

10 Steps to Covering Letter Success

1. Always send one!

Your covering letter is an important document, a key part of your application to a prospective employer whether for a graduate vacancy, work placement, internship or voluntary opportunity. A well written, error-free, excellently presented covering letter will make you really stand out from the crowd.

2. Don't re-write your CV

Highlight particularly relevant experience, skills and competencies which you will have mentioned briefly in your CV.

3. Research and Revise

Research the company/organisation. Tell them what you are impressed with and what attracts you to them. Tailor your covering letter to each application. Focus on relevant work experience, skills and competencies.

4. Named person

Wherever possible send your covering letter and CV to a named individual. Research using websites, ask friends and colleagues if they have any contacts or phone the company/organisation and ask for a name and job title.

5. Presentation

Don't forget to put the job title at the top of the letter and reference number where applicable. Avoid long paragraphs, and try never to exceed one page. Set out the letter formally with your address in the top right – hand corner and the employer's address below this to the left above the date. If you are sending your covering letter in the body of an email, you don't need to put the addresses but you still need to use the formal Dear ____ approach.

6. Structure

In your opening paragraph state why you are writing, identify the position you are applying for and indicate how you heard about the position. Explain what interests you about the job and the company/organisation. The middle paragraphs are your opportunity to show how you can contribute towards the company. Don't tell the employer that you are the best person for the job, this can appear arrogant. It is perfectly acceptable to refer the reader to your enclosed CV. Look at the terminology the employer has used in the advert/job description and incorporate this into your letter. Conclude on an upbeat note, explaining that you are looking forward to an interview, also stating when you are available.

7. Evidence, Evidence, Evidence

Pick out the top five qualities/competencies/skills the employer is seeking from the job advert or job specification. These should have already been covered in your CV. Use the **CAR** technique to structure your examples. Describe the **C**ontext (Where were you? Who were you with?), the **A**ction (What did you do?) and the **R**esult (What did you achieve?). Focus on the company rather than yourself, what you can do for them rather than what they can do for you.

8. Ending your Letter

To end the letter, you would normally write 'Yours sincerely'. Sign your name directly below this and then print it below the signature.

9. Check, Check and Check again

Proofread. Don't give the employer the opportunity to put your letter in the bin. Check grammar and spellings of names. Don't rely on spellcheck.

10. Submitting

If you are submitting your CV and covering letter via email, you can attach both documents separately or you can write your covering letter in the body of the email. If attaching both documents separately, you should include a short, professional message in the body of the email. If submitting by post or in person, use high quality white paper and no photocopies.

Useful Links:

www.prospects.ac.uk/cvs_and_cover_letters.htm
<https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice>