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**CONNECTING YOU TO YOUR FUTURE**

**COVER LETTER (EMAIL) GUIDE**

# Cover letters

## What is a cover letter?

Sent and read in conjunction with your CV, a cover letter is a one-page document that highlights relevant skills and achievements. It gives the reader an opportunity to see the ‘person’ behind CV.

## What is the purpose of a cover letter?

* Highlight the skills and achievements which are especially relevant to that particular employer.
* Brief summary of your experiences to date, aligned to the competencies that are required by the employer (read the job spec).
* Chance for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the organisation to which you are applying and your motivation for working there.
* Chance for you to exhibit your insight and knowledge of the organisation to which you are applying and your inspiration for working there.
* Opportunity for the employer to see your written communication skills in action!

## What needs to be included in a cover letter?

Employers expect you to show that you match the position. The secret of writing a good cover letter lies in using your qualifications and experience to show that you are the best person for the position.

* Focus on your relevant achievements: academic, extra-curricular, work experience and other interesting aspects of your life
* Focus on the employer, why you are applying for the job, including some interesting and relevant facts about that organisation.
* The way you write and present yourself shows them that you are capable of thinking clearly and you are a motivated, proactive learner. Write clearly and logically.

## How long should the cover letter be?

* 400 words are about right and certainly not more than one page of A4 paper.

## What type of language should I use?

* Sharp concise sentences that make for targeted paragraphs
* High quality writing and proofing skills.
* Have a friend proofread your letters Avoid overuse of “I” and pay special attention and try to have a natural flow between paragraphs.

## What is the correct layout of a cover letter?

* In general, cover letters are one side of typed A4 and are set out like a formal business letter. The letter should be about three to four paragraphs long with each separated by a single line. Do not indent the paragraphs as this is considered old-fashioned.

## How should I address my letter?

* Standard Business Letter (see example).

## How do I know who to write to?

* Reply to the name used in the job spec
* If you are not able to find a named individual, you can use “Dear Sir/Madam”.
* The correct greeting in a business letter is always formal. It normally begins with “Dear” and usually includes the person’s last name and title, i.e., Professor, Dr, Mr, Ms etc. If addressing a female, does the job adverts specify whether they are Mrs, Miss, or Ms? If it doesn’t say then it is best to use Ms.

# Layout for a Covering Letter

This is as important as the CV itself; indeed, it is usually the first part of your application that an employer will look at. It has to convince the reader, in a very few words, that your CV is worth reading. A typical structure would include the following:

Your contact address (right justified)

Single Spaced

Full Address

Eircode

Your tel. no. and email

The Company address (left justified)

Single Spaced

Full Address

Date

RE: JOB TITLE OF ROLE APPLYING FOR (plus Reference number if relevant)

Speculative letters also need a title, e.g. ‘CIVIL ENGINEERING PLACEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

2015/16’

Dear (NAME) Mr Smith (don’t include the person’s first name, just the surname)

**The openings** - introduce yourself briefly and, if appropriate, tell them which job you are applying for and where you saw the advert. Introduce yourself to your reader. This should be where you clearly state what position you have applied for – if you choose not to list it as shown above. You may find it useful to say where and when you saw it advertised, or if a speculative application what type of role you are seeking. Inform the employer at this point of the degree/course title you are studying/have studied; it’s relevance to the role applied for, and possibly your classification if graduated. Also let them know that your CV is attached for their information

**Why the job?** - Sell yourself by showing what you have to offer that makes you the ideal candidate for the role, and one that they must progress to the next stage of the recruitment process. To ensure this, you should address the key requirements of the role by highlighting what relevant skills, qualities, qualifications and work experience you have to offer the organisation. Give targeted evidence showing how you have a particular skill. For example, if the advert specifies someone with good influencing skills: “Last summer, I was employed by a market research company where on one Saturday, I successfully persuaded over 40 shoppers to stop and answer questions relating to their buying habits, despite their initial reluctance”. Try to show some of your decision making process. Say something original. Focus on one or two specific examples from your CV that demonstrate you have the skills sought for the position. Emphasize accomplishments and results that relate to the position.

**Why the employer?** - Why you are interested in them? Don’t repeat website content but do show you have researched the company and know a about them. Leave talking about their impressive list of awards until the interview. Say what particularly attracts you to the organisation. It is essential you show that you have carried out research and thought about why you are applying. It is an opportunity to show that you know what they do and possibly what particular projects or work the organisation is doing that attracts you to them. **Re-read the job advert**. Avoid saying salary, number of holidays, as this is what YOU will gain and not what the organisation thinks is good about their goods, services, research, etc. What attracts you to the organization’s mission, clients, programs, products, or services? By now, the recipient should clearly understand what you’d add to the organization, and be convinced of your enthusiasm for and match with the position.

