

# Covering Letters

## What are they for?

Covering letters have two main jobs: to explain what you are applying for and why you are applying, and to explain how you meet the organisation’s criteria.

It also demonstrates your written communication skills, so a well-written covering letter will sell you to a potential employer and encourage them to read your CV.

Because every job is different, that means every covering letter needs to be created from scratch. You need to give enough information to spotlight the important and relevant details on your CV – the letter is not simply a list of your academic qualifications and skills.

## What does a covering letter look like?

A covering letter has a standard format. Make your paragraphs concise and well organised, ensuring that each paragraph addresses only one important factor e.g. your motivation or suitability.

### **Structuring a cover letter:**

**1. Introduction**

Tell them why you are writing (e.g. for work experience or to apply for a specific vacancy; if the latter, give the job title and where you saw it advertised). If relevant, establish any links with the individual or the company to whom you are writing, e.g. ‘I spoke with Jane Smith, a consultant at Deloitte, at a careers evening and she suggested I apply for this role’.

**2. Why this Organisation/Career Path/Sector?**

Show that you know something about the organisation and why you would like to work for them. Never just repeat what is on their website. Perhaps you met someone from the company at a careers event or attended a presentation? If so, name the person and the event. Explain what motivates you to work in this sector, what you know about it and what is happening currently. This is your chance to show you have researched the organisation, the sector, and potentially the career path too.

**3. Why this job role?**

You need to show that you understand what the job involves and why it is of interest to you. Look at the information in the job advert which explains what you’ll do in the role and pick out any task or activities that particularly appeal to you. If it’s a traineeship or a development programme then you can also talk about how it is structured, such as the training provided, or the chance to rotate into different departments.

**4. How you meet their requirements**

The job advert will also detail the combination of qualifications, knowledge, skills, and experience they are looking for. Make sure to mention these requirements and provide evidence of how you meet them. Briefly detail in which part of your life you demonstrated these requirements so that they can then look for more information on your CV. You can refer to any aspect of your life e.g. side hustle, part-time work, your course, or a role within a club or society.

**5. Finishing the letter (one brief paragraph)**

This section is just to show that you are polite and know how to end a letter, but if you need to, you can briefly mention any additional factors e.g. why your degree result/A-level grades were not as good as expected, or when you are available if you are requesting work experience.

## Letter format guidelines

* **Layout:** use a formal business letter layout with your address in the top right-hand corner and the name and address of the person and organisation you are applying to below, on the left-hand side. Include the date and any job reference below this. Make sure all names are spelled correctly.
* **Length:** one side of A4.
* **Contact:** always try and write to a specific, named person. Use their correct title e.g. ‘Dear Mr Jones’ or ‘Dear Ms Smith’. If you can’t get a name, use Dear Hiring Manager or Dear Sir/Madam,
* **Font:** use something simple like Calibri or Arial, but make sure that it matches your CV or it will look like they were written by two different people.
* **End the letter correctly:** if you address the letter to a named person i.e. ‘Dear Ms Smith,’ sign off with ‘Yours sincerely’. Use ‘Yours faithfully’ if the letter is addressed to ‘Dear Hiring Manager’ or ‘Dear Sir/Madam’. Then leave a few lines and type your name in full, leaving space for your signature.

## Applying by email

Make sure that whatever you are sending out is professionally presented and error free. Use the same font type and size in both covering letter and CV. If you have been asked to send your application by email, you can attach both letter and CV to a brief email as .pdfs. Alternatively, you can use the covering letter as the text of the email and attach your CV as a .pdf. Make sure you follow any instructions the employer has given.

## Speculative letters

A speculative application is sent to an organisation to see if they have any opportunities which have not yet been advertised. It might be a good way of sourcing work experience or work shadowing, as long as you are willing to send a lot of them. Writing a good speculative letter requires you to:

**Do your research:** good research and careful thinking around the employer/organisation will help you to suggest the roles/areas you are interested in. Employers like to receive suggestions as to the type of work you can do.

**Think about the employer’s point of view:** do explain what you can bring to the organisation, whether this is relevant experience, or an interest in this area of work and lots of enthusiasm.

## Covering Letter Checklist

Have you:

Made a good opening?

* Started your letter with why you are writing

**Explained why this job role is attractive to you?**

* Conveyed what you would find particularly rewarding about working in the role
* Showed that you have a good understanding of what the job involves

**Outlined why their organisation appeals?**

* Conveyed what you think is attractive and rewarding to you about working for that organisation and in that sector
* Showed your understanding of what the organisation can and does offer, including what research you have done
* Written concisely and focused on the minimum number of points that demonstrates your motivation

**Shown why you are suitable for the job?**

* Identified the key requirements for the role and provided evidence of having demonstrated these skills, achieved the qualifications, attained the experience and used your knowledge
* Used the organisation’s terms from their job advert

**Written a concluding paragraph?**

* Rounded off your letter in an optimistic way and outlined what you would like to happen next

**General points**

* Write in a confident and optimistic tone – does it sound as if you want the job?
* Keep it to one side of A4
* Proofread it and ask someone else to check it for you

## Top tips for a winning cover letter

* Proofread the letter before sending it. Grammar and spelling mistakes are likely to result in your application being rejected
* Make it clear what you are looking for i.e. a meeting to discuss your CV further, an interview or work shadowing. If it is a speculative letter, explain that you will follow it up with a phone call in the near future
* Always keep a copy of the job advert together with the covering letter and CV which you sent in response to it.

## Remember: we can help!

Book an appointment via [MyJobsOnline](https://reading.targetconnect.net/home.html) and bring in your draft CV and covering letter to be checked by a Careers Consultant before you send it off.

## **Covering Letter – Example**

46 Lincoln New Rd

Southgate

Reading

RG1 1AA

Ms Karen Gold

Market Research Director

The Independent Travel Company

London

SW9 XTS

13 March 2023

Dear Ms Gold,

I am writing to you to explore the possibility of gaining 2 weeks unpaid work experience over the summer within your market research department. I am drawn to The Independent Travel Company because I have some insight into the tourism industry and your recent Award at the London Travel Show demonstrates your customer focus and innovative marketing approach. Before university I spent a summer working as a holiday representative for 18-25 year olds in a busy resort, and I particularly enjoyed designing appropriate marketing materials to attract new customers. I am keen to apply what I have learned in the bespoke tourism sector which your company serves.

Last summer I successfully completed an eight-week internship working in the marketing department of a local theatre and developed a number of digital marketing skills. I worked on a project looking at the theatre’s social media engagement. I interviewed small groups of people, gathered data and wrote a report, which included recommendations for both improving the theatre’s social media feed on Facebook and Instagram and increasing its following.

I am currently in my second year at the University of Reading where I am studying BSc Marketing and Consumer Behaviour. As part of my degree course, I was awarded a score of 80% for the module on research methods. I enjoy analysing data and can produce accurate written reports of my findings. I have also given a presentation to students in my seminar group, which increased my confidence in communicating complex material to my peers.

Thank you for considering my CV and request for work experience. I will be able to take the work experience any time in July and August.

I will follow this letter up with a phone call to you in two weeks’ time unless I hear from you beforehand.

Yours sincerely,

Ali Bakir