

ASK us about...

Job Prospects



An idea of how your covering letter should look.....

Your name
 and address on the right hand
 side of the page
 Always include your
 post code
 and telephone number

The name
 The job title
 The address of the person you are writing to
 on the left hand side of the page

Date

Dear Sir/Madam (if you don't know their name)
 Dear Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms (if you do)

Your first paragraph is your introduction. In this paragraph you should explain why you are writing to them. So, it may be that you are replying to a specific advert in which case where did you see the advert

In your second paragraph should refer to your CV and you should be setting out clearly what makes you suitable for this job. How exactly you match the employer's criteria in their advert. Or if this is a speculative approach you should be stating what you believe they are looking for. Talk about the skills you have that would be relevant to the job and back these up with clear examples of how you have used these skills.

In your third paragraph should explain why this company appeals to you. Here you can talk about what you know about the company from your own research. To research you can look at their website, an article or their company brochure. It is important not to waffle but to be clear and precise in what you say. If you can't find any info then use this paragraph to talk about your suitability further. Again put in evidence of your skills in practice.

In your fourth paragraph. This is where you need to conclude, sum up and end the letter. You can use phrases like 'in conclusion'.... You should include a suggestion to meet to discuss your suitability for a role within the company.

Yours sincerely (if you have put a name after "Dear...")
 Yours faithfully (if you haven't)

Sign here

Your name typed here

Applying for jobs: Covering Letters

What is a covering letter, and why do I need one?

When you apply for a job, work placement or voluntary opportunity, you will usually apply using a CV or an application form. When you submit your application, it is usually a good idea to submit a covering letter to introduce yourself and enhance the information within your CV or application form.

Use your covering letter to explain why you are writing to them; are you responding to an advertisement, or maybe applying speculatively? Explain the things that make you a suitable match for the employer, and make sure that you highlight your knowledge of the company to which you are applying and the sector as a whole.

When employers are choosing a candidate, they will want you to show that you understand what the job involves, what the industry involves and for you to sell your skills to them. A covering letter is an ideal way to highlight your strengths in a concise manner and draw their attention to you as a strong candidate.

Need more help? Just ASK!

- Visit the Help Zone at Student Services:
 - City North Campus (Perry Barr), First Floor Baker Building
 - Gosta Green, room G27
 - Edgbaston Campus, Second Floor Seacole Building
- Dates and times of drop-ins are available on our website www.bcu.ac.uk/student-services/see-us, along with details of how you can contact us.
- You can access useful links and information at www.bcu.ac.uk/student-services/careers, or telephone **0121 331 5588** for help and advice.

Student Services Career Zone, October 2009

View our full range of leaflets online: www.bcu.ac.uk/student-services/careers/handouts.html



T: 0121 331 5588
www.bcu.ac.uk/student-services



Writing a covering letter: the basics

Remember, your covering letter is an introduction to your CV or application. You should use this to:

- Explain why you are applying for the role
- Demonstrate your knowledge of the organisation
- Highlight any particular selling points within your CV
- Explain any additional factors that do not fit easily into your CV
- Mention any specific personal circumstances contained within your CV

Just like a CV, there are certain conventions to writing a covering letter. Remember the following:

- Use good quality paper, as with your CV
- Do not exceed one side of A4
- Use an easy to read font such as Arial, 10 or 12 point, and use good quality paper and a decent printer
- Put your name and address and contact details at the top
- The text of the letter should consist of four paragraphs
- Avoid using the same words and phrases that you use in your CV
- As always, double-check your spelling, punctuation and grammar. Get someone you know to have a read-through, or ask at one of the Academic Skills Centres at City North or Edgbaston Campus.

Birmingham City University
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held responsible for the content
of external websites

What should I say?

Your covering letter can really make a difference when you are applying for a job, whether you are responding to an advertisement, but especially if you are applying speculatively.

In either case, remember to target your CV and covering letter to the role and company for which you are applying. Before you send it off, try to re-read the letter from the employer's perspective; think about what they are looking for, rather than just how you will benefit!

Responding to an advert?

Start with the basics: make sure you state the role for which you are applying, the job reference number, and where you saw the advert. You should explain why you are suitable for the role, making sure that you highlight any particular skills or competencies that are mentioned in the advert. Remember, an employer will be looking to check your skills against the job specification, and if you don't mention your strengths, then the employer will never know about them!

Applying speculatively?

As well as highlighting your suitability for the job, and any technical competencies, it is **vital** that you show why you are contacting this company; you should also demonstrate the research you have done into the organisation and the job sector. The leaflet **Researching Employers** will help you to do this.

Remember to have your CV and covering letter checked by a Careers Consultant before you send them. You may also want to seek the opinions of friends and family, but **don't leave it until the last minute!**

Layout of your covering letter

The layout of covering letters tends to be more conventional; to help you, we have included a template overleaf which you may find useful. You may also wish to check the examples given in the **Applications, CVs and Covering Letters** booklet, which is also available online: www.prospects.ac.uk —> “Jobs and work” —> “Applications, CVs and Covering Letters”.

Remember to include the “basics” that are outlined above, and get your CV and Covering Letter checked before you apply!