

With an in-tray full of applications, an employer will spend approximately 20 seconds casting an eye over each one. You have to be sure that in those 20 seconds your cover letter has sufficient impact to make the reader want to know more about you.

A covering letter builds upon the information you provided in your CV, it is a focussed sales pitch stating clearly in simple language just why this company should employ you. All of its contents should reaffirm to the reader that you are the right person for that job.

Do your research

Before you sit down to write your letter do some research on the company and into the role to which you are applying. The easiest way to do this is on the Internet. Be sure you know exactly what the company does and how they are placed amongst their competitors.

Try to gauge what the company's business plan is. For example, if they have spent a lot of money on a flashy website they could be hoping to expand more into online sales. As accurately as you can try to, know exactly what will be expected of you should you get the job. For example what are the duties of a marketing manager and what qualities they should possess?

Carrying out research shows to the employer that you have initiative and that you are genuinely interested in the company, it will also allow you to use style and terminology that is appropriate to the audience. For example the company may be relaxed or very formal, new or established, rapidly expanding or in the doldrums.

If you are applying for an advertised position, make sure that the job advert is in front of you and refer to it frequently.

Addressing your covering letter

It is imperative that you address your letter carefully. After spending time wording it to perfection, you do not want it to be directed to the wrong person or to go astray.

If you are applying for an advertised vacancy there is probably a contact name on that advert, and so address your letter to that person.

If you are writing to a company for a job when they have not advertised a vacancy, the chances are that unless you have contacts on the inside you will not know the name of the person you need to write to. In this case you can address your letter to the manager of the specific departments to which you are applying, for example Marketing Manager, Sales Manager, otherwise you can send it to the Human Resources Manager or Recruitment Manager. Visit the company's website and see if you can track down the name of a relevant recipient. Alternatively give the company a call and ask for the name of the head of department to which you are applying.

You should make sure that the recipient's name, department and address details on the envelope are the same as at the top of the letter.

Beginning the letter

- Dear Mr Coxon – If you know the name of the person to whom you are writing
- Dear Ms Chambers – If you are not sure of the marital status of the female recipient
- Dear Sir/Madam – If you are in totally in the dark as to the name of the recipient

What content to include in your cover letter

The opening paragraph should be short and hard-hitting. Begin with an arresting sentence in which you explain why it is you are writing, for example, 'I would like to be considered for the position of Trainee Manager.

If you are applying for an advertised position then say where you saw the advert, 'In response to the Marketing Manager Job vacancy advertised in 'Marketing Weekly'. If someone referred you to your contact, mention your friend's referral in this section.

Examples of good opening paragraphs:

- In response to the advertised position in The Guardian on July 12th, please consider my CV in your search for a Training position.
- I was pleased to hear from Jeremy Green that you will soon have a vacancy. I am very interested in a Training position, and I think that with my skills I could be an asset to your company.

The Second Paragraph

Why should an employer be interested in hiring you? Briefly describe your professional and academic qualifications that are relevant to the position. If the job was advertised, refer to all of the required skills written therein. Do mention that your Visa will be sponsored by CCUSA, who are based in San Rafael, California.

The Third Paragraph

Emphasise what you can do for the company, not vice versa. Outline a relevant career goal, for example if you are applying for Sales positions do not say that you are training to be an airline pilot. Incorporate your research. Expand on the most relevant points of your CV.

The Fourth Paragraph

Request actions, for example indicate your desire for a personal interview and that you are able to meet with the employer at their convenience. Even a Skype interview will be enough to get your foot through the door.

Some job adverts will ask you to include salary requirements, you can choose to ignore this, opting instead to wait until the interview to talk about money, however, you must receive a salary while training.

Closing the letter

Sign off your covering letter 'Yours sincerely' then do not forget to sign it. Write an enclosure line at the bottom.

The Cover Letter Format

As with standard formal letter writing, your address goes at the top right hand corner, miss a line and then put the date. The recipient's address goes on the left side on the line after the date.

Employ appropriate margin and paragraph spacing so that your letter is not bunched up at the top of the page but is evenly distributed and balanced.

The envelope should look as professional as its contents. Do not use any fancy stationery; a simple white envelope is best. Use a good pen, with black ink and use your best hand. Alternatively, the envelope can be typed.

Always type your covering letter and use the same quality plain paper onto which you printed your CV. You may be asked to hand write your letter since some companies employ a graphologist to analyse your handwriting.

Important points to note

- Avoid sounding pompous or using clichés and catch phrases, there are some statements that are used all the time such as ‘I have excellent interpersonal skills’, you want your letter to be unique.
- Try to avoid using ‘I’ too much. A page of I did this and I did that is not appealing – it says to the employer that you have not thought about them.
- Do not use abbreviations.
- Do not exceed four paragraphs of content.
- To satisfy the skim reader, incorporate some industry sound bites and buzzwords.
- Subtly flatter the company, for example ‘you are the industry leader’
- Check and then recheck your spelling, grammar and punctuation. Get someone else to read it through also.
- If you are making a speculative application, you should follow up the letter with a phone call, e-mail or office visit.
- Paper clip your covering letter to your CV, one should never be sent out without the other.

PLEASE CHECK THE 3 TEMPLATES BELOW

1. Standard, conservative style

This is ideal for sectors such as business, law, accountancy and retail.

