

QUICK GUIDE TO A SUCCESSFUL COVERING LETTER



WHAT IS IT?

A one page letter that goes with your CV or job application form.



WHEN SHOULD I SEND ONE?

Always! Never send a CV or job application without one. It's both courteous and provides your contact details for the recruiter.

WHY WRITE ONE?

To highlight to the recruiter why you are making an application, your motivation and enthusiasm for the job.

To draw attention to your most relevant skills and experience – this demonstrates you have done your research.

To show what you know about the recruiter.

To make the recruiter interested enough to take a look at your CV.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

Keep it formal – use the correct modes of address ('Dear Sir/Madam' signs off 'Yours faithfully' and 'Dear Mrs Jones' with 'Yours sincerely').

Wherever possible always address it to a named person or at the very least a job title (eg, Dear Recruitment Manager). If in doubt, phone and ask who to address the letter to or use LinkedIn to help identify the person.

Avoid jargon, clichés and unsupported claims.

Write positively and enthusiastically.

Check your letter carefully for inaccuracies, spelling mistakes or grammatical errors before you send it.

If you're emailing your letter, save and send it as a PDF to retain the correct formatting.

WHAT TO INCLUDE?

The formalities – your address, the name and address of the organisation and the current date.

An introduction – the name of the job to which you are applying and where you found the vacancy.

Why you? Use evidence of your skills, competencies and experience to demonstrate that you are the right fit for both the job and the organisation. Tailor your evidence to the requirements of the job description and person specification. Focus on the main criteria required for the role.

Why them? Articulate your key reasons for why you want to work for this organisation specifically and what interests you about the job. Demonstrate your motivation and highlight, if appropriate, how this fits with your career goals. Remember that the more passion you demonstrate for their organisation in particular, the greater the likelihood that they will be interested in you.

A conclusion – round it up with an expression of anticipation and interest in the interview process and remember to use the correct sign off.

FURTHER HELP

Book a careers appointment at:
www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/careers

Go to our Canvas pages for help with applying for vacancies, interviews, assessment centres and psychometric tests:
www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/careerscanvas

Ask a careers question, or send your CV, covering letter, application or personal statement and receive feedback from a careers adviser:
www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/careers/contact

Have an upcoming interview or assessment centre? Request a practice interview at:
www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/practiceinterview



PLAN YOUR COVER LETTER

Your cover letter should be designed to support your CV. It is your opportunity to show the reader what you have to bring to their role and why you want to work for them in particular.

EMPLOYER'S WISH LIST:

What skills and qualities are being sought by the employer? Remember to use the criteria in the person specification/job description.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

USE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO BRAINSTORM IDEAS FOR YOUR COVER LETTER:

Who is the recipient of your application? (Name, title)

What internship/job role are you applying for?

How did you learn about the position? (Examples: Company website, Careers Network, through a contact)

Related Experiences:

List your work, internship or volunteer roles, organisation membership, or coursework most similar to the role you are seeking.

Relevant Supporting Evidence:

List your evidence from your related experiences that fit best with the employer's wish list.

What interests you most about this internship/job role?
Why would the role's tasks and responsibilities be a good fit for you?

As a potential employee, what interests you most about this organisation?
What distinguishes this organisation from others that do similar work?