

How to write a covering letter

If you are sending your CV to apply for a job, always include a cover letter. This is where you demonstrate your motivation and ability to do the job, and is your chance to really sell yourself to the employer.

A CV gives an overview of your skills and experience and the covering letter explains how these are relevant to the job and also shows your enthusiasm for the particular role and organisation. To convince the reader that you meet their specific requirements, you will need to write a different letter for each organisation and position that you apply to.

1 Greetings

Try to find a name as it sounds more personal and can show you have done some research about the company. If the job advertisement does not specify a name it is worth contacting the company to ask the name and the title of the person you should address the letter to.

2 Introduction

The first paragraph needs to be very clear. Include who you are (e.g. current 2nd year biomedical science student at Queen Mary, University of London), why you are writing (to apply for X position / looking for work experience) and where you saw the position advertised.

3 Why them?

Tell the employer why you want this job with their organisation - show your motivation and enthusiasm. Demonstrate that you understand what the job involves and that you have researched their organisation and industry. Avoid vague statements and obvious flattery. Be specific and illustrate your opinions with examples.

4 Why you?

Really emphasise why you are just right for this job, in terms of skills, experience and character. Illustrate your unique selling points with 3 or 4 excellent examples, rather than try to cover everything. Focus on the particular skills and experience the organisation want, using their recruitment information to find this. Use positive language and action words such as 'succeeded in', 'initiated'.

This is also the chance to deal directly and positively with any gaps or weaknesses in your CV.

5 The ending

Your closing paragraph is an opportunity to restate your interest and summarise your suitability. It is also a good place to state your availability for interview and to end on an optimistic note.

Make sure you sign off in the correct way: 'Yours sincerely' if addressed to a particular person, 'Yours faithfully' if you use Dear Sir / Madam.

On the following page is an example cover letter matching the CV and job description in the CV leaflet

Lindsey Wedderburn
14 Gravel Road,
London E1 4SK
Lin_wed@hotmail.co.uk
07390045678

*Use formal business
letter layout*

Recruitment Team
Omni-Lab
18 Walmar Street
London
WC3 5HS

*Include the job
title and reference
number*

17th April 2012

*It is always bet-
ter to send to a
named person
instead of Sir/
Madam*

Re: Medical Laboratory Assistant Job Ref no: Bio051342

Dear Ms. Simmonds,

*Your first
paragraph should
include what
you are currently
doing and the
position you are
applying to*

I am a final year student, studying Biomedical Science at Queen Mary, University of London. I am writing to apply for the position of Medical Laboratory Assistant at Omni-Lab, starting this summer, advertised on your Recruitment website.

As you can see from my CV, I have gained a wide variety of relevant knowledge and laboratory skills during my studies in Biomedical Sciences. In particular, my modules on Haematology and immunology would be very relevant to this position. I am extremely enthusiastic about my work in the laboratory and my most recent grade for a lab project (68%) reflects my keen attention to detail and organisational skills. I have excellent communication skills, demonstrated by my responsibilities as course representative as well as by my work dealing with customers, staff and suppliers at the Nightlife bar.

*Your next
paragraph should
show how you
match the skills
and experience
that the job
requires (find
these skills in the
job description
or person
specification)*

From looking at the large number of the testimonials on your website I am very impressed with the obviously high standard of customer service provided. My current job, where I work directly serving customers has made me extremely passionate about providing a high standard of customer satisfaction and I feel that this, as well as my dedication to exceedingly high standards in my laboratory work makes me a good fit for this role.

I am available for interview at any time and look forward to hearing from you soon.

*The final
paragraph must
show you have
researched
the company
and have
strong reasons
for applying.
Make sure your
reasons are very
specific.*

Yours Sincerely,
Lindsey Wedderburn

Checklist

- ✓ Does it match the job requirements?
- ✓ Does the content relate specifically to that role and organisation?
- ✓ Is it well written, clear and succinct? Does it look professional?
- ✓ Have you had feedback on your CV and covering letter from the Careers team? (Please take the job description with you.)

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