



## How to write a quality cover letter

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### The aim with any cover letter is to keep it brief (no more than a page).

Employers don't have time to read every job application they receive in full. Cover letters allow you to make an impression without taking up too much of the employer's time. Make sure your cover letter shows how you meet the criteria for the job – this could be through your personal strengths, skills and abilities, work experience, or academic results.

### When applying for a specific position, the basic format for a cover letter is:

- State that you're applying for the job - naming both the job title (as advertised) and the company
- State why you want to work for the company - what is it about the role or the company that appeals to you? Where possible, try to show that you have some knowledge of the company and its products or services.
- Highlight the skills and qualifications that you believe make you the best candidate for the job - always link these to the key requirements of the position (as stated in the position description or job ad). How can you contribute to their business? Why would they want to hire you?
- Ask for an interview. Don't be shy – this shows you have initiative and are enthusiastic about the job

### How to highlight your skills and experience:

Your cover letter should sell your key skills and experience, so make sure these things stand out. The letter needs to be brief (no longer than a page), so you'll need to write only one or two paragraphs that describe these key 'selling points'. This might include:

- Your relevant experience specific to the job  
(e.g. "As you can see from my resume, I have several years of experience in both retail and administration...")
- Your key skills, qualities and abilities specific to the job  
(e.g. "My written and verbal communications skills are excellent and I can direct others effectively, ensuring completion of tasks on time and to budget...")
- Your relevant qualifications or training/academic track record specific to the job  
(e.g. "My studies at Swinburne University of Technology have given me a sound knowledge of computing. Of particular relevance are my elective subjects of 3D Animation and Special Effects, in both of which I received high distinctions for all my project work...")

### How to highlight your skills and qualities if you don't have work experience:

If you don't have specific, paid work experience, you'll still be able to use your cover letter to highlight the skills, abilities and experience you've gained through school, training, work experience programs or voluntary positions. The letter needs to be brief (no longer than a page), so you'll need to write only one or two paragraphs that describe these key selling points. This might include:

- Your relevant experience specific to the job  
e.g. "I have two years' experience with all aspects of customer service and retail sales gained as a part-time volunteer with the Salvation Army's 'Savers' programs."
- Your key skills, qualities and abilities specific to the job  
e.g. "I have hands-on experience with a range of computer applications and I work well with others in stressful situations."
- Your relevant qualifications or training/academic track record specific to the job  
e.g. "My studies have focused on mathematics and science, and I took additional applied maths and chemistry electives in Year 11."  
"In my role as school captain, I was placed in charge of a large variety of school activities and was responsible for the organisation and completion of many programs."

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#### YouthJET

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Martin Burn  
Personnel Manager  
Broad and Allen  
256 Little Street  
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September 10, 2009

Dear Mr Burn

I am very interested in the position of Administrative Assistant for Broad and Allen advertised in the *Weekly Times* on September 5, 2009.

The skills and qualifications you seek match my experience in this area:

- I spent two years as Administrative Assistant in the Prospective Students Office of Monash University and am experienced with using a number of reporting tools and databases including Excel, Access, Lotus Notes and Crystal Reports.
- I assisted the General Manager of Saturn Satellites for two years providing administrative support, diary and appointment coordination and managing all travel and accommodation bookings for his busy and fast-paced schedule.
- I confidently work alone and in teams - in both situations I always complete tasks on time and enjoy assisting others to ensure that their tasks also come in on time and on budget.
- I am currently completing a part-time (evening) diploma of Human Resources at Northern Melbourne Institute of Technology. I have used the knowledge and skills gained from subjects including Managing Staff Development and Performance Management to assist in the coordination of staff training and performance reviews.

Enclosed is my resume for your review. I believe I am an excellent candidate for this role and look forward to meeting with you to discuss this position further.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Smith