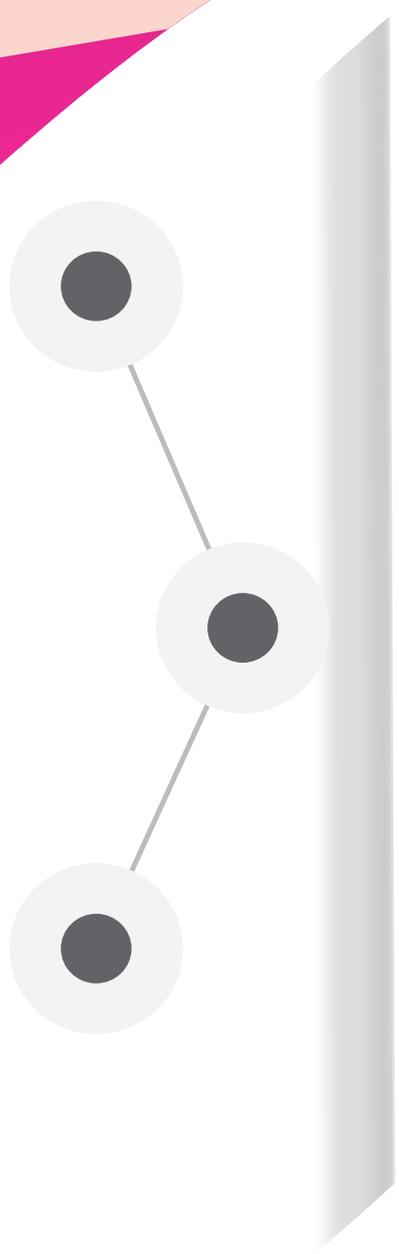




**STIRLING**  
INSTITUTE *of* AUSTRALIA

# **HOW TO WRITE A COVER LETTER**



### **The purpose of a cover letter**

A cover letter is just as important as a resume, it is an opportunity to draw attention to your application and motivate the reader to interview you.

### **How long should a cover letter be?**

A cover letter shouldn't be more than one page. It's only meant to be a summary of the information you put in your resume, so remember to keep things short.

### **Matching your cover letter to the job**

You should never use the same cover letter for different job applications. Your cover letter needs to show that you know what the job involves and what the organisation is looking for.

To do this you need to be as specific as you can about your skills and qualities and how they match the job or organisation's needs.



## **1. Find out who to address it to**

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Try not to address your letter "To Whom It May Concern". Finding out who to address your application to takes a little bit of effort, but it's worth it.

If you found the job in an ad, the ad will probably name a person to send the application to. If not, contact the employer or advertiser and ask who to send the application to.

## **2. Find out more about the job**

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When finding out who to address your application to, you could also try to contact that person so you can ask

questions that can help you match your cover letter (and resume) to the job.

Questions you could ask include: them.

- Can you tell me more about the kind of people you're looking for?
- Is there a position description I can look at (only ask this if the job ad didn't mention a position description)?

## **3. Find out more about the company**

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Finding out more about a company is another good way to work out how to tailor your cover letter. Here are some tips:

- If you know the name of the company, look for information online.
- Visit the company's website and learn about what they do and what their products or services.
- If the company name isn't in the ad, call the recruitment agency or advertiser and ask who the employer is.

# What you should include in your cover letter

## **Your name and contact details**

Put your name and contact details at the top of your cover letter. You don't have to give your postal address, but you do need to include your email and phone number.

Make sure you'll be able to answer the number you give. Don't give your landline number if you're not going to be home to answer it.

Your email address should create a professional impression. Don't use an email address like yolo@zapbangpowdude.co.uk.

If you don't have a professional email address, you can make one with a free email provider. Make it simple - something like your first name and your last name is a good way to go.

## **Their name and contact details**

Under your own name and contact details you should include:

- The name of the person you're writing to
- Their position or the name of their company
- Their contact details.
- If you're having trouble finding this information you can call the company to ask who you should address your application to.

You can also use "To Whom It May Concern", but try to only use this as a last resort.

## **The name of the job you're going for**

At the start of your cover letter you need to explain which job you're applying for.

You can either do this on a line by itself (for example, "Re: Application for Stock Controller position") or in the opening paragraph (for example, "I am writing to apply for the recently advertised Stock Controller position.")

## **A list of your relevant skills**

Your letter should include a brief summary that matches your skills and experiences to the job description. A short bullet-pointed list is fine.

If you're answering a job ad, either the ad or the position description may provide a list of skills and experiences that are essential for doing the job. It may also provide a list of "desirable" skills and experience. Your cover letter needs to respond to all of the items on the "essential" list and as many items as possible on the "desirable" list in as short a way as possible.

# What you should include in your cover letter

## **A summary of why you're right for the job**

After listing your skills and experience, you should explain how these link to the job (for example, "The combination of my interest in Health & fitness and my experience with coaching makes me ideally suited for this job.")

## **Speak their language**

Using the same language as people who do a particular job is a good way to convince people you're suited to the job.

Getting familiar with what a company does and how it talks about itself can give you ideas about things to mention in your cover letter, and how to talk about them.

