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Writing a Covering Letter

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Writing a covering letter

This guidance covers the following topics:

- When to use a cover letter
- Cover letter content
- How to send a cover letter
- Examples of cover letters

1. When to use a covering letter

Covering letters for advertised jobs

When sending any CV, it's good practice to enclose a Covering Letter where you can demonstrate you have the right skills and experience for the role. A Covering Letter allows you to add a personal touch, where you can show interest and motivation for the role itself and the company. If you get the content right, it should encourage the employer to read more about you and move on to your CV with a positive impression.

Covering letters for speculative applications

Some vacancies are filled by candidates who approach organisations on a speculative basis, i.e., making direct contact with a company regardless of whether jobs are advertised or not. This usually involves sending off a CV with a Covering Letter. Companies can get several letters a day from people enquiring about jobs, so yours needs to stand out.

In the letter you need to make a good case, explaining what you could do for the company. An interesting introduction is essential to encourage the employer to consider you for an opportunity that may exist. If you have already contacted them, mention the name of the person who you spoke to. If they do not have any current vacancies, ask them to keep your CV on file or pass it to colleagues, who may have more opportunities.

Covering letters with application forms

If the application form has been comprehensive, or if the application details state that you should not include any additional documents, then you do not need to send a Covering Letter. However, there may be times when you complete an application form that doesn't provide the opportunity to sell yourself well enough. For example, where you have been asked to complete all details of a certain aspect of your life but there is not enough space on the form. In this case adding a Covering Letter will give you the opportunity to add information or simply state that there was not enough space on the form. This should be done as concisely as possible.

A covering letter as an email

In some circumstances, it is acceptable to write an email which is like a Covering Letter to which you attach your CV. This could be like any of the letters described above depending on the situation.

2. Covering letter content

How long?

Where you do not have any instruction within the application information about how long a cover letter should be, always stick to one page of A4 length. If there are instructions or a word count provided, do follow these instructions. Try your best to fill the space suggested, however if you can't don't worry. It is more important to not exceed it and stick to within the boundaries given.

How should it start?

You need to be very clear about the purpose of the letter. It is important to do some initial research to find out more about the organisation and its employees. Use the web, printed materials, professional associations, trade journals or speak to someone in the company. It can be beneficial to address your letter directly to an individual so a quick call to the company to ask who the letter should be addressed to is a good idea. If they can't, or won't, provide you with a name then you have lost nothing by trying, however, if they do, your application could make more of an impact.

You may also wish to give your letter a general title to draw attention to the type of employment and training, or work experience that interests you.

Why them?

The first paragraph should explain why you are interested in this vacancy or why you have chosen to approach them. You may have read an article in the newspaper, analysed their annual report or worked on a relevant topic for your project. You should also say something about the organisation to show that you know what they do; if you cannot find out much about them; just say what attracts you to that sector or job area.

If the letter is in response to an advert, you need to be clear about the specific position being applied for, as some employers may be recruiting for several opportunities at once. Your letter shouldn't read like a mail shot - the employer should feel they, in particular, are being targeted for a good reason.

Why you?

Read the advertisement carefully and match your relevant knowledge and skills to the areas emphasised in the job description. With a speculative approach, make sure you know what relevant knowledge and skills are likely to be required. Use your research to match your profile to the type of activities the organisation is involved in. Don't copy whole sentences from your CV but highlight key points that have particular relevance. You may need to give more details of something that you summarised in the CV, e.g., specific details of how you have developed your fluent French, if this is mentioned specifically in the job description. This is a chance to pull together some threads and encourage them to read further and find out more about you. You may

need to produce variations of this letter for different situations, tailoring each one to the specific employer or sector.

How should it end?

Be positive; you are applying for the job or approaching the organisation because you think you can do the job or have something to offer them, so do not be afraid to promote yourself. If you are sending the letter to a named person, and can find their phone number, it is a good idea to mention that you will phone them “after the closing date to check how your application is progressing” or “in a few days to check they have received your letter and CV”. Or you might simply say “I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.” If you say that you will contact them, make sure you do so.

Don't forget to sign the letter and print your name after your signature. If you used “Dear Hiring Manager”, to address the letter, you must have “*Yours faithfully*” at the end of the letter; if you used the name of the person at the start, you should end with “*Yours sincerely*”.

3. How to send your covering letter

Always follow the instructions given by an employer. However, the following are typical methods:

- I. Find out their address and post it.
- II. Via email: write a brief email and include your cover letter with your CV document as attachments.
- III. Via email: include the content of your covering letter in the body of the email and attach your CV.

4. Examples of covering letters

The following examples give ideas about layout and content for the three types of covering letter that go with: a CV for an advertised job, a CV for a speculative application and a paper/online application form. In addition, an email example is included, following on from an interaction with an employer. If you use one of these as the basis of your own letter, try to change the text to make it your own. Be prepared to adapt your letter/email to varied circumstances/instructions.

