



Career
Resources

Cover Letter Guide

2023

A word cloud on a light blue background. The words are in various shades of blue and green. The largest word is 'cover letter'. Other prominent words include 'education', 'work experience', 'stand out', 'best fit', 'secure an interview', 'attributes', 'attention grabbing opener', 'qualifications', 'first impression', 'call to action', 'hiring process', 'transferable skills', and 'brain dump'.

attention grabbing opener
qualifications call to action
education first impression
cover letter
attributes
stand out best fit hiring process
secure an interview
work experience transferable skills
'brain dump'

This material is designed as supplementary reading material for New Arrivals from Ireland.

New Arrivals have a broad range of qualifications, knowledge and experience in many functional disciplines. Certain guidelines may fit your profile, others may not. Ultimately, it is your choice to select the guidelines that best suit your situation and to design a cover letter and/or resume that best represents you in the marketplace. Note that employment processes in Canada may be different than what you have experienced in the past.

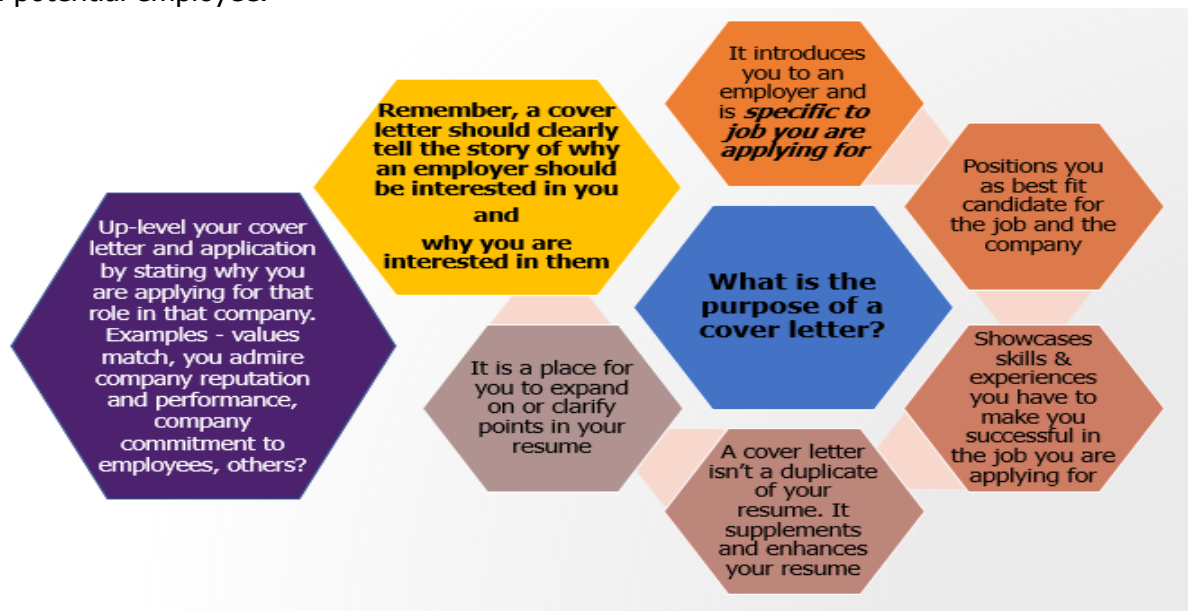
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www.irishcanadianimmigrationcentre.org

Career Resources

TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED

- A cover letter is an important part of the job application process in Canada. Submitting a one-page cover letter supports your application, a well written letter increases your chances of being invited to the interview stage, an engaging cover letter can shape your future relationship with the prospective employer, regardless of whether you get the job.
- Typically, a cover letter relates to a specific job, you should tailor it accordingly. The font style in your cover letter should match your resume font, for a consistent, professional look. Format your cover letter as you would a professional letter e.g., include the date. Do not go beyond one page, keep your letter relevant, professional, and concise. Remember to proofread your letter and have another person do this for you.
- A cover letter is a practical way to demonstrate your written communication skills, your level of self-awareness, how well you have researched the company and position, and your ability to decide what is and is not relevant to your application.
- Do not include any reference to your IEC Working Holiday visa in your cover letter. Your cover letter should focus on your qualifications and experience. Your primary objective is to secure the interview. Your visa status is a discussion item after you have secured the interview, when asked.
- Preparing a cover letter that makes you stand out in the application process will take time, yet it is worth it when you consider the purpose and function of a cover letter from both the employer and candidate perspective. A well-crafted cover letter can signal to a recruiter/hiring manager that you are serious about the position and have taken the time to submit a quality application. This is especially important considering a cover letter is a vehicle through which you can show prospective employers that you know what you can offer them and the company, how you meet their needs, and help them to envisage you as the person who can be successful in the job, the team, and their organization. It helps the employer better understand you as a candidate and ultimately a potential employee.



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COVER LETTER LAYOUT

1. Paragraph One - Attention Grabbing Opener

- Why this job and why this company?
- Be concise and professional. Avoid generic or typical openings where you may blend in with other applicants.
- Share what your real interest and passion is in this position. For example, do you admire the company, have they got an attribute or succeeded in a space that is inspiring for you? Are you motivated by something you've heard or observed related to their performance or work culture? Has the company been recommended to you, and you were impressed with the information that was shared with you?
- Demonstrate in your letter what has motivated you to apply, and this can help differentiate you from other applicants.

