

HOW TO WRITE A COVER LETTER

I. WHAT IS A COVER LETTER

A cover letter (covering letter) is a document sent alongside your CV that you send to an employer when you are trying to get a job. It is a quick way for you to summarize who you are, what position you are applying for and what skills, knowledge and experience you have.

II. LAYOUT OF A COVER LETTER

- **Good layout:** simple, clear.
- **Length:** one page of A4; three to five short paragraphs.
- **Margins:** 1-inch (2.54 cm); minimum ½-inch (1,27 cm).
- **Font: basic, simple fonts such as:** Arial, Verdana, Calibri, and Times New Roman. **Font size:** 10 – 12pt.
- **Spacing:** single-line spacing, with space between contact information, date, salutation, each paragraph, the closing, and the signature.
- **Alignment:** all text should be lined up to the left (but your contact information can also be placed at the center or on the right-hand side of the page).

III. STRUCTURE OF A COVER LETTER

Cover letters for job applications follow the format of a formal business letter which begins with your contact information, and then the employer's contact information. They are written in paragraph form and include a formal salutation, closing, and signature.

Your Contact Information:

Your Name
Your Address
Your City, State, Zip Code
Your Phone Number
Your Email Address

Date: 25th July 2017 (in GB) or July 25th, 2017 (in US)

Employer's Contact Information

Name
Title
Company
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Salutation: Ideally, address your cover letter directly to a specific person who will be reading it, but if the name isn't given on the advert, take the time to find out who the letter should be addressed to: search the company's website for details of the hiring manager, or call the organisation to ask who you should address your letter to.

If you know the name of the person to whom you are writing:

Dear Mrs (for a married woman)/ Miss (for an unmarried woman)/ Ms (for a woman you do not know her marital status)/ Mr (for a man) + last name. Ex: Dear Mr Smith

Note:

If you do not know the gender of your contact, you can write out the person's full name. Ex: Dear Cory Smith

The abbreviations Mrs, Miss, Ms, Mr are usually written without a full stop (.) in GB or with a full stop in US. Ex: Dear Mr Smith, or Dear Mr. Smith:

If you do not know the name of the person to whom you are writing: you can use a general salutation such as:

Dear Sir/Madam

Dear Hiring Manager

Dear Human Resources Director

To Whom It May Concern

Note: After the salutation, you use no punctuation mark or a comma (,) in GB; or a colon (:) in US.

First Paragraph: mention the information on *the position you are applying for*, including the job title; state *how you learnt about the job*; and express *how you are interested in* and/ or briefly explain *why you think you are an ideal candidate* for the position.

Ex:

I am very interested in the Help Desk Technical Support position that you have advertised on Indeed.com. I believe my training, experience, and proven ability as a Tier One Technical Support Specialist and Help Desk Technician will allow me to significantly contribute to the productivity and quality of your company's IT division.

Ex:

I am writing in regards to the position of marketing manager at XYZ Enterprises advertised on Monster.com. Susan Smith recommended that I write directly to you, as we worked together at ABC Inc. for several years, and she thought that this position would be a good fit for me.

Middle Paragraph(s): describe what you can offer the employer. Mention *why you are qualified* for the job and *how your skills and experience are a match for the position* for which you are applying. Provide specific examples to prove your skills and experience

Note: avoid copying statements direct from your CV. Think about how you can rephrase the information or expand on particular skills and achievements you have that are right for the role.

Ex:

I have acquired valuable experience in all facets of troubleshooting, installations, and maintenance for various desktop operations, hardware, and software. I possess a unique talent for translating highly complex technical information into terms and concepts that the end users can readily grasp. These skills have enabled me, in my most recent position, to reduce our response time to trouble tickets by 45%, vastly improving our client satisfaction ratios.

Furthermore, I am multi-task oriented, enjoy a challenge, and continually stay abreast of the latest advancements in the IT field. If you are seeking an IT professional who has excellent people and problem-solving skills and who can easily provide optimum support to your MIS operations, then please consider what I can offer.

Final Paragraph: conclude your cover letter by *summarizing what you would bring* to the position and *suggest next steps* by requesting a meeting or suggesting a call, then *thank the employer* for considering you for the position.

Ex:

I believe it would be mutually beneficial for us to meet and discuss the goals of your company and how my technical abilities can help you achieve those goals. I will call your office in a few days to inquire about the possibility of a meeting. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Closing: If you know the name of the person to whom you are writing, end your letter with "Yours Sincerely" or "Respectfully yours". If you do not know the name of the person to whom you are writing, end your letter with "Yours faithfully" If you send the letter by email, you can also write: Regards/ Kind regards/ Best regards.

If you end the salutation with a comma or colon, use a comma after the closing. If you do not punctuate the salutation, don't punctuate the closing.

Signature: Leave a double space or triple space between the closing and the name (space for the signature)

Handwritten Signature (for a mailed letter)

Fist name + last name

IV. SOME OTHER GUIDES

- Avoid abbreviations, slangs or colloquialisms.
- Write the letter in a simple, clean language.
- Keep your sentences and paragraph shorts.
- Use suitable tenses: past simple, present simple, present perfect, future simple.
- Do a final check (for spelling, grammar errors), get someone to look over the cover letter before sending it.
- If you send your cover letter (together with your CV) by email, include a subject line that enables the employer to recognize who you are and the job for which you are applying. Ex: Help Desk Technician - John Doe Application.