

## Cover letters



A cover letter can accompany your resume as part of the job application process. You may also be asked to address selection criteria and/or complete a standard application form.

Below are some tips for preparing a cover letter for a written job application.

### Addressing the letter

Send letters to people, not companies. If you don't know the name of the contact or proper job title, then call the company and ask. **Never guess.** Ideally, address your letter using an honorific (Mr or Ms), then their name, job title, company name and address.

If you are not responding to an advertised vacancy, target the Recruitment Manager or the Human Resources Manager.

### Contents

If the cover letter is the primary part of the application (i.e. there is no additional statement addressing selection criteria), you should cover all components of the “person requirements” in the logical sequence as contained in the advertisement/role description.

If the cover letter is simply a letter accompanying your selection criteria response and your resume, the letter should provide an overview or summary of your qualifications, skills and experience in relation to the role with one or two broad examples.

When addressing the role requirements and crafting your cover letter, it is essential to provide examples that demonstrate your capabilities and experience against each component, as succinctly as possible. To do this effectively you should use a framework to “tell the story” such as the CAR or STAR models.

Identifying examples of how you can demonstrate your skills using one of these models will be useful in developing a statement that flows well, makes sense, and conveys the necessary information.

The **CAR** acronym stands for:

- **Challenge** – Situation/ (briefly describe the context and your responsibilities)
- **Action** - what did you do?
- **Result** - what were the outcomes?



The **STAR** acronym stands for:

- **Situation** – What was the context\conditions\circumstances
- **Task** – What were your responsibilities or duties?
- **Action** – What action did you take?
- **Result** – What was the result/benefit/outcome?





## Format

1. Write the name of each component exactly as it is worded on the advertisement or role profile
2. Font size should be no less than 10 point and no more than 12 point.
3. Margins should be no less than 1.5cm
4. Describe your skills, knowledge, experiences and achievements relevant to the role
5. Use words that are action oriented, professional and clearly describe the level of responsibility, achievement, complexity and outcome.
6. Choose examples that are the most impressive and may differentiate you from other candidates.
7. Always tell the truth and use start with a positive statement
8. Keep the page length to what is required (the role description should specify this).

## Editing checklist

Before submitting your application, check your letter against the following:

	Yes	No
Responses sound professional and active		
Information is logical and consistent		
Check for grammatical and spelling errors		
Verb tenses are accurate and consistent		
Avoid abbreviations or unexplained acronyms		
Put most important information first		
You have adhered to the maximum page length		

## Letter framework

### Paragraph 1 – Introduction

- *What you are applying for and why you are applying?*

State the purpose of the letter in first paragraph.

Open the cover letter with a statement that grabs attention and compels them to read more about you. However, it must be related to the position and the reason you are writing.

#### Example

I am writing in response to the recent advertisement for the position of xxx. I was delighted/excited/interested to see this role become available as I believe I possess the ideal mix of skills, knowledge and experience to perform this role to a high standard and become a valuable asset to xxx company xxx (*use the company name here*).



## Paragraph 2-4 – Body

- *Stake your claim*

We all tend to under-sell ourselves and find it hard to talk about the things we are good at. Don't hide your light under a bushel. **Sell yourself.** Not only match your skills and experience to the requirements of the job, but make a point of offering more.

Every hiring decision, regardless of the size of the company, is a significant investment in time and money for an employer. They are hiring you to fill a role or function with the sole purpose of achieving an outcome for the company. Be mindful of this when you make your claims. Explain to the reader how employing you will benefit the company — don't leave them to guess. Use knowledge you have gleaned from your research to show your initiative and interest and align with company values.

### Example

I possess xxx years' experience in delivering xxx outcomes. I have personally been responsible for achieving xxx which had a direct flow on effect of saving the company \$xxx or increasing revenue by \$xxx. I have experience using the XXX system and daily use it to deliver xxx. A recent example of my experience was xxx.

It is useful to use a framework to articulate your examples (or tell a short story) using a format such as the STAR/CAR model. Either one enables you to provide detailed examples describing your actual achievements and a manner that flows. Be as succinct as possible.

## Final Paragraph – Conclusion

This is a call to action and thank you. Finish your letter with a positive proactive statement that gives no doubt about your interest and suitability for the role.

### Example

Thank you for the opportunity to apply for this role. I look forward to hearing from you soon with a view to presenting myself at interview to further showcase my abilities and potential for this role.

## Ending the letter

Business letter writing etiquette is to finish with either “yours sincerely” or “yours faithfully”, followed by a few spaces and then your name and telephone number.

Yours sincerely

Citizen Smith  
Mobile telephone number