



Australian Government



How to write a cover letter

Use this workbook to help you write a cover letter that you can adapt for each job you apply for.

The main role of a cover letter is to make an employer want to read your résumé.

Tips for writing your cover letter.

- Keep it short - no more than one page long.
- Include the job title or job reference number so the employer knows what job you are applying for (they may have several vacancies).
- Explain why you are a good match for this role.
- Outline how your skills and experience match what the employer is looking for.
- Address it to a specific person. This could be the contact person listed in the job ad, the owner (for a small or local business) or the recruitment manager. If you don't know who to address your application to, call the business to find out the name of the recruitment manager.

The checklist at the end of this workbook will help you create cover letters that show why you are a good candidate for job roles you apply for.



Understand what the employer wants

Visit an online jobs board. Find two job ads that interest you. Read each ad carefully to complete the following exercises.

Exercise 1. What attracts you to a job?

Highlight all the words in the ad that describe anything you find appealing about the job, such as salary, location, hours, any training offered, job tasks and the workplace environment. Write out the reasons for your choice below.

Hint: While it is good to understand what attracts you to a job, some of those reasons may not be suitable to mention in a cover letter. For example, it's not a good idea to refer to salary in your cover letter.

Job ad 1 - Title:

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Job ad 2 - Title:

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Exercise 2. The first paragraph.

Your first paragraph should be short and reference the job role and the reasons you are interested in the role.

Hint: Think about what you would like job seekers to say if you were the employer.

For example, imagine you are applying for a job as a Retail Sales Assistant, Apprentice Hairdresser or Personal Care Attendant in Aged Care. Your opening paragraph could read, "I am writing to apply for X job as I enjoy working with people". If applying for a job as a Business Equipment Technician or Service Centre Customer Agent you could write that you are a "patient and keen problem solver".

Now you give it a try.

Job ad 1 - Title:

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Job ad 2 - Title:

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Exercise 3. Finding the employer's key words.

What are the key words the employer uses to describe what job seekers must have to win the job?

Hint: 'Key words' are the words and phrases that describe the personal traits and skills the employer is looking for.

To find the key words, read through the job ad line by line. Highlight the kinds of tasks that are required in this job, the interactions you'd have with people (both coworkers and customers) and the type of environment you'd be working in.

Job ad 1 - Title:

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Job ad 2 - Title:

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Using your list of 'key words' above:

- Identify which words are "skills" by circling them.
- Identify which words are "personal attributes" with a tick.
- Identify which words are "qualifications" with a "x".

Skills means knowing how to do a task that is required in the workplace. For example, managing others or computer skills.

Personal attributes are the positive personality traits that show the employer you will be an asset to their business. For example, reliable or enthusiastic.

Qualifications are certifications that show your level of education and prove you are able to do a particular job or task. For example, Year 12 certification or drivers licence.



Exercise 4. How do you fit the employer's needs?

Compare the employer's skill, personal attributes and qualification requirements to what is in your résumé.

Review your history of employment, training, volunteering and work experience. Write down how your experience matches the employer's requirements using the employer's own 'key words'.

You can use these examples to build the main section of your cover letter and explain how you meet their needs and are right for the job.

Job ad 1 - Title:

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Job ad 2 - Title:

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Exercise 5. Final paragraph.

This paragraph should be a brief summary of why you want the job and to thank the employer for considering your application.

Write a short statement about why the employer should consider your application:

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Exercise 6. Get building!

Now create your own cover letter based on your answers above. Use the following checklist to ensure it hits the mark.

There are many free templates available online. Try typing 'cover letter template' into your internet search engine. Or you can use your word processing software to create your own basic letter.

Remember to keep it simple and professional looking - you want the employer to focus on your suitability for the job, not the template.



Exercise 7. Cover letter quality check.

Use this checklist to make sure your cover letter sends the right message to employers.

Task	You	Friend
The letter fits on one page (three or four paragraphs only)		
The letter has today's date on it		
The letter is easy to read and looks professional		
The letter references the job number and/or vacancy title		
The name, spelling and title (ed Dear Mr, Miss, Mrs, Ms) of the person you are writing to is the same as in the job ad		
There are no spelling or grammatical errors anywhere in the document		
You have included your contact details (email and phone number) and they are correct		
You have used the employer's own key words (from the job ad) to explain that you have the essential skills and abilities for the job		
You have explained (in your own words) why you want the job and what you have to offer the employer		
The letter is signed off in a formal way (eg. Yours sincerely)		

Exercise 8. Get someone to check your letter!

Hand your draft cover letter to a friend, career adviser, jobactive consultant or family member to proofread. Also give them a copy of this cover letter checklist to help them understand the sort of things they should be looking out for.

Disclaimer: The content of this workbook is intended as general information only and does not replace professional advice. It is derived from a variety of sources and has been prepared without taking into account your individual objectives, situation or needs. You should consider your personal circumstances, and if appropriate, seek independent legal, financial or other professional advice before acting. The Department has endeavoured to ensure the currency and completeness of the information in this workbook at the time of publication; however, this information may change over time. Provision of links to external websites are provided for convenience only and should not be construed as an endorsement or approval of the third party service or website by the Department. The Department expressly disclaims any liability caused, whether directly or indirectly, to any person in respect of any action taken on the basis of the content of this workbook.