



EFFECTIVE COVER LETTERS

CONVINCE AN EMPLOYER THAT YOU ARE RIGHT FOR THE JOB AND THE ORGANISATION.

A cover letter is your opportunity to explain to an employer why you are applying to them, and how your skills, knowledge and experiences make you a good fit for the role and organisation.

You should communicate effectively to the reader:

- Why you want to work in their organisation.
- Why you want to work in that particular role.
- Why your strengths, skills and experience make you the right candidate.

Ideally your cover letter and your CV will be read together but you can never be sure, so try to make sure they can each stand alone. That means your cover letter should refer to key facts from the CV but should amplify rather than duplicate. Your CV should present more detailed evidence to back up the points you make in the cover letter. Keep your cover letter to one side of A4.

Structure and content

There is no ‘magic formula’ for cover letters, but the following can provide a helpful structure. Think of sections rather than paragraphs, since some aspects may require two paragraphs. These sections may appear in different orders for different applications.

Greeting

Always try to find a name, rather than a job title, as it demonstrates that you researched the organisation. ‘Dear Ms Smith’ is much better than ‘Dear Sir/Madam’ (avoid ‘To whom it may concern’). Remember the signing off rule of ‘yours sincerely’ if it is addressed to a named person and ‘yours faithfully’ if not.

Introduction

Include who you are, your degree subject, university and situation – recently graduated, about to graduate, penultimate year. Explain why you are writing (to apply for X position/looking for work experience) and where you saw the position advertised. Or, if it’s a speculative application, where you heard about the organisation.

Why them?

Use this section to tell the employer why you want this particular job, and why them rather than someone else.

By showing that you really know about the role and the company you can demonstrate your commitment and enthusiasm. Vague statements and blatant flattery don’t work; instead be specific and illustrate your opinions with some original points. Try this test: if you could remove the organisation’s name and replace it with that of a competitor, and it still makes sense, it’s not specific enough. Researching the organisation through their website, Twitter profile or LinkedIn page can help you.

Why you?

Make it easy for the employer to see why your skills, experience and personal attributes are right for the position by clearly linking them to the requirements of the job. Don’t try to cover all of your experience; just illustrate your selling points with three or four good, specific examples, backed up by evidence.

If you are applying for a job that has been advertised, and you have a person specification for the role, then the covering letter should address that in detail. Make sure you show the employer that you meet their stated requirements.

The ending

State your availability for interview and thank them for the time they have taken in reading your application. End on an optimistic and polite note. **L**

Top tips

- **Presentation** – if an application requires a cover letter, it should be laid out formally as a letter. Keep it clear, well presented and visually attractive. Don’t cram too much on the page. Often you will be sending a cover email rather than uploading or attaching a formal letter, in which case dispense with elements such as addresses at the top.
- **Use positive language** – power words can illustrate your experiences in a really effective way. For example, ‘initiated’, ‘instrumental in...’, ‘succeeded in...’.
- **Be succinct** – remember this is an example of your written communication, so write in a clear, succinct and professional manner.

Shows motivation and commitment to the business area.

If possible, always send to a named person.

States clearly and concisely why she is writing and where she heard of the vacancy.

Dear Mr Jones,

I am a second year economics student at Queen's College, University of London, and would like to apply for the Summer Internship Programme with Diamond Plus Bank (DPB), as advertised on your website.

Studying A level economics sparked my interest in working in finance and my university studies and extra-curricular activities have confirmed my career choice. In November 2016 I attended a 'Working in Banking' careers panel which gave me a useful overview of roles and opportunities. After attending a lecture series 'Focus on: BRIC Economies' I became particularly interested in the challenges and opportunities the BRIC economies present, which is one of my reasons for applying to DPB, as I see you have a strong presence in Brazil. I am seeking an internship to develop my understanding of the industry further and to gain first-hand experience.

Demonstrate examples that meet the requirements set in the advertisement.

Uses numbers and concrete results to demonstrate impact.

In my role as committee member of the Economics Society, I worked closely in a team of seven to grow membership numbers by 17%. We met regularly to plan promotional campaigns and relied on one another to carry out the different elements of implementing the campaign. I am highly self-motivated, as demonstrated in my part-time role at Curry's, where I took the initiative to explore training options to further my team's knowledge about internal systems. My work at Nexus Training has enabled me to refine my communication style, where I have adapted my methods in order to successfully build relationships with an ethnically diverse client group.

Highlights commitment, and interest, by referring to conversation with an employee.

One of the attractions of DPB is the emphasis placed on individuals reaching their capabilities, through learning and taking responsibility. This was highlighted for me at the Queen's College Careers panel where I met a DPB Graduate Trainee. She gave examples of new projects she has delivered, which have had a real impact in the bank. This appeals to me, as someone who enjoys taking responsibility for achieving results, demonstrated in my role as football coach, where I was responsible for motivating and organising a squad of 15 to get to the finals of the Small League Championships. In addition, DPB has proven that a long-term investment strategy alongside sensitivity to local conditions can pay dividends, as seen by the raft of awards won in Russia over the last few years. I am very keen to work for a bank which has such a considered approach to investment.

Shows interest in the employer and demonstrates the research she's done.

I enclose a copy of my CV and hope I may be considered for the Summer Internship programme. I am available for interview at any time and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Ends succinctly without padding.

Samantha Chester