

How to Write a covering Letter

A CV covering letter is an important part of the application process. Some employers quickly scan read through large amount of applications and sift out unsuitable applications from the cover letter.

It is good practice and a good opportunity for you to highlight that you have the relevant skills and experience for a role; it will also ensure that the recruiter will give your CV the right attention.

In short your covering letter is a marketing document to sell your relevant skills that can help get you on a short list or to interview stage.

Below are a few tips to make your cover letter effective.

1. What to include in a cover letter

Covering letters, like CV's will vary slightly in content depending on what role you are applying for and what skills and experience you need to highlight from your CV. However all covering letters will be expected to have the following content.

- Contact Details (address, phone number, email address)
- Details of the job you're applying for and where you saw the job advert
- A brief summary of any recent experience and what you have gained from this.
- Why your skills and experience are suitable for the job role.

2. Address the letter to the right person.

It may sound obvious, but when writing a cover letter you should always try to address it to the right person. If you're unsure of the person's name and it is not on a job advert, or if it is a speculative application you can always telephone the company (as it shows initiative) and ask who would be the best person to address it too. This will also make your application more personable and will help get your CV a proper viewing.

However it is not possible to get the person's name simply address you letter to Dear Sir / Madam.

3. Keep it brief and refer to your CV

Covering letters should be a brief summary of your CV, matching your skills and experience to the requirements of the role, so keep as short as possible and certainly should not exceed one A4 side.

4. Do your home work

Covering letters provide a great opportunity to show you have properly thought through the job specification and that you have done some research. So a line about why you are interested about the job and some brief knowledge of the company will better the chances your CV will stand out.

5. The recruiter hasn't asked for a cover letter.

It is 'good practice' to include a cover letter even if you are applying through an online job board when more often than not it is not specified to include one. Remember a covering letter is an opportunity to sell yourself and improve your chances of getting an interview.

I'm applying prospectively, so can't match myself to job requirements.

Effective cover letter writing generally matches your skills and experience to the requirements of a specific job advert or requirement. However if your applying prospectively you won't have a detailed job description to work from or match yourself to.

So when making prospective applications, be sure to give a description of the job and type of role you're looking for, add in the details of the skills you have to carry out this role.

Covering letters with prospective applications are excellent to show you have done a bit of homework on the company and to detail why you would like to work there.

Phone the company you are sending a prospective application to and ask who would deal with that type of role or application.

I'm not fully qualified for the role.

If you're not fully experienced or qualified for a specific role, your covering letter is a great place to confront this.

So when outlining your relevant skills for a role you should be able to highlight an area where you can make up and add benefit for lack of experience or qualifications and why you still believe you will be able to meet the requirements.

