

Covering and speculative letters

Covering and speculative letters are your first chance to sell yourself to a prospective employer. **If you don't get it right, you may not get a second chance.**

A **covering letter** should:

- * be sent with a CV or application form that has been asked for by the employer.
- * clearly state the job you are applying for.
- * contain the key information that will most 'grab' or impress the employer.
- * be short and punchy. You don't want to put them off before they even get to read your CV/ application form.

A **speculative letter** should:

- * be sent to an employer with a CV in the hope they may have a vacancy to suit you. It is a great way to tap into the 'hidden' job market – all those vacancies that never make it into the newspapers, job centres or vacancy websites.
- * not repeat everything you've put in your CV, but highlight the key skills and experiences that would really interest the employer.

- * show that you have done some research into the company.
- * be sent to a named person. Telephone the company in advance and ask who would be the most relevant for the type of work you are looking for.
- * clearly state why you are contacting the employer, for example, full-time work, part-time work, an apprenticeship, work experience placement or holiday work.
- * state when you could start work.

General dos and don'ts

- * **Do** keep your letter to one page of quality A4 white or cream paper (match it to your CV). Use a good quality envelope too.
- * **Do** keep the letter short, uncluttered and to the point. Use five or fewer lines per paragraph and alter the length of sentences.
- * **Do** spell check and proof read all documents. Ideally get someone else to do this.
- * **Don't** forget to enclose either your CV or the application form.

- * **Don't** mass copy letters – personalise them.
- * **Do** make it sound as if you have chosen them above all others. Find out a little about them, for example how long they have been operating, if they specialise in a particular product.
- * **Do** make sure you emphasise your skills and the needs of the company.
- * **Don't** forget to ask for an interview and ensure you are going to be around to go for one if asked. It won't look good if you post a pile of speculative letters and then disappear on a three-week holiday!

There are plenty of examples of covering and speculative letters in books and on the internet – try your local Connexions centre or library. Customise them to suit the company you are approaching and use a style that you are comfortable with.

Think about:

Remember it won't look good if you post a pile of speculative letters and then disappear on a three-week holiday!

Example covering letter

21 Green Lane
Bridge Heath
New Town
NT5 3NL

Mr N. Black
Horton and Black Bindings PLC
Units 34-39
Waterside Business Park
Feeder Way
Walton WA12 9PF

31 May 2008

Dear Mr Black,

ACCOUNTS CLERK – VACANCY REFERENCE 168495

Please find enclosed my CV in application for the post advertised by Connexions on 27 May 2008.

Since completing my BTEC First Diploma in Business (with Merit), I have been particularly keen to apply my business, administration and finance skills with a company that operates across Europe.

I am a fluent speaker of Spanish and also have a working knowledge of German.

I am a fast and accurate worker, with a keen eye for detail. I really enjoy the benefits of team working and can also work effectively on my own.

I am enthusiastic and determined to make a success of this exciting opportunity.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this application and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely

Alicia Covas

Example speculative letter

85 Rasse Road
North Broadway
Lonnington
LN6 8MS

Mrs B. Thorpe
Head of Recruitment
Level 5 HQ
135 W 18th Street
New York
NY 10011
USA

2 May 2008

Dear Mrs Thorpe,

I am writing to ask if you have any part-time opportunities for Menswear Retail Assistants in your new Lonnington branch when it opens next September. I enclose my CV (résumé[■]) for your information.

I have been watching with great interest the development of Lonnington's new retail development – Grand Arcade. I was really happy to learn that Level 5 had decided to open its first UK branch here. I have had the opportunity to visit some of your branches in New York and really liked the positive energy of the staff and the designer ranges stocked.

As you will see, I have had extensive academic and frontline retail experience in the sector, giving me varied skills and the ability to work with many different types of people. I believe I would be an enthusiastic and hardworking member of your team.

I have excellent references and would be delighted to discuss any possible vacancy with you at your convenience. I would be available to start work immediately.

Yours sincerely

Brian Adelaide

■A résumé is what they call a CV in America.