

Cover Letters – How To Impress Your Prospective Employer

The Basics

- Always include a cover letter. The recruiter may not read it, but if they do, it is a key way to differentiate you from your competition. Over 85% of candidates do not routinely include a cover letter with their applications.
- Remember that the first person who will look at your application will be a member of the HR Team. Therefore everything needs spelling out, as they will not be an expert in your area. Do not use acronyms unless they are used in the job advert. Use words that the recruiter will recognise and be able to link to the duties of the role. This will increase your chances of having your application put forward to the hiring manager.

Things To Remember

- Make sure you have included your name, address, telephone number, email address and the date of your application at the top of your letter.
- Include the company name and address if you have it.
- If you have the name of the specific person to send your application to, make sure you include it and CHECK THE SPELLING. Recruiters are known to reject applications on the grounds that their name is spelt wrong. They believe that it shows that the candidate cannot pay attention to details.
- Address the letter correctly if you do not have a name. You

should address it to “Dear Sir/Madam”.

- Sign the letter correctly. If you have written, “Dear Mr X”, you should end with, “Yours sincerely”. If you have addressed the letter, “Dear Sir/Madam”, you should end with, “Yours faithfully”.
- If you have been asked to include anything with your application, such as references from previous employers, evidence of qualifications or samples of your work, make sure they are attached; otherwise your application will be rejected for not paying attention to detail.
- Avoid humour or jokes in your cover letter (unless you are applying for a role as a comedian or a comedy writer). Your sense of humour may not appeal to everybody.
- Do not use swear words or crude language in your cover letter.

First Paragraph

- Make a heading for your letter. This should be in bold with the title of the job you are applying for and the location (if there are several options).
- Your first line should be simple and to the point: “Please find attached my CV for the post of X”.
- Then tell them where you saw it advertised. If you are being referred to the role by someone already working for the company, mention their name here, as if there is an internal employee referral scheme, they stand to make some money if you are appointed.

Second Paragraph

- Outline briefly why you are interested in working for the company and the key skills you can bring to the role. To do this effectively, read through the advertisement and highlight

which words seem to be important within it. Then double check by looking at the company website and see what they state their corporate values to be. The chances are that some of these will be in the advert. Use these key words in your cover letter.

- If they mention key experience in the job advert, mention the experience 3 times in your application (across both the cover letter and the CV). For some reason, recruiters believe something that is mentioned 3 times. For example, if they state that they want someone with team management experience, you should point out in your cover letter that you have team management experience. Within your CV you should also state under at least 2 jobs that you have team management experience. Bear in mind that your cover letter and CV may be being scanned and ranked against other candidates by an automated e-recruitment system. By using the exact words used in the advert you are more likely to get yourself ranked highly. Similar phrases are not generally searched for so if, for example, "team management" is used, use the phrase "team management" not "managed a team".
- If they have asked for essential qualifications or accreditations, make sure that you mention them in this paragraph.

Third Paragraph

- Outline briefly relevant work experience and any other experience (non-work related) which would make you suitable for the role.

Fourth Paragraph

- Re-emphasise your interest in the role and ask them to invite you in for interview. Be subtle about this. Something simple

such as, “I would welcome the opportunity of an interview” is fine. If you are going to be out of the country when the job closes, let them know at this point and tell them when you will return. If you will be checking your emails whilst you are away, this is a good point to let them know.

- Thank them for their time in reading your application.
- Finish with, “I look forward to hearing from you”.
- End with either, “Yours sincerely” or “Yours faithfully”.
- If you are emailing or uploading your application to a website, it is not necessary to hand sign the letter. If it is being posted or hand delivered, you must sign your name at the bottom of the letter. A typed name will not be sufficient.

Attachments

- If you have been asked to attach work samples, evidence of certifications and accreditations or references from previous employers, list them under attachments.
- If you have not been asked to attach any additional information and you have decided to, it is worth listing them under “Attachments” so that the recruiter knows to look for them and that they are relevant to your application.
- If you are only attaching a CV, it is not necessary to have an “Attachments” section at the bottom of your letter. It is optional.

Notes:

Carolyn Philip is the Director of [Fremantle HR Consultancy](#) and regularly advises clients about how to apply for jobs and get their applications noticed.