

HOW TO WRITE GREAT COVER LETTERS



Make each cover letter unique

Your cover letter can make a real difference to your job success - it's the place where you can really demonstrate to the employer that you understand what they are looking for and that you are the right person for the job. Each cover letter (or cover message on online jobs sites) is a vital part of the job application. Never send a standard letter. Instead, tailor the content for each job you apply for.

We've put together some tips for writing a great cover letter, including a letter template.

Key things to do

- Wherever you can, find out the name and job title of the right person to write to, so you can address the person by name (not Dear Sir/Madam).
- State where you saw the job advertised, or how you came to know of the position you are applying for.
- Describe the top 2 or 3 areas of skill and/or experience that make you suitable for the role. Don't just copy and paste from your CV – your letter needs to flow.
- Explain why you are interested in this job and organisation, showing you understand what it's likely to involve and what the needs of the organisation are. You may need to do some research of the company to help you with this.
- End your letter on a positive note, opening the door for the next step in the application process.



Things to avoid

- Never use a standard letter in which you just change the name of the employer and leave the rest unchanged. Your letter must be tailored to show how your skills match those required in the job advert.
- Don't focus on what you want – instead, try to focus on what the employer needs.
- Avoid starting every paragraph with 'I' as this gets repetitive.
- There's no need to give the employer your life history – what they want to know is how and why you are suitable for/interested in the role.
- Don't mention your need for part-time or flexible work. This piece of advice may surprise you, but remember that the employer will select people who have the best skills for the job. Focus on that, and leave flexibility for later.

Example cover letter for a specific job

On the next page you'll find an example of a job advert, followed by a cover letter that could be sent in response. We have put these together using the following approach:

1. Read the job advert carefully
2. Call the company to find out anything missing you need to know (eg is there a fuller job description? Can you find out the name of who to write to?)
3. Highlight in the job advert all the key skills and experience that the job requires.
4. When you write your cover letter, pick out three or four of the skills required and explain how your experience demonstrates that you're a good match for the role.

Step 1: analyse the job advert

Read the job advert carefully and highlight all the skills required, as we have done in the example job advert below. The type of work you are seeking may be quite different to this job advert, but using this skills-highlighting approach will be helpful. Don't leave anything out. Before you start to write your letter, make sure you fully understand what sort of a candidate the employer is looking for.

Advert seen on: Timewise Jobs, 21st May 2018

Admin Assistant

Enthusiastic and responsible administrative assistant required to support the day to day running of a successful and growing event management company.

You will have experience of administrative work including a sound **knowledge of MS Word, Excel and Outlook**. You will be used to **handling customer telephone and email** enquiries in a **friendly and efficient** way.

You will be a **strong communicator**, able to **liaise with suppliers and other businesses** and to communicate with others in our busy office.

Candidates must be able to demonstrate an ability to **work accurately**, to **prioritise, meet deadlines** and take **responsibility for their own workload**.

Based in our central London office, candidates will also be required to **organise meetings** and **order office supplies**.

Knowledge of the events industry is desirable.

Hours: From 21 hours per week - flexible pattern
Salary: £24,000 pro rata

To apply, send your CV to A. Smith, Managing Director, All Events Ltd, Palace Street, Victoria, London, SW1 2AB.

Step 2: template for your cover letter

Kate.Jones@gmail.com
07500 123456
25 Any Road, London N1 100

Dear Mrs Smith

**Re: Role of Administrative Assistant
(advertised on Timewise Jobs)**

As an experienced administrator, with a track record of over five years working in busy offices, I would like to apply for the above position.

The article about your company's 'dynamic and creative approach' in last month's issue of 'Events News' caught my eye, and I would love the opportunity to work for you.

The following are the main ways in which I meet the requirements of the role and can contribute to All Events Ltd's ongoing success:

- I have excellent knowledge of MS Word, Excel and Outlook, having used these packages daily in busy office administration roles e.g. as Administrative Assistant to a marketing team of 7 at ABC Bank Ltd.
- In my current role I am responsible for handling all initial customer enquiries (by telephone, email and letter) and for dealing with other businesses. I am an effective communicator and have a friendly manner.
- I collated monthly sales figure reports in time for monthly management meetings at XYZ Ltd, requiring attention to detail and an ability to manage my own work. In that role I also managed office supplies (and reduced spend by 10% by negotiating discounts).

Further relevant information is given in the attached CV. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Jones

Always include your contact details. You'll rarely write by post these days but if you do, also include the name and address of the person you're writing to, and the date of your letter.

Begin by stating that you are writing to apply for the job. Mention the specific job title and where you saw the advert.

Try to include the key reason why you're a good match for the job.

Somewhere in the letter, you should explain briefly why you are interested in working for this employer. If possible, reveal some knowledge of the organisation.

Tell the employer what you can offer them. Pick out the skills you have that match those mentioned in the job advert, even using the same keywords.

Refer briefly to relevant achievements from your previous jobs, giving specific evidence where possible.

At the end of your letter, refer your reader to the enclosed CV; invite him/her to seek out more information about you there. Open the door for an interview.

Additional Tips

- Focus on the ways in which you meet the requirements of the job advert, and don't apologise for any gaps in your experience or skills. eg In the example letter, Kate Jones doesn't have events industry experience but she doesn't draw Mrs Smith's attention to that.
- Find your own style. The tone and style of this letter may be different from yours. Go with what you feel comfortable with. There is more scope in a cover letter than in a CV to introduce something of your personality, but keep it business like.
- Finally, if you are finding it difficult to think of relevant skills to write about in your cover letter, ask yourself if you should really be applying for this role. If you're applying for a job you really want, and you have the skills and experience to do it, your cover letter should flow easily.