



Writing a Cover Letter

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Unless you are specifically asked not to send in a cover letter, you do want to include one with your application. Cover letters haven't quite gone the way of the dinosaur yet.

The purpose of the cover letter is to get the recruiter/hiring manager interested enough in your application that they will want to read your CV. The purpose of your CV is to show them you would be a great candidate for the job and to get invited to an interview.

Some pointers on writing a cover letter.

1. Your cover letter should be $\frac{3}{4}$ to one page in length, typed in a professional, simple font. Generally, 3-5 paragraphs are what you want, and if you want to use bullet points you can. Make sure you don't flood the page with typeface. You need to have some whitespace. Otherwise the person looking at it is put off. Anything that looks like it could be a difficult or a long read will be put aside and not read.
2. Have a professional header at the top with your name, cell phone number and email contact details. Always make it easy for someone reading your CV or cover letter to know how to contact you. Some people include the link to their LinkedIn profile, and if you have a website or site where you have a professional portfolio, then also include that.
3. You will start off with a greeting. Don't say, "Hey there", "Hey you", "Hi there", and don't even use sir or madam. Find out the name of the person who you are sending your CV to. If you really cannot find a name then address your letter to "Dear Hiring Manager", "Dear Hiring Team" or "Dear Head of Human Resources".
4. You can have a heading for your cover letter that states the role you are applying for and where you found out about the job. Please get this right. People have been known to send in applications and type in the wrong role. Underline the heading or use a bold font to get it to stand out. The recruiter needs to know exactly what role you are applying for.
5. Often the first paragraph is about why you are interested in the role and the company. You may say something such as, "I was very excited when I saw your advert for the position _____ as I have been a big follower of your company and really like the new products you are focused on launching, such as..... To have an opportunity to work at your company has always been something I have wanted".
6. In the second paragraph talk about why you are the ideal person for the role. Talk about your years' experience in different fields, your qualifications, and your key skills. Summarise these because you don't have lots of space and you don't want to regurgitate what is contained in

your CV. You want to get them interested in you. Mention what is core to performing the role. Use keywords from the job description that apply. Do not put any work experience or skills or qualifications in your cover letter that are not relevant to the job you are applying for. Ideally you don't want this in your CV, but sometimes it can be good. The recruiter does not have the time to read information that is irrelevant to the role on offer. Also, put in the more recent work experience if you have worked for more than 15 years.

7. In your third paragraph talk about your achievements. The more senior the role you are applying for, the more you need to talk about quantitative achievements you brought about in your previous roles. Results speak volumes. They get the attention of recruiters. That is what your cover letter is meant to do. Select relevant achievements. If you are applying for a financial manager role don't talk about winning a flower show. Talk about achievements in your past jobs that you were responsible for, that are linked to work you will need to perform in this role you are applying for. Use numbers as much as possible. Quantify how you saved costs, improved processes, retained clients, saved time, brought in new business, developed new products that sold well, etc. Don't have too many. Three good achievements is great for a cover letter. The rest you can add to your CV. By listing your achievements you want the person reading your cover letter to start to think, "If they can do this in our company it will be fantastic".
8. When you sign off the cover letter be professional, honest, straightforward, and confident. If you want the job you want the recruiters to know that. Don't come across as too desperate. I have read cover letters where people say they will be available anytime, anywhere, to do whatever the recruiter wants (well not quite that). Don't say that. You sound desperate and insecure. What you do want to highlight is that you want this job because you want to bring something to the company. So, you want to be confident and you want to come with a "How can I help your company be better" attitude. A typical ending could be, "I thank you for your time, and look forward to discussing with you how I can add value to your organisation". Or you could say, "The above are some of my achievements in my current role, I look forward to discussing with you how I can do the same in your organisation".

It goes without saying that you need to edit and spell check your cover letter. Think about every word you have used. Put yourself in the shoes of the company doing the hiring. Would you be impressed if you saw your own cover letter? What do you think is going to get them to think, "We really have to have this person?"