



RICHMOND
THE AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL
UNIVERSITY
IN LONDON

Writing A Cover Letter

- What is a cover letter? ▪ Who Needs A Cover Letter? ▪ What should a cover letter include? ▪ Organize your letter: Opening Paragraph - Body Paragraph - Closing Paragraph ▪ Before you send... ▪ Example Cover Letter

**Office of Career Services
Student Affairs**

Richmond: 020 8332 8208 Kensington: 020 7368 8506

Email: career.services@richmond.ac.uk

1 What is a cover letter?

Simply put, a cover letter is the letter you send along with your CV when you are applying for a job.

The cover letter is supposed to give the company a brief overview of who you are, what you have to offer and why you should be considered for the vacancy.

2 Who Needs A Cover Letter?

Everyone who sends out a CV does! Even if the cover letter wasn't mentioned in an Advertisement, it's expected that you will write one. Make sure you always tailor it to the *specific* company.

3 What should a cover letter include?

The easiest way to remember what you need in a cover letter is **Who, What, Why and When** . . .

Who Who are you writing to? If possible, get a name to address your letter to and try to find out something about the company. This will enable you to put in facts and information that are relevant to the company.

Address it to the person who can hire you. Applications sent to the personnel department have a tougher time of it. If you can find out (through networking and researching) exactly who is making the hiring decision, address the letter to that person. Be sure the name is spelled correctly and the title is correct. A touch of formality is good too: address the person as "Mr.," "Ms.," "Mrs.," "Miss," "Dr.," or "Professor."

Research the company. If you have a company or employer in mind, do some research regarding their policies and principles. Review websites, brochures, pamphlets and any other pertinent materials you can find about the company. If you can, try to speak with current employees; this will provide you with a unique inside perspective.

What What are you applying for? Begin by clearly stating the title of the job you are applying for. The company may have several positions so make it easy for them to see which one you're interested in. The easiest way to do this is with a sub-head in your letter like this:

Dear Mrs Brown

Re: Vacancy for Administration Assistant (Yorkshire Evening Post 13/4/00)

Please find enclosed my CV in application for the above vacancy

Why Why are you interested in the vacancy - you like the sound of the job, you have heard good things about the company, you want somewhere that will train you for bigger things.

And why should they consider you - you have experience of similar work, you have good typing skills, you are organised, you have good interpersonal skills. At your stage, no-one expects you to have years of work experience, so use anything suitable. You could have done basic admin duties for a club or society, maybe you helped to organise a local event. Anything that shows you're suitable, e.g. "you will note from my CV that my work for the local chess club has involved a range of administrative skills, which I feel would be very suitable for this role." But be brief, they can get full details from your CV.

Stand out from the crowd! Why are you better than anyone else? Got any awards from school or local clubs? Done any charity work? Got your name in the paper (for a good reason)? Brag about it. You want them to know you are an achiever, so don't be afraid to let them know. But again, keep it brief and refer them to your CV for more information.

When Finally, let the company know when you are available for an interview and (if you're already working) how much notice you need to give your present employer. Finish by thanking the person for considering you and letting them know how and when they can contact you for more information.

4 Organize your letter

Beginning The Letter

Your name and full contact details go on the top or right hand corner of the letter.

The addressee's name and full contact details go on the left hand corner of the letter.

Salutation

If you are addressing the letter to a specific person, start out with the formal salutation: Dear Mr. Pierce. If you don't know the name use: Dear Hiring Manager. Refrain from using the old standby's: To whom it may concern or Dear Sir or Madam

Opening Paragraph

The opening paragraph should accomplish a couple of goals:

1. It should grab the reader's attention
2. Discuss the position you are applying for
3. List your references or how you heard about the job
4. Highlight the main points you will focus on in the letter

Opening Paragraph Example

Dear Mr. Pierce:

Please accept this letter as application for the customer support position currently available with Y (company's name), as advertised in The Guardian on x/y/zz (date). As my enclosed CV attests, the position is a perfect fit with my qualifications. My experience working as a Help Desk Student Assistant in the Division of Information Technology at Richmond University and my vast experience in the audio field has prepared me for the technological and user support this job requires, making me an ideal candidate for this position.

Body Paragraph(s)

The body paragraph should accomplish a couple of goals:

1. Refer employees to certain points in your resume
2. Emphasize your strongest qualifications or top selling points
3. Show how these qualifications will benefit the company you're applying for
4. You may provide examples of your achievements that have benefited previous companies
5. Be specific in your descriptions

Body Paragraph Example

As my CV highlights, I have offered high-responsibility computer and software support for faculty, staff and students. This experience, along with constant home use of computers, has

given me a thorough background of many different forms of software and operating systems including the Windows and Apple families, Microsoft Office, and Dreamweaver. I have also become very comfortable performing hardware and software upgrades on Windows and Mac machines and working with various types of networks including wireless and LAN. In addition, I master new skills quickly and complete tasks efficiently.

