



## What makes a good covering letter?

Writing a good letter to accompany your application can mean the difference between being selected for an interview or being rejected. Your covering letter is the first thing that a recruiter will see and therefore the more impact it has and the better the presentation, and the more likely your CV or application form will be looked on favourably.

- ✓ A neat and professional appearance. Either hand-written or typed on a good quality A4 paper. Make sure there are no spelling mistakes or grammatical errors and no “Tippex” either!
- ✓ Short and to the point. The content should be concise and relevant. No more than one A4 page.
- ✓ A business style layout. This is a formal business letter.
- ✓ Refer to the job applied for and how you heard about it. Always say which job you are applying for (whether the employer may be advertising several a one time) and how you heard about it, whether via a friend, colleague, newspaper or magazine etc.
- ✓ Do not fill it with facts and figures. Keep facts or figures for your CV or application form.
- ✓ Tailor your letter by saying how you meet the requirements for the job. Study the wording of the advert carefully and analyse what you think the employer is looking for and then say how you fit their requirements. State how you have the relevant experience and attitudes.

Tell the employer why YOU are the person THEY WANT and sell yourself and your qualities.

- ✗ Do not have a standard letter. If you have a standard letter you will not be doing what it says above and you won't actually be applying for the job on offer. Instead, work out a library of good positive statements that can be fitted into the letter when and where relevant.
- ✓ Be positive. This is a selling letter, so sell your experience to the recruiter. Do not worry if you don't fulfil all their requirements of the advert concentrate on the areas where you do.
- ✓ Finish positively. Your finishing sentence should give a positive outlook – you look forward to meeting them etc.

# Cover letter guidelines

## 1. ADDRESS IT TO A PARTICULAR PERSON

Contact the company in which you are interested and find out the name (correct spelling) and title of the individual in charge of the department you would like to work in. If you get stuck, call his/her office. Don't say that you looking for a job. Say you have some information to send and want to make sure that it gets into the hands of the right person.

## 2. COMMUNICATE SOMETHING PERSONAL

In your opening lines write something that is uniquely associated with that person, division or organisation and that will signal to the reader that you invested the time to communicate personally.

The likelihood of a personal response to your letter is directly related to the degree of personal attention you put into it in the first place.

## 3. ANSWER THE QUESTION WHY SHOULD I SEE YOU?

In the body of the letter communicate some special way that your skills will be valuable to the potential employer.

This will tell some basic research in your target field and familiarity with the interests and needs of the specific employer, plus a willingness to show how you can make a difference.

## 4. ASK FOR THE INTERVIEW

Always call when you said you would. Your objective is to agree a suitable date for a meeting (a more subtle word for interview).

Cover Letter: Example

Flat 90, Orchard Court  
24 Any Road  
Barchester  
BC4 7UT

Mrs B Another  
Personnel Manager  
Super Store  
10 Main Road  
Barchester  
BC1 4UP

5 September 2007

Dear Mrs Another,

I am writing in response to your advertisement for the position of Deputy Manager for your Sunderland store.

Please find enclosed my CV detailing over ten years of retail experience including five years in a management role. In particular:

I can demonstrate a strong record of sales achievement in a highly competitive environment

I have the experience of successfully managing a large team

Your plans for future expansion described in the advertisement look very exciting and I would welcome the opportunity of discussing with you how I could add value to your management team.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Christine Other

34 Any Gardens  
Battersea  
London  
SW11 7KT

Ms T Other  
Human Resources Manager  
Discount Warehouse  
Head Office,  
The Road  
London BR6 8WG

24 August 2006

Dear Ms Other,

I read with interest your advertisement for the position of Manager Designate for you new UK operations.

Please find my enclosed CV, which I believe, is particularly appropriate to your requirements as described in your advertisement. In particular:

I have direct experience of managing in a seven day, extended hours trading operation

I am fully conversant with computer based stock management and EPOS systems

In addition I can demonstrate a strong record of sales achievement in a highly competitive environment.

I am available for interview at your earliest convenience and look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Another

Cover letter: Example

Bob Other  
12 Any Way  
Rotherwhich  
RT19 2UV

Mr J Ford  
Car Express  
The Street  
Rotherwhich  
RT4 2TW

7 September 2007

Dear Mr Ford,

I wish to apply for the position of Forklift Driver as advertised in the Rotherham Advertiser (job ref: 2212).

I have over 20 years experience in handling Reach and Counterbalance trucks and have full licences for both.

My attendance and time keeping records are outstanding and I feel certain I would fit well into any team as previous bosses have commented on my friendly and approachable nature.

I would like the chance to talk to you in person and will call next week to discuss the matter further.

