

Note: If reading is hard for you, you can talk to us instead. Call 6262 5400



Tip Sheet:

Writing a cover letter

What is a cover letter, and why do I need one?

A cover letter is one of the first opportunities an employer will have to make a judgement about whether you are the right person for their vacancy and their organisation. First impressions are important, so it's essential that you get your cover letter right.

Your resume is a more general document covering your skills, experience, qualifications and work history. Your cover letter is your opportunity to give much more focused attention to the job you are applying for with this particular employer.

What should I include?

Each cover letter should be tailored, and what is included may differ depending on what you have been asked for.

A general guide is to include at least:

- The name of the job you are applying for
- Why you are applying
- What interests you about the position
- The skills and experience you can bring to the role
- Any other qualities you think are relevant and will set you apart
- Your contact details

How do I start?

Here are some 'Dos and Don'ts' to help you get well on the way to having an excellent cover letter:

Do:

- Do pay attention to the details. Make sure you address your cover letter to the right person, and spell their name correctly. Get the title of the job right, and submit your application following their instructions (this may include a direction to call before submitting, so make sure you do that. See our [Responding to job ads by phone Tip Sheet](#) first.
- Do find out exactly what the employer is looking for - you can find out a lot from the job ad, position description or selection criteria if there are any. You can go a step further by researching the organisation. If there is a contact person listed you might want to give them a call to find out more - but make sure you read our [Responding to job ads by phone Tip Sheet](#) first.
- Do get to the point. Make a list of the important things you want to cover, and then put them in an order that makes sense. Then add facts and examples to show the employer that you really can meet their needs.
- Do be honest. This is an opportunity to tell people about your strengths and let yourself shine.
- Do show your personality, but remain professional. Employers want to get to know you, not a robot or a template.

Don't

- Don't hand write your cover letter or resume, unless the employer specifically asks you to.
- Don't write a generic template and just change the name and other small details. You are wasting your time, and theirs.
- Don't address it to the wrong person, or spell their name incorrectly.
- Don't make statements of belief. For example, "I believe I would be good at the task." Instead, make strong statements of fact. For example, "I demonstrated my ability to undertake that task when I..."
- Don't waffle and put extra words in for no reason. Your cover letter should be short and to the point, and no more than two pages maximum unless otherwise directed by the employer.
- Don't be humble or underplay your successes or strengths..
- Don't be misleading and exaggerate your successes or strengths either.
- Don't forget to update and tailor your resume too. Check out our [Putting a resume together Tip Sheet](#) for advice.

Formal letter writing tips:

How you start and end your letter matters. If you open the letter with one of the choices below, you should use the matching one to close the letter, rather than mixing them up:

| If you open with... | then close with: |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Dear Sir/Madam, | Yours faithfully, |
| Dear Ms Richards, | Yours sincerely, |
| Dear James, | Yours sincerely, |

What if I need help?

Our team at Workskills is here to help and this is just a small sample of what we can do to support you gaining employment.

In order to access our full range of support you will need to be assigned to us through Centrelink, so when you're asked to choose a jobactive provider, think of the Tasmanian company helping Tasmanians – Workskills.

If you are looking to access our service or just need some direction, contact our team at Workskills on **6262 5400** or emailing Employment@workskills.org.au