

### What is a covering letter?

A covering letter (or 'cover' letter) introduces you to an employer, tells them that you are applying for a job, and explains why you think you would be good at it.

The aim of your covering letter is to sell your skills, experience and personal qualities to the employer, to make them want to learn more about you by reading your CV or application form, and then to invite you an interview. So, your cover letter must be interesting and impressive.

When you're sending an application by email, use the body of the email text to act as your 'cover letter', and include the same points as you would for a postal letter (see the email example below).

### Top twenty cover letter tips

1. Use our 'Job applications' editor' to write your cover letter. It saves time, and lets you customise a 'template' for different job applications. Use the editor to send your application by letter, fax or email.
2. Don't repeat in the covering letter things that you've said in your application form or CV. Try to use different words and phrases.
3. Whenever you send off a job application, include a covering letter unless the employer tells you not to do so.
4. Don't write your cover letter by hand – always type it.
5. Use the same font as you use for your CV – stick to fonts such as Arial, Geneva, Helvetica, Times New Roman, or Verdana.
6. Tailor your covering letter for each new job you apply for – don't just send out the same letter to every employer.
7. If you don't know the name of the person to send your application to, 'phone the employer and ask.
8. Your cover letter should fit on one side of A4 paper.
9. Don't use personalised stationery – it can appear pretentious.
10. Use only white, A4 paper – the same as you use for your CV. Not copier paper. Use a slightly heavier paper of about 90 gms (ask at your local stationers).
11. Leave plenty of white space (empty areas of the page) around the edge of the letter.
12. Print out a copy of the covering letter for your own records.
13. Use short, punchy sentences and action words such as 'achieved', 'managed', 'supervised', 'accomplished', etc.
14. Don't include a photograph – unless the employer has asked for one (eg if you're applying for a job as a model).
15. Always address your cover letter to a **named** person – not something like 'The Manager'. Call the employer and ask who you should send your application to.
16. Check your covering letter several times on screen and amend it as necessary. Then print it out and check it several times again. Get someone else to check it for you. (Use our article

'Checking documents' to help you).

17. Don't forget to sign your letter before mailing it.
18. Put the covering letter and CV (or your completed application form) in a large, white **C4** envelope. Don't fold the letter, your CV or the application form.
19. If sending by postal mail, send your application by first class post.
20. If you don't hear from the employer within a week of sending your application, call to check they have received it.

### Covering letter – postal mail

Include the following items in a covering letter which you're going to send by postal mail:

1. your home address
2. the date
3. the employer's contact name and address
4. a greeting – use 'Dear Sir' if you don't know the name of the person you're writing to (but better to call and ask who to send it to); use 'Dear ' and the name of the person you're writing to (when you know the person's name)
5. a line to say that you wish to apply for the job, and where you saw it advertised
6. a short paragraph describing your skills and abilities
7. a short paragraph telling the employer why you want the job, and why you think you will do it successfully
8. finish with a line which says that you enclose (or attach) your CV or application form, and that you can attend for interview when required.
9. end with 'Yours sincerely' if you know the name of the person you're writing to, or end with 'Yours faithfully' if you started the letter 'Dear Sir'.

Sample cover letter (postal mail)

18 Tower Place  
Dillerton  
Biddinghurst  
BD3 3HH

Date: 26 July 2006

Mrs Samantha Peters  
Sales Manager  
In The Fashion  
1 The High Street  
Biddinghurst  
BD1 1TY

Dear Mrs Peters

**Job Reference no: JH1A2**

I wish to apply for the position of Sales Assistant that was advertised today in the Daily Post.

While I was studying at Central University, I worked for 3 years as a part-time junior sales assistant with the M E Trades Department store in Biddinghurst. During that time, I learnt important skills such as dealing with customers, managing stock, liaising with other staff, and deputising for the departmental supervisor. I enjoyed my work in sales immensely, and since obtaining my degree in art, I have considered my options very carefully, and would now like to pursue a career in the retail trade. I have a particular interest in accessories, and my career objective is to become a buyer in women's fashion. However, I would like to develop my skills on the sales floor before seeking promotion to a supervisory level and then on to buying.

I am a hard-working, reliable and enthusiastic employee, with a huge amount of patience and an outgoing, friendly personality. I have a keen interest in fashion trends, lots of artistic flair and learn quickly. On my many visits to 'In The Fashion', I have always been very impressed with the merchandising in your store, as well as your distinctive style of fashion and accessories. I believe I can make a positive contribution in your company by building on the skills I've acquired in the past 3 years, and learning from your organisation's considerable expertise in the fashion business.

