

# COVER LETTER WRITING.

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## 1: HOW DO I WRITE A COVERING LETTER?

The covering letter and CV is the total package – your golden opportunity to sell yourself to employers. They are going to be reading your covering letter before your CV, so it's important that it makes an impact. Covering letters that create a good first impression are well constructed, don't contain any spelling mistakes or bad grammar, and support what you are saying in your CV.

A good cover letter makes an employer sit up, take notice and want to read your CV. It will have more of an impact if it shows the employer that you have done your research. This means showing you know what the job involves and what they are looking for in an employee. Your cover letter will need to convince an employer that you want the job and that you're the best person for it.



## 2: HOW TO WRITE A COVER LETTER:

### TIPS YOU NEED TO KNOW;

**1. Don't Repeat Your CV:** Instead of just repeating yourself ("I was in charge of reviewing invoice disputes"), use your cover letter to describe additional details that you weren't able to squeeze onto the single page of your CV: "By resolving invoice disputes, I gained a deep analytical knowledge—but more importantly, I learned how to interact calmly and diplomatically with angry customers." A cover letter gives you the freedom to use full sentences—instead of bullet points—so use them to expand upon your CV points and tell the story of why you're the perfect fit for the company.

**2. Think Not What the Company Can Do for You:** A common cover letter mistake? Talking about how great the position would be for you. Frankly, hiring managers are

aware of that—what they really want to know is what you’re going to bring to the position and company. On that note:-

**3. Clearly Show What you’re Capable Of:** Beyond explaining what you’ve done in the past, show hiring managers what you can do for the company in the future. “Determine the key requirements and priorities for this job, and make it instantly clear to the reviewer that you can deliver the goods on these key things,” “Consider crafting a section within the letter that begins with, ‘Here’s what, specifically, I can deliver in this role.’ And then expound upon your strengths in a few of the priority requirements for that role.”

**4. Showcase Your Skills:** When you know you have the potential to do the job—but your past experience doesn’t totally sell you as the perfect one for the position—try focusing on your skills, instead.

**5. Not Necessarily your Education:** Many new graduates make the mistake of over-focusing on their educational backgrounds. At the end of the day, what hiring managers care about most is your work experience (and yes, that can be volunteer or internship experience, too)—and what you can walk through the door and deliver on Day 1 of your employment.

**6. Don’t Apologize for Skills You Don’t Have:** When you don’t meet all of the job requirements, it’s common for job seekers to use lines like, “Despite my limited experience with marketing...” or “While I only have work experience doing administrative tasks...” But why apologize? Instead of drawing attention to your weaknesses, try to focus on the skills you do have, “Stay positive, focus on your strengths, and immediately launch into your transferable skills and infectious enthusiasm for the position.”

**7. Highlight the Right Experiences:** The hiring manager is looking for skills and experiences to advance his/her organization.

**8. Tell a Story:** What brings you to this company? Did you used to sing along to all of its commercials as a kid? Did the product make some incredible difference in your life? Do you sometimes pull into the parking lot and daydream about what it would feel like to work there? Stories bring your background and experiences to life, so feel free to tell them. (Just, you know, keep them short and to the point.)

**9. Use a Few Numbers:** When it comes to the job search, numbers often speak louder than words. “Offer stats to illustrate your impact on companies or associations you’ve worked for in the past,” “Employers love to see numbers—it shows them that you speak their language and that you understand what they’re looking for in an employee: **results.**”

**10. Consider Testimonials:** If you have great feedback from old co-workers, bosses, or clients, don’t be afraid to use it! A seamless way to integrate a positive quote from a previous manager or client is to use it as evidence of your passion for your area of expertise. For example, “I have developed a keen interest in data science during my years working various political campaigns (as my past supervisor once said, I love Excel more than anyone she knows).”

**11. Cut the Formality:** “Don’t be overly formal (‘I wish to convey my interest in filling the open position at your fine establishment’),” writes career expert Mark Slack. “It makes you seem insincere and even robotic, not anything like the friendly, approachable, and awesome-to-work-with person you are.

**12. Think Custom, Not one common:** Most companies want to see that you’re truly excited about the position and company, which means creating a custom letter for each position you apply for. “When a recruiter reads, ‘Dear Hiring Manager, I am so excited to apply for the open position at your company, where I hope to utilize my skills to progress

in my career,' he or she immediately recognizes it for what it is—a stock cover letter that you've mass-distributed to every place in town," And then probably throws it in the trash.

