



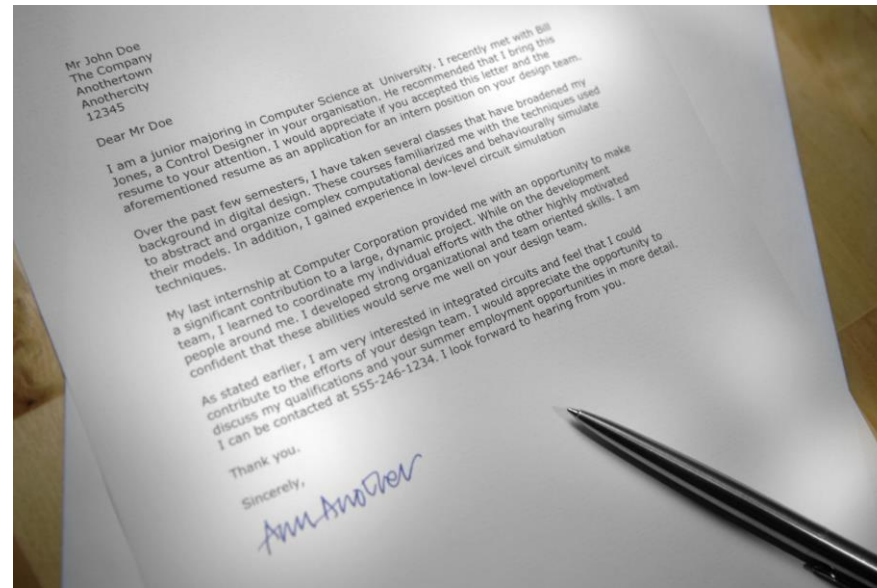


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# Cover letter



By

Nasim Amarkhel





## 1. What is a cover letter?

A cover letter is a one-page document that is sent and read in conjunction with your CV. It highlights relevant skills and achievements.

## 2. What is the purpose of a cover letter?

The cover letter is a chance for you to highlight the skills and achievements which are especially relevant to that particular employer. It will be a brief summary of your experiences to date, tailored to the competencies that are required by the employer. It is also a chance for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the organization to which you are applying and your motivation for working there. Some recruiters will also use your cover letter to assess your written communication skills.





### 3. What needs to be included in a cover letter?

Recruiters expect you to show that you match the position. The secret of writing a good cover letter lies in using your qualifications and experience to show that you are the best person for the position.

One way of going about it is to begin your cover letter by focusing on your relevant achievements: academic, extra-curricular, work experience and other interesting aspects of your life. Then move on to focus on the employer, why you are applying for the job, including some interesting and relevant facts about that organization.

Show them that you are capable of thinking clearly and you are a motivated, proactive learner. Write in a clear and logical manner and remember, the way you write and present yourself says a lot about you.





#### 4. How long should the cover letter be?

Where possible, follow the employer's instructions and any advice offered by them. If this is not available, something around 400 words is about right and certainly not more than one page of A4 paper.

#### 5. What type of language should I use?

Aim for short, sharp sentences that make for concise, gripping paragraphs, which are good for busy recruiters who can't spend a long time reading each application.

#### 6. What is the correct layout of a cover letter?

In general, cover letters are one side of typed A4 and are set out like a formal business letter. The letter should be about three to four paragraphs long with each separated by a single line. Do not indent the paragraphs as this is considered old-fashioned.





## 7. How should I address my letter?

Your name and address should be clearly shown at the top, right-hand corner of the letter. Don't think that because this information is on your CV you don't need to put it on the cover letter. Pages can become separated easily.

## 8. How do I know who to write to?

It's usual to reply to the name used in the advert or application pack. If a name is not given, call the organization and ask for a named individual who deals with recruitment. We strongly advise that you address your cover letter to a named person. Do make sure you use the correct spelling of their name. If you are not able to find a named individual, you can use "Dear Sir/Madam".

The correct greeting in a business letter is always formal. It normally begins with "Dear" and usually includes the person's last name and title, ie, Professor, Dr, Mr, Ms etc. If addressing a female, does the job advert specify whether they are Mrs, Miss, or Ms? If it doesn't say then it is best to use Ms.





### 9. How do I sign off?

The convention in the UK is if you address the letter to a named individual, sign off with “Yours sincerely”. If your letter begins with “Dear Sir/Madam”, end with “Yours faithfully”.

