

## A cover letter

A cover letter, also known as an application letter, is a formal letter from you to the person who is in charge of hiring people for the job you are applying for.

A cover letter tells your personal career story. It is not the same as a resume. Resume provides information about your career point by point. Ideally, cover letter and a resume should complement each other and provide answers to all questions a recruiter may have about your skills and work experience. Your cover letter expresses how you can communicate your work experience and skills to a potential employer.

### What should a cover letter include?

- The position you are applying for
- How (where, when) you learnt about the job position
- Why you want to work for the company
- Why you are applying for the job position
- The skills, experience, and work-related personality qualities that make you a perfect candidate for the job
- Your interests and hobbies that are related to the position you are applying for
- Your willingness to attend a job interview and the exact time when you are available to start work

When you are talking or writing about why you want to work at the company, you can't just say/ write "because I need a job." Although it is true, it is not a good way how to show your interest in the job position and the company itself. Instead of writing/ saying „because I need a job“, describe your specific values, characteristic features and aims in your career that fit the company's policy.

### How to write a good cover letter

When you are applying for a job, it's extremely improbable to be the only applicant. In nearly all cases, you are one of a group or hundreds of applicants. It means that your cover letter must attract the recruiter's attention the most. You must effectively state your strengths that make you a perfect candidate and stand out from the crowd to persuade the recruiter enough to invite you to an interview.

Before you write your cover letter, think about the job position, read carefully all the requirements and also spend some time going through the company's website to learn about their aim, values and policy.

### Personalize the greeting

The first thing the recruiter will see in your letter is whether you addressed it to them personally. If you know the name of the person you are writing to, address your letter to them. It's always better to write the person's name (if you know it) than to write impersonalized Dear Sir or Madam.

### Get the recruiter's attention

Your cover letter needs to get attention within the first sentences. The recruiter will read a lot of letters with similar content. If your letter doesn't get their attention from the beginning, it can sink into oblivion and get overlooked.

Write about your most relevant strengths, skills and experience and show them in action not just listing them.

When describing your work experience, use active voice and dynamic words.

For example: Instead of saying/ writing:

„I worked as a bank clerk for sixteen years and then I decided I’d rather become an electrician.“

Use:

„After more than a decade as a bank clerk, I pivoted to a new career and began my professional practice as an electrician.“

### Ask for the interview

In your cover letter you are advised to ask for the interview. You should do it in the last paragraph of your letter. Here are some possibilities how to do it:

- “I would like to meet in person to discuss this position further. Please contact me at ....(your phone number) or (your email address).”
- “I’m looking forward to meeting with you in person to discuss my suitability for this job position.”
- “I hope you’ll consider me for this position. Please contact me at .... (your phone number) or (your email address) to schedule/ plan an interview.”

### Cover letter dos and don’ts

When you are writing your cover letter, keep these points in mind:

- **Don’t** use very a complex language and also never use slang or very casual language.
- **Don’t** use abbreviations and contractions.
- **Do** have someone who can read your cover letter and give you feedback before you send it to the recruiter. This can be anybody who knows you well and can tell you what to add or remove.
- **Don’t** use the same cover letter for every job. Your cover letters can be similar but recruiters know when they are reading impersonal letters. You must show that you read the job description carefully and you are really interested in the job offered by them.
- **Do** use keywords in your cover letter. You can find these keywords in the job description. These are: the job title, department of the company, industry, and specific tasks. Many large companies use software to screen applicants and these programs look for specific keywords in cover letters.
- **Don’t** write a long, rambling and unstructured cover letter. Keep it under a page in length with shorter paragraphs which can help you to better keep the reader’s attention.