**The ending** - You can include the standard “look forward to hearing from you” and “available for interview at your convenience” but don’t forget to sign the letter as well. You might briefly summarize your qualifications and interest in the position unless you’ve done so above. If you prefer, simply use the closing paragraph to say that you look forward to hearing from the employer and thank them for considering your application. Always good to encourage them to contact you should they have any further queries on the number above.

Yours sincerely, Yours faithfully

(YOUR NAME) \* Use ‘Yours faithfully’ when you do not know the name of the person and have addressed the letter to ‘Dear Sir/Madam’ / ‘Yours sincerely’ is used when you do have the person’s contact details.

## Sample Cover Letter (1)

Dear Mr Thomas,

I am a final year student at Dundalk Institute of Technology, predicted to gain a 2:1 classification in Bachelor of Business (Honours), and wish to apply for the Graduate Retail Management Scheme, as advertised on my institutes’ careers website. I attach my CV for your consideration.

My commitment to a career in retail management has developed through my part-time and vacation work in a local department store, where I have gained promotion to supervisor on weekend shifts. This experience has given me the opportunity to manage a section of a busy department store, solve problems and keep the staff team well organised and motivated.

I am particularly interested in NAME OF COMPANY because of the great success of your business model, involving fast turnaround of stock and introduction of new clothing ranges every 2-3 weeks, the opening of new stores throughout Europe and your effective use of online shopping to generate sales. Your reputation as an employer who develops its workforce and gives early responsibility to graduate trainees further attracted me.

My degree course has provided me with many transferable skills that would enable me to perform well on the graduate programme. I am a good team worker, through working successfully on several group projects on my course. The experience has shown me that I am able to get people to co-operate well in teams, as well as keeping a team on track to achieve its goal. Studying business has developed my analytical skills and my dissertation enabled me to carry out a small scale research project, which included designing and undertaking a survey and interpreting qualitative data.

My leadership potential has been demonstrated in several ways at college such as through my role as President of the Debating Society and as Course Representative. In the latter role I have successfully negotiated solutions to problems put forward by my peers, including a coordinated approach to the setting of assignment deadlines across the whole degree programme. This required good communication with multiple stakeholders including academics, students, and the student union.

I am a hard worker, strongly motivated to work in retail management and am able to bring energy and enthusiasm to this role, which I believe would be of great value in motivating others. I hope you will find my CV of interest and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

## Sample Cover Letter (2)

Dear Mr Thomas,

I would like to apply for the logistics track of your graduate training scheme, advertised on the Prospects.ac.uk website. As requested, I am enclosing my CV.

I am in the final year of my geography degree, expecting a 2:1. Always intending to have a career in business, I have taken modules on the geography of business and GIS modelling. My final-year dissertation is on changing patterns in retail. During my degree, I have developed my analytical skills and ability to read, manage and present data. I have also become familiar with a range of business intelligence sources.

As you can see from my CV I have experience in:

* Retail - moving from shelf stacker to checkout operator to team leader in my two years with Tesco. I contributed to the store consistently being in the top five for the region by providing excellent customer service.
* Warehouse operations - picking and packing to meet targets over the busy Christmas period.

I have also:

* Worked in and led teams at Tesco, on course projects and in sports.
* Communicated with colleagues at all levels in retail and warehousing.
* Solved problems as a team leader, ensuring staff cover and dealing with customer complaints.
* Worked flexibly doing both early and late shifts and covering for absence, sometimes at short notice.
* Managed my time when combining study with work and sport.

My semester in Germany exposed me to a different culture and improved my language skills. In addition, my voluntary work with young people has increased my resilience and ability to mix with people from all walks of life.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

(Sign your name here)

Avril Lee

See https://www.prospects.ac.uk for more examples

# Cover Emails

For job-hunters, emails offer a number of advantages over the handwritten or typed letters that traditionally used to accompany CVs in the post. They are easier to compose, they generally require less formality in content and tone, and they are much more immediately accessible to the recipient. But simplicity, informality and speed can have drawbacks. Unless you observe some straightforward rules, the CV in which you have invested so much time and effort may never be opened.

Emails are typically read much faster than letters – but if the recipient’s inbox has piled up with applications, he or she might be more prone to making snap judgments, simply to expedite the initial screening process. A neatly-composed, correction-free handwritten letter will always stand out from those that have been dashed off in a hurry – but with email, there is a more level playing field, and it is what you say that will primarily dictate how the recipient responds.

