

The covering letter

Similar to application forms, a cover letter or email can market you and showcase your skills. Just like your CV, you will need to amend each cover letter for each job application to make it suits that particular employer. Keep a 'draft' copy saved on your computer so you can adapt it each time you apply for a job.

Who's recruiting?

Find out the name of the recruiter and address your cover letter or email to them directly. It makes your application more personal and shows you've used your initiative. If a name is not available, use 'Dear Sir/Madam' instead. If doing this remember to close your letter with 'yours faithfully' rather than 'sincerely'.

Keep it short

Don't write an essay about your skills and how much you want the job. Keep it short and to the point. Aim for a letter that fits on a single A4 page, or if it's an email a few paragraphs will be fine.

What to include

This is your chance to highlight your key skills, experience and/or qualifications that are relevant to that particular job. Explain why you want to work for the company and what you can bring to the role, expanding on any relevant projects or accomplishments that are not already listed on your CV.

Be clear on your availability

If you're going to be away or out of reach for some time, for instance if you're heading away on holiday, let the recruiter know. It's frustrating for busy recruiters when they can't get hold of candidates.

Close with a positive

End the letter on a positive note, expressing your willingness to discuss your application at interview. Perhaps highlight that you will call them to follow up in a few days and remember to include your contact details in case they want to reach you.

Final checks are a must

Lastly, review your spelling and grammar. If you're applying online and there is no chance of adding a covering email, you can make your covering letter the first page of your CV, so it's all in one document. Personalise the letter and title it 'Covering letter for x company'.