

Writing a Cover Letter

Purpose

You should use a cover letter to introduce yourself, and highlight relevant skills, qualifications and experience so you will be considered for a job interview. For speculative letters, where you are enquiring whether positions are available now or in the future, ensure you are specific about the kind of work you are looking for – not just any available position and emphasise your key selling points.

Employers use a cover letter to quickly decide if an applicant meets the minimum selection criteria and demonstrates an appropriate background to be competitive for the position. Your cover letter should provide an active incentive for an employer to find out more about you in your resume. Remember, your cover letter may be one of tens or hundreds the employer receives. If you are writing an unsolicited cover letter in which you enquire about possible job openings, it is even more important to capture the employer's attention.

Formatting and Style

Format your cover letter in a standard business style, so that it is concise and is easy to read. Use these features:

- One A4 typed page
- 10-12 point standard font (eg Times New Roman, Arial)
- Clear structure – one main idea per paragraph
- Plenty of white space (standard margins and space between paragraphs)
- 100% accurate spelling and grammar
- Short, well-constructed sentences, not unnecessarily long and wordy
- A positive tone (do not include your weaknesses)
- Plain English (avoid slang, SMS language or other abbreviations, jargon or terms which are too casual)

Content

Target the letter to the position and to the organisation.

The letter should demonstrate strong written communication skills, your level of interest in the position, your knowledge of the organisation, and a brief description of your relevant skills. Use well structured paragraphs and points supported by your resume.

Include:

- Your name, address, phone number and email
- Today's date
- The recipient's name, title, organisation and address
- A formal greeting to the relevant contact person
- The purpose of the letter, including details of the position (position title, reference number)
- Evidence of your interest in the position and the field – state why you want the job
- Show your research and interest into the organisation
- Your skills and experience as they will be useful in the role applied for

The content should **not** include:

- A simple list of your skills without any supporting evidence of **demonstrated** skills
- Sentences or phrases copied directly from the organisation's website

Typical Structure

Your Name
Your address
Suburb State Postcode
Your telephone / mobile
Email address

Date

Name of contact
Title (HR Manager etc.)
Name of the organisation
Address
Suburb State Postcode

Job title and/or reference number

Dear Mr...Ms... or if name unknown, Sir/Madam

Opening Paragraph

The Fundamentals: What is the purpose of this letter?

Introduce yourself and explain why you are writing. If responding to a job advertisement, include the position title and any reference number if applicable. If you're not writing in response to an advert and canvassing for potential employment, introduce yourself and your current career circumstances as concisely as possible, including any specialised professional interests and abilities.

Paragraphs 2, 3, 4/5

Why you want to work for this employer and why they should want you.

It is essential that you demonstrate within these paragraphs your ability to gather the most relevant information from a range of sources to state your claim as a suitable candidate.

Briefly cover your current or completed course, the planned finishing date, your major, specialisation or special interest, and any outstanding academic results.

Highlight the skills, expertise, qualities and employment experience you have included in your resume that you believe are most relevant to the requirements of the position. Make sure that you can demonstrate how you meet the selection criteria, and how what you have to offer relates to both the current and future needs of the employer.

Include other factors that point to your possession of key general skills (e.g. communication, teamwork, initiative, self-management) through your experiences in voluntary or community activities, clubs and societies etc.

Show that you have researched the organisation and the position. Include this when you show your enthusiasm for that particular position with that particular employer (Do not copy sentences from the employers website).

Final Paragraph

What do you want to happen next?

Confirm that you have included your resume and any other documents requested. Finish on a positive note, thank the employer for their time and express interest in attending an interview.

Close

Yours sincerely (if you have addressed them by their name) or

Yours faithfully (if you have addressed them by their title)

(Place your signature here if sending by hard copy)

Your Name

Sample Cover Letter

Andrea Douglass
27 Premier Avenue
Scoresby VIC 3179
0413 447 946
adouglass@hotmail.com

5 September 2015

Mr Brendon Johnson
Graduate Recruitment Co-ordinator
Shell
60 Albert Street
St Kilda East VIC 3183

Dear Mr Johnson,

RE: Shell Graduate Program

I wish to apply for the Shell Graduate Program, as advertised on Monash University's Career Gateway. I am in my final year of a Bachelor of Commerce at Monash University, majoring in Human Resources Management and Economics. I have a strong interest in management consulting, where I hope to put my interests and learning into practice.

Shell is a company of particular interest to me. From my research I am aware of the organisation's emphasis on working creatively as a team to solve clients' business problems. This philosophy engenders trust and long term client relationships and would allow me to apply the communication, teamwork and problem solving skills I have developed through both my studies and employment experience.

My current role as Assistant Shift Supervisor with Fine Food Supermarket involves duties that include preparing rosters, arranging shelf space, maintaining the enquiries desk and providing back-up to the cashiers and storeroom staff. By working collaboratively with management and staff, I have developed my skills in planning, goal setting and staff training and support.

As a volunteer and instructor with VICSwim, I have presented community education programs to raise awareness of water safety, and conducted swimming classes for individuals and groups. These activities have developed my skills in public speaking, organising and taking responsibility for managing an activity program.

To support my application, I have enclosed a copy of my resume and academic transcripts. I believe that I have the potential to be a valuable member of your team and would welcome the opportunity to discuss my application in more detail at an interview. I can be contacted as indicated above on mobile 0413 447 946.

Yours sincerely,

Andrea Douglass

Cover Letter Checklist

General Impression	
Grabs the reader's attention and makes a positive impact	
Reads in a logical order	
Is tailored to the employer, demonstrating research of the organisation	
Demonstrates how the applicant matches key requirements sought by the employer	
Format	
One page of single-spaced text	
Font is an appropriate size and style (e.g. Size 10-12, Arial, Times New Roman)	
Margins of the page are an appropriate width (e.g. 2cm – 2.5cm)	
Business letter format is used (applicant's details, date, recipient's details, appropriate greeting, appropriate closure)	
Language	
No abbreviations are used (e.g. B.Bus, &, 1-10 are written as words not symbols)	
Paragraphs are used effectively with linking sentences	
Correct syntax, spelling, grammar and punctuation have been used	
Content	
Clearly introduces the purpose of the letter (i.e. what position you are applying for)	
Briefly describes relevant qualifications, skills, experience and/or achievements	
Skills are backed up with examples and credible evidence	
Demonstrates applicant's research into the organisation	
Highlights why the applicant wants to work for the employer	
Closing paragraph thanks the employer for their time, refers to an attached resume and any other included documents, requests a response/interview and provides contact details	

General enquiries

T: +613 9905 4170

E: careers.info@monash.edu.au

W: monash.edu.au/careers

Disclaimer: This information was current at the time of writing.
Please use this as a guide only

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