**How to write a cover letter**

**The purpose**

* To introduce you to an employer and ask them to consider your application
* To encourage an employer to read the accompanying CV or application form
* To draw together relevant facts about you and shape them to the needs of the employer; demonstrating your ability to do the job/course
* If speculative: to explain why you are sending your CV

**When to include a cover letter**

You should always include a cover letter when you apply for a job using a CV. You can write it as an email if you’re applying online or print a copy to go with a paper application.

**Preparation**

* Research the organisation using resources such as the company or organisation's website, recent news articles and their social media.
* Thoroughly research the role you are applying for, including the main responsibilities
* Identify aspects of the role that are most important to you
* A cover letter should be about one side of A4, usually 3 to 5 paragraphs long
* Use a matching font and style to your CV.

Tailor your cover letter for each application. You can adapt information you cut and paste from previous applications. However ensure it is appropriate to the job you are applying for.

**Send it to the right person**

It's important to try to address your cover letter to someone by name. Check you have the details of the person you need to send it to.

You'll need their name and preferred title. For example, ‘Dr’, ‘Mr’, ‘Mrs’, ‘Ms’, and their job title. You should also make sure you have the right company name and address, including postcode.

**If you do not know their name**

If the job advert does not include a name, you can check the company website. Try to find details of the head of the department, head of human resources or a recruitment manager.

If you still cannot find a name, you can start your letter with ‘Dear Sir or Madam’.

**Planning considerations**

* What are your key strengths in relation to the opportunity?
* What has motivated you to pursue this opportunity?
* You may need to illustrate how your skills satisfy the requirements (e.g. leadership, teamwork, communication) so think of some examples of where you will have demonstrated these (such as work experience, university experiences, volunteering, Internships, interests, hobbies)
* What differentiates this organisation to you from their competitors?

**Writing your first draft**

We suggest using a structure similar to this:

**ICME Structure**

I – Introduction: A brief opening to introduce yourself, outline the role you are applying for and where you saw it advertised

C – Capability: a paragraph explaining why you are qualified for the role and meet its requirements, highlighting your skills and experience

M – Motivation: a paragraph detailing why you are interested in this specific organisation. Convince them you're enthusiastic about working for them. Let them know you share their work values, culture and style.

E – Ending: briefly thank the reader for his/her time and state that you are looking forward to hearing from them. Refer back to the specific course or job requirements.

Use subheadings and bullet points to highlight key information and help your cover letter stand out by using direct, positive and appropriate language.

TOP TIP: Expressing things more positively can make the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful application

If you have gaps in your employment history, you could talk about the skills you gained while you were out of work.

**Yours sincerely or yours faithfully**

If you know the name of the person you’re writing to, you should end the letter with ‘Yours sincerely’.

If you’ve addressed the letter ‘Dear Sir or Madam’, you should end the letter with ‘Yours faithfully’.

**Tips for writing a cover letter**

When writing your cover letter, remember to:

* write a new one for every job you apply for and make sure it’s tailored to the company and the specific role
* use the same font and size as you do for your CV, so it looks consistent
* make sure the company name and recruiter’s details are correct
* use the right language and tone: keep it professional and match the keywords used by the employer in their job advert
* show you’ve done your research into the job and the company
* highlight your most relevant skills and experience to stand out from other applicants
* back up any statements you make with facts and use [the STAR method](https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/interview-advice/the-star-method)
* double check spelling and grammar before you send it
* keep a copy of your cover letter as they may ask you about it in an interview

<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/covering-letter>

**Employment with disability**

If you’ve mentioned on your CV that you have a disability, you might want to talk more about this in your cover letter. Organisations like [Disability UK](https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/telling-people-you%E2%80%99re-disabled-clear-and-easy-guide-students) can give you advice on how to do this. You do not have to mention your disability at this stage if you prefer not to.

You can get more help with specialist advice on [finding work if you have a disability.](https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/career-and-job-support-for-people-with-a-disability/)