



Cover Letter

A cover letter is a written document commonly submitted with a job application outlining the applicant's credentials and interest in the open position. **A template is included at the end of this document**

When it comes to applying for jobs, many job seekers are apprehensive about experimenting with their cover letters. There's so much pressure to impress the hiring manager, and one slip-up could land your application in the bin.

A cover letter is an important component of the decision making process among 83% of hiring managers, recruiters, and HR staff. Bottom line – writing a cover letter can help you make up for flaws in your CV in more than eight out of 10 cases.

In addition to writing an impressive cover letter, 18% of employers say a creative cover letter is valued. This is why you should allow your personality to shine through in order to differentiate yourself from other job seekers applying for the same position.

Be Concise: Cover letters should be one page long and divided into three to four paragraphs. The first paragraph should indicate the reason you are writing and how you heard about the position. Include attention grabbing yet professional information.

Consider the following steps when compiling a cover letter:

1. Break it down.

Employers like numbers. They especially like numbers when they have meaning. If you choose to use numbers to illustrate your experience in your cover letter, use them within context. This will allow employers to understand your accomplishments and how they qualify you for the position.

Example: 640 hours. 50 volunteers. Eight weeks. One event. That's what it takes to pull together an Annual Community Expo.

As a special events professional, I've gained experience pulling off extremely successful events under tight deadlines. This is why I believe I'm qualified for your Special Events Manager position for (name of company). E.g. I have a conversion rate of 1:12 for bringing on new clients and in 2018 I brought on 240 new clients and retained 90% of those clients in 2019



2. Use a quote describing your work ethic.

Although it may seem cliché to use a quote in your cover letter, when used well and in context, a quote can add more value to your cover letter.

Select a quote that relates to your experience, passions, and the position for which you're applying. Once you find a quote, tie it into the elements of your experience and explain how it summarises your qualifications.

Example: Stephen R. Covey once said, "Accountability breeds response-ability." As an experienced manager, I believe accountability is the key to success in any work environment. In every management position I've had, I've encouraged my employees to be accountable for their successes and failures, which is why my leadership style will be a great fit for this position.

3. Tell a mini anecdote.

Telling a story in your cover letter allows employers to see your more personal side. When employers search for candidates, they're not only looking at your qualifications, but they also know if you'd be a good fit for their culture, too. By telling a story that relates to your career path, it will allow you to reveal your genuine self to the reader.

Example: I fell in love with netball at a very young age. Not only do I love the sport itself, but also I loved the numbers behind the scores. Because of this life-long interest in sports and numbers, I believe I would be an excellent candidate for the Data Analyst position for (name of the company)

4. Illustrate your passions, dreams, and goals.

Employers not only want to hear why you're qualified for the position, but they also want to know why you chose your career path. Employers want to hire passionate employees because they know these individuals will be motivated to do their job.



Example: Content marketing, social media, and research are my passions and areas of expertise. Not only are these my passions, but also I believe these skills are the foundation for any digital marketing professional. These passions, combined with my enthusiasm, would make me a great candidate for your Digital Media Manager position at (name of the company)

5. Speak as if you're already hired.

When you jump into writing your cover letter, shift your mind set to as if you're already hired. Pretend you're in the break room and one of your co-workers or manager asks you why you chose to work at their company. This is a great way to show your interest in your cover letter.

Example: When I discovered (name of the company) was hiring, I knew I had to apply. I've been waiting to find a company where I feel like I can make a difference while working as an (position applying for). Not only are your clients awesome, but the overall mission of your company is something I believe in, too.

6. Say it in A4 or less.

The shorter and more powerful statement you can create, the stronger your cover letter will be. Remember, employers don't have a lot of time to review cover letters and a CV. However, if you can make your introduction short and sweet, you'll help the employer decide if they should keep reading.

Example: Design and nature are my elements. Let me tell you how my web design experience will help you protect the environment.

There are endless ways to write a cover letter and there's no perfect formula. Just keep in mind your audience and how you can relate to them, and you'll be able to write a much stronger cover letter that will land you an interview.

There's definitely an art to writing the perfect cover letter, and it's one that many job seekers don't take the time to learn. While it does require some effort to get right, once you learn how to write an effective cover letter, it gets easier and easier each time you do it.



Now let's look at the seven common cover letter mistakes.

1. Regurgitating Your CV

When candidates don't know what to write in their cover letter, they often resort to restating their job history. But this isn't a great tactic. Remember, the employer already has your CV, so there's no need to repeat your entire work history. Focus on making your career narrative and relevant qualifications crystal clear. In other words, tell the reader a story about not just your past jobs, but how you got where you are today and why you think this position, you're applying for is the right next step.

