

## Creating your cover letter

### Purpose of a cover letter

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You may need to write a cover letter to respond to an advertised position or you may be approaching a company seeking an internship or graduate role. Whatever the situation, a cover letter needs to highlight the skills and knowledge you will bring to the position. Your cover letter is an example of your written communication skills and needs to be tailored to the company and/or job you are applying to.

### Understand the company and the role

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Before putting together your application, undertake some research about the company and role. This might include current projects of the company, awards they have won or looking at their values and culture. Use your new knowledge to explain why you are interested in this company and to shape your overall application.

### Structure

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A general guide for a cover letter structure is:

#### Opening paragraph

- State your purpose for writing. Focus on what has attracted you to this role/company. Show your research.

#### Middle paragraphs

- Show your suitability for the position – how you meet the selection criteria. Provide specific examples

#### Closing paragraphs

- Include a short summary of your suitability. Thank the reader for considering your application. Indicate you look forward to an interview.

### Resources

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You can also plan your cover letter out with [EmployMe](#). Try out the cover letter builder and access a range of resources to help you perfect and specialise it.

Additionally, utilise the Careers and Employability website and services to continuously improve your knowledge of cover letters.

See the following examples – use these as a GUIDE only (DO NOT COPY, THEY ARE GIVEN TO MANY STUDENTS)

### Example 1: Responding to a job advert

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Your Name

Address

Phone

Email

Date

Contact Persons Name

Contact persons Position Title

Name of organisation

Organisation Address

Dear Ms Employer (always try to get a name and avoid sir/madam)

#### (Position title and reference number, if applicable)

1. **Nominate the job** for which you are applying. Indicate the source and the date of the published job information. Provide details of **any contact** you have had with the organisation, mentioning a name if appropriate.
2. **Introduce yourself** in a way that will be most appealing eg: *'I am recent graduate with experience in.....'* Then go on to say why you want the position. You need to convey strong **motivation** for the particular role and the particular organisation. Link this with your career plans or direction. In doing this, you will also demonstrate that you have a strong understanding of the organisation.
3. Over the next one or two paragraphs, indicate why you are a strong candidate for the job –that is, how you meet the **selection criteria**. Don't try and cover every element. Focus on some key criteria (and also your own understanding of what would appeal to this employer – sometimes obvious aspects are not mentioned in selection criteria) and refer to your qualifications, experiences and achievements to support your claims. Include specifics rather than talking in very general terms. *Option – some applicants use dot points in this section.*
4. Try to include something which makes you **stand out** eg: a particular skill or quality, or aspect of your work, life or extra-curricular experience which is distinctive or perhaps unusual but still relevant to the position.
5. Express your **appreciation** for consideration of your application and your availability for work.

Yours sincerely

*A. N. Applicant*

Attachments: [Resume] [Selection Criteria] [Academic Transcript]

## Example 2 Speculative/cold approach cover letter for internship opportunity

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Jane Do  
161 Swanston Street  
Parkville, VIC 3010  
0400 170 755  
[jane.do@student.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:jane.do@student.unimelb.edu.au)

20 April 2018

Mr John Doe  
Internship Co-ordinator  
SciTech Corporation  
100 St. Kilda Road, Suite 714  
Melbourne, VIC 3000

Dear Mr Doe

### First paragraph

Introduce yourself by stating your degree/major and where you are studying. Specify the type of position you are seeking (eg: internship, hours, brief description of Engineering and IT Internship subject). Explain why you are particularly interested in the company and the type of work they do.

### Middle paragraphs

Outline your relevant qualifications, work/volunteer experience, extracurricular activities, training and link these along with any relevant skills and achievements.

Don't assume that an employer will automatically read your resume AND cover letter. Always include your key selling points in both of these documents.

### Summary paragraph

Summarise why you are a strong fit for the company and how your skills will meet their needs. (Tip: You could summarise the 3 best things about you that make you most competitive for the internship and how these things will allow you to make an impact/get results in the role).

### Closing paragraph

Close by stating your desire for an interview. You may say that you will call in a day or so to request an appointment.

Thank them for considering your application; tell them that you have attached a copy of your resume and host employer information, and a positive statement about discussing your application and the position further at an interview.

Yours sincerely

Jane Do

Attachments: [Resume] [Academic Transcript]

## English Language Tips

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### Describing your personal qualities

As a recently qualified professional, you can make your application stand out by drawing attention to the personal qualities of yours which are suitable for the position. Think carefully about the qualities and skills you have gained through your studies, part time work, life experiences, hobbies and extracurricular activities.

#### **What skills might you have learned from playing the piano?**

*E.g. discipline, application, precision, persistence.*

#### **What skills might you have learned from playing football? Retail work? Waiting on tables?**

*E.g. teamwork, responsibility, reliability, accuracy, good work ethic.*

#### **What skills might you have acquired from completing your studies?**

*E.g. time management, working to deadlines, collaboration, research, professional communication.*

Here are some personal qualities which are highly valued by employers. These are the nouns, but adding an adjective can make them stronger (e.g. *highly* committed).

Take a look at the examples below, then practice writing nouns and adjectives in a grammatically correct sentence.

