

## Guide to writing a cover letter

The purpose of a cover letter is to complement the CV by displaying a candidate's knowledge of the recipient organisation and the role for which they are applying. In contrast to the CV the cover letter should act as a 'bridge' to your CV, highlighting key achievements using well written, relatable prose.

A cover letter should ideally be one page long and preferably:

- Be addressed to a specific person where possible- take the time to find the recruiters name where possible. If not 'Dear Sir/ Madam'.
- Open with a clear statement about who you are, the job for which you are applying and preferably where you saw it advertised.
- State why you are interested in the organisation (their aim or mission statement, their body of work, programme of events, inspiring publications, pioneering projects etc...) and how you would be the right person to represent them in the future.

### **E.g.: Graduate Internship, International conservation charity:**

*"The joint focus of my degree has equipped me with knowledge of the challenges faced in achieving truly sustainable environmental conservation in the developing world, having studied modules in Biodiversity Conservation and Human Society, Sub-Saharan African Development and Natural Resources for Development. By also choosing to study an East Africa Field course module I have experienced firsthand the juxtaposition between Africa's rich natural capital and its poverty stricken, human population.*

*The approach taken by Save the Hippo International in working on the ground with communities to support sustainable resource use, educational programmes and livelihood diversification (in order to conserve wildlife whilst alleviating poverty) is one that I feel is truly effective and work that I would love to have the opportunity to support".*

- Directly link your experience to the role advertised. This can be best done by looking at the person specification and highlighting your experience in relation to the key requirements.

### **E.g.: Communications Intern, Forum for the Future**

*"My most recent position has permitted me experience in using several different communication medians. I initiated the creation of Environment West Midlands's Twitter account and manage and contribute to their blog. I authored a press release promoting the findings of a report I authored, appearing live on regional BBC Radio to communicate its findings. I am also responsible for the design and content of the Environment West Midlands newsletter, and have knowledge of using Dreamweaver to publish such communications onto a website.*

*I would very much like to expand my knowledge of sustainable development and further my experience of communications within such a dynamic and distinct organisation as Forum for the Future and hope that my CV further reflects my suitability for the role".*

- Finish on a professional note, thanking the recipient for taking the time to read your application. Use 'Yours sincerely' if you know the name of the person the letter is addressed to, or 'Yours faithfully' if it is to sir/madam.

This is a general structure that can be used, with a template available for download from the Sustainability West Midlands graduate guidance page. As with a CV, regardless of cover letter format it should **flow logically**, be **crisp and clear** and **error-free**.

There are many websites available to help you construct a cover letter and effectively convey information about yourself. [Cvtips.com](http://Cvtips.com) has a great, no nonsense video of 10 great cover letter tips and there is a great check list at [Monster.com](http://Monster.com). Other useful websites for graduate CVs include [Prospects.ac.uk](http://Prospects.ac.uk) and the [Graduate recruitment bureau](http://Graduate recruitment bureau).

## Some quick tips

Here are some quick tips that we feel are the most important in writing an effective CV...

### Do:

- Take the time to find the name of the person recruiting for the role- it shows that you have taken the effort to research the application.
- Use well written, eloquent paragraphs. Unlike your CV well constructed paragraphs are a must, although bullet points could be use to highlight your most relevant achievements.
- Shout about your achievements. This is the very first thing an employer will read so do not be shy about showcasing what you have to offer.

### Do not:

- Just repeat what is on your CV. The cover letter should be used to expand upon your greatest achievements.
- Use fancy, over bearing language. As with the CV information should be as easy to read as possible, even when within a paragraph.
- Use the wrong writing style - always ask yourself - 'what does the person who will read this letter want?'