### 10. What do I put as the subject header when sending my cover letter via email?

Title the email “Application for (job title)”, also following any additional instructions in the job advert (like including a reference number). If you are sending a speculative application you can be less specific. Try to keep your subject header concise and professional though.

### 11. Should I handwrite a cover letter?

If you are asked specifically to handwrite it, then you must. Make sure the letter is neat and legible. Use dark ink because it is easier for photocopying. In almost all cases though, you should send a word processed letter.







## 12. Can I use bullet points or subheadings in a cover letter?

There is nothing to stop you using bullet points or subheadings to help structure your cover letter. However remember that you are still writing a formal business letter which needs to be written clearly and succinctly.

## 13. Which is more important, the CV or the cover letter?

They are both important. If you want to maximise your chances of success you should treat them both seriously. The cover letter is often the first thing the recruiter sees and will set their expectations for what is to follow. A good cover letter will highlight your key strengths and motivations for wanting to work in a particular organisation, the CV will then go into more detail about what you have achieved. The recruiter will form an impression of you based on both documents.





#### **14. All the organisations I am looking at seem to be the same. How can I demonstrate that I know the differences?**

It's often assumed that the way to impress an organisation is to show that you have carried out a lot of research. This is true up to a point. The strongest cover letters show that you have done some research but also make a link between you and the organisation. Show initiative and speak to people working for the organisation to learn more.

#### **15. My circumstances are unusual, how should I present these in a cover letter?**

You need to think about the needs of the employer that you are approaching and try to present the information to meet those needs, emphasising the transferable skills that you have acquired. You do not need to focus on all aspects of your life to date in the letter, only those areas in which you feel the employer will be interested and which are relevant to the role.





## **16. Can I have a standard cover letter?**

Your cover letter should be tailored to one specific vacancy (or to a particular employer if you are applying speculatively). Recruiters will be able to spot generic cover letters and furthermore, you will not be able to show specific research you have done into a particular organisation.

## **17. Can I send a speculative CV and cover letter?**

Sometimes roles are not formally advertised so you can contact a potential employer to enquire about upcoming opportunities or to express an interest in working for them. Try to find out who deals with recruitment through calling or networking, as personally addressed applications are the most effective and professional.

You should include a CV and cover letter, and media and journalism applicants should also include one or two examples of published work. Once you have sent your speculative application, wait between one and two weeks to follow up.





# Top Tips: Cover letters

- Keep the language friendly but formal. Think about how you would speak to an employer at interview.
- Be positive! Use action words but don't lose sight of your own style.
- Avoid repeating key words or phrases.
- Always end on a positive note. You can end by reaffirming your enthusiasm or your suitability.
- Check your letter several times, and then get a friend to check it, then go away and check it again later.





Talks about education and work experience in a way that emphasises relevant skills and achievements

Ms J Joseph  
Graduate Recruitment Manager  
TB4 Consultancy  
Strand, London  
WC2R 2LS

22 January 2016

Dear Ms Joseph

I would like to apply for the position of Trainee IT Consultant recently advertised on the LSE Careers vacancy board. I have just started a one year master's course in Information Systems at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

As you can see from my enclosed CV, I worked during my undergraduate degree at the University of Warwick gaining valuable experience as an IT business analyst with Société Générale and as a volunteer with Peace Way Foundation. At Société Générale, one of my key achievements was to design and implement a company-specific information system which has resulted in a 25% reduction in administration time for the bank. Also, as part of the internship in the New York office, I completed a 60 page report on how a good information system strategy could be developed and implemented by senior managers. Working as a volunteer with the Peace Foundation in Bangkok further developed my cultural awareness and relationship management skills, qualities also relevant to the work of an IT consultant. As well as these qualities, my undergraduate studies have also developed my skills in researching a topic, making presentations, writing reports and analysing data.

One of the main reasons for choosing IT consultancy as a career is that I have for a long time been interested in business but also fascinated by how technology and information systems can improve organisational effectiveness. The variety of working on different projects across different sectors of work also appeals to me. My reasons for applying to TB4 are as follows: First, the range of clients TB4 works with is considerably broader than many of the other major IT consultancy firms that I have been researching. I recently read an article on [www.top-consultant.com](http://www.top-consultant.com) about the innovative work you have done both in the public and private sectors relating to IT systems mergers and information security, an area I'm very interested in. Secondly, having attended your recent presentation at LSE and having spoken with Jim Bowen, I was impressed by the enthusiasm with which he talked about his work and the many opportunities at TB4 for ambitious graduates.

