

## Creating an Alluring Covering Letter

### Is a covering letter necessary?

The main aim of a covering letter is to encourage recruiters to read your CV. However, it needs to do a lot more than say, 'here is my CV!' While a CV sets out the skills and experience you have for the job, the covering letter more explicitly demonstrates your understanding of the employing organisation and the nature of the job being advertised.

A covering letter gives you the opportunity to show how your skills and abilities fit the vacancy. It can be used to highlight particular parts of your CV that are your unique selling points or to draw attention to additional information that does not fit easily into a CV. It can also be useful tool for explaining any personal circumstances or anomalies in your application.

In short, it is the biggest chance you have to sell yourself.

### What to include

#### Introduction

Explain why you are writing, making sure it entices the employer to read on. If you're replying to an advert, state what you are applying for, say where and when you saw the advert and if there is a reference number, quote it., If applying speculatively, say what has prompted you to apply.

#### Experience and personal skills showcase

Briefly explain your current job and, if applicable, qualifications (professional/academic). Don't give too much away or they may not want to go on and read your CV. If you are replying to an advert, make sure the skills you specified are reflected in your CV.

Draw attention to the relevant aspects of your experience; say what you learned and how it would be useful for the job or to the employing organization. Sell yourself on the basis of your personal qualities, making sure that these match the requirements of the job/role. Take the opportunity, if necessary, to explain any anomalies in your background, such as any time gaps. Perhaps explain how any hurdles you've encountered have helped you develop in a positive way.

#### The Perfect Team

Explain why you wish to work for this company and what you know about them. Demonstrate enthusiasm and evidence of research into such aspects as their successes, involvements, values or clients. Remember to research the firm fully by visiting its website or premises, using every bit of information you find to help improve your chances.

#### A Positive Sign-Off

Lay down an action plan; say you would like the opportunity to meet them for an interview and that you will await their response, or that you'll call in a few days (you don't have to leave the ball in their court but be careful that you don't pester). Indicate your availability for interview.

## **DO'S...**

- Check that you have addressed your letter to the correct person and spelt their name correctly, and used the correct job title. Phone the company and find out the name of the person who will be responsible for dealing with applications for the post. This will ensure that it reaches the right person. It also gives you a contact name for a follow-up call or email.
- Demonstrate any research you've already made into the organisation.
- If the job is in a different sector from those in which you have previously worked, draw links between the two.
- Present it in the usual letter format, keeping it short and factual. Ideally, your covering letter should be no more than one page long and with short and clearly themed paragraphs.
- Think from the employer's perspective rather than your own. Tell them what you can contribute to the organisation rather than how it can benefit you.
- If your cover letter is written as part of an email (as opposed to an attachment), make sure you apply the same formalities as you would in a hand-written letter.
- Spell check, spell check, spell check.

## **DON'TS...**

- Don't regurgitate your CV.
- Never send out standard covering letters to different employers for different positions.
- Don't mention salary at this stage (unless specifically asked to) – that subject should be saved for after you have a job offer.
- Don't ignore specific instructions with your application. Ensure that you address the letter exactly as you have been instructed. Do not address somebody by their first name unless you have been invited to do so.
- Avoid negative information of any sort in your covering letter and your CV.