

How to write the perfect cover letter.

What is a cover letter?

When sending a CV it should always be accompanied by a cover letter. Its purpose is to ensure that you draw the employer's attention to the key points in your CV, highlighting your suitability.

Types of Cover Letters



Standard Cover Letters

This type of cover letter will allow you to state what job you are applying for and where you saw it advertised. You could use the letter to highlight anything that you feel is appropriate.

This gives you the chance to place emphasis on your best attributes. Mention your skills, experience, but remember to provide evidence of these. Use the letter to tailor your application to the company you are applying to. This way you will give credibility to your application and add a personal touch.

Always finish the letter in a positive manner and invite the employer to contact you for an interview.



Speculative Letters

These letters are sent to companies to enquire whether they will be advertising any suitable vacancies in the future.

Build upon your CV, mention how your skills and personal qualities have developed throughout your work experience and again, provide evidence of this.

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TIPS

1. Try not to go over **one side of A4**, unless the employer states that otherwise.
2. **Don't make the employer work to read your letter!** Keep it clear, concise and to the point.
3. **Action verbs** can help to make it sound better. Provide examples **using active, positive words (these are normally verbs) in a CV or in an application form can give it additional impact** and make a stronger impression on potential employers.

Examples include: Forward-thinker, Responsible, Innovative, Self-starter, Team-player

Sample Action Verbs

accomplished	completed	familiarized	monitored	scheduled
achieved	composed	formulated	motivated	selected
adapted	concluded	gained	negotiated	solved
administered	conducted	generated	obtained	started
advised	coordinated	identified	operated	streamlined
analyzed	corresponded	implemented	organized	strengthened
arranged	created	improvised	participated	structured
assembled	demonstrated	increased	planned	supervised
assessed	designed	influenced	presented	surveyed
authored	developed	initiated	produced	taught
balanced	directed	instructed	programmed	tested
bargained	drafted	interpreted	promoted	trained
broadened	earned	interviewed	provided	transformed
budgeted	edited	introduced	purchased	translated
built	encouraged	investigated	recruited	traveled
calculated	established	maintained	reduced	updated
classified	evaluated	managed	represented	upgraded
communicated	examined	marketed	researched	utilized
compiled	explained	moderated	reviewed	wrote

Use action words (also called buzz words) to explain your duties or posts of responsibility - not just the tasks you have carried out.

For example, I worked for Oxfam as a Volunteer and I was **in charge** of the receiving donations into the shop. Instead you could write...As a Sales Assistant working for Oxfam, I **managed** the receiving of donations from customers.

4. **Spell-check** and then double-check your spelling and grammar. Spell checkers won't pick up *form* instead of *from*.

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5. **Answer the question "Why should I see you?"** It would be very useful to include your understanding of the work/knowledge of the company, and how you fit the criteria required. "I have a real interest in working as a" will not do: you must say why you decided to pursue this career
6. **Relate your skills to the job.** Show the employer that you have obtained the communication, team working, problem solving and leadership or other skills that are appropriate for the job. Provide examples.
7. **Say when you're available to start work** (and end, if it's a placement): be as flexible as possible.
8. If you don't know the name of the **person you are writing to**, it's probably best to use the formal *Dear Sir or Madam* and to sign off *Yours Sincerely* or *Yours Faithfully*
9. **Email etiquette.** If emailed put your cover letter in the body of the email. If you attach it with nothing in the email body it may be misidentified as spam.

Reply back to employers emails in the same style, so if they have signed their email "Chris", write *Dear Chris*, but if they have signed it "Ms Begum", write *Dear Ms Begum*.

If they have emailed you and addressed you *Hi Jenny*, then it's OK to reply *Hi Jenny*.

Also mirror the way they sign off, if they use "*regards*", "*best wishes*", then it's safe to do the same.

To Your Success!