**13. Consider Adding a Headline:** Add an eye-catching headline to your letter, like “3 Reasons I’m an Excellent Fit for the Marketing Manager Position.” Again, no one says you have to follow the tried-and-true format, and this can be an easy way to catch the hiring manager’s eye quickly.

**14. Be Real:** “Honest, genuine writing always goes much, much further than sticking to every dumb rule you’ve ever read in stale, outdated career guides and college textbooks,”

**15. And Normal:** We can’t tell you how many cover letters we’ve seen from people who are “absolutely thrilled for the opportunity” or “very excitedly applying!” Downplay the adverbs a bit, and just write like a normal person.

**16. Cut the fluff:** Avoid, at all costs, describing yourself as a “team player” or a “people person,” “Instead, show off your skills with descriptive statements like ‘I’m an expert communicator with experience bringing together diverse departments to develop a cohesive program.’ It’s longer—but it’s also stronger.”

**17. Write in the Company’s “Voice”:** Cover letters are a great way to show that you understand the environment and culture of the company and industry and prove that you’ve got what they are looking for. So, always keep in mind who will be reading your cover letter, and tailor it to what you know will get them excited. Spending 5 or 10 minutes reading over the company website before you get started can be a great way to get in the right mindset—you’ll get a sense for the company’s tone, language, and culture, which are all things you’ll want to mirror as you’re writing.

**18. Boost Your Confidence before Writing:** Writing guru Alexandra Franzen offers a simple mind trick that will dramatically change the way you write cover letters: Pretend.

“Pretend that the person you’re writing to already loves and respects you. Pretend that the person you’re writing to already believes that you’re worthy and valuable. Pretend that the person you’re writing to doesn’t need a big sales pitch,” she explains. Then, write. Your words will come out so much easier.

**19. Have Some Fun with It:** News flash: Cover letter writing doesn’t have to be boring. In fact, there are plenty of ways to spice it up! Hoping for a job at a startup? Making your cover letter more creative—whichever tone you use, play with the format, or make it more visual—will likely improve your chances of getting a call back. Applying for a corporate position? Make it more conversational, or include a story about how you first came in contact with the company or how much you love it. Much more fun, right?

**20. Don’t Let Your Fear of Bragging Get in the Way:** If you tend to have hard time writing about yourself, here’s a quick trick: Imagine you’re someone else writing a letter about yourself. Think from the perspective of a friend, mentor, or previous employer—someone who would only sing your praises—and then write the letter from her point of view. If it helps, you can even write the letter in third person (i.e. “Stephen would be a great fit for this position because...”). Just make sure you’re very careful about going back through and changing it to first person when you’re done!

**21. Have Someone Check It:** Have a friend take a look at your cover letter, and ask him or her two questions: Does this sell me as the best person for the job? And does it get you excited? If the answer to either is “no,” or even slight hesitation, go back for another pass.

**22. Keep it Short and Sweet:** There are always exceptions to the rule, but in general, for cover letters, don’t go over a page. “According to the Orange County CV Survey, almost 70% of employers either want a half page cover letter (250 words) or ‘the shorter the better,’ approach,”

**23. Don't Start With Your Name:** Because, well, the hiring manager can see it already on your CV. Get right to the point with what you can bring to the job.

**24. But Do Include the Hiring Manager's Name:** Use the person's first and last name, including a "Mr." or "Ms." (e.g., Mr. John Njoroge). Never use "To Whom it May Concern" or "Dear Sir or Madam"—nothing could be more generic (not to mention old-fashioned)

**25. Unless You Don't Know It:** OK, sometimes, even after hours of online searching (try these tips), you still might not be able to definitively figure out who exactly the hiring manager for the position you're applying for is. If you can only find a list of executives and you're not completely confident who the hiring manager is, use the head of the department for the position you're applying for. If you really don't have a name to use, try to still be as specific as possible in your greeting. Consider using "Senior Analyst Hiring Manager" or "Research Manager Search Committee"—something that shows that you've written this letter with a particular audience in mind.

**26. Edit:** Ensure you spell check your cover letter, and edit where necessary.

**27. But Care Most About Standing Out:** The most memorable cover letters are written by people who care less about the rules and more about standing out to the hiring manager. "Next time you sit down to write a cover letter, vow to not get uptight about all the tiny little 'rules' you've picked up along the way," "Instead, Be memorable. Nail the stuff that will make you a true standout."

### 3: GENERAL POINTS AND GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A COVER LETTER.

Your covering letter is a document that is individual to you and the job you're applying for, but there are some general rules to consider. Here are some points to consider:

- 1) Use a computer:** It's normal to use a computer to write and print out your covering letter. Most employers will prefer covering letters to be done in this way. It makes it easier for them to read and easier for you to make any changes or corrections before you print it out.

