

WRITING A COVERING LETTER

What is a covering letter? Think of it as the first introduction between you and your prospective employer. A little like a handshake and greeting when you first meet someone new. They'll form impressions about you right from this point so it's important to get it right.

Your carefully prepared resume and your covering letter have the same goal in mind. They should give you the best possible start in getting an employer to see you as *just the person* they're after.

HINTS AND TIPS *BEFORE YOU START*

Your *resume* is more of a general document covering your skills, experience, qualifications, and work history.

Your *Covering Letter* is much more direct and tailored to the particular task at hand – finding you a position with *this* particular employer.

If you've done your homework you can *really focus* on answering what you believe are the key selection criteria for the job.

WHAT NEXT?

You can begin the process by following these simple guidelines;

- *Study and understand the needs and requirements of the employer.* You can find these from the Job Ad, Selection Criteria or the Position Description
- See if you can organise the most important items you *need to cover in order, supporting them with facts and real life examples.* (This is your chance to shine). The key is to show the employer how your background, education, previous work experience and abilities can absolutely meet their needs!

- A resume should *always* be accompanied by a covering letter unless specifically requested by the employer. Your covering letter introduces your resume and should give the employer the confidence to proceed with evaluating your application
- Just like your resume, your covering letter should be *concise and to the point.* You'll lose their interest quickly if they're not engaged. So keep it short but don't omit the essentials, like addressing how you will be the best fit for the job. Aim for one/two pages max.
- *Personalise* your letter. It helps the employer understand who they're really dealing with. Remember, they don't know you yet so you have to get your best qualities out there and up front in this letter. This is where they'll get a little insight into your personality before they even meet you

SO WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIALS?

Your Covering Letter should provide the following information:

- The job you are applying for
- Why you're actually applying
- Why you're interested in the position
- The skills and experience you can bring
- Any additional qualities you believe will enhance your chances of success
- Your contact details

(More info overleaf)

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

- One size doesn't fit all... and one Covering Letter doesn't fit every application you do. It may take time but you *must* tailor each letter to each job
- By all means you should write the letter yourself but get someone else to check your spelling and grammar as well. Reading it back aloud also helps!
- Stick to highlighting your talents and experience. You're convincing them you're the best candidate for the job, so don't waffle or get off the track. And be honest. They might just find you out, especially if your referees are reliable!
- Handwritten letters are a no-no these days unless you are actually requested to respond that way



OPENING UP, CLOSING OFF

Make sure you keep to expected standards in formal letter writing. Here are a few examples of introductions and sign offs:

Dear Sir/Madam...Yours faithfully

Dear Ms Richards...Yours sincerely

Dear James...Yours sincerely

(Don't conclude with Regards or Yours truly).

Here's an example of how your letter could start:

Dear Ms Hall

I'm writing to apply for the position of Retail Assistant advertised in the Mercury newspaper on Saturday 6 March.

(Note: Some ads require you to call first you may be directed to their web site to find the job, Selection Criteria and Position Description.)