

Writing a cover letter

Do you question whether you should even bother with a cover letter in this digital age? It is questioned whether recruiters even read cover letters. However, the importance of writing cover letters to support your application should not be underestimated and can be just as important as your resume.

Even if your cover letter doesn't get read, the fact that you have even bothered to write a cover letter makes you stand out to recruiters above those applicants that just attached their resume. Tailoring your cover letter shows you are motivated and actually keen on the role; you are not just one of hundreds of applicants who just send their resume off in a scatter-gun approach to any old job that is not even relevant.

Writing a cover letter could mean the difference between you getting a chance to interview for a role you are really keen on, or your resume getting lost under a pile of applications.

Your cover letter can be described as a 'taster' to the main feature (your full resume!) and its main function is to get your resume read. It is your chance to provide insight into your motivations of why you are applying for the role.

Tips on how to write a cover letter

- Avoid writing a lengthy cover letter. Four short paragraphs should be sufficient for you to gain the interest of the reader and help your application stand out from other applicants.
- Focus on the company's requirements rather than your own – look at what they have listed in the job description as to the main responsibilities of the role and the qualities they are looking for in candidates – describe your own skills and experience using the same language.
- Try to avoid too much use of the word I, especially at the beginning of paragraphs.
- Always tailor your cover letter to the job that you are applying for and where possible address the person who has written the advert. Avoid writing 'Dear HR Department'. Follow their lead with style and language, a cover letter to a government department is unlikely to be the same style as one to a media production company where you may have more scope for creativity.
- Before you hit send, check grammar and spelling carefully. Sloppy spelling could see your application sent straight onto the rejection pile as this shows you don't have an attention to detail.

How to structure your cover letter into four parts

1. The opening paragraph should establish a connection with the reader and tell the employer who you are, why you are applying for the role and your interest in their organisation.
2. The second paragraph outlines what you have to offer. Include three points that highlight your specific relevant experience or skills
3. The third paragraph should include three points explaining how your achievements would add value to the company
4. The closing paragraph should state clearly when you are available for interview and thank the reader for reviewing your application.

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