138 The Lees
Worsley Manchester
M28 4FH
13th August 2022

Mark Richards Personnel Director
NW Business Scope Ltd Manchester
M1 1XX

Dear Mr Richards,

Trainee Public Relations Officer – Ref 13.1

I am writing in reply to your Guardian Website advertisement for a Trainee Public Relations Officer. A completed CV is enclosed with this letter as requested.

Your job opportunity interests me as I am keen to develop a career in this field. I am confident that your role would allow me to build upon the skills and experience I have gained through my studies and volunteering and make a significant contribution to your agency. I have just graduated with a BA (Hons) in Media and Performance from the University of Salford.

My degree course included the opportunity to write and produce video content, allowing me to expand my written and oral communication skills, as well as acquiring techniques with digital media. I particularly enjoyed the presentations where I delivered the results of my research to students and staff. I also developed strong team working skills in the co-creation of performance projects with other students. My experiences at university were enhanced through my active involvement with the Students Union newsletter and campaign work, where I was able to produce news and feature articles, press releases and brochures often to very tight timescales both for online and print materials. I have excellent IT skills, gained through the design and production of web sites, and am a competent user of design software and word-processing packages.

My personal skills include the ability to talk to groups of people, design and develop resources and work independently. In order to balance the demands of my studies, work commitments and Students Union activities, I have become an effective time manager.

I am aware that your agency provides PR services to a number of NW-based and national companies and that you have contracts with several prestigious clients in the public and private sector. I am excited at the prospect of training and working with you and believe that I can become a valuable asset to your organisation.

I am available for interview at your convenience and look forward to hearing from you soon. I will contact you in a week or so to check on the progress of my application.

Yours sincerely,

Laura Hooper

42 Park Road
Eccles Salford M5 4ZZ

4th July 2022

Mr S Thomas
Head of Research and Development ChloroLabs
Trafford Park Manchester M15 4AB

Dear Mr Thomas,

Biological Laboratory Technologist

I am looking for a post as a laboratory technologist and would like you to consider me for any future vacancies within your company. I have recently completed a BSc. in Biological Sciences at the University of Salford and expect to obtain an upper second class degree. Within my degree I selected modules in Biochemistry and Immunology and completed a 10,000 word research project on identification and treatment of defective immune systems.

I am interested in applying to you because your company web site outlines your extensive involvement in the research and development of drugs for the control and eradication of human cancers. I have learned that your expertise in undertaking clinical field trials has been recognised on an international scale. This type of work attracts me as it is both a worthwhile and stimulating area of scientific investigation.

I am highly computer literate, having used a variety of software packages for data interpretation and analysis. I have word-processed all my assignments and laboratory reports during my course, and used graphics and desk top publishing packages to produce materials for presentations and printed articles. I also undertook six months voluntary work in the Microbiology Laboratory at Hope Hospital to enhance my technical skills.

I am available for flexible working arrangements and can take up employment and training at your convenience. I am very enthusiastic about this area of work and will telephone in the near future to check on the availability of suitable opportunities.

If you do not have any current vacancies, please feel free to pass my CV to other departments, or keep it on file for future opportunities.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Charles

20 Panmure Road
Milton Keynes
CV17 4BX

30th August 2022

Mrs Summers
Personnel Manager
Morrisons Group
Lymm
Cheshire CH2 30P

Dear Mrs Summers,

Retail Management Trainee Scheme

Please find enclosed my application form for the post of Retail Management Trainee.

As requested, I have completed the form and continued my statement on a separate sheet, which is attached to the form. Please note that I have not been able to include all details of my work experience, as the space provided is limited and would be happy to provide you with more information as necessary.

I would like to draw to your attention the fact that I am a qualified first aider and recently completed training which will last up to June 2016.

If you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me at the above address.

I look forward to hearing from you in the very near future.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Chambers

Example of an email used instead of a formal covering letter

Email subject line: Social media account executive application

Dear Ms Khan,

Following on from our conversation at the careers fair at Salford University on 25th November, I am contacting you to express my interest in the internship opportunity you are advertising as a social media account executive. What you told me of your company *ABC Business*, was very interesting, and I would be very eager to contribute to the development of your organisation. Having reviewed the job details, I believe I am ideally suited to your role.

As you can see from my attached CV, I am a recent graduate of Journalism from Salford University. I have a particular interest in the application of social media marketing and gained experience of this through my recent volunteer work with Oxfam Books, in which I used social media extensively in developing their online shop to engage new customers and raise more money for the charity. During the six months I worked for them, I was able to double customer traffic attracted to the online bookstore.

Through the course of my degree, I have developed excellent writing/reporting skills for different audiences. I am also able to undertake data analysis in order to critique the effectiveness of different digital communication tools.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that I am available immediately to start work, and living locally, I am flexible about attending an interview with you. My full contact details are on my CV. However, if you want to contact me speedily, my mobile number is the best way to reach me.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Aqeel Akhtar