For example, if there's a tool or software or skill the job requires, like machining tools or cash handling, mention it in your cover letter (but make sure you mention it correctly!).

## **Ask them to read your resume & contact you**

Your cover letter should finish by asking the reader to read your resume. It should also ask them to contact you about an interview.

Try something simple like, "I have attached a copy of my resume. I look forward to hearing from you about this job."

# What you SHOULD NOT include in your cover letter

## **Typos or mistakes**

Always spellcheck your cover letter. It's even better to get someone else to read it and point out any mistakes.

Double-check everything in your cover letter. If you mention a company's name, make sure you get it right. If you mention places you've worked before, make sure you get their names right too. Mistakes on cover letters are worse than typos.

## **Including your whole resume**

Don't cut and paste your resume into your cover letter. Try to re-word the information on your resume rather than just repeating it. Keep your cover letter short and let your resume tell the whole story.

## **Using "I" too much**

Try to make sure that you don't fill your cover letter with things like "I believe", "I have" and "I am".

Once you've written your letter, read over it and try to take out or rewrite as many sentences that start with "I" as you can.

## **Don't mention your other job applications**

You'll probably have more than one job application on the go at any one time. It's important, though, not to mention other job applications. You're trying to convince people you really want the job. It's hard to do that if they know you're looking for other jobs as well.

# Writing a cover letter when there's no job

Sometimes you might want to work for a particular business or organisation even though there haven't been any jobs advertised with them. This is often called "cold calling".

Contacting a business directly to ask if there are any jobs available can show that you're motivated and enthusiastic. It could even get you a job.

Even if there's no job currently available, there's a chance the business could keep your details on file and get in touch when a job does become available.

A cold-calling cover letter can be written like any other cover letter, with just a few differences. It should:

- Show you've researched the organisation or business and know about what it does.
- Mention why you're interested in working for them (in terms of what they do and your own long-term goals).
- Show how your skills, experience and interest fit in with the goals of the business or organisation.
- Let them know what you're hoping for (for example, you might want to know about positions currently available or speak to someone about what it's like to work there).
- Finish the letter by saying that you look forward to hearing from them.
- If you haven't heard back in a couple of weeks, it's okay to contact them again to ask for a response. You could try emailing them or calling them to discuss your letter directly.



## Writing a cover letter when there's no job

### 1. Email cover letters

Sometimes you'll be asked to send your cover letter as an email instead of a separate document. If this happens you should:

- Write your name and the job title in the email subject line (for example, " David Smith - Application for Administration Assistant role").
- Remember you still need to use the name of the person you're writing to avoid formatting the body of the email like a letter - leave out the contact details and just go straight to the "Dear XXXX" part.
- End the email with a professional signature that includes your phone number always send the email from a professional email address.

### 2. What to do when only a cover letter is asked for

Some organisations may specifically ask you to respond to requirements of the job in a one-page cover letter instead of submitting a resume.

When this happens it's important to link your experience to the job's requirements in your cover letter. When writing this kind of cover letter you should:

- Include contact details (yours and theirs), a reference line and a brief introduction to yourself, as advised in "What to include in your cover letter" in this document.
- Briefly summarise your experience
- Use bullet points to clearly outline each requirement and how you meet it conclude by asking them to contact you.

# Sample Cover Letter

## Sample cover letter: Work experience

Use this cover letter template if:

- You're applying for a job that has been advertised
- You have some formal (paid) work experience.

This sample cover letter demonstrates the kind of things you should include when you're applying for an advertised job and you have some formal (paid) work experience.

This sample can be used by high school students and graduates, university/TAFE students and graduates, and also people who have left school without doing Year 12.

A good cover letter should include:

- Your name, email address and phone number at the top of the page on the right
- The name of the business and the contact person's full name (if you know it) on the left
- The date you wrote the letter on the right
- A reference line (e.g., "Re: Application for Administration Assistant position")
- An address to the reader directly (e.g., "Dear Mr. Moyle" - try to avoid using "To whom it may concern" if you can)
- An opening statement that briefly introduces you to the reader
- A main body that highlights the skills and experiences you have that are relevant to the job
- A closing paragraph asking to arrange an interview.

Other things you can mention in your cover letter include:

- General skills that help you work in a team and as part of an organisation
- Personal attributes that will help you learn to work in a professional work environment
- School work experience or volunteer work that demonstrates your strengths and attributes
- Any sporting or community club participation (if relevant)
- Any hobbies or interests that are relevant to the job or demonstrate your professional experience.

Key points of this cover letter are that it:

- Introduces you to the reader
- Responds to the requirements of the job
- Attracts the reader's interest and refers them to your resume
- Doesn't include too many "I" statements, which can run the risk of disengaging the reader.

Joanne Tint  
Email: joannetint@xmail.com  
Mobile: XXX XXXX XXXX

Mr Allan Moyle  
John Smith and Associates  
Phone: XX XXXX XXXX  
Email: enquiries@johnsmithandassociates.com.au

## Sample cover letter: Work experience

23 Jan 2017

RE: Application for Trainee Administrative Assistant position

Dear Mr. Moyle,

As a young and motivated individual I am extremely interested in submitting an application for the advertised Trainee Administrative Assistant position with John Smith and Associates.

