



How to write your first cover letter

Entering the job market is confusing for most, but particularly intimidating if you're a first timer. But don't stress. Use our tips to create an excellent cover letter and get your career underway.

Why do I need a cover letter?

You want to stand out, don't you? A well-crafted cover letter lets you do what many others fail to do; create enough interest in your skills and talents to secure a job interview. You only get one chance to make a first impression. Remember, this letter is your personal introduction to someone who is potentially your new boss. Your cover letter should help to persuade them, in minutes, that you are the ideal candidate for the job and encourage them to invite you for interview.

How do I start?

First, make sure you are addressing the correct person by using the name given. If there is no name mentioned, the most professional opening is 'Dear Sir/Madam'. State the position you are applying for and how you heard about it. Alternatively, do some research and make a phone call to find out who is likely to be reading your application – a little extra inside knowledge may land you on the short list!

Tell them about you

This is where you get the chance to tell them why you would be an excellent choice! Have you had similar experience elsewhere? If you've never worked before, think of other ways you can demonstrate your suitability. For example, if the vacancy is about working in a team, perhaps you have been a volunteer or a scout leader where you were required to organise, coordinate, and work with others.

Break it down

If the role has specific requirements, it's okay to use bullet points to show your fit with an explanation alongside. Mirror their language and repeat their key words when describing yourself to show you are a match.

Keep it professional

Remember, this letter is their first impression. When the employer is reading it, they are already assessing your suitability from the way you write, punctuate, and express yourself. So keep it professional. Put some effort (and personality) into it, and always, always proof read – don't just do an auto spell check... it won't pick up every error.

Wrap it up

At the end of your letter, it's time to bring it home. Reiterate your enthusiasm. Suggest when you may be free to meet for interview, and thank them for their time. Don't forget, they need to know how to contact you, so make sure you have your contact telephone number and email address on the letter.