

**HOW-TO GUIDE**

# **Write a cover letter that stands out from the crowd**



**do  
good**

**jobs**

Kia ora. Julia from Do Good Jobs here.

I've seen a lot of cover letters over the years, and let me tell you something - cover letters are SO important!

I know it seems like they're just another hoop we have to jump through but trust me, they serve a purpose - especially in the for-purpose world.

When we recruit for Do Good Jobs, the cover letter often makes or breaks an applicant's chance of landing on the yes pile.



And others in the recruiting world seem to say the same...



A cover letter is your chance to add some personality to your application, make a positive first impression and show that you're willing to put in the extra effort to get the job.

A well-crafted cover letter can really help you stand out from the crowd of vague and generic cookie-cutter templates.

So now you know that you need a kick-arse cover letter, this guide is going to show you how to write a good one!

# How to write a cover letter that stands out from the crowd



Imagine you are applying for a dream job doing good. You've got ALL the right skills and experience, plus the passion to boot, and you know you can do it. You dust off your CV and knock up a quick generic cover letter.

And you hear.....crickets. You don't even get an interview.

That's because you didn't spend enough time on the crucial first step – creating a cover letter that bowls recruiters over. If you are up against candidates with the same skills and experience, your cover letter could be the deciding factor!

And in the for-purpose world where team fit and values alignment are often more important than technical skills, you might even be overtaken by someone with fewer skills or less experience but who really conveyed why they wanted the job.

In some cases, if a recruiter has to make a tough decision, they will often look back at the CV and cover letter and other resources even after an interview as the final assessment.

You've probably been taught at some point that when you write a cover letter, it goes like this:

*"Dear Sir/Madam*

*My name is XXXX and I'm emailing to apply for the role of XXXX with your company. I have the following skills and experience. Insert long list of skills and experience."*

Zzzzzzz.....I fell asleep just reading that line. Forget all that!

This is your chance to market yourself and set yourself apart

# 9 steps to a cover letter that converts

## STEP #1. IDENTIFY WHAT THE ORGANISATION NEEDS

Grab a copy of the job advert and highlight the key things they are looking for in the role (both the hard skills and the soft ones). You need to make sure you address these in your cover letter and showcase your experience.

Bonus tip: try using ChatGPT to summarise the key points of the job ad you NEED to reference.

## STEP #2. IDENTIFY WHY YOU WANT TO WORK THERE

Why do you want to work for this organisation? This is your chance to convince them that you are the perfect fit for this job.

What resonates with YOU about the organisation? Maybe it's a personal connection or story to the cause, maybe you've used their product or service before or know someone – kids, parents, friends – who have. Showing your enthusiasm for their work can be powerful.



### #3. KICK OFF WITH A GOOD HOOK

Now that you've done the research and figured out why you want to work there, it's time to write the cover letter.

A good opener is what gets you noticed. You want the recruiter to feel like they want to know more and are not seeing yet another cookie-cutter cover letter. It should connect you to the organisation's purpose in an authentic way and show why you have picked them – and then, in the next step, tell them why they should pick YOU.

If you are looking for some inspiration, we've included some examples further down in this guide. We're not saying they are perfect, but they are definitely better than "I'm writing to apply for the role of [xxxx] as advertised on [job board]. I am a [skills] and think I'd be an excellent fit for this role."

### #4. HIGHLIGHT YOUR VALUES

In the for-purpose world, values are important. So in your cover letter, it's as much about showing how you share those values as it is about your technical skills.

Do your research and include some key points about how you match the organisation's values and mission – AND PROVE IT! Give an example of how you live these values. Don't go over the top, though, or you might come across as looking a little over-eager or too good to be true.



## #5. INCLUDE RELEVANT DETAILS

A cover letter should be tailored. Applying for a job in a coffee shop? That barista course you did in high school is relevant. Applying to be the fundraising manager for a charity? That barista course, not so much (unless it involved a constant ask to make a donation with every coffee).

Your CV is the place where all your skills and experience can live (but don't list every job you've ever had – just the most relevant ones in the past 10 years).

Whereas in your cover letter, you should have only the best and most relevant information and show how it relates to the role you are applying for. It's about sharing your experience and the unique things you can bring to their organisation.

The best way to do this is to take a highlighter to a printout of their job ad and highlight the key requirements they are looking for. Then next to each part, note one qualification or experience you have that matches.

## #6. LET YOUR RESULTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

It's important to highlight your past successes to showcase your skills and experience. One way to do this is to provide specific examples of accomplishments.

Identify the skills and achievements that are most relevant to the position you're applying for, and then choose specific examples that showcase those skills. Use active language and quantify your achievements wherever possible – provide specific numbers or examples.



## #7. ADDRESS ANY CONCERNS

Sometimes you don't tick all the boxes for the job. That's not always a problem, especially in the for-purpose world where things don't always come in neat packages. If you don't quite meet one of the criteria, get ahead of the game and address it and show how you could learn to meet it or what you could bring instead.