It’s usually OK to be a little less formal in an email, however, that’s not a green light to be over-familiar. If you’re in any doubt about whether your tone might strike the wrong note, it’s better to err on the side of caution.’

Remember that the purpose of your email (or covering letter) is to get your CV opened and read. But if technology gives you the ability to fire off your CV to scores of employers, the downside is that those employers will be on the receiving end of hundreds of applications. Many will therefore raise the bar considerably – and if they are looking for reasons to reject (which, in most cases, takes far less time than to accept); your email must be tailored accordingly.

Make it personal. Address the recipient by name, saying why you are emailing them. If you have been asked to quote a reference number, do so. Don’t fall into the trap of assuming that the person you are emailing has only one function, which is to sift through applications for a single solitary job. They may well use the same address as they do for their regular email or for applications for other vacancies. If the recipient has to work out for themselves why you have emailed them because you’ve not taken the time to explain yourself – when an explanatory email takes just minutes – it might indicate that you can’t follow simple instructions, or that you don’t regard your potential employer’s request as sufficiently important to comply.’

Nor will taking short cuts – by typing the reference number into the subject field and attaching your CV – pass muster with most recipients. There needs to be a sense of a human being behind the email. If you were posting a printout of your CV, you wouldn’t just scribble a reference number at the top of the front page; you’d write or type a letter. Yes, it’s easier for recipients to open emails, and then open attachments – but doesn’t mean you should leave it to them to find out why you’re emailing them.

## WHY NOT ME?

Your email may only be given a cursory glance – so get straight down to business. Referring back to the requirements that you know about (or those you safely assume would be needed), summarise why you think you would be right for the job.

Making a direct reference to what the employer’s looking for shows that you’re taking the application seriously – instead of just sending what is obviously a template email. If you’re applying via a recruitment consultant, tailoring the email demonstrates that you’re genuinely interested in the opportunity with their client. That may well keep you at the forefront of your consultant’s mind when new jobs arise, which can only be a good thing.’

If the company sponsors its trainees through exams for professional qualifications, they may look favourably on you as someone who’s unlikely to cost them a fortune in re-sits. If you’ve managed to pass your exams while holding down a demanding job, that’s even better.

In a job market that increasingly sees candidates who resign receiving counter‑offers from their present employer, recruiters and their clients appreciate evidence that you are committed to changing jobs, not window-shopping in order to force up your salary. By saying why the job for which you are applying appeals to you, you are saying 'I really do like the sound of this opportunity'.

Motivation is a key factor for employers. They want reassurance that candidates in whom they plan to invest time interviewing are worthwhile prospects.

## SENT ITEMS

If the recipient is hovering on the cusp of inviting you in for interview but isn’t yet certain, how you conclude your email can make an impact on their decision – and on your prospects of being invited to make your case in person.

Leave them in no uncertainty; make it clear that you can do the job, you want the job and that you’d be happy to attend an interview.

Take care not to be overly demanding when signing off. Politely asking for confirmation of receipt by reply might not seem like a big ask – but multiplied by 10, or by 50 (or even more), and it becomes untenable. Some candidates ask for confirmation as a misguided strategy to strike up a matey dialogue with the recipient, in the hope that they might then receive favourable attention.

Unless you have good reason to suspect that your email has gone astray – for instance, if you receive an undeliverable message from the employer’s server – it’s best to leave well alone and wait for a reply. Many organisations will have automated reply systems in place. But even if they don’t, or if you don’t receive an immediate reply, it’s better to hold back. Careful screening of emailed applications takes a lot of time and manpower.

Once you have sent off your email, don’t forget to save it. Email may facilitate job-hunting in volumes that wouldn’t be humanly possible with handwritten letters – but that makes good housekeeping essential. It strikes completely the wrong note if a candidate doesn’t appear to remember the job for which he or she has applied. That initial spark of interest at the employer’s end can easily be snuffed out.

Similarly, make sure you know which version of your CV you sent. If you have modified it to highlight specific experience or competencies, but you don’t remember the modification, you risk looking as if you have falsified your application, even if that is absolutely not the case. And if that happens over the interview desk, your careful preparation may come undone

**Ref.**

<https://careers.accaglobal.com/careers-advice/job-hunting/job-applications-cvs/a-winning-covering-letter.html>

Useful Links

<http://gradireland.com/careers-advice/cvs-and-applications/cover-letters-for-graduate-jobs>

<http://www.prospects.ac.uk/covering_letters.htm>

<http://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/applications-and-cvs/covering-letter-essentials-for-graduatevacancies>

<http://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/job-hunting-tools-downloads>