

NEW ZEALAND MUSIC COMMISSION INDUSTRY INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

HOW TO WRITE A GREAT COVER LETTER AND CV

There is really useful information online about writing a great cover letter and CV. Some of the best and most relevant advice we have found was at Careers NZ - www.careers.govt.nz. Here are some of the key points sourced from their site.

TIPS ON WRITING A GREAT CV

The purpose of a CV is to get you an interview. It needs to show what you can do, and why you're a good fit for an organisation.

Key things to keep in mind include:

- Employers may take just 15-20 seconds to initially scan your CV so it needs to be **well organised and clearly set out**. If you make a **good first impression**, they will read your CV more closely.
- Tailor your CV for each job. Make sure your CV highlights the **key skills, experience and achievements** that are **relevant to the job** you are applying for. Look at the job advertisement for clues on what an employer is looking for.
- Use **plain, simple language** in a business-like tone. Avoid clichés, and jargon and abbreviations that might be unfamiliar to an employer.
- Look at the job advertisement and reflect the words used in the job description. For example, if it talks about 'personnel', use the word 'personnel' rather than human resources.
- **Avoid long sentences** and large blocks of text. Bullet points and key phrases keep the word count down and make your CV easier to read quickly.
- Show yourself to your best advantage but **be honest** – don't claim experiences or qualifications you don't have.
- Do a thorough **spelling check** before sending off your CV, and have someone else read over it to check for mistakes.
- An application for a job should always include both a **CV and a cover letter**.
- When emailing a CV, make sure it is in a very **simple file format**, such as a Word document, Google doc etc. If in doubt, email your CV and cover letter as a PDF.

TIPS ON WRITING A GREAT COVER LETTER

Always include a cover letter when sending your CV out to employers. A good cover letter should make an employer interested enough to read your application thoroughly, and call you for an interview. Here are some tips to help you.

- What information to include in your cover letter?

Your cover letter should give an employer an idea of who you are, and explain what skills you could bring to the job.

You should also explain to an employer why you are interested in their business, and the particular role. Showing a genuine interest helps you stand out among other candidates, so it is important to tailor your cover letters so they relate specifically to each job application.

- Do your skills and experience match the job requirements?

To get an employer interested, you need to explain how your skills, attributes and achievements match those needed in the job vacancy. You can use information about your work history, including voluntary work, life experience, education and training and, if relevant, personal activities.

- Explain why you are the best person for the company and how your skills will meet the company's needs. Link your experience, skills and qualifications to what the employer has asked for, and show that you meet the job requirements.
- Use two or three key examples to demonstrate your suitability for the job.
- Promote yourself – explain how you can contribute to the company. Focus on what you have to offer, rather than what you want.
- Research the company and show your knowledge by sharing any recommendations you have. For example: *"With 10 years of retail management experience and a record of rapid advancement, I have found at least three ways to increase sales at your Wellington outlet."*

- Why do you want this job?

Ways to demonstrate your interest in the job could include:

- showing how motivated and enthusiastic you are, and how you can fit into the organisation
- discussing your personal qualities and why the position interests you
- mentioning any personal interests or activities that are relevant to the company and the work it does
- commenting on something positive about the company and letting them know why you would want to work there. For example, you could refer to the company's reputation, management philosophy, product quality, or other factors that impress you.

- What your cover letter should look like

Your cover letter may be the first contact you have with a prospective employer, so it is important to make a good impression. If your cover letter makes a poor impression, your CV may not be read.

- How to structure your cover letter

- Cover letters are usually no more than one page long.
- Address your letter to the relevant person, rather than starting with "Dear Sir/Madam". If you are not sure who to address your letter to, contact the employer and ask. Make sure you spell their name correctly too!
- Your letter should start by stating where you heard about the job. This directly relates your application to a position they have advertised. If no specific opening has been advertised be sure to state what your job objective is.
- End by saying you look forward to an interview, and that you are willing to provide further information.

- How to word your cover letter

- Be professional, warm and friendly.
- Make the letter interesting to read, but short and to the point. Do not repeat everything you say in your CV.
- Be enthusiastic and assertive, but not pushy. Do not beg for a position.
- Use simple, natural language, avoiding clichés and expressions like "aforementioned".
- Use positive words and phrases such as "I have" or "I can".
- You can put your key points in a bulleted list, or in a comparison list-style in which you directly compare your specific experiences and accomplishments with the company's stated needs.
- Don't use words that weaken your message or give the impression that you lack confidence – for example, "fairly experienced" or "some knowledge".
- Do not start every sentence or paragraph with "I".

- How to present your cover letter

- Use clean, white, A4-sized paper and keep it neat. Don't send cover letters that are photocopied or marked.
- Use an easy-to-read font.
- Leave plenty of space around the edges of the page and clear space between each paragraph or section.

- How to make sure you send out the best cover letters you can

- Write a rough draft first so you can get your thoughts in order.
- Remember that whoever reads your cover letter will consider it an example of your writing skills. Make sure there are no grammatical mistakes and that the spelling is perfect.
- Always get another person to read your letter before sending it to an employer.
- Keep copies of all letters sent – when you get an interview it is very useful to know what you have written. It also makes the next letter easier to write.

Thanks to Careers NZ for letting us share this advice. For additional information on writing a CV and cover letter, visit Careers NZ Mana Rapuara Aotearoa - www.careers.govt.nz.