



UCP University Centre
Peterborough

Cover letters



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What is a cover letter?



“If the CV can be described as a foot in the door, then the cover letter could be described as that vital first impression of the person at the door.” Keith Corbin, HR Management, Thomas Cook

A cover letter is a supporting document, sent with your CV when applying for jobs. It provides a personalised introduction and supports your CV. It is used to highlight to an employer why you would be an ideal candidate for this role, summarising your relevant skills and experiences. It compliments your CV, it does not duplicate the CV's personal profile/statement. A cover letter is your opportunity to make a great first impression, you will want to motivate the reader to want to further engage with your CV.

It is generally 3-4 paragraphs on one page of A4, the body of an e-mail with your CV attached or (although rarely) a videoed cover letter.

Not all job applications request a cover letter but if no guidance is provided, it is advised that you provide a cover letter/email when applying for a role.

Target your reader



It is important to note that your cover letter should change for each job you apply for.

Although you will be identifying your skills and achievements briefly within the cover letter, the cover letter's foundation must relate to the specific employer and role.

Do your research

Before applying for any role, you need to complete your research.

The following key areas must be researched:

- Who will be receiving and reading your letter
- The skills and experience mentioned in the job description
 - The key words (see CV module for additional information regarding sector keywords)
- The company and its culture
- Their competitors and market position
- The sector and any recent news or trends
- The organisation's current and future aims

Ensuring you have sound knowledge of the role, company and industry will allow you to tailor your cover letter for each company you apply to, highlighting your passion for the job and sector.

Who to address the cover letter to



Your cover letter should be addressed to a specific recipient. Here are a few steps to help you find out who this is.

1. Look at the job description - it may contain a name and number/email of a person to contact if you have any questions.
2. Telephone the company, explain which position you are applying for and ask who you should address this to. If they are not sure, ask to speak to a member of the HR team who may be able to help.
3. The company website - Try the "About us" or "Team" page to identify the manager of the role's department or HR department. These people are normally the best to send your cover letter to.
4. LinkedIn or Social Media pages - find the staff listed within the organisation e.g. if you are applying for a job within the finance department, find the director of finance.
5. Lastly if you are unsure on who to make the letter out too, find the most senior person possible within the company; normally the CEO or director. Once they receive this they will be able to pass it down to the correct person.

Just of note, it is considered 'lazy' or revealing a lack of initiative by some employers to address the cover letter, "To whom it may concern" or "Sir/Madam".

The basic content

The good news is that there is a generally accepted content format, even though you will be tailoring each cover letter to the specific role.

Your cover letter should address the following:

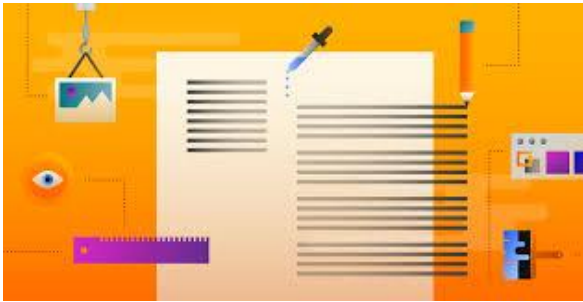
- Which role are you interested in and why
- What are your most relevant skills and experiences
- How can your skills and experiences be of benefit to the employer
- Requesting an interview

Your cover letter will be brief whilst emphasizing your suitability for the role.

Once finished read through the document and cut out any unnecessary words and sentences. Don't fill up space by repeating what's already covered in your CV.

We will cover the content in more detail shortly.

Paragraph content



Paragraph 1

Explain why you are writing this cover letter: the position you're applying for, where you saw it advertised and when you are available to start.

e.g. "I am writing to apply for the role of [job title], in response to an advert I saw on [name of job site]. I have enclosed/attached by CV."

"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."

Paragraph 2

This section will explain how you are suitable for the job, what is attracting you to this type of work, why you're interested in working for this company and what you can offer the organisation. It cannot be a copy of your CV, and should mirror the skills and language used in the job description.

"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."

"According to the job requirements, you are looking for an entry-level candidate who is an excellent problem solver and has experience of Javascript. During my degree, I achieved high scores in all my modules and was placed in the top 5 of my class for Javascript. I have also set up a Youtube account with videos teaching people how to use Javascript, please refer to (link)".

Paragraph 3

Explore your relevant experience and how your skills match the specific requirements of the job description, summarising your additional strengths and how these could benefit the company (see the examples over the next few pages).

Paragraph 4

Reiterate your interest in the role and desire for a personal interview. You may wish to add any dates/times that you are unavailable for interview. Thank the employer and say how you are looking forward to receiving a response.

