## Week 2 - Covering Letters, some guidance

Always include a covering letter if you are using a CV to apply for a job.

The CV tells the employer what you have done, but not why you believe you are suitable for the job, why you want to work in this area, or for this particular organisation. The CV is the product, the covering letter is the marketing.

You should try to include the following in your covering letter.

* **Introduction** Why are you writing? Is it in response to a vacancy or are you making a speculative enquiry.
* **Why you?** Refer to the information in your CV and state clearly how you match what the employer is asking for in the advert. If you are making a speculative application, what would you expect them to be looking for.
* **Why them?** Say why this employer and job appeals to you. Draw on the research you have done into this area of work and on this employer.
* **Sum up** Summarise in a confident and up-beat way by combining all the positive messages from the previous two sections.

#### Do

* Use one side of quality white A4 paper.
* If possible, address it to a person by name - just call the organisation and ask, if it's not clear elsewhere.
* Wordprocess your letter unless you are asked to hand write it.
* Set out your letter as a formal business letter. If you are not sure how to do this, look at the examples available to download.
* **Check for spelling or grammatical errors.**
* Use the same font as your CV so that they look consistent.
* Deal with problem areas if you feel they need to be raised, for example, a re-taken year or a health problem. Try to be brief and positive and don't draw attention to something which is minor. If in doubt talk to a Careers Adviser.

#### Don't

* Waffle. Make the employer *want* to read your CV.
* Be overly humourous or too informal - you want to be taken seriously.
* Underplay your skills or make negative comments about yourself.
* Allow ANY errors of spelling and grammar creep in!

#### Email Applications

If you are sending your CV as an email attachment then you should also attach your covering letter rather than type it into the body of the email message. The format of an email can change drastically depending on the system used by the employer and may not look the same when it arrives or be easy to read. Saving CVs and letters (once perfect!) as PDF files helps to ensure that your formatting isn't corrupted by an employer's printer settings.

#### Finally

Tailor your covering letter to each application and try to highlight skills and experience that are *relevant* to the employer. Don't just create a standard covering letter or copy from the examples as it will appear rather bland and not do the job of making your application stand out.

Once you have produced a draft of your CV and covering letter check it carefully for errors, then get it checked by PEEU or someone who will provide you with sound advice.

**Example covering letter template**

Your address line 1

Address line 2

Address line 3

Address line 4

Phone number

e-mail

Date

Addressee Name (relevant person to contact - call them if you don’t know who to address it to)

Organisation address line 1

Address line 2

Address line 3

Address line 4 if you fold your letter carefully this address will show in a window envelope,

this looks professional and avoids handwriting the address again.

Dear (title and surname)

**First paragraph** Not surprisingly, this is your brief introduction. Start off with who you are, your aspirations, when you expect to graduate, details of your degree, university and result/expected result. State the title of the position you are applying for and, if you are replying to a job ad, tell them where you saw the ad (date of publication too, if you want). You could tell them here that you’ve enclosed your CV too. Try to grab their attention with your first sentence!

**Second paragraph** Explain a bit about why you are applying to that organisation, and for that particular role. Attempt to show that you know a bit about your prospective employer and about the industry in general. What work does the company do? What are its strengths? Be as specific as you can – why *this* job and *this* particular employer?

**Third paragraph** You could combine this with the second paragraph. Talk about your own strengths, and why you would suit the job on offer. Make a link between the organisation and you: where do *their* aims coincide with *yours*? Talk about any relevant experience and particular skills you have to offer. Back up your statements with hard evidence, and refer to sections of your CV.

**Fourth paragraph** Any other relevant points, little extras you might want to mention. Maybe you have taken a year out, and need to explain this. Highlight any interests/roles of responsibility that are particularly relevant to the job on offer.

**Final paragraph** Tell them when you’ll be available for interview (and for work) and that you look forward to hearing from them. Remember to be brief: keep the entire covering letter to one side of A4.

Yours sincerely,

*(or "Yours faithfully" if you don’t know their name and have used "Dear Sir or Madam" – double check with someone like a careers adviser if you’re not sure about letter etiquette.)*

*Remember to sign the letter!*

*Your (typed) name here*

**DON'T FORGET TO HAVE YOUR LETTER THOROUGHLY PROOF READ/ CHECKED!  
MAKE SURE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS ARE CORRECT!**