I enclose my CV for your consideration, and can attend for interview at your convenience.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely

**(Sign your name here)**

**Michelle Roberts**

### Covering letter – fax

Faxes aren't used so much these days to make job applications, because email is quicker, cheaper and more convenient.

If you do need to fax your job application to an employer, incorporate your cover letter into the first page (the cover page) of the fax. You should still keep to about 1 page of A4 overall for the text of your cover letter.

Set your fax out like this:

1. heading – this should simply say 'Fax' in bold characters. Use a large font size such as 14 or 18 pt
2. at the top of the cover page, include the following information (all in bold text)
  - your name
  - your address
  - your 'phone number
  - the date
  - the name and address of the person you're sending the application to
  - the employer's fax number
  - the number of pages in the fax (including the cover page)
3. write the rest of the text as for the postal cover letter, and sign your name at the end
4. count the number of pages in your fax (including your CV or application form) and include this number at the top of the fax cover page.

Sample cover letter (fax)

**Fax**

**From:** Michelle Roberts

**Address:** 18 Tower Place  
Dillerton  
Biddinghurst  
BI 3 3HH

**Tel:** 09876 543 210

**Date:** 26 July 2006

**To:** Mrs Samantha Peters  
Sales Manager  
In The Fashion  
1 The High Street  
Biddinghurst  
BD1 1TY

**Fax:** 01234 567 890

**Number of pages:** 4 (including this page)

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Dear Mrs Peters

**Job Reference no: JH1A2**

I wish to apply for the position of Sales Assistant that was advertised today in the Daily Post.

While I was studying at Central University, I worked for 3 years as a part-time junior sales assistant with the M E Trades Department store in Biddinghurst. During that time, I learnt important skills such as dealing with customers, managing stock, liaising with other staff, and deputising for the departmental supervisor. I enjoyed my work in sales immensely, and since obtaining my degree in art, I have considered my options very carefully, and would now like to pursue a career in the retail trade. I have a particular interest in accessories, and my career objective is to become a buyer in women's fashion. However, I would like to develop my skills on the sales floor before seeking promotion to a supervisory level and then on to buying.

I am a hard-working, reliable and enthusiastic employee, with a huge amount of patience and an outgoing, friendly personality. I have a keen interest in fashion trends, lots of artistic flair and learn quickly. On my many visits to 'In The Fashion', I have always been very impressed with the merchandising in your store, as well as your distinctive style of fashion and accessories. I believe I can make a positive contribution in your company by building on the skills I've acquired in the past 3 years, and learning from your organisation's considerable expertise in the fashion business.

I enclose my CV for your consideration, and can attend for interview at your convenience. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely

**(Sign your name here)**

**Michelle Roberts**

### Covering letter – email

Most employers now accept job applications by email because it's quick and convenient. Your 'cover letter' will be the text of the email.

The same basic rules apply to emails as for letters:

1. put the job reference number in the 'Subject' line of the email. If there's no reference number, just use an appropriate title such as 'Application for position of Sales Assistant'.
2. include the date as the first line of the body of the email text.
3. for the remainder of the email, use the same format as a postal covering letter.
4. don't forget to attach your CV or the application form before emailing.
5. print a copy of the email for your own records.
6. don't email later to ask if the employer received your application – telephone instead.

### Sample cover letter (email)

**Subject:** Job Reference no: JH1A2

**Text for the body of the email message:**

Date: 26 July 2006

Dear Mrs Peters

**Job Reference no: JH1A2**

I wish to apply for the position of Sales Assistant that was advertised today in the Daily Post.

While I was studying at Central University, I worked for 3 years as a part-time junior sales assistant with the M E Trades Department store in Biddinghurst. During that time, I learnt important skills such as dealing with customers, managing stock, liaising with other staff, and deputising for the departmental supervisor. I enjoyed my work in sales immensely, and since obtaining my degree in art, I have considered my options very carefully, and would now like to pursue a career in the retail trade. I have a particular interest in accessories, and my career objective is to become a buyer in women's fashion. However, I would like to develop my skills on the sales floor before seeking promotion to a supervisory level and then on to buying.

I am a hard-working, reliable and enthusiastic employee, with a huge amount of patience and an outgoing, friendly personality. I have a keen interest in fashion trends, lots of artistic flair and learn quickly. On my many visits to 'In The Fashion', I have always been very impressed with the merchandising in your store, as well as your distinctive style of fashion and accessories. I believe I can make a positive contribution in your company by building on the skills I've acquired in the past 3 years, and learning from your organisation's considerable expertise in the fashion business.

I enclose my CV for your consideration, and can attend for interview at your convenience.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely

**Michelle Roberts**