Closing Paragraph

Your closing paragraph should accomplish a couple of goals

1. Ask for an interview
2. Set up a possible time and date
3. Be genuine and thank them for their time

Closing Paragraph Example

Please take the time to look over my CV, and feel free to contact my references. I would welcome the opportunity to further discuss this position in person and look forward to hearing from you to schedule an interview at your convenience.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Don't forget to sign your letter

5 Before you send...

Check Your Facts

Double check to make sure you've got the basics. Are you addressing the letter to the right person? Have you got the right address? Are you applying for the right job? It all sounds basic, but you'd be amazed how many people applying for jobs they can't do, simply because they couldn't be bothered to read the advert properly.

Check Your Writing

If you send off a cover letter full of spelling mistakes and nonsensical grammar, you won't get past the bin. So before you seal the envelope, double and triple check for spelling mistakes and even ask someone else to read the letter for you. What makes sense to you may be absolute gibberish to someone else.

Be Your Own Editor

Finally, be critical. You have to learn to edit yourself. So read through the letter one last time and ask yourself:

- **Am I being clear?**
If your letter can't be understood, it's bin city.
- **Am I being concise?**
More than 4 paragraphs and you're on the boredom threshold.
- **Do I sound negative?**
Make sure you haven't said anything negative about yourself or anyone else, even if it is true!
- **Do I sound like a second-hand car dealer?**
Being positive is one thing, being pushy is another.
- **Am I being serious?**
"Forget the rest, I'm the best" is only going to take your application in one direction - the shredder!
- **Am I being consistent?** Use the same paper your CV is printed on. Use the same font on your CV and your letter.

6 Example Cover Letter

Your name
Mailing address
City, Postcode
Telephone number(s)
Email address

Today's date

Your addressee's name
Professional title
Organization name
Mailing address
City Postcode

Dear Mr. (or Ms.) last name,

Briefly say what job you are applying for and where you saw it advertised. Summarize your skills and qualifications and state why you are the right person for the job.

The mid-section of your letter should be one or two short paragraphs that make relevant points about your qualifications. You should not summarize your CV! You may incorporate a column or bullet point format here. Use terms and phrases that are meaningful to the employer. (This is where your industry research and networking come in.) Make sure your cover letter contains each of these job requirements and shows how you measure up.

Your last paragraph should initiate action by explaining what you will do next (e.g., call the employer) or instigate the reader to contact you to set up an interview. Close by saying "thank you."

Sincerely yours,

Your handwritten signature

Your name (typed)

Enclosure: CV

Examples of good cover letters 1

Sarah Mitchell
Richmond University
Queens Road
Richmond upon Thames
TW10 6JP

February 3, 2008

Mr. Alex Smith
VA2005-071UBW
University of Baltimore
1420 N. Charles St.
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Mr. Smith:

I would like to express my sincere interest for a position as an Admissions Counselor with the University of Baltimore. The chance to work for such a reputable institution is without compare and I am excited about this possibility. Every effort will be made to have an impact and contribute in any manner requested.

The knowledge that I have gained through my educational studies provides, what I believe to be, the background necessary to be an effective Admissions Counselor for the University of Baltimore. The courses I have taken required me to become conversant in a number of diverse areas. With classes such as Developmental Psychology, Human Behavior, Social Problems, Psychology of Personality, and Infancy and Childhood, I have been able to learn and respond to different situations as required by our society. As a Resident Assistant I've been able to apply the knowledge that I have learned from these classes with everyday interactions with my residents. For two years I have advised and counseled my residents in making career/life decisions. As a Student Admissions Guide, I communicated with the students as well as their families in promoting the University. In addition, I had to acquire an in-depth knowledge of the University to address the many questions presented to me.

I have been quite active in campus activities, many of which have been instrumental in changes in the campus community. As president of the Union of African American Students, a member of the Resident Assistance Counsel, and the NAACP I have honed my leadership and public speaking skills. One change included making student organizations more aware of the community issues and how to have an impact within the community.

In conclusion, I would like to again express my enthusiasm and sincere wish to pursue a career with University of Baltimore. The opportunity to apply my educational experience and energy with your institution is exciting to say the least. I am confident that I will be a valued asset to the University. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Sarah Mitchell

This is a good Cover Letter because:

- ▶ The block format is correct.
- ▶ Strong closing paragraph.
- ▶ Letter addresses skills required for the job in the middle two paragraphs..
- ▶ Addressed letter to the person involved in the job search.
- ▶ Speaks highly of the employer.
- ▶ Consistent, logical flow to the letter.
- ▶ No spelling, grammar errors.

Examples of good cover letters 2

Sarah Mitchell
Richmond University
Queens Road
Richmond upon Thames
TW10 6JP

April 27, 2005

Mr. Adam Crowley
KPMG, Inc.
111 South Calvert Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Mr. Crowley:

Currently I am a junior in The Perdue Business School at Salisbury University and am actively seeking an internship with a reputable company such as KPMG. I was extremely impressed with KPMG's approach to auditing after attending the presentation given by your firm on April 19, 2005 at Salisbury University. After discussing the summer internship program with Wade Adkins, a Salisbury University student who interred at KPMG, I became even more excited about your internship program. In addition, I talked to other students who interred at KPMG and after I conducted research of my own I confirmed my interest in KPMG. I believe my skills and qualifications make a great match for your intern program.

