

FORTNIGHTLY FOCUS

Getting your cover letter right

While we all know that a resume is important when searching for a new job, it is not necessarily the most important document you will need to secure an interview.

A strategically targeted cover letter is usually the most important part of your application. This is why:

- The cover letter allows you to target the job and the employer in a very specific way, leaving the resume to market your skills, qualities and experience as a part of the bigger picture. Your resume then needs less tweaking with each application because the letter, which must be different each time, does that for you.
- A great cover letter should not just repeat your resume in a shorter form, but should tell the employer what it is about the job that is attractive to you, and why you want to work for that employer. You will also need to include the unique skills and the qualities you bring to that job and the company.
- Writing an effective cover letter is not a simple task. It requires thought, knowledge and understanding.

Tips for writing a good cover letter

1. Don't just rehash your resume — be strategic

A strong cover letter should do much more than just restate salient details from your resume. Here's a brief checklist of important functions of a cover letter:

- Draw attention to specific skills and experience that make you an ideal candidate;
- Mention relevant skills and personal qualities the resume may not illustrate;
- Explain why you would love to have the job in question, and how it advances your personal career goals;
- Establish any personal connections to the company or hiring manager, and how you'd like to help the business grow; and
- Justify any gaps in your resume.

2. Tailor it to a specific job

Just as we recommend for the resume, take the time to target your cover letter to the job at hand. Begin by carefully reviewing the job description, making a list of your specific skills and experience that match this particular role.

Gather facts and figures to support your claims. For example, if you're applying for a managerial role, mention the size of teams and budgets you have managed.

Besides highlighting your talents, you can further personalise your cover letter by demonstrating your familiarity with the industry, employer and type of position.

3. **Address the hiring manager personally**

Just as you personalise your resume to the role, you should also address the cover letter to the person actually hiring for the position. If it is not spelled out in the job posting, call the employer's main phone number and ask for the name and title of the hiring manager.

4. **Always address the selection criteria in the advertisement**

Your chances of being short listed for an interview can often be determined by whether or not you have successfully identified, understood and responded to the selection criteria. In addition, carefully thought out and well-structured answers will be beneficial - if you are invited to attend an interview, questions from the interviewer are often based around the selection criteria.

5. **Edit and proofread thoroughly**

Once you are convinced you've made a strong argument for your candidacy, now it's time to proofread your work. No hiring manager wants to see a great cover letter with typos and grammatical errors.

After you've given your cover letter a final polish, ask a friend with excellent grammar, punctuation and spelling skills to review it. Consider giving them a copy of the job advertisement so they can help make sure you've hit all the right points.

Now that you're all prepared and confident with preparing a great cover letter and resume, why not [find out more about the exciting roles that Interaction has on offer at the moment.](#)



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