

Cover Letter Seminar

We will be covering in this seminar

1) What is a cover letter?

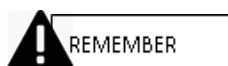
NOTE

A cover letter is a _____ **letter** expressing that you wish to apply for a particular job and why.



The role of a cover letters role is to:

- **Explain why** you are sending your CV.
- To introduce yourself to prospective employers.
- To draw a prospective employer's attention to your skills, experience, qualities and qualifications that they have asked for. You don't have to go into great deal of detail – it is simply to point the prospective employer to where the information would be in your CV.
- To create a point of difference from other people who are applying for the same role. To point out to an employer that you have what they have asked for and why you are well suited to the job.
- Express your interest in a role – to show that you are very interested. It is difficult to show your interest by your CV. The best place to use emotive language is in a cover letter.
- To get a prospective employer to read your CV.



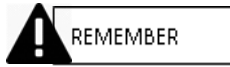
_____ + _____ = Success

2) Why do I need a cover letter?

There are many reasons to use a cover letter.

- If you do not use a cover letter and simply send off your CV to a company, they may not know which job you are applying for. Larger companies or start-up companies in particular could have a large number of jobs advertised at their company.
- Prospective employers use things like cover letters to cut down applications. If you don't have a cover letter, your application could go in the "no" pile.
- An employer will use things like cover letters to gauge your interest in a job and how well you have read the advertisement. They may put in additional information into a job advertisement such as, "If you are interested in this role, download a job description at [www....](#)" They monitor who has accessed this file and keep note of it.

- It shows prospective employers how professional you are and how English literate you are.
- It helps you explain to a prospective employer why you are interested in their company or a certain field of work.



If a prospective employer reads your CV, the cover letter has done its job.

3) Where should I use a cover letter?

A cover letter can be used in a range of situations. A job advertised on the Internet, a job advertised with a Recruitment Agency or even from someone personally asking you to send in your CV. The best thing to do is always include a cover letter even if an employer has not asked for one. As already mentioned it shows that you are a professional and demonstrates your ability to communicate.

A cover letter is to be used anytime you are sending your CV in other words – your CV should not go anywhere without a cover letter.

4) What do I need to include in a letter?

The MOST important thing is to read the job advertisement and/or the job description in order to find what skills, personal qualities, experience and education that the employer is looking for. One of the best ways to do this is to use a clean piece of paper and create a list of them all by using the job advertisement. Don't make the mistake of including things that they are offering i.e. training provided. It is necessary to create a new letter for every role you are applying for. You cannot use the same letter every time as every job is different and the requirements vary. If the job advertisement has a list already, address these in the same order as they are likely to be already in order of importance.

The lay out

The details

- ✓ A cover letter should be **short and concise**. Do not waffle and if you can say the same thing with two words as you can with 10 words, use two words.
- ✓ When you look at your letter, it should have lots of white space and only be on **one, A4 page** and **clear paragraphs**.
- ✓ **Type up your letter** on the computer – do not hand write a letter unless the advertisement specifically asks for it.
- ✓ Your letter must **be perfect!** Check it twice and get someone whose English skills are better than yours to check it also. Don't ignore spellcheck either.

