

Thursday: Cover Letter Workshop

Cover Letter

What is a cover letter?

A cover letter is a one page document that is sent with the CV when applying for a job. To be considered for almost any position, you need to write a cover letter (also known as a letter of application). Cover letters allow you to tell the employer exactly why hiring you, instead of the numerous other candidates, is a great decision.

Why do you need a cover letter?

A cover letter is important because it:

1. Introduces your story and personal interest in the position to the hiring manager
2. Highlights a few of your experiences and skills
3. Helps you argue why you are a good fit for the job
4. Requests an opportunity to meet with the potential employer, increasing the chances of you getting an interview

Task

In groups of three's go through the above concepts of what is a Cover Letter and why you need it and discuss.

Styling Tips

1. Use 1.5 spacing
2. Letter should be less than 1 page total, but be careful not to make the content look crammed together
3. Use 12 point Times New Roman or Arial font.
4. **Maintain** a uniform alignment throughout. Keep all paragraphs left-aligned, with indentation for the first line of a new paragraph.

First Step

Before we get started here is a good example of a [Cover Letter](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XBSr9tx_BHwHuGDwHI8LbJGFeCzNNjI8-W06aaaRU4I/)

(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XBSr9tx_BHwHuGDwHI8LbJGFeCzNNjI8-W06aaaRU4I/)

Now, let's start!

1. Go to [Google Drive](https://drive.google.com/) [\(https://drive.google.com/\)](https://drive.google.com/) and create a new Google Document
2. Name the document "[your first and last name] [company name] Cover Letter"
3. Share the document with the Professional Development Mentor.

We use Google Docs because they are easy to share with others, modify, and ensure that you do not lose your Cover Letter if something happens to your computer.

Task

Go to one of the job vacancies site listed below and select a job posting that is per your technical competence and your stack. Pretend that you are applying for that specific job and tackle all the tasks in this cover letter creation exercise.

Check below for a list of useful websites to search for jobs (*however, do not restrict yourself to these websites ONLY*) and how you can effectively search for the right jobs:

Website	Search Keywords	Comments
<u>https://ihub.co.ke/jobs</u> <u>(https://ihub.co.ke/jobs)</u>		Constantly updated
<u>https://kaziplus.com</u> <u>(https://kaziplus.com)</u>		Weekly newsletter sent to email address. Sign Up for Newsletter
<u>https://www.shortlist.net/ken/</u> <u>(https://www.shortlist.net/ken/)</u>	Software Developer, android, IT, Full stack	Sign Up using email address
<u>http://www.summitrecruitment-search.com/jobs/</u> <u>(http://www.summitrecruitment-search.com/jobs/)</u>	Select Information Technology category	
<u>https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/</u> <u>(https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/)</u>	Software Developer, android,	Select appropriate location, Nairobi, Kenya

IT, Full stack

<https://www.brightermonday.co.ke>
(<https://www.brightermonday.co.ke>)

Select IT under
category

Select appropriate location,
Nairobi, Kenya

<https://www.glassdoor.com/index.htm>
(<https://www.glassdoor.com/index.htm>)

Software
Developer, IT,
Android

Select appropriate location,
Nairobi, Kenya

Contact Information

The contact information includes your contact information and that of your employers.

Name

City,Country

Phone Number

Email

Employer Contact Information

Name

Title

Company

City, Country

Date

Example

Joseph Muli

Nairobi, Kenya

0719116442

joseph.muli@gmail.com

Faizal Mirza

Group CTO

Cellulant Kenya

P.o Box 101 - 0100

Nairobi, Kenya

1st February 2017

Task

Having gone through the above example, create the contact information for your cover letter

Strictly follow the format used in the example above.

With your peer partners, review each other's work and give feedback. Refactor until the "Contact Information" section is perfect..

Addressing the Employer

Avoid addressing the employer as "Dear Sir/Madam" or "To Whom it May Concern". Instead, use the name of the person that you are sending the letter to. For example:

Dear Faizal Mirza,

This shows that you have done actual research about the company, and are not just using a templated cover letter. Look at the company website or job posting to find the name of the person hiring for the position.

Task

Following the instructions given on how to address the employer, go ahead and address the employer on your cover letter.

Review the task with your peer partners and give each other feedback following the outlined format used above in [Addressing the Employer](#)

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JNnph0YwnftO5yQSeLZ2m7HLN4DGz2SI23I_PelzqXk/edit?ts=59b0df1f#heading=h.z6g2bhgd99x4.

