



Writing Perfect Cover Letters

A cover letter is the first thing that a recruiter looks at when they receive your resume. Be it a hardcopy or electronic version your cover letter should stick to the following simple rules.

Short and to the point

Your cover letter should be roughly four to five paragraphs long and clearly address the main criteria listed in the job advertisement. If you feel the need to go into detail try and keep it as succinct as possible – don't write more than a page.

Make it interesting

Try and keep the tone of the cover letter upbeat and positive. You want the reader to be interested in you and your story. Don't go overboard – it's still a professional document but try and add a little of your personality to it.

Formal, but Friendly

Your cover letter is a formal business letter and should not be overly familiar or inappropriate in its tone. It should be friendly and helpful. Avoid using the recruiter's first name only, but refer to them as Mr. or Ms. Surname. This demonstrates to the recruiter that you are able to present yourself appropriately for different situations – that is, you wouldn't talk to them the same as you would your friends!

Don't rewrite your resume

Your resume and cover letter should be two different documents. Of course you will be covering the same sort of ground, but you must do it in different ways. The cover letter should briefly address the job criteria listed in the advertisement. If done well the reader will want to open your resume and see a more detailed account of your experience and skills.

Customise it

Whatever you do don't use a form letter. The points listed in a job advertisement are what an employer feels are important to the position. You need to show the reader that you have the relevant experience to cover these. If you don't why would they look at your resume? A standard letter will not present the right image to a prospective employer.

Sample Cover Letter

You should always date your letters!

8th August 2006

Your address details should be at the top for easy reference for the recruiter.

Ms. Jane Applicant
23 Berry Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Address your letter to the appropriate person in the job advertisement. If the job ad does not include a person's name or if it is unclear what gender they are, refer to their title in the address line.
Make sure you get the spelling right!

Mr. John Manager
Human Resource Manager
OzJobFindIt
25 Rose Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Refer to the recruiter's name (not first name) or Sir/Madam.

If there is a job reference number, refer to it at the top of the letter.

Dear Mr. Manager,

Re: Application for the position of Editor (Reference Number: Job 10/06)

Refer to where you saw the ad. Make sure your opening is friendly, yet formal!

Please find enclosed my application for the position of Editor with OzJobFindIt advertised on OzJobFindIt.com on the 6th August 2006.

Use the cover letter to 'introduce' your resume.

As you will see from my resume and qualifications, I have over five years experience as a website Editor. I also have substantial experience as a sub-Editor for local newspapers.

Throughout my career I have developed strong skills in written and verbal communication, negotiation and time management. I have worked in very high pressure and high volume environments, and have often been required to meet tight deadlines. My resume attests to my successes as an Editor, including my budgetary and staff management.

Refer to the essential criteria of the job and how your experience meets these criteria.

Provide the recruiter with an invitation to contact you and your most convenient

I welcome the opportunity to discuss my application for this position with you further, and I can be contacted on (02) 5555 5555.

Yours sincerely,

Politely, but formally, sign off the letter

Jane Applicant

What Not To Do Sample Cover Letter

There are no contact address details here!

Letters should always be dated!

His name is spelt wrong and his job title is also wrong... how to get off on the wrong foot! There are also no address details here!

You should have a clear reference at the top of the letter, particularly if there is a job reference number.

John Manger
Human Resource Assistant
OzJobFindIt

Using the recruiter's first name is too familiar!

The letter should be formal but friendly. Avoid opening phrases like this.

Dear John,

You need to justify why you're best candidate. Begging is so uncool!

I'd like to apply for the job of editor for OzJob.

Watch your spelling! Your cover letter should be a teaser for your resume. If you don't refer to how you meet essential criteria, the recruiter will not look any further and you will not get the job!

I'd really like this job and think I'd be good at it.

I've got loads of expeyience and some important people will vouch for me.

Email is not a convenient way to contact you. It is also too impersonal, include your phone number

You can email me and let me know whether I got it or not at applicant@applicant.net.

Ciao for now!

Your letter needs to be formal, yet polite, not overly familiar or informal.

Jane