I will graduate from The Perdue School of Business with a degree in Accounting in May, 2006, and have completed an internship in the Bergey & Co., CPA Firm which lasted for 10 months. This internship provided me with solid analytical and problem solving skills through my responsibility of identifying and resolving financial reporting issues. In addition I learned how to use multiple accounting software and acquired skills based on incentive calculations and payments. Account reconciliations and analysis are procedures I was able to master and I participated in closing programs through preparation and review of consolidated financial statements schedules, research, and journal entries. You will find that I am interested in every facet of accounting, but most of all I am interested in international accounting because I have vast multicultural experience and foreign language skills.

I am excited about gathering "real" world experience with such a prestigious firm as KPMG. Being an international student, I possess a diverse, multicultural perspective which I feel is critical to succeed in today's market place. My business overview is truly global by nature and the chance to enhance that overview with KPMG is desirable to say the least. Learning from a firm such as yours will give me a true vision as to what is expected from a college graduate in the world of accounting. If I am selected, I will work extremely hard to learn as much as I can while fully understanding as a college student I do have so much to learn.

I have enclosed my resume for your review. I welcome the opportunity to meet with you and would greatly appreciate having the chance to further discuss my skills and qualifications. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Sarah Mitchell

This is a good Cover Letter because:

- ▶ The block format is correct.
- ▶ The middle two paragraphs highlight accomplishments.
- ▶ Enthusiasm and emotion is displayed by using words and phrases like "extremely impressed, even more excited, such a prestigious firm, etc."
- ▶ All sentences are well written and do not begin with "I."
- ▶ This letter truly says this student wants to work for this employer.
- ▶ No spelling errors.

Examples of bad cover letters 1

Sarah Mitchell
Richmond University
Queens Road
Richmond upon Thames
TW10 6JP

11/2/2008

Kristen Dinisio
Director, Human Resources
1020 Hull Street
Baltimore, MD 21230
1.888.4.AMOUR

Dear Ms. Dinisio:

I am a junior at Richmond university, working toward my bachelor's degree in Marketing. I discovered your internship program while researching opportunities in the field of business and marketing. I am writing to inquire about potential positions with Under Armour.

My courses in marketing have convinced me that sales and marketing is a career option I would like to explore. More importantly, an internship with Under Armour would be mutually beneficial and i would like it very much. Your company has an excellent reputation for customer satisfaction.

I know that the combination of my education and motivation to excel will make me an asset to your marketing department. My enclosed resume provides additional details about my background.

If possible, I would like to call you next week as to follow up to see if you would review my qualifications and consider me for a position for your company. If so, I hope to schedule an interview at a convenient time. I look forward to speaking with you. Should you have any questions before that time, you may reach me via phone (410-332-5188) or via email (f123456@students.richmond.ac.uk).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sarah Mitchell

This is a bad Cover Letter because:

- ▶ There is very little substance in their second and third paragraphs
- ▶ The U in University in the first paragraph is not capped
- ▶ The I in the third paragraph is not capped
- ▶ Paragraph 3 has only 2 sentences and does not highlight anything from her resume
- ▶ Lacks emotion

Examples of bad cover letters 2

Sarah Mitchell
Richmond University
Queens Road
Richmond upon Thames
TW10 6JP

29 October 2008

Inside Lacrosse
Towson, MD

Dear Inside Lacrosse Magazine,

My knowledge of lacrosse through living it and breathing it growing up, and my avid writing skills are what would make me an asset to the Inside Lacrosse staff. I am now seeking the position of assistant editor that I read about one

www.journalismjobs.com

The experience that I have lies in my internship at Women Supporting Women, which is the local breast cancer support group for the Eastern Shore of Maryland. I currently have three articles published in a local magazine and many more to come. My job before I graduate is to interview local survivors and write their stories to be published once a month for the next year. This internship has helped me to develop an appreciation of deadlines and has helped me strengthen my writing and editing skills.

Lacrosse was a love of mine at one time and to rekindle that with my new love for writing would be magic to your writing. I am also very familiar with the Towson area and the local lacrosse scene.

I hope to meet you soon to further discuss the arts reporter position. Please feel free to call me anytime on my cell phone at 443-000-0000 or email me at f123456@students.richmond.ac.uk.

Sincerely,

Sarah Mitchell

This is a bad Cover Letter because:

- ▶ There are indents for paragraphs. This should be a block format.
- ▶ There is not a double space between paragraphs.
- ▶ The A and E in Assistant Editor in the first paragraph is not capped
- ▶ The sentence in paragraph 1 that states "I am now seeking the position of assistant editor that I read about one www.journalismjobs.com" needs the word "one" changed to "on." Spelling error.
- ▶ The contact below the date is lacking a person's name and address.
- ▶ The salutation should be to a person not to a magazine.
- ▶ The 3rd paragraph is two sentences and says very little. There is also a spelling error in the last sentence of this paragraph-scene should be scene.