



Candidates

Writing an IT cover letter:

Whilst it is essential to write a cover letter to accompany your résumé if you are applying for a permanent role, it is not so important if you are applying for a contract role. So bear this in mind if you are applying for a contractor position within the IT industry – ultimately the choice is yours.

A cover letter achieves a number of basic but important things:

- Makes it clear which role you are applying for
- Makes it clear which person (HR Manager, Line Manager or recruitment consultant) you are applying to
- Demonstrates your desire and fit for the role in question

In some instances a cover letter can really enhance your application. These are:

1. When you know the name of the person hiring
2. When you know something about the job requirement
3. When you've been personally referred (which might include 1 and 2)

In each of these cases it is important to mention your relationship with the person hiring/referring you or what you know of the role and how e.g. you may know somebody who has worked in the role/team/company. This will undoubtedly add weight to your application and could secure you an interview.

Firstly here are some tips on what NOT to do when writing a cover letter:

1. Forget to proof-read.
2. Get ANY basic details wrong e.g. job title, company name, salutation
3. Use an outdated greeting e.g. Dear Sir or Madam. If you do not have a name, use the department or a generic term such as Dear Recruiter. Address women as 'Ms' never 'Mrs'
4. Go on too long. A 3 to 4 paragraph cover letter is adequate
5. Use a form letter. Never a good idea as this screams lack of effort
6. Turn your cover letter into a copy of your résumé

Now here's an idea of what to include:

Start the cover letter by stating your postal address and date. Also provide a personal email address and mobile and/or home phone number so that you can be easily contacted. Next add the recipient's name, designation, company name and address below your details. This may be for the company where the role exists or through a recruitment agency or other third party.

It is important to remember that a Hiring Manager/recruitment consultant will have a few minutes to quickly glance through your résumé, so the **first paragraph** of your cover letter should include the details of the job you

are applying for, the most relevant technical skills you have acquired which match the role and the interpersonal and business skills / experience that make you eligible for the job.

The **second paragraph** of your cover letter should succinctly mention details of previous work experience and projects. Dependent upon your IT experience and focus, you must balance the emphasis across technical, interpersonal and business skills. For example a Test Analyst role will include a focus on the technical skills, listing the most relevant and proficiency. A Pre-Sales role on the other hand will place an emphasis business skills / experience, projects worked on / scope and markets.

Ideally, in your **third paragraph** you would hone in on a specific achievement which you feel is particularly relevant to the role. Quantify each success in terms such as budget, deadline, scale, increase sales / productivity or cost savings.

For graduates with little or no work experience, you will need to focus on technologies and proficiency level in each. Explain the projects you have been involved with and the details of your contributions. Avoid mentioning software languages that you are not well versed with. You could also mention attendance at IT seminars on emerging new technologies or other technical topics which demonstrate your enthusiasm and breadth of knowledge.

Always end your letter in the **final paragraph** by thanking the Hiring Manager/recruitment consultant for considering you for the job opening and mention your interest in attending an interview. Make sure you sign the letter before sending it (if not electronic) and provide the details of the documents enclosed in the letter.

A cover letter is simply an essential support document which needs to be accurate, focussed and relevant.