

## Covering letters

### *...getting them to read your application*

An effective and focused covering letter is an integral part of many application processes and you will certainly use one if you are applying by CV. The idea is that a persuasive covering letter introduces your CV and says why you want to work for that employer and what you have to offer.

Writing, "I would like to apply for a role with your organisation and I enclose (or attach) my CV" is not going to get you anywhere. Fortunately, the rules of writing a good covering letter are not complicated.

**A serious word of warning, though.** Don't be tempted to copy any of the example letters in this leaflet. In the Employability Team we regularly see covering letters laid out in the same way and using exactly the same words and phrases. There is also no such thing as a 'generic cover letter' as your cover letter should be personalised and tailored to each company and role you apply for.

#### Top tips:

- Your covering letter should be no more than one side of A4
- If sending your letter by post, use plain white paper
- If sending your letter by email, attach as a PDF so the formatting doesn't change.
- Alternatively, if they haven't asked for a cover letter you can include the content of your cover letter in your email
- Start with your address on the top right of the page, and include a professional email address and your mobile number (make sure you have a professional answerphone message!)
- Date your letter
- Put the name and title of the person to whom you are writing with the address of the organisation on the left hand side of the page
- You *can* begin your letter with: "Dear Sir or Madam" – but only if there is no alternative
- Writing to a named person, "Dear Ms Smith" is more effective and research shows that your application has an increased chance of actually being read (if you don't know the name of the person, try phoning the company to find out.)
- Remember to spell the name and title correctly, and if writing to a woman be careful to use their preferred mode of address, either Miss, Ms or Mrs (if in doubt use "Ms")
- Tell them the purpose of your letter and include their reference number if applicable, e.g.:

Re: Placement Opportunity in Product Design (6-months), ref JR 325

## Planning your cover letter:

### Section 1 - Context

Say how you heard about the vacancy. Did you see it advertised through NTU, on InPlace or FutureHub? Did you hear about it at a recruitment fair? Did someone they would know recommend that you contact them?

### Section 2 – Why are you applying for this position?

It's crucial to explain why you are interested in working for them. It's not enough to put a formulaic reason such as, *"I want to work for a reputable organisation with an international profile."*. You need to be specific about the company / role. E.g.:

*"I want to work with Toyota because I know that you have increased your share of the UK car market by 6% over the last four years and that you will shortly bring on a new range of models based on your new lean-burn engine. You have manufacturing agreements with firms in Poland and Brazil and all this suggests a successful operation that I would like to contribute to."*

Have an in-depth look at the company website to see details of recent projects and clients and to see what their values are as an organisation. Background research is easy with larger firms - as well as Google the business pages of the *Independent*, *Guardian* and *Daily Telegraph* can provide real insights. You could also include your personal knowledge of the company; what does the brand mean to you? What has inspired you about this company? If you have met anyone from the company, you could explain what you have learnt from them. Use your research to show *why* you want to work there.

### Section 3 – What can you offer them?

You also need to say what you can offer them. In order to do this, you should use the job advert to identify what they are looking for and then give evidence of your relevant key selling points for the role. These will be four or five personal qualities or periods of relevant experience. These qualities have to be genuine and should reflect what is on your CV. You need to express your key selling points in clear and enthusiastic language.

### Section 4 – Positive and professional sign off

End your letter on a positive note and say when you will be available for interview. Usually at any time but you may have dates when you can't attend because of exams. Finish with *"Yours sincerely"* if you have written to a named person or *"Yours faithfully"* if not. Don't end with simply *"Yours"* or *"Yours truly."*

### Before you send it:

- Check the spelling and grammar - most rejected applications result from basic mistakes in the covering letter
- Read it out loud to see if it flows well
- Ask somebody else to read it for a second opinion
- Check your whole application against the job advert – have you included everything they have asked for?
- Read the instructions – make sure you are sending it to the right person in the right format

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/cvs-and-cover-letters/cover-letters>

Claire Derby  
21 Moor Road  
Rugby  
CV7 4MJ

T: 0123 456789  
M: 07896 20120403  
E: cdy@gmail.com

Ms Julie Hemingway, Head of Design  
HiTech Design Solutions  
Oldham Road  
Manchester M14 6UF

12 February 2016

Dear Ms Hemingway,

I am writing to apply for your **Assistant Product Designer** post, which was advertised on the vacancy website of Nottingham Trent University Employability Team, 8 February 2016.

I first became aware of HiTech Solutions at Nottingham Trent University's Recruitment Fair in March 2015 and I was impressed with both the company profile and the staff on the stand. My subsequent research introduced me to the innovative display designs you have produced for clients such as Max Factor, Rimmel and Maybelline and the Gold Award you gained at the 2014 International Merchandising Exhibition in Barcelona.

The HiTech website emphasises customer focus and improving quality and efficiency. My degree in Product Design offers a firm foundation of theory and practice and my final year dissertation examined developments in high street displays. I am also a keen reader of the financial press and aware of current trends and developments within the retail sector. I believe that commercial design can only flourish if it meets customer needs.

My CV shows the range of roles I have undertaken which require high-level communication, interpersonal and interpretive skills. This is best demonstrated by my successful completion of a 6-month work placement at Design Nation, Leicester where I performed precise and exacting tasks in a fast-paced working environment with a very demanding customer base.

I believe the ability to build and maintain productive relationships with clients and colleagues is key skill that I can bring to the role of Assistant Product Designer.

While the advertisement for the post states that Maths at 'A' level would be an advantage, I believe that my grade A\* at GCSE Maths demonstrates both an aptitude and practical number ability which would be an asset to HiTech.

I hope that after reading my CV, you will recognise my potential to perform well and to make a real contribution to your organisation. I can be available for interview at any time apart from 27-29 February 2016 when I have exams. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Derby

James White  
134 Mansfield Road  
Nottingham  
NG3 2KL

E: [jameswhite99@hotmail.com](mailto:jameswhite99@hotmail.com)  
M: 071234567891

Mr David Enderby, Managing Director  
Avant Garde Heating  
Units 14-16 Greenfield Business Park  
Doncaster Road  
Sheffield S11 2DR

14 February 2016

Dear Mr Enderby,

I am writing to enquire about the possibility of a work placement with Avant Garde Heating. I am aware that you have employed Product Design graduates from Nottingham Trent University in the past and I hope that you would consider me for either a 6-month or 12-month placement beginning in September 2016.

I have a keen interest in heating design and systems and I am fascinated by the idea of bringing old building stock back to full use through sympathetic restoration. I know that your products are regularly used in the rebuilding and refurbishment of listed houses and the conversion of old industrial premises.

You will see from my enclosed CV that I am in my second year of the Product Design degree at NTU. As well as experiencing design in a wide range of materials I am skilled in 3D Design, 3D Model Making, Drawing, 2D Design, Visuals and Photography. My Mac and PC skills include *QuarkXpress* (Intermediate), *Photoshop* (Advanced), *Illustrator* (Intermediate) and *Freehand* (Advanced) as well as the Microsoft Office packages.

I am a highly motivated person who is flexible and adaptable and I would enthusiastically engage with all aspects of your business. I am a self-starter who would make a real contribution and require little in the way of supervision. My wide experience of people-centred jobs in the retail and hospitality industries means that I would relate well to your clients and represent Avant Garde in a professional manner.

If you think I could be an asset to your business I would be delighted to hear from you. I would be available for interview at any time except w/c Monday 11 March 2016 when I will be on a course-related study visit to Berlin.

Yours sincerely,

James White