

PGR Tips on writing an effective covering letter

The [PGR Tips issue 52 on writing CVs](#) promised an edition on writing [covering letters](#), and here, at the close of the year, it is. Consider your covering letter as the icing on the cake that is your application, as it creates a first impression about you. It should draw attention to the talents you would bring to the job. In addition, it showcases your ability to write well and do so persuasively. It should be very concise, one side of A4 at the most. A good covering letter takes a considerable amount of time to write...

Get a name to write to

If there is no name to address the letter to in the job advert, phone to get one. It is generally a good idea to phone in advance to clarify any queries you may have and make yourself known as an interested candidate.

Introduction

Clearly state what position you are applying for, who you are and why you are interested.

Convince the reader you want the job

What a lot of job seekers don't realise is that those looking to fill a position may have a valid fear that their ideal candidate will turn down the job or not stick at it for very long. Convince them you really are interested and how it fits in with your (career) plans

Convince the reader that you could do the job

Matching the skills and experience you have with what they are looking for. Give examples of qualities they ask for and how you have coped with responsibilities matching those in the job description in the past, referring to your CV. Make sure you tailor your language- use the phrases they use wherever possible, doing any translation for them.

Let your personality shine through

Write with enthusiasm and be positive.

Be informed

Throughout, show that you have researched the position and the employer. This is called competitive intelligence. Quotes from their (and their competitors') website or other information you may have will show you have done your homework.

Understand you and their values

A more subtle use of competitive intelligence is to get a good understanding of a company's values and show how yours match. Having shared values creates a human connection. The same is true for language.

End with a confident conclusion

Summarise what you offer and how that fits perfectly with what they are looking for. Say you are looking forward to the interview to explore the fit. If you are writing a speculative application rather than in response to a job advert, indicate that you will call in a specific number of days (and do so).