I am very excited about this opportunity and look forward to discussing my application with you in greater detail. Should you require any further information please get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Paola Vincent

Paola Vincent  
33 Emmengate Street  
London  
SE12 3PY

States clearly where position was advertised

Writes precisely about why she wants to work for TB4. Avoids vague generalisations



**Recruiter's name and address**

Beatrice Crier  
Income Development & PR Department  
Youth Action  
London SW1F 2RP

29 July 2016

Dear Ms Crier,

I have recently completed my second year at the London School of Economics, pursuing a BSc in Social Anthropology. I am writing to apply for the internship offered at Youth Action this summer, which I saw advertised on the Working for an MP website. Please find enclosed my CV as requested.

I am particularly drawn to the internship because it provides experience in three key areas in which I am interested.

First, I am eager to develop my skills in media. This year I hosted a weekly radio show that won two LSE Media Group Awards and I was an active contributor to the student newspaper, The Beaver. I would welcome the opportunity to work with the UK Youth Magazine and learn more about online journalism. Second, I am interested in gaining a better understanding of fundraising because I believe it depends on highly polished communications skills. As you can see from my CV, I have worked on raising money for Drop the Debt, and I am currently a participant in Oxfam's Laos Global Challenge. I hope to build my future career in the not-for-profit sector and any chance to sharpen my abilities or knowledge of fundraising would be extremely helpful. Third, though I have considerable experience in the logistics of event management through my work as a Senior Steward in the LSE Events Office, I am interested in gaining experience of the public relations aspect.

I am also enthusiastic about the post because of my long-standing interest in issues of social exclusion affecting young people. In high school, I was instrumental in founding and developing the Diversity Committee, which examined problems of difference and facilitated open discussions. By chairing sensitive debates in youth forums at city, state and national level, I acquired excellent communications skills. I also gained an understanding of the intricacy of issues such as under-age drug use, school-leavers, and teenage pregnancy in my diversity work.

Youth Action attracts me because it works to understand and tackle these complicated problems by connecting a wide and varied network of autonomous member organisations, consisting of both young people and adults. I am eager to contribute to Youth Action in the work of promoting and expanding its network, advocating the benefits of high quality youth work and, most importantly, in working to help realise the potential of young people. Your organisation has a long history and is a leader in its field, and the opportunity to work with such a respected charity would be invaluable to me.

I am enthusiastic about supporting the work of Youth Action and gaining the experience that this internship provides in media, fundraising and event management. Thank you for taking the time to read my application. I am available for interview at any time and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Enrico Smith

Enrico Smith  
125 Shipman House  
Alnick Street  
London  
W2 0PQ

**Applicant's name and address**

**Customary sign off if you are writing to a named person. If you have not been able to write to a named person, sign off with "Yours faithfully"**



# Useful Resources

[www.surrey.ac.uk/careers/current/leaflets/index.htm](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/careers/current/leaflets/index.htm)

[www.surrey.ac.uk/careers/current/work/cv/index.htm](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/careers/current/work/cv/index.htm)

[www.prospects.ac.uk/cvs and cover letters.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cvs_and_cover_letters.htm)

[www3.surrey.ac.uk/destinations/units/unit-cv005.shtml](http://www3.surrey.ac.uk/destinations/units/unit-cv005.shtml)

<http://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/job-hunting-tools-downloads>

applying for jobs abroad:

[www.surrey.ac.uk/careers/current/work/abroad/index.htm](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/careers/current/work/abroad/index.htm)





# More useful resources.....

<http://www.milkround.com>

[www.work-placement.co.uk](http://www.work-placement.co.uk)

[www.gradjobs.co.uk](http://www.gradjobs.co.uk)

[www.studentemploymentservices.co.uk](http://www.studentemploymentservices.co.uk)

[www.RateMyPlacement.co.uk](http://www.RateMyPlacement.co.uk)

<http://www.gradcracker.com/>

<http://www.allaboutcareers.com/jobs>

[www.Wikijob.co.uk](http://www.Wikijob.co.uk)

[www.fledglings.net](http://www.fledglings.net)





# Thanks

Together there is no Mountain, we can't climb !



