

WRITING A GREAT COVER LETTER



TO WRITE OR NOT TO WRITE?

The cover letter is a subject of mixed opinion in today's employment market. Some recruiters say they skip straight to the CV without even reading it, and others say it makes or breaks the application. So where does this leave you as a job seeker? Better to be safe than sorry, we say... so get writing! Here are some hints to help you along the way.

WHY DO IT AT ALL?

As mentioned above, you don't know what the attitude of the person reviewing your application is, so leaving a cover letter out means there is a chance of being put straight into the 'no' pile no matter how qualified you are for the role.

EMAIL VS LETTER

It is perfectly acceptable for your cover letter to be the email to which your CV is attached. Attaching two separate documents reduces the chances of a busy recruiter opening and reading both, and you will still have to come up with additional compelling text for your covering email.

MAKE IT SPECIFIC

Ensure wherever possible, you include the name, title, company and address of the recipient. If this information isn't available due to an electronic submission or similar requirement, don't panic. But as an absolute minimum refer to the position title and reference number as mentioned in the advertisement. Check that additional references to the position throughout the letter are also correct – remember to change them from your last application!

MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

Use brief, factual sentences, and avoid flowery language or excessive usage of superlatives. Tailor key experience and achievements to the requirements listed in the ad.



KEEP IT SHORT

Your cover letter should be the 'teaser' to get people interested, and your CV should be what seals the deal for an interview. Your cover letter should never be longer than a page, and should be structured as follows:

- The first paragraph should detail who you are and what you want.
- The second paragraph should highlight your relevant skills and experience, and provide specific (but brief) examples.
- The third paragraph is your 'why choose me' statement: what makes you a more attractive option than other applicants?
- The final paragraph is your call to action. State when you are available for interview, and provide your contact details (make sure you have a voicemail service on your phone – they may not call a second time!)

TAILOR MADE IS BEST

It's likely that you will be applying for more than one position, so you may be re-using content from a previous application. Always re-read your statements about your career goals and experience to make sure that they are an exact match for the current role you are applying for. Don't talk about your love of sports because your last application was to Cricket Australia, when this role is with a bank.

CHECK, CHECK AND CHECK AGAIN

Correct spelling and grammar are essential. Don't rely on the spelling and grammar checkers on your computer, as these are far from trustworthy. Check for 'organise' vs 'organize', and typos such as 'to' vs 'too' etc, as these often go undetected.