the CareersGroup University of London

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How to write a Covering Letter

Send a covering letter with your CV (except where the employer specifies not to). It is where you explain your motivation and ability to do the job. Your CV demonstrates your skills and experience, a covering letter shows how these are relevant to the job and demonstrates enthusiasm for the particular role and organisation. Remember that your letter is not a regurgitation of your CV; think of it as a tailor-made statement for that position and employer, so you'll write a different letter for each organisation you apply to.

STRUCTUREANDCONTENT

Greetings

1

Try to find a name as it sounds more personal and can show you have done some research about the company. If the job advertisement does not specify a name it is worth contacting the company to ask the name and title of the person you should address the letter to.

Introduction

2

This first paragraph needs to be very clear: include why you are writing and where you saw the position advertised. You may want to include something about yourself.

Why them?

3

Tell the employer why you want this job and show motivation and enthusiasm. Demonstrate that you understand what the job involves and have researched their organisation and the sector. Avoid vague statements and blatant flattery; be specific and illustrate your opinions with some original points.

Why you?

4

Really impress upon the employer why you are right for this job, in terms of skills, experience and personal attributes. Illustrate your unique selling points with three or four excellent examples, rather than try to cover everything. Use the organisation's recruitment information to guide you towards the particular skills and experience they want. Use positive language and action words such as 'succeeded in', 'initiated'.

This is also the chance to deal directly and positively within any gaps or apparent weaknesses in your CV.

The ending

5

Your closing paragraph is an opportunity to restate your interest and summarise your suitability. It is also a good place to state your availability for interview and to end on an optimistic note. You can demonstrate your keenness by informing the organisation that you will follow up your letter with a phone call. Sign off in the correct way Yours sincerely if addressed to a particular name, Yours faithfully if you use Dear Sir/Madam.

EXAMPLE COVERING LETTER

Mr B Taylor
GYK Events
25-32 Freeman Street
London EC1 YHG

44 Fenton Road
Crouch End
London N8 9NS

21 March 2012

Dear Mr Taylor

Graduate Traineeship - Technology Consulting Division

I am writing to apply for the above position as advertised in The Guardian on 15 March. I am currently completing a master's degree in Environment, Science and Society at University College London and am interested in joining your graduate scheme for the September 2012 intake. Please find enclosed my CV as requested.

I am interested in a career in technology consulting because I have always enjoyed problem-solving, including the analysis of the problem and then working out a practical solution. My strengths in IT and technology make a career in technology particularly appealing, but I am keen to be involved in an environment which is focussed on people and business goals rather than pure technology.

Shows that she understands the job and how her interests relate to it.

I have had experience of some of the processes involved in consultancy in my capacity as a Webmaster with the London Disabled Forum. Not only has this given me an insight into the realities of working within an IT-based environment, it has helped me to develop important key skills such as client relationship-management, team working and leadership. These skills have been added to by time spent working at the University of London Union bar, where I often had to deal with potentially difficult situations with tact and diplomacy.

A good summary of aspects of her work experience relevant to the job.

As a Geography student, I have had to use research and analysis skills throughout my degree and masters courses. Dissertations and research projects have taught me how to plan my time effectively and use resources in the most efficient way. I have opted to take a number of IT and management courses such as Geographical Information Systems and Regional, Economic Development in the UK which have helped me understand the vital role technology plays in today's business environment.

Relates the course content to the needs of the role.

Having thoroughly researched the sector, I am drawn to GYK due to the tailored nature of your technology solutions and the culture of the organisation as being one of a multi-disciplinary team that share both goals and working space. I have attended presentations at the GYK Open Day held on 15 January and talked to new trainees present at the UCL Finance and Management Fair. I was impressed with their obvious enthusiasm and honesty when describing their work.

I am available for interview at any time and look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Provides specific examples of what she likes about the company and shows how she has found out about them. This convinces the reader that this is a serious application.

Yours sincerely

Sadia Mira

Checklist

- Does it match the job requirements?
- Does the content relate specifically to that role and organisation?
- Is it well written, clear and succinct?
- Does it look professional?

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