EFFECTIVE COVERING LETTERS

CONVINCE AN EMPLOYER THAT YOU ARE RIGHT FOR THE JOB AND THE ORGANISATION.

A cover letter is your opportunity to explain to an employer why you are applying to them, and how your skills, knowledge and experiences fit the role and organisation. It should work alongside your CV, drawing attention to key skills and achievements relevant to the role.

You should communicate effectively to the reader:
- why you want to work in their organisation
- why you want to work in that particular role
- why your strengths, skills and experience make you the right candidate.

A good covering letter will do all of the above while conveying a confident, competent, enthusiastic and professional attitude.

Structure and content
There is no ‘magic formula’ for covering letters, especially since they need to be adapted for each application, but the following outline should give you a useful structure to start with. Think of sections rather than paragraphs, since some aspects may require two paragraphs. These sections may also appear in different orders for different applications. Keep it to one side of A4.

Greeting
Always try to find a name, rather than a job title, as it demonstrates that you have done your homework and have researched the organisation. ‘Dear Ms Smith’ is much better than ‘Dear Sir/Madam’. Try to avoid ‘To whom it may concern’.

Introduction
Include who you are (recently graduated with a 2.1 in geography from University College London), why you are writing (to apply for X position/looking for work experience) and where you saw the position advertised or, if it’s a speculative application, where you heard about the organisation.

Why them?
Use this section to tell the employer why you want this particular job, and why them rather than someone else. By showing that you really know about the role and the company you can demonstrate your commitment and enthusiasm. Vague statements and blatant flattery don’t work; instead be specific and illustrate your opinions with some original points. Try this test: if you could remove the organisation’s name and replace it with that of a competitor, and it still makes sense, it’s not specific enough. Researching the organisation through their website, Twitter or LinkedIn profile can help you.

Why you?
Make it easy for the employer to see why your skills, experience and personal attributes are right for the position by clearly linking them to the requirements of the job. Don’t worry about covering all of your experience; just illustrate your selling points with three or four good examples.

If you are applying for a job that has been advertised, and you have a person specification for the role, then the covering letter should address that in detail. Make sure you show the employer that you meet their stated requirements.

The ending
State your availability for interview and thank them for the time they have taken in reading your application. End on an optimistic and polite note.
Dear Mr Jones,

I enclose my CV for consideration for the Summer Internship Programme with Diamond Plus Bank (DBP) as advertised on your website. I am a second-year economics student at Queen’s College, University of London.

I became interested in working in finance when undertaking an A level in economics. Subsequently, at university, I attended the ‘Focus on: BRIC Economies’ lecture series and, more recently, a ‘Working in Banking’ careers panel in November 2015. These events convinced me that I would like to go into banking and I am seeking an internship to develop my understanding of the industry and to gain experience.

In my role as Committee Member of the Economics Society, I worked closely in a team of seven to grow membership numbers by 17%. We met regularly to plan promotional campaigns and relied on one another to carry out the different elements of implementing the campaign. My part-time role at Curry’s demonstrates my self-motivation, as I took the initiative to explore training options to further my team’s knowledge about internal systems. My work at Nexus Training has enabled me to refine my communication style, where I have adapted my methods in order to successfully build relationships with an ethnically diverse client group.

One of the attractions of DBP is the emphasis placed on individuals reaching their capabilities, through learning and taking responsibility. This was highlighted for me at the Queen’s College Careers panel where I met a DPB Graduate Trainee. She gave examples of new projects she has delivered, which have had a real impact in the bank. This appeals to me, as someone who enjoys taking responsibility for achieving results, demonstrated in my role as Football Coach, where I was responsible for motivating and organising a squad of 15 to get to the finals of the Small League Championships. In addition, DBP has proven that a long-term investment strategy and remaining sensitive to local conditions can pay dividends, as seen by the raft of awards won in Russia over the last few years. I am very keen to work for a bank which has such a considered approach to investment.

I would be very grateful if you would consider me for the Summer Internship scheme. I am available for interview at any time and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Samantha Chester

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Mr B Jones
Diamond Plus Bank
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London
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9 January 2017

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- Shows motivation and commitment to the business area.
- Always send to a named person.
- Uses numbers and concrete results to demonstrate impact.
- Highlights commitment, and interest, by referring to conversation with an employee.
- Laid out as a formal business letter.
- States clearly and concisely why she is writing and where she heard of the vacancy.
- Ends succinctly without padding.
- Shows interest in the employer and demonstrates the research she’s done.