It's also okay to make things a little personal, as opposed to your CV, which should be totally professional. Your cover letter should not only whet the reader's appetite, but also add value to your entire job application. Use this opportunity to give the reader a sense of your personality. While the CV can be a dry document, your cover letter is your opportunity to introduce your personality so the reader can begin to assess your cultural fit for the organisation.

2. Using a Generic Template Letter

I often see cover letters that were obviously copied-and-pasted. You don't want to use the same cover letter for every job with just the contact name, company name and position title swapped out. Even when the hiring manager and company name are correct, you can tell that it's a generic template letter.

Instead, take time to review the job listing again and identify the top three things the hiring manager appears to be seeking in an ideal candidate. Use this information to customise your message. Explain how you are a good fit for the role by summarising your qualifications based on their requirements. Better yet, open your cover letter with a story that provides proof of your skills the employer cares about most.

For an added personal touch, look up the hiring manager on LinkedIn or Facebook. If you can find something you have in common, like a school, volunteer organisation or hometown, find a way to slip it naturally into your cover letter. Don't force this, however — it must be a genuine connection.



3. Only Talking Up Your Soft Skills

The worst mistake I see in cover letters is candidates adding too **many soft skills** rather than focusing on job-related skills, many fill the cover letter with content about how they are reliable, motivated and dependable. Let's hope that you're reliable, motivated and dependable. Those characteristics are bare minimums that a hiring manager expects from any applicant. Instead, do your best to set yourself apart by explaining how your hard skills and experience could add value to their organisation. Tell them about your accomplishments with those skills as it relates to the job.

4. Writing Too Much

An overly wordy cover letter is a waste of time and a big mistake, Keep the body of your cover letter to A4 or less. Employers are pressed for time and simply do not see the value in investing their time reading a lengthy cover letter. Additionally, many employers and recruiters are reading on their mobile devices, so keeping your cover letter brief will ensure it is easier to read, which increases the chances that it actually will be read.

5. Including Non-Essential Information

The main thing you want to get across in your cover letter is why you're the right fit for the job. That means everything you include should be specific to the company and the position you're applying for. The manager doesn't need to read about extracurricular activities that are not work-related or about every book you've ever read.

6. Not Easing Fears About Relocation

Out-of-town applicants are typically at the bottom of the list of candidates since the odds of this candidate coming to work for them is less than slim and expensive. If you're applying for a job somewhere far from your current location, be sure to use the cover letter as an opportunity to quash and concerns they might have. Find a way to connect yourself to the area. Examples could be: you are originally from the area, you have family in the area or your partner/spouse accepted a position in the area.



7. Not Referencing Next Steps

Don't miss the opportunity to plant the seed of an interview in the recruiter or hiring manager's head. This is one of the oldest sales strategies known to man, but it works. Close your cover letter by giving the employer your interview availability. By doing this, the reader automatically thinks in their head, *'Hmm, what am I doing that day?'* By getting into their mental schedule, you are already pencilling yourself in."

Example:

Based on your requirements and my passion for this position, I feel like I would be an ideal candidate. I am available to speak via phone or in person on Wednesdays and Fridays after 1 p.m. and welcome the opportunity to discuss my candidacy, it works like a charm.

What mistakes have you made on a cover letter and regretted?



Cover Letter Template

[Your Name]

[Address]

[Hiring manager's name]

[Hiring manager's company name]

[Company address]

[Today's Date]

[Name of Recipient]

Dear Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms **[Hiring managers name – if not known, simply Sir/Madam]**

I wish to apply for the role of **[Job Title]**, currently being advertised on reed.co.uk. Please find enclosed my CV for your consideration.

As you can see from my attached CV, I have over **[time period]** experience in the **[Sector]** industry, and I believe the knowledge and skills built up during this time make me the right/perfect candidate for the role.

In my current role as a **[job title]** at **[employer name]**, I have been responsible for **[Insert a quantifiable and notable achievement/s - e.g. a x% increase in revenue]**, which when coupled with my enthusiasm and dedication **[insert skills relevant to the role – usually found in the job description]**, has helped the business to **[measure of success]**.

I am confident that I can bring this level of success with me to your organisation and help **[company name]** build upon their reputation as **[state their position in market – learned through your research]**. With my previous experience and expertise, I believe my contribution will have an immediate impact on the business.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to meeting with you to discuss my application further.

Yours sincerely/Yours faithfully,

[Your name]

[contact phone number]

[Signature - if desired]