Paragraph 1

Begin by introducing yourself and telling the employer the position you are applying for.

Examples

My name is Joseph Muli. I am thrilled to be applying for the position of an Android Developer at Cellulant Kenya. I came across this job posting through the business development manager at Moringa School, and after reviewing it I think that my skills are a perfect match for your needs.

I am writing to apply for the position of a Front-End Developer at BRCK. I came across this job through the BRCK website and I am excited about the potential of the work we could do together.

Task

Using the above examples as a reference:

- Introduce yourself, state what job position you are applying for and how you got to know about the job
- Briefly state why you are interested in the job position
- Review the first paragraph with your peer partners. Give each other feedback using the instructions on [Paragraph 1](#)

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JNnph0YwnftO5yQSeLZ2m7HLN4DGz2SI23I_PelzqXk/edit?ts=59b0df1f#heading=h.sl3l811j5rkk) on how the paragraph should be structured. Refactor until they are contented with your work.

Paragraph 2

Briefly talk about what you are passionate about and why you are interested in the job. Do research on the company and the role you are applying for so that you can make this paragraph very compelling and personalized. This paragraph is your chance to share your interest in the role and to convince them that you are very excited about what they are doing.

In order to do that, do research by looking at the company website, looking through the company blog, Googling the company, looking at existing employees LinkedIn profiles, and/or reading their GlassDoor reviews. Then, write a strong paragraph.

Example

My fascination with computers began when I was 13 and built my own computer. Since then, I've always been an avid gamer who loves solving challenging problems. Not long ago, I had the opportunity to interact with employees from Cellulant during a hackathon, and I was very impressed with their skillset and the projects they were working on. This prompted me to learn more about your company and current openings. From my research it is clear that you are looking for an enthusiastic applicant that is reliable and can effectively build solid Android applications. Given these requirements, I believe that I am the perfect candidate for the job.

Example

While reading through a blog by your Director of Engineering, Sam Kitonye, I came across an article outlining the current software architecture of your Jumo platform. This type of contribution to the tech community furthers your award from Nairobi Tech Week of being recognized as one of the best places to work for tech professionals. My passion for tech prompted my career change 5 years ago, after I spent 10 years in the financial services industry. I am very excited about the possibility of joining your company as a Junior Software Engineer, where I can follow my passion for both coding and finance. Your culture of innovative engineering design and progressive product development is inspirational and I am excited about the opportunity to contribute.

Task

Using the above examples as a guide, write down why you are Interested in the job position and what you are passionate about.

Review the second paragraph with your peer partners and give each other feedback using the instructions given [Paragraph 2](#)

(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JNnph0YwnftO5yQSeLZ2m7HLN4DGz2SI23I_PelzqXk/edit?ts=59b0df1f#heading=h.d0mibc1i0ohd) on how the paragraph should be structured. Work on the corrections given if any. Refactor until they are sure the paragraph is well polished.

Paragraph 3

In this paragraph should briefly talk about yourself, your accomplishments and applications.

Examples

High school graduate with no work experience

I am a resourceful recent high school graduate with a mean grade of A. As a student in high school I have been extensively involved in my school community, which has allowed me to develop strong interpersonal skills which I hope to leverage as an Android Developer at Cellulant. I am proficient in Java, javascript programming languages and Android mobile development, and I love building mobile

applications using Android. Similar to the BRCK project, the most recent Android application I built delivers educational resources to children offline. My career focus is on education, and primarily in building access for underserved communities.

College graduate with no work experience

I am a highly motivated recent college graduate with a Bachelor's Degree in Software Engineering from the Multimedia University, Kenya. I have developed a variety of web applications using Ruby and rails framework. Similar to the BRCK project, the most recent Android application I built delivers educational resources to children offline. My career focus is on education, and primarily in building access for underserved communities.

Professional with work experience

I am a hands-on software developer with a Bachelors in Software Engineering from the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. Over the course of my 5 years in employment, I have developed a skillset directly relevant to the Android Developer role you are hiring for. In my past position as Software Developer with IBM, I was involved with project research, planning, design and testing within the Software Product Development team. Through innovative thinking I used computer aided devices to perform routine calculations creating an efficient project development timeline. During the design stage I met with customers to better understand customer needs and perspectives. As I became more familiar with the needs of IBM's clientele I suggested, implemented and maintained test procedures and test scripts for new products.

