

COVER LETTERS

The 'Covering' Letter:

CVs are seldom used alone, they should always be introduced by a letter or a telephone call. The letter can really let your personality come through. Remember, recruitment consultants and employers read hundreds of CVs, an interesting introductory letter can make yours stand out.

Your letter can be used to pick up points which modesty or space prevented you from including in your CV (i.e. to highlight your key strengths relevant to the job). An introduction letter can save you from having to rewrite the CV each time you want to target your application to a specific advertisement or sector.

Nevertheless, keep your CV up to date. Using an out of date CV looks sloppy at best and may exclude you from consideration.

The only function of this letter is to get your CV read, and to get you a meeting. Think of your letter like the first page of your CV, as a one page advertisement for you. Make your letter brief, enthusiastic, and interesting.

- Ensure that everything in the reader's name, job title address is correct.
- Try not to begin every sentence and paragraph with "I". Focus on the reader of the letter and his/her perspective.
- Research. Refer to the problems, opportunities and headaches your target company is facing. Remember SWOT as a prompt: what can you say about a company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats?
- Indicate in brief paragraphs what you are applying for, who you are, why you are interested, and what you have to offer. Don't oversell. State briefly why you are a good match for the job.
- Refer the reader to your enclosed CV. Pick 3 or 4 of your top achievements and repeat them in the letter, using different terms to the way you have expressed them in your CV. Choose achievements relevant to the job.
- Don't put anything in your covering letter which gives the reader an excuse to put the letter aside, e.g. apologising for your lack of a particular requirement, or mentioning your age, or referring to negative aspects like why you left your last job.
- If your letter is a speculative approach (i.e. to a company that isn't currently advertising a job), try to ensure that your letter is read by a decision maker.
- Think carefully what action you are asking for. If you are seeking a meeting, ask for one.
- Telephone to check that your letter has been received by the intended recipient.
- Ask one relevant question, or mention one reason why you might be able to help the employer, and suggest a meeting.

Source – Recruitment & Employment Confederation