2. Paragraph Two and Three – Focus on Your Skills and Attributes

- Key questions you need to address in this part of your cover letter are - why should the employer hire you? What can you contribute to the organization? How will hiring you benefit them?
- Acknowledge the position requirements and match your qualifications and experience directly against each requirement. Spell out how your skills, experience, qualifications, work attitude, and accomplishments match their needs, as indicated in the job posting. Prioritize your top strengths and accomplishments to match needs. Connect the dots for the reader.
- If you are not responding to an advertised position and are simply making a general inquiry, insert a profile paragraph highlighting your qualifications and experience.
- In both cases, use 3-4 sentences. Never state that you are interested in the position because it will provide you with good experience. The employer wants to know what you will contribute to the organization, not what the organization will do for you. Including an accomplishment relevant to skill(s) being sought will support your application.
- Remember you need to convincingly highlight that the skills you have used in the past are those you can transfer into the job you are applying for. Prioritize your top strengths and accomplishments to match the needs of the job and the organization.
- Highlight your personal attributes – “hardworking”; “diligent”; “purpose driven employee”; “detail oriented with a commitment to upholding confidentiality”; “desire to make a significant contribution to the organization's success”; “strong commitment to customer service”; “dedicated to process improvement”; etc.
- If there is something you feel may need to be interpreted from your resume or pre-emptively noted, then mention it if you think it will strengthen your application. A cover letter is not the place to over explain, be apologetic or spotlight position requirements you may not meet yet. The interview stage could be better positioned to discuss areas you want to develop or expand upon. Remember a job application is a place to focus on your assets and what you can offer.

3. Paragraph Four – Wrap Up and Call to Action

- Thank the recruiter/hiring manager for their time in considering your application.
- Reinforce your excitement and skills to do the job by summarizing what you offer. This gives the employer/recruiter a reason to contact you.
- Sign off appropriately, remembering your contact details which should match what you have included in your resume.

Example:

I would welcome an opportunity to meet with you at your convenience to discuss my application in greater detail. Please note that I am available to commence employment immediately. [This may provide you with a competitive advantage to start quickly because you do not have to provide Notice to a current employer].

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

[Date]

[Employer Name and address]

To Whom It May Concern / Their Name

Re: Recruitment Co-Ordinator, Job ID 0346

I am pleased to submit my resume for consideration with respect to the vacancy as referenced above. As a purpose driven employee, I am committed to quality service delivery. My work ethos and experience are aligned to ABC company values and your innovative approach to service delivery.

In relation to your defined role and candidate requirements, please note that I hold a Bachelor Degree of Business Studies combined with diversified experience in several key functional areas including recruitment, selection and training; people management; business development and client retention; project management; customer service and E-Commerce. [match your qualifications and experience with advertised requirements]. I am currently in discussions with HRPAO with a view to completing courses required for the CHRP professional designation.

In terms of personal qualifications, I am results-achievement oriented; hard working and diligent with excellent problem-solving and communication skills. I particularly enjoy a role in organization management; managing and interacting with customers and staff and related problem-solving; time management. I am particularly strong in managing teams.

I would welcome an opportunity to meet you at a convenient time to discuss my application in greater detail. Please note that I am available to commence employment immediately. I can be reached to [insert email and cell phone details].

Respectfully submitted

[applicant name]

Common Questions...

A cover letter takes a lot of time to put together. Do I really need to include a cover letter, will anyone read it?

- Even if the job posting/ad does not ask for a cover letter, include it. **The exception to this** is when the job posting/ad explicitly asks applicants not to include a cover letter. In this case, follow the instructions and do not include a cover letter. A cover letter is not necessary when registering with an employment/recruitment agency, unless the recruiter specifically asks you to include one.
- There is no single process for how applications are considered. Some hiring managers/recruiters will not consider your application without a cover letter. Others will defer to your resume first and then move on to cover letters in short-listing who they bring forward to interview stage. Some processes will start with the cover letter and then move along to resume. Ultimately, a well written cover letter can enhance your application regardless of what approach is used. As a candidate, deciding that you will submit a cover letter is one part of the hiring process that you can take ownership of.

Who do I address my cover letter to?

- When writing a cover letter, try to personalize it with the full name, title, company name and address of the recipient. You may need to do additional research on this to be sure who it should be addressed to. If you do not have this information, a reference "To whom it may Concern", "To hiring team", or "To hiring manager" is appropriate. Avoid mis-gendering the reader, "Dear Sir or Madam" may increase your chances of doing this if you do not have accurate information.

How long should my cover letter be?

- One page max. Do not exceed this length. Your letter should be clear, concise, and professional. It should capture your enthusiasm for the role, showcase why you are the best fit for the position and have what it takes to be successful in the job.

I don't know where to start...

- Start with the job posting/ad. The employer posting provides many clues and cues about what is required and should form the basis of where you start and why the role interests you. Keep it relevant. Preparing a cover letter that is application ready may take a few drafts.
- Start with a 'brain dump' or bullet, the main points related to why you can do this job.
- Create your first draft using whatever approach works best for you. For some that means getting it onto paper from the start, for others it means speaking it out while recording it and then committing to paper when it has taken shape.



Reference ICAN Employment Services – Cover Letter & Resume Templates, Gerry O'Connor