Task

Think about what accomplishments you have made so far and what applications you have built that are related to the job you are applying for and briefly write them down.

After completing the third paragraph, review it with your peer partners. Give each other feedback following the instruction given in [Paragraph 3](#)

(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JNnp0YwnftO5yQSeLZ2m7HLN4DGz2SI23I_PelzqXk/edit?ts=59b0df1f#heading=h.f4568d7m3l44) on the paragraph should be crafted. Work on the feedback given if any. Refactor until the paragraph is well polished.

Paragraph 4

The final paragraph is called the "call to action". Inform the hiring manager that you would love to learn more about the position and be interviewed. Thank them for spending their time reading your letter. And sign off.

Example

Please review the enclosed resume and references, and consider my application. I am excited to elaborate on how my skills and abilities will benefit your organization.

Thank you for taking time to review my application, I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Task

Using the example above as a guide, create the final paragraph for your cover letter

Review the fourth paragraph with your peer partners. Give each other feedback using the information in [Paragraph 4](#)

(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JNnph0YwnftO5yQSeLZ2m7HLN4DGz2SI23I_PelzqXk/edit?ts=59b0df1f#heading=h.t1fidgg6ct7) on how the paragraph should be crafted.

Final Step

After putting together the four paragraphs, finish up the cover letter with a sign off. Make sure to use a professional closing, such as Regards, Sincerely, and Best

Last, write your first and last name.

Example

Sincerely,

Joseph Muli

Task

Finish up your cover letter by writing a sign off.

Final Review!

1. Congratulations, you are done making the first draft of your cover letter! Now, read through your Cover Letter and refactor until everything is perfect, using the following checklist:
 1. Ensure that the contact information section is as per the [instructions given](#) (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JNnph0YwnftO5yQSeLZ2m7HLN4DGz2SI23I_PelzqXk/edit?ts=59b0df1f#heading=h.1p70d58vaxz1). Ensure that you have [addressed the employer](#) (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JNnph0YwnftO5yQSeLZ2m7HLN4DGz2SI23I_PelzqXk/edit?ts=59b0df1f#heading=h.z6g2bhgd99x4) in the correct manner.

2. Check [Paragraph 1](#)

(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JNnph0YwnftO5yQSeLZ2m7HLN4DGz2SI23I_PelzqXk/edit?ts=59b0df1f#heading=h.sl3l811j5rkk) and ensure that you have introduced yourself well and that you have not forgotten to tell the employer of how you got to learn about the job.

3. Read through paragraph two, three and four and ensure that you have followed the information given [Paragraph](#)

(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JNnph0YwnftO5yQSeLZ2m7HLN4DGz2SI23I_PelzqXk/edit?ts=59b0df1f#heading=h.sl3l811j5rkk) [2](#)

(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JNnph0YwnftO5yQSeLZ2m7HLN4DGz2SI23I_PelzqXk/edit?ts=59b0df1f#heading=h.d0mibc1i0ohd), [3](#)

(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JNnph0YwnftO5yQSeLZ2m7HLN4DGz2SI23I_PelzqXk/edit?ts=59b0df1f#heading=h.f4568d7m3l44) and [4](#)

(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JNnph0YwnftO5yQSeLZ2m7HLN4DGz2SI23I_PelzqXk/edit?ts=59b0df1f#heading=h.t1fidgg6ct7) on how to structure each paragraph.

4. Ensure that you have [signed off](#)

(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JNnph0YwnftO5yQSeLZ2m7HLN4DGz2SI23I_PelzqXk/edit?ts=59b0df1f#heading=h.bin6h6sakj6y)

5. Lastly, review your formatting to ensure that you have used:

1. 1 line spacing
2. Left alignment
3. 12 point Times Roman or Arial font
4. Leave a space before beginning a sentence in the paragraph
5. Space between the paragraphs

1. When done, review your Cover Letter with your peer partners and give each other lots and lots of feedback using the above checklist as a guide.
2. Make the corrections suggested by your peers.
3. Allow your peer partners to review your Cover Letter after implementing their suggested suggestions.
4. When you and your peer partners are completely satisfied with all your Cover Letters, notify the Professional Development Instructor who will read through all your group's final drafts.