



Hints and Tips

Writing a Covering Letter



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Covering Letter Hints and Tips

When should I send a covering letter?

You should always send a covering letter to accompany a CV (curriculum vitae). This can be when an employer specifically asks for a CV or when an advertisement says “apply in writing”.

‘Speculative’ applications also require covering letters. You are writing to an employer ‘speculatively’ when you are not applying for an advertised vacancy but asking to be considered for such vacancies should they arise in the future. Your application may be kept on file or the employer might invite you for an interview or an informal chat. In this instance your covering letter can be crucial in explaining why you are sending your CV and highlighting what you have to offer the company.

It is sometimes necessary to send a covering letter to accompany an application form. If you have had very little space or opportunity to sell yourself on the form, or there is something that you particularly want to emphasise, the covering letter can help you to do this.

Why send a covering letter?

- To encourage an employer to read the accompanying CV or application form
- To draw together relevant facts from your CV or application form and shape them to the needs of the employer

To explain why you are sending a speculative CV.

What are the main points to remember?

- Covering letters need careful thought. Try brainstorming some ideas first before trying to construct full paragraphs
- It is worth spending some time experimenting with different versions before adopting a style that suits both you and the organisation you are writing to
- Try to keep your letter to one side of A4 word processed text printed on good quality plain paper, ensuring that the layout looks balanced
- If you are asked for a handwritten letter, write as clearly and neatly as possible, since the employer will be looking at your presentation skills
- Use positive and active words where possible, e.g. achieved, organised, negotiated
- Sell yourself and emphasise your enthusiasm for, and commitment to, the opportunity or profession
- Make sure you get someone else to check your letters before you send them off
- If you would like some help from a careers adviser, it is a good idea to bring some ideas with you or, ideally, bring a draft version that the adviser can work through with you.