

COVER LETTERS EXPLAINED

A COVER LETTER IS AN EXTENSION OF YOUR CV

A cover letter should complement your CV, but not duplicate it. Use your letter to add context to your application – it gives you the opportunity to explain to an employer why you're applying and how you're a match to their requirements. Your letter should be both as unique as you are and tailored to each opportunity.

Ask yourself 3 questions: Why this role? Why this organisation? Why me?

FORMATTING

Generally, one page will be sufficient. However, if the job requirements are quite extensive, then aim for 1-2 pages. Pay attention to details such as grammar, spelling, and presentation. Use simple fonts such as Arial or Calibri and black font colour only. Where possible, address the letter to a specific person. Proactive online research – or taking the initiative to call and enquire – means the letter is seen by the right hiring manager.

STRUCTURE

Employers are mostly checking that you are:

- **motivated** – tell them why you're applying for this role and this organisation.
- **qualified** – showcase relevant skills or experience that you've identified from the job information.
- **compatible** – that you are a good fit for their organisation and/or share their values priorities.

A professional-looking letter will demonstrate that you are a serious applicant.

LANGUAGE

It is vital to use relevant and appropriate vocabulary throughout your letter. For instance, a retail or transport employer might use the term 'customer', whereas a financial services or legal employer might prefer the term 'client'. Analyse the job information, company website, and their social media feeds to identify relevant terminology and recent developments. Use dynamic language – verbs such as facilitating, liaising, and coordinating (CareerHub+ has a Power Verbs Generator) – to demonstrate your enthusiasm.

essex.careercentre.me/elearning/scorm-rise.aspx?CourseId=v37hEgMqPxy5bpXwiYZEEw==

SPECULATIVE COVER LETTERS

Not all vacancies are advertised. When you're writing speculatively – to generate interest and potentially secure a role – then your cover letter will need to reflect this. It can help to explain what kind of role you're looking for, and you should use your research into the organisation to inform how you outline your relevant skills and experience.

TOP TIPS

- Closely follow the employer's instructions – you might be asked to paste the content of your cover letter into an online form, rather than attach it as a separate letter.
- When a contact asks you for your CV via email, you could take the opportunity to highlight a few relevant points in the body of your email, instead of writing a separate full cover letter. But keep it concise where possible!
- If you're starting from scratch, check out our template overleaf. This can serve as a basic structural guide for how to include and format key points of your letter.
- Before sending, quickly recheck the employer's brief to make sure you have responded correctly to all their instructions – it's easy to miss something!

RESOURCES

There are lots of useful resources available to help with writing cover letters:

- prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/cvs-and-cover-letters/cover-letters/speculative-cover-letter
- prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/cvs-and-cover-letters/cover-letters
- targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/cvs-applications-and-tests/covering-letter-essentials-graduate-vacancies
- targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/cvs-applications-and-tests/four-covering-letter-blunders-and-how-avoid-them
- targetjobs.co.uk/cv-and-cover-letter-templates

FURTHER SUPPORT

For more information, advice, and support with cover letters, email careersinfo@essex.ac.uk or visit careerhub.essex.ac.uk to book an event or 1–1 appointment.

COVER LETTER EXAMPLE:

Name of Hiring Manager
Organisation Name
Address

Your Name
Your Address
Your contact telephone number / email address

Today's Date

Dear Name of Hiring Manager,

Re: Name of Job Title (Ref XYZ)

I am writing to apply for the above role, as advertised in *name of publication/website*. As you will see from my CV, I am a final year *name of subject* undergraduate offering a strong array of XXXXX and XXXXX abilities – combined with excellent XXXXX and XXXXX skills.

The opportunity to be part of the *name of organisation* team is exciting because *insert reasons here*. I greatly admire *name of organisation's* values and commitment to XXXXX that is XXXXX. I would relish the opportunity to work and learn alongside such inspiring colleagues.

My studies and experiences acquired at the University of Essex have equipped me with a sound understanding of XXXXX and XXXXX. As an example, my final year project is centred on XXXXX, and my research requires analysis of XXXXX. XXXXX and XXXXX have also been key features of my degree. Furthermore, I have a proven track record for managing multiple projects at pace, alongside the ability to build rapport with clients and colleagues.

I am therefore confident that I possess the skills, qualities, and knowledge to be a strong applicant for this role.

Thank you for your kind consideration of my enclosed CV; I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Your Name