- ✓ **Address your letter to a person** in the company. If you are writing to John Smith, use his last name and address the letter to Mr Smith. If there is only a first name written, then you can use this. If there is no name, you can phone the company to find out whom to send the letter to. If the company receives 50 letters addressed to “To Whom it May Concern” and one to Mrs Johnston, this will make your letter stand out. Use language with emotion – I am very interested in this role; This opportunity really appeals...
- ✓ **Don’t go overboard and sound arrogant** and rude.
- ✓ **Try not to start every sentence with I.....**Too many sentences starting with I just sounds self-centred.
- ✓ If the job advertisement has a large number of requirements, you can make a **bulleted list** to make your letter easier to read.
- ✓ Use a **font that is pleasing** to the eye. Arial, Garamond, Century Gothic, Calibri, Verdana and Tahoma are all good fonts.
- ✓ Write your cover letter from the perspective of **what you can offer to the employer**, not what the employer can do for you.
- ✓ If there are **job requirements that you do not have, don’t point these out to employers**. Very few people will have everything the employer has asked for. You can cover these by either saying I am keen to learn or up-skill. Alternately, you should not mention them and make the most of the things you do have.
- ✓ Include on your letter, **the easiest way to get a hold of you**. If you regularly check your email, put your email address under your street address at the top of your letter. If you carry your cell phone and are able to answer it during the day – put this on the letter instead. A work phone number on your cover letter or CV is not a good look.
- ✓ When writing a cover letter, you can also **talk about voluntary jobs** you’ve had, **hobbies** you enjoy etc that are relevant to the job.
- ✓ **Can the employer pronounce your name?** Make sure that a Kiwi employer can say your name if no one from your country is there to help. If an employer can’t say your name, this is a turn off. They don’t want to insult you by pronouncing it incorrectly or embarrass themselves either. Shorten your name if needed, or pick a name that is easy to say. Put this name in brackets on your CV and even use it to sign your letter.
- ✓ Leave space at the bottom of the letter for a signature. If posting the letter, **sign it**. If you are emailing you can scan your signature and put this in the letter. Alternatively, you can use a signature font – like freestyle script.
- ✓ **Keep copies** of all of the letters you send. There is nothing more embarrassing than applying for the same job twice or forgetting what you’ve written in your letter during an interview.

Other things you need to know

If you are applying for jobs with a large company or through a recruitment company, there may not be a real person reading over every application. Some companies have key word scanning programmes. The computer programmes have been designed to look for key words in your paperwork. There is nothing wrong with using some of the exact words that the employer has used in the job advertisement.

NOTE



5) How should my cover letter look?

Your street address

Suburb

City and post code

The best way to contact you – a landline number, e-mail or cell number to contact you

Today's date

Name of the Company

Company's Address

Suburb

City and post code

Dear (Use Surname e.g. Mr Smith)

(Add in a reference number if given)

(Paragraph 1) I read with interest your advertisement in/on the (name of publication/web site etc) on (date) and would like to be considered as an applicant for the position of (name of position advertised).

(Paragraph 2) SELL YOURSELF – study the job advertisement, job description and job specifications to identify the key words and attributes. In other words, say why you are the best person for the job and why you want to job! Mention your key skills, experience, qualification, strengths, etc that the employer is after. (Don't repeat what is in your CV but simply highlight the relevant points requested in the job advertisement or job description.)

(Paragraph 3) I would be very happy to attend an interview and can be contacted either by telephone or at the above address.

(Paragraph 4) I have enclosed my curriculum vitae for your information.

(Paragraph 5) I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely, (if you know their name, faithfully if you've addressed it to Dear Sir/Madam)

(Your signature)

Your first and last name

6) How to analyse a job advertisement

What are the skills, experience, personal qualities that this job advertisement asks for?

Essential - _____

Desirable - _____

How should I send my cover letter and CV?

The details of this are usually in the job advertisement. If in the job advertisement gives you the option of posting or emailing in your job application, it is better to go with emailing as it gets to an employer much quicker. Often you have to apply online. Sometimes there is a form to fill in – be prepared for this.

If you are emailing your application in and you are using Microsoft Outlook, you can set “request delivery receipts.” This way, you know that your email has been received and opened.

It is good practise to keep records of jobs applied for, when and with whom. You can phone a company to check that they have received your application a couple of days after you have sent it. There is nothing worse than waiting by the phone and the company didn’t even receive your email or letter.

Email protocol

Now that you have got this far, make sure if you are sending an email with your covering letter and CV that you stay professional. Don’t start your email with “hiiiiii.” Or Hi Ma’am. You don’t have to say a lot in your covering email as you have covered it in your letter.

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NOTE

Dear Mr Smith,

Please find attached my cover letter and CV for the role of IT Professional as advertised on your company website. Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you require additional information. Thank you for your consideration. Best regards,

What now?

It is a mistake to apply for one job at a time and then wait for the outcome of the one job. This could mean that there are weeks between applications. It is also foolish to pin your hopes on one job, even though things have been going well. Keep looking and applying until you actually start a job. You need to apply for multiple jobs to increase your chances of gaining the job of your dreams.

More Help? Templates and further advice is available at

<http://www.careers.govt.nz/how-to-get-a-job/cvs-and-cover-letters/templates/>