"I would love the opportunity to work for "COMPANY" and would be delighted to meet you for an interview. I can be reached on TELEPHONE NUMBER and EMAIL".

Yours sincerely / Yours faithfully?

Yours sincerely - use when you have the name e.g. Dear Ms. Green

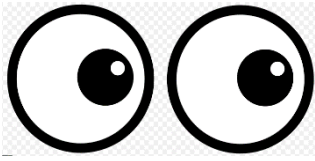
Yours faithfully - use when you do not have a name e.g. To the HR Manager

Sincerely, Truly, or Faithfully?	
to an unknown person	to a known person
 Dear Sir, [blah blah whatever] Yours truly, John Doe	Dear Mr. Jones, [blah blah whatever] Sincerely yours, John Doe
 Dear Sir, [blah blah fishcakes] Yours faithfully, Fred Bloggs	Dear Mr Jones, [blah blah fishcakes] Yours sincerely, Fred Bloggs

[https://www.grammar-monster.com/lessons/yours faithfully or sincerely at end of letter.htm](https://www.grammar-monster.com/lessons/yours_faithfully_or_sincerely_at_end_of_letter.htm)

Final checks-cover letter

Easy read?



- Keep the layout clean, clear with white space
- Stick to the point, be concise and effective in your communication
- Only use imagery if appropriate
- Avoid using bright paper or coloured text
- If submitting a video cover letter, watch the video back to make sure the sound, the background noise and surroundings appropriate
- Ask someone to proof read your document for typos, spelling, grammar etc.
- Check that the formatting is consistent throughout the document

Final checks



- Is it tailored to the role and company - mass mailshots are unfocused and obvious-employers will notice!
- You have included you CV either (a) **behind** your cover letter if posting or (b) as an attachment if uploading/emailing

Cover letter layout

Letter layout

	Your address line 1
	Address Line 2
	Address Line 3
	Phone
	Email
Addressee name	
Address job title	
Company address Line 1	
Company address Line 2	
Company address Line 3	
dd/mm/yy	
To/Dear [name or their job title],	
RE: Job Title you are applying for	
Paragraph 1...	
Paragraph 2...	
Paragraph 3...	
Paragraph 4...	
Yours sincerely/faithfully,	
<i>signature</i>	
Your Name	

Online/email layout

Subject line: Job title, Reference Number (if given)
- your first and last name

To/Dear [name or their job title],

RE: Job Title you are applying for

Paragraph 1...

Paragraph 2...

Paragraph 3...

Paragraph 4...

Or a shortened version of the paragraphs

Yours sincerely/faithfully,

Your Name

Phone Number

Email

Following up on your cover letter



Following up is so important! It is a necessity with the amount of people currently looking for graduate roles.

Following up with a phone call is something that most people neglect to do; so make yourself stand out but demonstrating initiative, confidence and proactivity. Give them a personal connection - a telephone call bridges that gap between you being a piece of paper and you being someone they now have a connection with.

Be prepared when you call

Employers do not respond well to an unfocused call from a job seeker, make sure you have planned what you want to say.

For example:

- Introduce yourself and ask the employer for a few minutes.
- Check the application has been received
- Be engaging and specific in your discussion- it is a good idea to highlight certain points made on your cover letter. If the employer doesn't currently have the cover letter in front of them, when they go to read through the letters they will be reminded of your phone call.
- Ask the employers if they have any questions for you- be prepared to answer any questions that may arise

Example

"Hi. This is _____ calling. On _____, I applied for the _____ position in your company. I'm calling to make sure you received my CV and reiterate my interest in the position."

Think about the questions the employer may ask you, prepare and practice potential answers until they sound natural.

Alternatively, you can send a brief, follow up email, simply checking that your application has been received and reiterating your enthusiasm for the company and role. However, the connection this creates has far less impact than a phone call.

Example cover letter

Available at:

www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/cvs-and-cover-letters/cover-letters

115 My Street
Mytown
WX55 1CQ
ajlee99@gmail.com
07777999888

Harry Smith
Graduate HR director
Big Company Ltd
Woodcotes Business Park
The Midlands
MX9 6PQ

15th April 2019

Dear Mr Smith,

Re: Logistics graduate scheme

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 Fresh Foods. 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 Fresh Foods, 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

Other examples/information

- www.reed.co.uk/career-advice/graduate-cover-letter-template
- www.grb.uk.com/careers-advice/graduate-cover-letter
- <https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/applications-and-cvs/271393-covering-letter-essentials-for-graduate-vacancies>
- <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/get-a-job/covering-letter>