Yours sincerely,

Bob Other

22 Any Court  
West Bargeford  
Ullingham  
UL11 5DF

Tel: 0115 999888

2 April 2007

Mr K Body  
Personnel Manager  
Cougar Computer Systems  
21 The Street  
Ullingham  
UL25 5UU

Dear Mr Body,

**re: Position as Trainee Computer Programmer (Ref: NEP/121)**

With reference to the advertisement in the Nottingham Evening Post dated 1 April, would you please send me an application form and full details for the above post.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Other

# Speculative approaches

## Making your approach

1. Make a list of the organisation you are going to target
2. Pick your first choice organisation
3. Research it to answer the following question:
  - Why do I want to join them?
  - How could they use my skills?
  - Who should I contact?
  - Who can tell me more about this organisation?
  - Do I want to work there?
4. Decide who you are going to contact and write to them enclosing your CV
5. Follow up the letter with a phone call after 7-10 days. Call again after a suitable time to see if the situation has changed

When sending a letter conduct sufficient research beforehand to find out the name and position of the person who should receive it. This may be somebody in a particular department, it may be somebody in the personal department, and it may be both.

In the speculative letter remember to be short and to the point, be clear about the purpose. Remember – this is unsolicited and therefore the recipient must not be discouraged from reading your letter because it is too long.

Whilst the purpose of your approach may be to get a job – you should not specifically ask for the job at this stage. You are asking for an opportunity to discuss possibilities.

Speculative letter: Example

Mr D Another  
Flat 3  
34 Square  
London  
W1 2AZ

Mr T Other  
Operations Manager  
Blowitt Plc  
London  
SW2 1AZ

31 August 2007

Dear Mr Other,

From my knowledge of the facilities management industry I know that your reputation is excellent. With my commitment to providing first class support and service within maintenance/security and administration posts, I am keen to contribute to your successful team.

In particular I would like to highlight my skills below:

Over 15 years experience of carrying out maintenance work of all kinds including plumbing, electrical and mechanical repairs

Experienced at providing security to premises

Able to provide administrative support such as reception, purchasing and paperwork

I have attached my CV to show my work history to date and would welcome an opportunity to discuss your needs now or in the near future. I will call you soon to follow up.

Yours sincerely,

Mr David Another

Speculative letter: Example

3, Green Towers  
Grosvenor Place  
Fairport  
FP7 900

Mr G Other  
Mercury Publications Inc  
Fairport  
FP1 8TT

1 May 2007

Dear Mr Other,

I was interested to learn from the local newspaper that your company is shortly to launch a new colour Sports and Recreation publication with a target audience of the under 30s.

I am a 26-year-old with five years experience using desktop publishing systems to produce journals and brochures for local educational establishments. To develop my career I am keen to gain experience in a more commercial market whilst continuing to develop skills in this field.

The opportunity for this development is unlikely to arise in my present post and I would be delighted to be given the chance to contribute to the launch and growth of your new magazine.

I enclose my curriculum vitae and hope to hear from you shortly regarding any opportunities at this time or in the future.

Yours sincerely

Gareth Another

The Old Rectory  
Somerville  
Boncastle  
BO29 4DJ

Tel: 01234 111222

Miss J Flower  
Office Manager  
Bloomers  
12 Twig Lane  
Chipping  
OX2 9PB

31 July 2007

Dear Miss Flower,

I read with interest your web site and how the company's activities have grown extensively over the last few years.

I am currently seeking a challenging position, enabling me to utilise the skills and experience I have gained throughout my career. With this in mind, I would like to demonstrate the attributes I have to offer which I feel would be of value to your organisation, in particular, highlighting the following:

Over 10 years PA experience at senior level, encompassing elements of finance, HR Sales and marketing

Effective communicator at all levels, providing a highly confidential point of contact for directors, clients and staff

Excellent problem solving skills, able to organise and prioritise effectively, delegating work as and when necessary in order to provide an efficient and professional service to directors and clients

Confident and accurate PC user with a keen eye for detail, familiar with Microsoft Office, Sage and web Site design

I would welcome the opportunity of meeting with you to discuss my skills and experience further.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Rebecca Another

## Covering letters: summary

A customised, one page letter should go out with each CV or application form you send out. The letter should consist of three paragraphs:

1. State the reason for your application.
  2. Sell yourself by linking your strengths and skills to the job.
  3. Request an interview or meeting.
- ✓ It should be typed on white A4, if this is not possible, hand write neatly.
  - ✓ Address it specifically by name and sign "Yours Sincerely".
  - ✓ Keep it brief.
  - ✓ A good cover letter significantly increases the likelihood of getting an interview.