Dear Mr/Miss/Mrs ,

Please find enclosed my CV in application for the post advertised in the

on .

I am looking for a paid Training position in (Business/Management/ Finance/Commerce - Highlight as many as are applicable). I must emphasise that other than my salary, there are no added or hidden costs to yourself.

The nature of my degree course in and experience has prepared me for this position. It involved a great deal of independent research, requiring initiative, self-motivation and a wide range of skills. For one course, [insert course], an understanding of the [insert sector] industry was essential. I found this subject very stimulating.

My (academic or employment) achievements to date include.....

I am a fast learner with a keen eye for detail, have the enthusiasm and determination to ensure that I make a success of it and would be very grateful for the opportunity to progress to the next stage of my career, training with a prestigious company. I am available to start training in the USA, for 18 months from ... until and can take on the responsibility of this position as soon as my State Department and Visa applications are approved and.

My Visa sponsors, CCUSA, are based in San Francisco, CA, and have fully briefed me on the State Department regulations that govern overseas' workers' eligibility to legally work during the Practical Training.

For more in-depth information of my work experience, please see a copy of my CV, attached to this email.

I am available for a Skype interview at your earliest convenience, where I can provide you with more detailed information, as required.

My Skype address is.....

Thank you for taking the time to consider this application and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely

2. Standard speculative letter

This may vary according to the nature of the organisation and the industry you're applying to.

Dear Mr/Miss/Mrs,

I am writing to enquire if you have any Training vacancies in your company. To meet the US State Department regulations the position must be salaried and in (Business/Management/Finance/Commerce - Highlight as many as are applicable). I must emphasise that other than my remuneration, there are no added or hidden costs to yourself. I enclose my CV for your information.

As you can see, I have had extensive relevant work experience in, the sector and service industries, giving me varied skills and the ability to work with many different types of people. I believe I could fit easily into your team.

I am a conscientious person who works hard and pays attention to detail. I'm flexible, quick to pick up new skills and eager to learn from others. I also have lots of ideas and enthusiasm. I'm keen to work for a company with a great reputation and high profile like [insert company name]. I am available to start training in the USA, for 18 months from ... until and can take on the responsibility of this position as soon as my State Department and Visa applications are approved and.

My Visa sponsors, CCUSA, are based in San Francisco, CA, and have fully briefed me on the State Department regulations that govern overseas' workers' eligibility to legally work during the Practical Training.

I have excellent references and would be delighted to discuss any possible vacancy with you at your convenience. In case you do not have any suitable openings now, I would be grateful if you would keep my CV on file for any future possibilities.

Yours sincerely

3. Letter for creative jobs

The example given is of a copywriter, but you can adapt it for your profession. The aim of a creative letter is to be original and show you have imagination but understand what the job entails. Balance is essential: don't be too wacky, or it will turn off the reader.

Dear Mr/Mrs/Miss.....,

- Confused by commas?
- Puzzled by parenthesis?
- Stumped by spelling?
- Perturbed by punctuation?
- Annoyed at the apostrophe? (And alliteration?)

Well, you're not alone. It seems that fewer and fewer people can write. Unfortunately, there are still a lot of people who can read. So they'll spot a gaffe from a mile off. And that means it's a false economy, unless you're 100% sure of yourself, to write your own materials. (Or to let clients do it for themselves.)

To have materials properly copywritten is, when one considers the whole process of publishing materials and the impact that the client wishes to make, a minor expense. Sloppiness loses clients, loses customers.

There is an answer. Me. Firm quotes are free. You can see some of what I do on my multilingual website at [insert web address]. If you'd like, I can get some samples out to you within 24 hours. And, if you use me, you'll have some sort of guarantee that you can sleep soundly as those tens of thousands of copies are rolling off the presses.

Luck shouldn't come into it!

With kindest regards

Sample Cover Letter for a Resume

Your Name
Your Address
Your City, State, Zip Code
Your Phone Number
Your Email

Date

Name
Title
Organization
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

I am interested in the author's assistant position at ABC Company, as advertised in XXX. I am currently employed as legislative director for Assemblywoman XXXX, Chairperson of the NYS Assembly. I believe that the skills and experiences I have gained at this position make me an ideal candidate for the job of author's assistant.

As legislative director, I have developed strong writing and editing skills. For example, one of my main duties is to prepare Assemblywoman XXXX's personal legislation, which deals with issues related to her position as Senior Member of the NYS Assembly Standing Committee.

This duty requires meticulous writing and editing skills, and an ability to convey complex legal ideas clearly. I have prepared dozens of pieces of legislation and received praise for the clarity of my writing.

I have also gained extensive experience in legal and policy research – fields that you state the author's assistant must be familiar with. My experience in the NYS Assembly has afforded me the opportunity to become familiar with the consolidated and unconsolidated laws of the State of New York. In particular, through my work with Assemblywoman XXXX, I have become heavily involved in the current welfare and Medicaid reform movement. I am always eager to learn more about state legislation, reading up on these topics on my own time to become more knowledgeable. I would love to bring this passion for policy and law to your company.

I am confident that my experience in the Legislature and my research and writing skills qualify me for consideration. If you would like, I can provide you with current samples of my work. I have also enclosed my resume. I look forward to meeting with you and discussing my qualifications in more detail.

Sincerely,

Signature ([hard copy letter](#))

FirstName LastName

