with "Yours sincerely". If your letter begins with "Dear Sir/Madam", end with "Yours faithfully". Make sure you sign /put your signature in between:

Example:

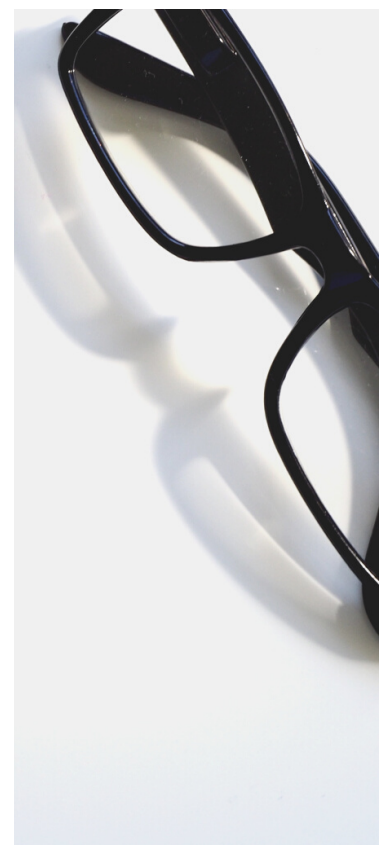
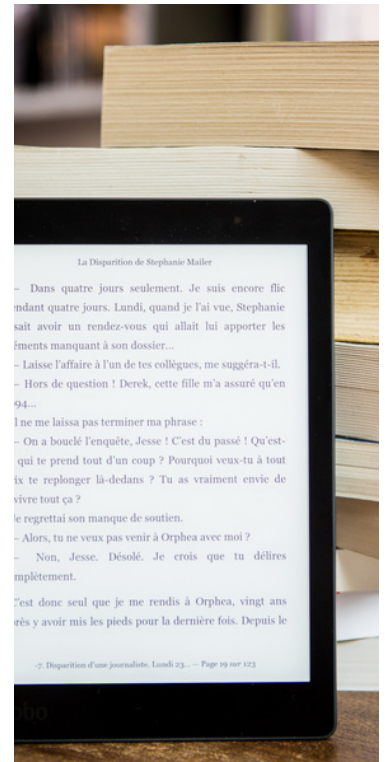
Yours faithfully,
(Signature)
Juliet Atieno

9. What do I put as the subject header when sending my cover letter via email?

Title the email "Application for (job title)", also following any additional instructions in the job advert (like including a reference number). If you are sending a speculative application, you can be less specific. Try to keep your subject header concise and professional though.

10. Should I handwrite a cover letter?

If you are asked specifically to handwrite it, then you must. Make sure the letter is neat and legible. Use dark ink because it is easier for photocopying. In almost all cases though, you should send a word-processed letter.



Cover Letter

11. Can I use bullet points or subheadings in a cover letter?

There is nothing to stop you from using bullet points or subheadings to help structure your cover letter. However, remember that you are still writing a formal business letter which needs to be written clearly and succinctly.

12. Which is more important, the CV or the cover letter?

They are both important. If you want to maximize your chances of success you should treat them both seriously. The cover letter is often the first thing the recruiter sees and will set their expectations for what is to follow. A good cover letter will highlight your key strengths and motivations for wanting to work in a particular organization, the CV will then go into more detail about what you have achieved.

13. Can I have a standard cover letter?

Your cover letter should be tailored to one specific vacancy (or to a particular employer if you are applying speculatively). Recruiters will be able to spot generic cover letters and furthermore, you will not be able to show specific research you have done into a particular organization.

15. Can I send a speculative CV and cover letter?

Sometimes roles are not formally advertised so you can contact a potential employer to enquire about upcoming opportunities or to express an interest in working for them. Try to find out who deals with recruitment through calling or networking, as personally addressed applications are the most effective and professional. You should include a CV and cover letter, and media and journalism applicants should also include one or two examples of published work. Once you have sent your speculative application, wait between one and two weeks to follow up.

