

# Application Letters

**An application letter is also called a cover letter and is an important part of your job application.**

It is your chance to introduce yourself, summarise why you are right for the job and entice the employer to read your resume and shortlist you for an interview.

## **Preparation**

- You need to prepare by reading the full position description. Most jobs have downloadable position descriptions or you could call/email the company to ask for one.
- Most job advertisements and job descriptions contain two sections. The first describes the duties you would be expected to carry out. The second describes the job requirements and outlines the skills, experience and qualifications that are required to do the job.
- If you lack a preferred quality you can still apply for the position, providing that you can persuade the employer that your experience is relevant.
- If the job description says that candidates need to clearly address all criteria, you will also need to create a separate document and address the key selection criteria. See Quick tip on Selection Criteria for how to do this.

## **Unadvertised Positions**

- Where positions are not advertised you may have to write an unsolicited letter to an employer. For example, if you are looking for fieldwork experience or course related vacation work, you often need to write directly to employers who may be able to offer placements.
- In cases where you are writing an unsolicited letter, you must still target your letter to the needs of employers. Check job advertisements in the same or similar field to identify common qualities that are sought after.

## Find Out About the Organisation You Are Applying to

- Your letter will stand out if you target your application to the employing organisation. Information that is likely to be useful includes company background and history, client profile and services.
- Details of company/organisation activities can be found on their website, in annual reports, publicity material and employer directories. Other sources are the stock exchange, internet, relevant human resource departments, state or local libraries, professional associations, business magazines or trade journals.

## Identify What You Have to Offer

Consider your skills and experience gained through study, paid or voluntary work, sport and leisure activities. After compiling a thorough listing of examples, carefully select those that are most relevant to the job and the organisation.

## The Look

A letter of application is a business letter and should adhere to that style and format. Your application letter should be:

- one page—from start to finish
- typed on plain white paper if being sent via mail
- blocked on the left-hand margin, without indenting
- contain structured paragraphs with a double space between all paragraphs
- in a word document or PDF format
- attached as a separate document if sent via email; not in the body of the email.

## Structure

Plan your structure before you start writing. A good basic structure could be four paragraphs:

1. introduce yourself and say why you believe you are a good fit for the job
2. outline briefly your relevant work experience
3. outline your related education and qualifications
4. summarise the connection between your skills and experience and this position, and why you particularly want to work at this organization.

## The Contents

The letter should flow in a way that takes the reader from one point to another naturally.

- Avoid long, complicated sentences where points can get lost.
- Avoid starting every sentence with 'I'.
- Use concise and simple language.
- Use a conversational style of speech.
- Avoid impersonal phrases, such as: as per your advertisement.
- Use active verbs.
- Make the first paragraph interesting to read.
- Try to be enthusiastic.
- Give the employer an insight into your personality.
- Check your spelling and grammar – and ask someone else to proof read.

## The Next Step

If you need assistance with writing an application, undertake the online tutorial Application Express and then have it checked by the Career Development and Employment team.  
[www.rmit.edu.au/careers/applicationexpress](http://www.rmit.edu.au/careers/applicationexpress)

## Further information

Visit the Job Shop for career related workshops and events and one on one advice.

Read the Jobs and Career advice web pages  
[www.rmit.edu.au/students/life-and-work-opportunities/jobs-and-career-advice](http://www.rmit.edu.au/students/life-and-work-opportunities/jobs-and-career-advice)

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