In November 2014 I completed my VCE studies and also obtained a Certificate II in Business Administration. This has given me a range of practical capabilities that will meet the needs of this role.

While completing my VCE studies I worked part-time as a Customer Service Assistant for KSmart. My responsibilities in this role included providing face-to-face customer service and assisting on the floor with stock movements and visual merchandising. This position has given me key employability skills while also allowing me to experience working in a professional and fast-paced work environment.

With regard to my ability to meet the specific requirements of this job:

- Customer Service: Worked for four years in a face-to-face customer service environment providing customer service at registers, lay-by counter and on the retail floor.
- Reception duties: Responsibilities at KSmart included answering incoming phone calls and assisting customers with phone-based enquiries.
- General Administration: Certificate II in Business Administration has provided training in the use of skills including filing, data processing, records management and written communication.

My teachers and employers have commended me for my high level of interpersonal skills and naturally engaging personality. My motivations include learning new things and the challenge of meeting key objectives. My current and previous managers can be contacted to provide more information about my ability to meet the needs of this job.

I understand that you will receive a large number of applications for this role. I do, however, believe that my motivation, commitment and pre-existing skills will allow me to fit into your work environment and immediately start supporting the needs of your organisation.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss my application at an interview. I have enclosed a copy of my resume for your consideration. I can be contacted at all times on the details provided above.

Thanking you in advance for your time,

Joanne Tint

## Sample Cover Letter: No Work Experience

Use this sample cover letter if:

- You're applying for a job that has been advertised
- You don't have any formal (paid) work experience

This sample cover letter demonstrates the kind of things you need to address if you're applying for an advertised job, but you don't have any formal (paid) work experience.

You can use this sample cover letter whatever your level of education. This sample has been designed to be used by high school students and graduates, tertiary students and graduates, and also people who have left school without doing VCE.

A good cover letter should include:

- Your name, email address and phone number at the top of the page on the right
- The name of the business and the contact person's full name on the left
- The date you wrote the letter on the right
- A reference line (e.g., "Re: Application for Administration Assistant position")
- An address to the reader directly (e.g., "Dear Mr. Moyle" - try to avoid using "To whom it may concern" if you can)
- An opening statement that briefly introduces you to the reader
- A main body that highlights qualities and characteristics you have that are relevant to the job
- A closing paragraph asking to arrange an interview

If you don't have any formal work experience, things you can mention in your cover letter include:

- General skills that help you work in a team and as part of an organisation
- Personal attributes that will help you learn to work in a professional work environment
- Key strengths and contributions that show you are a stand-out applicant
- School work experience or volunteer work that demonstrates your strengths and attributes
- Any sporting or community club participation (if relevant)
- Any hobbies or interests that are relevant to the job or demonstrate your professional experience

Key points of this cover letter are that it:

- Introduces you to the reader
- Responds to the requirements of the job
- Attracts the reader's interest and refers them to your resume
- Doesn't include too many "I" statements, which can run the risk of disengaging the reader

The focus of this kind of cover letter is to prove that your personal qualities and characteristics are a good fit with the requirements of the job and also that they will make a positive contribution to the organisation or business.

# Sample Cover Letter

Joanne Tint  
Email: joannetint@xmail.com  
Mobile: XXX XXXX XXXX

Mr Allan Moyle  
Moyle Retail Solutions  
Phone: XX XXXX XXXX  
Email: enquiries@moyleretailsolutions.com.au

23 April 2015

RE: Application for Casual Retail Sales Assistant position

## **Sample Cover Letter: No Work Experience**

Dear Mr. Moyle,

As a highly motivated and dedicated student with strong communication and interpersonal skills, I would like to apply for the position of Casual Retail Sales Assistant.

As a student, I have been extensively involved in my school community, which has allowed me to develop strong interpersonal skills. My involvement in various events, including drama music festivals and sports carnivals, has allowed me to work closely with my peers while supporting the school community as a whole.

These experiences have allowed me to develop strong time management and organisational skills, which I see as being very important when seeking to work in casual employment while continuing to study.

Personal attributes that I believe make me suitable for this position include:

- Motivation: Volunteer participation and school results demonstrate high motivation.
- Customer Service: Assisting with the sale of products at community events has allowed the development of customer service skills.
- Communication: Acting in drama performances and working as an MC for school events has allowed the development of communication skills.

My teachers and educators have commended me for my willingness to participate and my dedication to helping out where possible. I enjoy working with others and believe that my strong communication skills will ensure that I can meet the expectations of this role.

I am aware that you will receive a large number of applications for this job, but I would very much appreciate the opportunity to demonstrate my capabilities to you in person. I believe that I have a lot to offer your organisation. I am keen to develop my professional skills and look forward to discussing my application with you at an interview. I have enclosed a copy of my resume for your consideration. I can be contacted at all times on the details provided above.

Thanking you in advance for your time,

Joanne Tint



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If you require any support  
or need assistance with your  
cover letter, call us on

**1300 790 265.**

From Your Stirling Support  
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