WRITING YOUR COVERING LETTER

Covering Letters

A covering letter gives you the chance to show your motivation for the role, demonstrate how your skills match the requirements and explain any areas of your CV that may need clarification, such as employment gaps. It can also be a space to share information about a disability or learning difference if you choose to.

Some roles will ask for a covering letter as part of the application. If it's optional, including one can strengthen your application and add value to your CV. Below are some ways to do this effectively.

Researching the employer

You could refer to company values you connect with, data that shows their success, or recent projects they have worked on. These details help explain what attracted you to the organisation and show genuine motivation to work there. Use a variety of sources to do your research such as their company website, LinkedIn and news outlets. Refer back to **page 4** for information on research you can do.

Researching the role

Give specific details about what interests you in the role, such as opportunities to build new skills, receive training, or work towards a qualification. Showing that you understand what the job involves can demonstrate your motivation and readiness for the position. Use the job description to help you with this research.

Tailoring your covering letter

Using specific information about the employer and the role demonstrates genuine interest in working there. Relate this information back to yourself. For example, by explaining how you align with their values and providing evidence such as relevant education, projects, volunteering, or work experience.

Your Unique Selling Points (USPs)

Including your USPs in a covering letter helps you highlight the qualities, strengths or experiences that set you apart from other applicants. By clearly showing what makes you distinctive, you make it easier for employers to see the unique value you would bring to the role. **Page 17** will cover this in more detail.

Finding your Unique Selling Points (USPs)

Unique Selling Points are the strengths or experiences that set you apart from other candidates. They might include:

- → A specific skill
- → Work experience, volunteering or extracurricular involvement
- → A qualification you've gained
- → A combination of these

Use your USPs in your covering letter to show why you're the strongest candidate for the role, tailoring them each time to match the job requirements.

How to write about your USPs

Understand what the employer wants

Start by analysing the job description to identify the key skills, attributes and experiences the company is seeking.

Identify what you offer

Reflect on your own skills and experiences using the Skills Audit tool on **page 5**. Consider examples from work experience, academic projects, volunteering, clubs, and other extracurricular activities. The Successful Futures Pathway (**www.southampton.ac.uk/successfulfutures**) can also help you recognise the skills you've developed during your time at university and beyond.

Match your strengths to the role

Compare what the employer is looking for with what you have to offer. The points where these align are your Unique Selling Points (USPs) for the role.

Highlight your USPs in your covering letter

Use the "Why you?" section of your covering letter to clearly demonstrate these USPs. Below is an example of how to describe a USP effectively.

Your Unique Selling Point	Evidence of your Unique Selling Point	What value does this bring to the role?
My strong ability to create engaging social media content	gained during a marketing internship at the MTM Agency where I managed Instagram and TikTok campaigns that increased follower engagement by 35%	will enable me to grow the company's online presence and strengthen brand visibility.

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Covering Letter example

Here is an example covering letter that may be used in an application for a UK-based role. It follows a typical structure and is a maximum of one page in length.

Introduction:

Introduce yourself briefly, and state the purpose of the letter; to apply for the position. Refer to where you saw the advert or why you are writing if it is a speculative letter. You could provide a brief summary of one or two key reasons why you feel you are right for the role, citing the skills mentioned in the job description.

Why them?:

Give the reasons you are applying to that company/organisation. This is your chance to target your application and demonstrate that you have done your background research. Avoid vague generalisations about the organisation, such as mentioning their 'excellent reputation' or 'first class training programme'.

Why this job?:

Give reasons for your interest in the job or career sector for which you are applying. Indicate what abilities, knowledge, skills and/or qualifications (if applicable) you hope to gain by doing the job. Be specific about what you find satisfying about doing this kind of work.

Why you?:

It is vital to show what you can do for them. This part of the covering letter is where you should write about your Unique Selling Points (see **page 17**). Give reasons why they should consider you, drawing upon experiences, skills and knowledge that you have which are relevant to the job. You could expand upon themes or achievements mentioned in your CV to give greater context, but ensure you do not just repeat word for word what is already in your CV.

Additional information:

You can use an additional paragraph to explain any anomalies in your experience such as an employment gap or competencies that you do not yet have. Explain these in a positive way and consider mentioning how you have overcome any difficulties.

Conclusion:

Short final section, perhaps summarising your suitability for the job and/or looking positively towards the opportunity to discuss your application at interview.

If the letter is addressed to a named person, sign off with Yours sincerely. If not, use Yours faithfully.

Speculative covering letters:

You may also wish to submit a covering letter if you are contacting a company on a speculative basis. This may be a specialist company in your field of study, or a company you have a particular interest in working for that is not currently advertising a suitable role. You can find more information about speculative covering letters here:
www.southampton.ac.uk/coveringletters

14 Oldfield Avenue
Guildford
GU2 7ZZ
eh14@your_email.com
07989 989765

Ms A Jones
James Day Recruitment
London
WC1A 9ZZ

12th October 2025

Dear Ms Jones,

Application for Graduate Recruitment Consultant position

I am writing to apply for the Graduate Recruitment Consultant position at James Day Recruitment Agency, as advertised on the 'MyCareer Jobs Board'. I will graduate this summer with a BSc Psychology degree and am predicted a high 2:1. I was inspired to apply for this role after speaking to one of your consultants whom I met at the University of Southampton Careers Fair.

It is my ambition to work for James Day Recruitment because your Investors in People accreditation reflects a genuine commitment to developing your employees, and your reputation for valuing every client relationship demonstrates the high standards you uphold. This aligns with my own desire to work hard for the benefit of others, as demonstrated through my voluntary work as a Student Mentor. The global nature of your company also appeals to me, as I would be able to continue to utilise my French language skills to liaise with colleagues in your Paris and Brussels offices.

I am particularly keen to have the opportunity within this role to take on additional responsibility from an early stage in my career. I enjoy taking on new challenges and have taken on the role of Team Captain in my university hockey team in recent seasons. I would welcome the opportunity to apply my interpersonal skills in a fast paced business environment, working closely with high profile clients and sourcing exceptional candidates. I developed these strengths through part-time work as a retail assistant and further refined them while delivering presentations to employees during a Student Innovation Project.

As you can see from my CV, I have a range of skills and experiences that will enable me to succeed in this position. My experience of working within an HR environment has strengthened my ability to communicate effectively and build relationships quickly with both internal staff and external candidates. This will enable me to liaise confidently with hiring managers to understand role requirements and provide timely updates throughout the recruitment process. I have also communicated with different types of audiences, from secondary school pupils to heads of department, and have developed my teamworking abilities through group projects. I am able to work effectively under pressure, as demonstrated in my degree programme when I was faced with multiple assignment deadlines within a week and I completed each one on time and to a high standard. During my part-time retail assistant role at Primark, I used my initiative to solve problems independently and worked flexibly to meet customer needs effectively. I was also able to apply knowledge from my 2nd year Social Psychology module, by applying psychological principles to everyday life and gain a deeper insight into customer behaviour.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my application. I hope that I have demonstrated that I have the enthusiasm and commitment, as well as the necessary skills and experience, to succeed and be a future asset to your company. I am available for interview at your convenience, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Lockman