

HINTS & TIPS SHEET VOL:1

SHOULD I WRITE A COVER LETTER?



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A cover letter may seem like a redundant exercise in your already long to-do list when finding a job, but many career experts agree that if you have the option to, it is wise to send it.

A TOUCH OF PERSONALITY

A cover letter gives you the opportunity to show a personal side, when many hirers will be getting many automated applications from job boards. Aside from making you stand out, it also proves your dedication to the role as you are willing to personalise your application for each job.

Positions at smaller companies can have a big effect on the organisations culture, so hirers will sometimes use cover letters to ascertain how well someone will fit into the team. Use your cover letter to make a personal connection. This is the opportunity to share job experiences or personal stories that relate to the role you are applying for. Always focus on the requirements of the role.

Where possible, recount meaningful examples that match your skills to problem solving accomplishments or solid business results – you need to show hiring managers examples of your skills to make a memorable impression.

Furthermore, your cover letter is the ideal place to proactively address potential issues or concerns, such as irregularities in your employment, short term positions or even incomplete degrees. Where this may not be appropriate on your CV, in your cover letter you can take the opportunity to tell your story in the most positive way possible.

A good cover letter will accompany your CV and will be tailored to the role you are applying for, with relevant examples. Read the job description and give specific instances that match the requirements of the role, and demonstrate why you are the perfect fit. Remember to write in your own words rather than use a pre-written template, as it always looks like you have put more effort in.

RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH

Research is key when writing a cover letter. You should aim to find out what the company does, their competitors, their target audience, requirements of the role and the essential skills needed. When you have done this research, it will give you the knowledge to tailor your letter to the style of the company. It also shows you have a real interest in the role and company, and will help towards your interview prep.

Ideally your cover letter should be addressed to the person handling the applications. Normally this will be somewhere in the job advert, but if it isn't visit the company's website and find out the name of a relevant recipient. This demonstrates initiative and your genuine interest. If you find a name address your letter "Dear Mr Jones / Ms Smith". If you are unable to find a name "Dear Sir / Madam" will be fine.

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STRUCTURE

Unless specified in the job description, there is no required length for a cover letter, so concentrate on the details that are most important for the job. The opening paragraph to your letter should be concise, and explain why you are getting in touch. It is helpful to include where you found the advert, and if someone has referred you to the position, mention their name here.

The second paragraph should illustrate why you are suitable for the role. Briefly explain your professional and academic qualifications that are relevant to the position, and make sure you refer to each of the skills listed in the job description. The third paragraph should demonstrate what you can do for the company. Summarise your career goals (once again making it relevant) and expand on points that are in your CV, including examples.

The fourth paragraph should reiterate your interest and why you would be the best fit for the position. You can also suggest you would like to meet with the hiring manager for an interview. Sign off the letter with "Yours sincerely" if you do not know the name of the hiring manager, or "Yours faithfully" if you do.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST

There are situations where it is not appropriate to send a cover letter – for example when an employer does not request one or the job application software does not allow for additional documents. Always follow the employers instructions, and make sure your CV includes lots of keywords that align to the job description. If the cover letter is described as "optional", take this opportunity to increase your chances of moving forward in the hiring process.



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