Cover Letters

You can write a cover letter to apply for an advertised job or to make a general enquiry about future opportunities. Both types of cover letter should always use a business letter format, including a formal greeting and sign-off.

In a cover letter you highlight your selling points and answer three main questions the employer wants answered:

1. Can you do the job? Do you have the right qualifications, knowledge, skills, abilities and experience?
2. Will you do the job well? Are you reliable, self-motivated, and enthusiastic?
3. Will you fit into the organisation? Are your values and goals a good match? Will you get along well with clients and co-workers?

Write a general cover letter and change parts of it for each job application. Your resume supports and adds to the information in your covering letter. You may also customise your resume by changing your career goal statement and choosing more appropriate referees.

It's a good idea to keep copies of all the cover letters you send. When an employer asks you in for an interview, it's really useful to know what you wrote. If your applications are not successful, consider ditching the letter template and starting again with a new model.

**How to structure your letter**

Always include your name and address, as well as the recipient's name and address, with the date underneath. Take a look at the [sample cover letter](http://myfuture.edu.au/getting-started/prepare-to-apply-for-jobs/writing-a-cover-letter/sample-cover-letter) to see how these are laid out.

**Salutation (greeting)**

Whenever you can, address the covering letter to a specific person by name – you want it to get to the person who makes the decision to hire.

Check names and titles. You must spell these correctly.

If you don't know the name of the employer, phone the organisation and ask the receptionist who the right person would be.

Don't assume the gender of the recipient – 'Jo' or 'Kim', for example, may be a man or woman. Phone to make sure.

Some companies don't give out staff names and details. If you can't find out who the employer is, address your letter to the 'The employer' and use 'Sir/Madam' in the salutation.

**Opening paragraph**

Start your letter by stating the position you're applying for (or your job objective, if you're not applying for a particular job). Say where and when you found out about the position – this helps the company choose the best way to advertise jobs. For example:

I write to apply for the Retail Sales Assistant position in Company Q's Brisbane city store, advertised in the *Courier-Mail* on Saturday, 12 September.

If someone referred you to this employer, mention that person's name in this paragraph, too.

Now make a strong statement that shows how valuable you would be to the employer – give one good reason why you should be hired. For example:

My current job/recent experience as a teenage fashion sales assistant at Company A means I could quickly adapt to Company Q and make an immediate impact in this position as I know what is currently in fashion and how teenage girls make their buying decisions.

**State your qualifications and skills**

Here you can write two or three paragraphs to show you can do the job and that your skills will meet the employer's needs. Address each of their needs in the same order as the job advertisement.

Focus on what you have to offer and how you can contribute to the company, not what you want.

If you have had a similar job before, describe how it gave you the experience or skills that are needed for this job. Your resume should outline your relevant skills, experience, training and achievements but if you're not asked for a resume then include this information in the cover letter. Your skills may be technical or personal – you may have gained them through previous jobs, education or training, work experience, voluntary work or other activities.

You can also introduce two or three of your selling points and show how these things will allow you to make an impact or get results in the role. Go to [How to market yourself](http://myfuture.edu.au/getting-started/prepare-to-apply-for-jobs/how-to-market-yourself) for more about selling points and identifying your strengths.

Briefly explain your current situation – whether you are working, just returned from travel and ready to start work again, or studying.

**State your interest in working for the organisation**

Here's where you show how motivated and enthusiastic you are, and how you can fit into the organisation.

Make some positive comment about the company and let them know why you want to work there. Refer to the company's reputation, corporate culture, management philosophy, size, sales record, product quality, sense of environmental responsibility, or anything else that it takes pride in.

Again, your resume is usually the place to address any personal interests or activities that connect you with the company and its work, but if you are not asked to submit a resume then include any personal interests in your letter.

**Closing**

Keep it simple. You might write something like, 'I am looking forward to discussing the position and how I can contribute to your business at interview'.

If you started the letter with 'Dear Sir/Madam', end with 'Yours faithfully'. If you started with the recipient's name, end with 'Yours sincerely', 'Yours truly' or 'Cordially'.

Leave some blank lines for your signature, then type your name, aligned left. If your letter is to be emailed, don't leave room for a signature – your typed name is enough.

**What not to include in a cover letter**

You should only state your salary requirements in your covering letter if the employer asks you to. Leave money matters for the interview or when you are offered the job.