## #8. KEEP IT TIGHT

Recruiters are busy people, especially in the for-purpose world where the recruitment person often wears many other hats. Once your hook has got them interested, don't lose them with a snooze fest in the middle. Your cover letter should be long enough to include all the necessary information but with no waffle. And leaving a few hooks in your cover letter gives you something to expand on in the interview.

Once you've written your cover letter, read it back and edit out any fluff.

## #9. GET THE BARE BONES RIGHT

Sounds simple but check that you have got the basics right. Have you used the right name at the beginning of the letter and included any specific information the recruiter has asked for? Have you checked the spelling and grammar? Little details are important and could make all the difference.

### Struggling with what to write in your cover letter?

If you are struggling with what to put in your cover letter, here are a few things you could share...

- a personal story about how you are connected to the organisation – its product or services or through other work you have done
- a real-life experience that aligns with the organisation's mission
- your passion for what they do and how you share their beliefs
- a personal belief statement
- something from a previous role where you've had a relevant success

## Here are some examples

“I've been passionate about writing since I was ten years old. My love for writing has led me to write two personal blogs, pursue a career as a reporter, and write my own fiction book. Now, I'd love the opportunity to combine my writing skills with my interest in storytelling as a communications manager at [organisation]. [[Sharing story and successes](#)]

“From setting up a second-hand toy stall outside my home as a child to raise money for the toy library, to working the phones for a local charity, to finding corporate donors in my most recent role, I've always had a knack for finding creative solutions to raise funds for good causes. I'd love to put my skills to use to generate funding for the work that [organisation] does.” [[Sharing examples of work and values alignment](#)]

“When I was 10 years old I formed a Kiwi conservation club with my neighbours. While this was often used as our excuse to visit the dairy (collecting rubbish on the way) what it taught me about protecting the environment and climate change has had a long-lasting effect. Over the past 10 years, I have worked in climate change policy and have honed my skills in advocacy and action” [[Sharing a personal story and its impact](#)]

“As a parent, I know what a difference it can make to a child to have the right food, so I would love the opportunity to help [organisation] make sure every child has food on the table.” [[Highlighting values and why you want to work on this cause](#)]

“I was excited to see this role advertised! It jumped out to me as I had such a positive experience being part of [X] last year and have continued to use what I learned during this time to improve my [skill]” [[Showcasing fit and learning mindset](#)]

“During my time at [animal charity] I was able to use my previous volunteer experience at the animal shelter to create content that resonated with supporters and increase the number of subscribers on our newsletter list by 245%.” [[Showcasing values alignment and impact](#)]

“In my previous marketing role, leveraging the connections I'd made as a journalist, I was able to place stories about our work and people in 10 newspapers and magazines over the course of 6 months.” [[Sharing great numbers and a real-life example](#)]



## AND HERE'S YOUR REMINDER OF WHAT NOT TO DO!



“To whom it may concern” – who speaks like this? If you can, find the person's name (usually in the application email) or do a quick search on LinkedIn for the manager and if worst comes to worst just put “Dear Hiring Team”.



DON'T write a boring, generic intro, unless you really want to sound like you've just copied your cover letter from a template you found online like the one below!

*“I am writing to express my interest in the position of [XXX] with [company], which is currently being advertised on [job board]. My background is in [background] and makes me an ideal candidate for the position.” or this “I am writing to apply for the [position] at [company], as advertised on [job board]. I am interested in this role as when I read the description it sounds like my dream position. I am a [attributes] person that can channel this energy into the job. I believe I will fit into this position well with my personality and skills.”*



DON'T regurgitate your CV in your cover letter. Use it to highlight your story, your fit and hook them into wanting to know more about you.



DON'T focus too much on the organisation and how amazing they are – they already know that!

## CHECKLIST FOR A POWERFUL FOR-PURPOSE COVER LETTER

### Content

- Written a great intro and good hook that gets attention, interest and action!
- Highlighted the key requirements they are looking for and how YOU align with these PLUS demonstrated that skill.
- Shown how your values match
- Tailored your letter to the specific job application
- Matched the language used by the organisation
- Cut out any waffle

### Formatting

- Font – Choose a basic universal font like Arial, Calibri or Verdana. Avoid using fancy or decorative fonts – if you don't PDF this document, or someone doesn't have your fancy font, it will be lost. Keep it at 12-point size for easy reading and use the same font as in your CV.
- Spacing – make sure to add spacing between each paragraph (this might sound obvious, but for many people trying to cram a cover letter onto one page, spacing goes out the window!). This makes it easier to read, skim and get the key points.
- One page – Keep your cover letter to 3-4 paragraphs and within one page.
- Format the cover letter in the way asked for by the advert – eg via email, a Word doc or via an online portal
- Rename your file to something appropriate and specific. EG “Your Name and the role you are applying for” as the hiring managers can see the file name of your online submission.

### Basic details

- Check your spelling. Top tip: use a text-to-voice reader ([like this](#)) to read out your cover letter to you – you are more likely to spot an error when you hear it vs reading it on a screen.
- Make sure you have addressed the cover letter to the right person.



## How'd you get on?

Has this resource been useful?  
Let us know by emailing  
[hello@dogoodjobs.co.nz](mailto:hello@dogoodjobs.co.nz)!  
We'd love to hear from you!