You might be asked to handwrite your covering letter. This is normally so employers can see what your handwriting is like. Make sure you follow any instructions you're given. Take your time; make sure you've not made any mistakes and that your handwriting is clear. You could do a draft first, ask somebody else to check it for you and then re-read it and check it yourself.

- 2) Push your strengths:** Your covering letter should draw attention to your most relevant skills and achievements.

You can provide more information on the skills and experience that are relevant to the job. You could explain how a particular experience helped you develop the skills included in your CV. For example, 'doing the weekly stock take helped me to sharpen my math's skills and spot sales trends'.

- 3) Make it personal:** Don't send out identical covering letters without any details about the employer.

Show the employer that you've done your research on the company and you know what they do. Make it clear you've thought about which skills they want and how you can provide them. The more specific you can be, the more attention your letter will attract. It's better to spend your time writing ten personalized covering letters than sending out 50 identical ones.

**4) Consider explaining CV gaps:** You can use a covering letter to explain gaps in your CV, such as unemployment, gap years or time spent travelling or in prison.

Don't be worried about mentioning difficult subjects like this. It's a good opportunity to introduce them and explain how you dealt with these periods and what you learnt from them.

If you take this opportunity to explain any gaps in a positive way it will mean that an employer has a full picture of your history. There will be no unexplained gaps that could cause concern.

Whatever the reason for gaps in your CV, explain what you've learned. If you've been unemployed you could mention how organized you were in your approach to job hunting, training courses you've been on, or any volunteering you've done.

If you've been in prison you could describe any learning courses or other activities you got involved in. If it's relevant, you could also describe the circumstances leading up to your offence, but keep it brief. You could also explain that you've learned from it, and how you have changed. Show that you now understand your responsibilities.

**5) Provide information about your disability:** You're not legally obliged to mention your disability and it's your choice on how open you decide to be in your covering letter about it.

Deciding to disclose your disability at the application stage can give you an opportunity to talk about the transferable skills you've developed as a result of dealing with your disability. You can use your covering letter to talk about how you will bring those skills to the workplace.

**6) Use the right language and tone:** When applying for most jobs, use clear, business-like language.

If you're applying for a creative role, such as an advertising copywriter, you could show your originality and word skills in the language and tone you use. However, use your judgment carefully, based on what you can find out about the company and their



approach to recruiting.

- 7) Check it and then check it again:** Always check your covering letter for spelling and grammatical errors.

Don't rely on word processing spell checkers, as they don't pick up everything. (If we had written 'pack', 'peck', 'pock' or 'puck', a spell checker would not have picked these up as these are valid words. It would not have known that the word we wanted to use was 'pick'!)

It helps if you leave some time after completing the letter before checking it. This way you'll look at it with fresh eyes. When you've been working on one piece of work for a while, it can be difficult to spot any mistakes or errors.

It's a good idea to ask someone else to check it over for you, to get a different perspective. Just like the employer, they will be reading it for the first time. They might also be able to make helpful suggestions and check that it flows well.

- 8) Keep it brief:** Keep your covering letter short and to the point. A maximum of five short paragraphs on a single page should be enough to get your message across. It will also be short enough for employers to read quickly.

**Keep the format consistent:** If you use the same font and text size on your covering letter and CV it will look neat and professional.

## **SAMPLE COVER LETTER.**

Your name  
Street address  
Postal address  
Phone number  
E-mail address

JOB APPLICATION  
Date

Title and name of the receiver  
Name of company / organisation  
Street address  
Postal address

#### JOB TITLE

1<sup>st</sup> paragraph  
How did you find out about the job?  
Why are you interested in working for this particular employer?  
Why are you interested in this particular job opening?  
What is your motivation for applying for this job?

2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> paragraph  
What are your qualifications for this job?  
Have you done something similar in the past?  
Describe your expertise related to this line of work whether it is work experience, theoretical knowledge, volunteer work experience, language or computer skills or something you have learned in your leisure time activities.

Next paragraph  
What are you like as a person?  
Do not only list adjectives but illustrate them with examples.  
What is your work style?  
Do you perform best when working independently or in a group?  
If your former colleagues have given you positive feedback, use it here.

Last paragraph  
What happens next?  
Will you contact them or will you wait for an invitation to an interview?  
State your salaries wish if asked to do so.  
What is the best way to reach you?  
When would you be able to start?

Sincerely yours / Kind regards,

Signature  
Your name typewritten

Enclosure: CV