**Honesty**      *"I am extremely/scrupulously/very honest."*  
*"I demonstrated complete honesty in my management of funds for the University Chess Club."*

**Integrity**      *"I am a person of high/absolute/complete personal integrity." (There is no adjective for integrity)*

#### **Can you do the same with the following?**

*Adaptability/Flexibility; Loyalty; Dedication/Hard-Working/Work Ethic/Tenacity; Positive Attitude/Motivation/Energy/Passion;*

*Dependability/Reliability/Responsibility; Professionalism; Self-Confidence; Self-Motivated/Independent; Willingness to Learn.*

#### **Adverbs to express strength of your personal qualities can be found in a collocations dictionary.**

*E.g. [prowritingaid.com/Free-Online-Collocations-Dictionary.aspx](http://prowritingaid.com/Free-Online-Collocations-Dictionary.aspx)*

## Experience and skills – it's all in the verbs

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The verbs you use to describe your experience are important – make sure they are precise enough and use appropriate formality. Here are some examples of imprecise verbs to avoid and some suggested alternatives:

### **Don't Write**

**Did:** *"I did a course in statistics"*

**Made:** *"I made a plan for..."*

**Kept:** *"I kept studying"*

**Put:** *"I put tables out for the customers"*

**Had:** *"I had a job as a waiter"*

**Got:** *"I got first class honours"*

**NB:** *Use a good dictionary, with examples, to check the exact meaning of the word you have chosen and if it is appropriate in each situation*

### **Instead, Write**

*undertook, completed, instigated*

*created, designed, organised*

*continued, persevered with, maintained, prolonged*

*placed, arranged, organised, filed, aligned, positioned*

*held, maintained, engaged in, sustained*

*received, obtained, was awarded, procured, acquired*

## Choose the correct verb tense

Tense	What for?	Example
Simple past	Events, completed activities, specific dates	"I completed my Bachelor of Arts in 2013."
Present perfect	Skills acquired when exact time is not relevant For unfinished activities	"I have been trained in Halftix event booking software." "I have worked for IBM since 2014 / for two years."
Future Use	'will' not 'going to' (formality)	"I will complete my Bachelor of Arts in November this year."
Present simple	Ongoing qualities or states/habits	"I am punctual."
Passive	Centre of action	"I was promoted." *Compare this with "they promoted me" (active voice)

**Make sure you know the exact meaning of the verb you choose by looking it up in the dictionary to establish who is doing what.** Getting tense right in passive verbs can be difficult. Hint: put the sentence in the active form, then take the verb tense and put it on the verb "to be". Below are some examples of the correct usage of passive verbs in different tenses:

I learned software design = They **trained** me in software design = I was **trained** in software design  
They **will train** me - I **will be** trained/They **have trained** me - I **have been** trained/They **are training** me - I am **being** trained

## End sentences with important, useful or positive information

Readers tend to view the end of a sentence as the most important part. So if you want to make your message clear, move the part you want your reader to focus on to the end of the sentence. Compare the following:

**X**

*I learned many useful skills although my placement lasted only twelve weeks.*

*I was responsible for keeping records and coordinating staff*

**✓**

*Although my placement lasted only twelve weeks, I learned many useful skills*

*In the day to day running of the business, I was responsible for keeping records and coordinating staff.*

## Use positive language wherever possible

**Negative**

*I do not have much experience in...*

*Although I can complete all stages of the project assessment, I am not yet qualified to provide certification.*

*I graduated in November but I did not get a job until April*

*While my first job was interesting it did not provide opportunities for promotion.*

**Positive**

*I have some experience in...*

*I can complete all stages of assessment prior to certification*

*I graduated in November and commenced work soon after.*

*My first job was interesting but lacked opportunities for promotion.*

## Cover Letter Checklist

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The following is general advice on how to draft a professional job application cover letter.

A cover letter must highlight your key achievements against the specific selection criteria and must be tailored to the particular job or position you are applying for.

A cover letter is often required in the job application process. However, if in doubt, always follow the specific requirements of the job advertisement and industry standards.

### FORMAT AND PRESENTATION

A cover letter is your introduction to an employer. It should communicate your motivation for the position and why you are a strong candidate for the role.

Length should be 1 page maximum.	
Layout is consistent. Tabs are aligned and line spacing is even.	
Format is clear and easy to read – not overcrowded with enough white space used throughout.	
Style is consistent (e.g. font type, font size consistent, bullets, bold).	
Contact details are included (ie: name, phone number, email). Optional: LinkedIn URL and residential address.	

### CONTENT

Application/reference number: clearly nominate the job for which you are applying.	
Date: is included.	
Addressed appropriately: refer to addressee as outlined in the job add (ie: Mr / Ms – only use Mrs if indicated). Do not use Sir / Madam. If unknown recipient, address: 'To whom it may	
Purpose: reason for writing is clearly articulated in the first paragraph.	
Supporting statements: justify your suitability for the position – how you meet the selection criteria.	
Appreciation: is expressed for consideration of your application.	
Formal closing: e.g. Yours sincerely.	
Spelling, grammar and punctuation: you must check your spelling and grammar to ensure your document is mistake-free.	