

# How To Write a Cover Letter

## Why do I need a Cover Letter?

Whether you are submitting a CV, by paper or electronically, you should always include a cover letter

- It's the first document the employer will read.
- It allows you to demonstrate your professionalism.
- Makes your application more personal.
- Draws attention to key areas of interest in your CV
- Demonstrates your writing ability
- No more than 1 page
- Tailored to the job your applying for

## Suggested Structure for a Paper Cover Letter

	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Your Address (Include Postcode)</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px; width: fit-content; margin-left: auto;">Date</div>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Employers Address (Include Postcode)</div>		
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Dear (Named Contact OR Sir/Madam)</div>	<p style="color: red; font-size: small;">Named persons have increase response rates</p>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p style="color: red; font-weight: bold; margin-top: 0;">First paragraph</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why you are writing the letter</li> <li>State the position you're applying for</li> <li>Where you saw it advertised</li> <li>You have enclosed your CV for their consideration</li> </ul> <p style="color: red; font-weight: bold; margin-top: 10px;">Second paragraph</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why you want to work in this particular sector</li> <li>Why you want to work for THIS company in THIS job– be specific</li> </ul> <p style="color: red; font-weight: bold; margin-top: 10px;">Third paragraph</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What skills YOU can offer THIS company</li> <li>Refer to the job description and match the specific skills they are looking for</li> </ul> <p style="color: red; font-weight: bold; margin-top: 10px;">Last paragraph</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indicate how you are looking forward to receiving a response</li> <li>Mentioning any unavailable dates for interview</li> <li>Thank the employer for their time</li> </ul> </div>		<div style="background-color: red; color: white; padding: 10px; border-radius: 50%; width: 150px; height: 150px; margin: auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;"><b>Tailor EVERY part of your letter to the job description</b></p> </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">                 Yours Sincerely (if a named contact)                  Yours Faithfully (if Dear Sir/Madam)             </div>		
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">                 Sign Your Name in Pen                  Type your name             </div>		

## Top Ten Do's

1. Be succinct and to the point, your letter should be one side of an A4 page.
2. Use the same high quality paper used to print your CV.
3. Address your letter to a named person wherever possible for maximum impact.
4. Tailor your letter to the job advert and include the skills they are looking for.
5. Get someone else to proof read your letter, don't rely on the computer spellcheck.
6. Use a professional formal letter layout and make full use of the space available.
7. Ensure you have the company name, address and details correct.
8. Read your letter out loud and delete any unnecessary or irrelevant
9. If posting on hard copy leave space at the bottom and sign your name in pen
10. Show your enthusiasm for the company and the vacancy

1. Don't repeat what is written in your CV.
2. Don't spill over on to a second page – you're writing too much.
3. Don't share unnecessary personal details.
4. Don't focus solely on your qualifications and forget about your experiences and transferable skills.
5. Don't include any spelling or grammar mistakes.
6. Don't address it 'To whom it may concern' – use a named person or 'Dear Sir/Madam'
7. Don't send the same cover letter to every employer.
8. Don't forget to include your correct and complete address, including postcode.
9. Don't send a letter (or CV) with any marks or stains on it.
10. Don't fold your documents, use an A4 envelope where possible.

## Top Ten Dont's

## Email Cover Letters

- If sending your CV electronically put the text in the body of the email unless specifically requested to send your cover letter as an attachment. ONLY include the greeting, paragraphs and ending. Addresses are NOT necessary.
- Include a professional signature with your contact information.
- Follow the company instructions at all times. If they want PDF attachments don't send them in MS Word.
- Emoticons, colours, unusual fonts, gifs, abbreviations and humour are all unprofessional – avoid them.
- Make use of the subject line and include the job title and reference so it gets to the correct person as quickly as possible.
- Keep it short and sweet, don't make the employer scroll to finish your email.
- Many companies use applicant tracking systems (ATS), programmes which screen for key words to find suitable candidates and skill sets. Use key words so they can find you.
- Send a test message to yourself so you can check your formatting is appropriate.

- [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk) – Graduate website with sample cover letters and addressing specific issues, including speculative letters and disclosing information
- [www.gradireland.com/careers-advice/cvs-and-applications/cover-letters-for-graduate-jobs](http://www.gradireland.com/careers-advice/cvs-and-applications/cover-letters-for-graduate-jobs)
- [www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/careers/StudentsandGraduates/CVsMakingApplicationsandInterviews/CVandCoveringLetters](http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/careers/StudentsandGraduates/CVsMakingApplicationsandInterviews/CVandCoveringLetters)
- Also links to book an appointment with a Careers Consultant.