

**COVERING LETTER (BrE)  
OR  
COVER LETTER (AmE)**

**Ivana Marinkovi**

**Definition:** a short letter sent with another document.

**Purpose:** to introduce yourself as an ideal candidate for the job and ask for an interview.

**Importance:**

1. The covering letter is vital to your CV. This is why it is the first page and not an addition.
2. It 'puts flesh on the bare bones of your CV' and gives the personal touch that your CV intrinsically lack.
3. It demonstrates your writing style better than your CV which is brief and factual.

## Writing a covering letter – basic rules:

1. make it short, concise and easy to read (on one A4 page, with plenty of white space);
2. include a lot of action verbs, not long clichés;
3. get to the point immediately - confirm that you are applying for a job;
4. say where you learned about the position;
5. say why you want the position;
6. say why you would be the perfect candidate.

## Layout

- Different in different cultures.
- English-speaking people usually observe the following rules:

### 1. Your address:

Put your own address at the **top** on the **right**. Follow the rule of '*smallest first*': house number – street – town – postcode - telephone number - fax and/or email address.

23 Plowden Road  
Devon  
TQ6 1RS  
Tel 0742 012345  
Email [keithparker@hotmail.com](mailto:keithparker@hotmail.com)

#### Note:

- Do not put your name here.
- Americans sometimes put commas or full stops at the end of lines in addresses.

## 2. Date:

Put the date directly under the address:

17 May 2015 (British style)  
May 17 2015 (American style)

Do not write the date as numbers only for two reasons:

1. it can be considered too official and therefore impolite;
2. all-number dates are written differently in BrE and AmE, which can lead to confusion:

4/2/15 = 4 February 2015 (BrE)  
4/2/15 = 2 April 2015 (AmE)

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### 3. Destination name and address:

Put the name (and the title) of the person you are writing to, his/her job title, the company name and address on the left side of the page.

This should be the same as on the envelope.

Start on the same level as the date or slightly below.

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17 May 2015

**Ms Emma Campbell**  
**Personnel Manager**  
**Multimedia Design**  
**4 Kennington Road**  
**London SE1 8DD**

#### 4. Addressing people:

A letter in English begins with *'Dear...'* even if you do not know the person.

##### British style

Dear Sir(s)

Dear Madam

Dear Sir or Madam

Dear Ms/Mrs/Miss *Campbell*

Dear Mr *Carter*

##### American style

Gentlemen

Dear Madam

Dear Sir or Madam

Dear Ms./Mrs./Miss. *Campbell*

Dear Mr. *Carter*

To whom it may concern

23 Plowden Road  
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Ms Emma Campbell  
Personnel Manager  
Multimedia Design  
4 Kennington Road  
London SE1 8DD

17 May 2015

**Dear Ms Campbell(,)**

##### Note:

- Do not use a title with a first name (Dear Ms Emma Campbell = incorrect).

## 5. Body:

Leave an empty line after 'Dear...' and start on the left.

The length of the letter: 3 - 6 paragraphs.

### First paragraph

- state the job you're applying for;
- say where you found out about it (organisations like to know which of their advertising sources are being successful);

### Second paragraph

- write about your education and your work experience;

### Third paragraph

- why you're interested in that type of work;
- why the company attracts you (if it is a small company, say you prefer to work for a small friendly organisation);

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Ms Emma Campbell  
Personnel Manager  
Multimedia Design  
4 Kennington Road  
London SE1 8DD

17 May 2015

Dear Ms Campbell(,)

**I am writing to apply for the position of** Assistant Designer **advertised in** the Times of 23 April. **Please find enclosed** a copy of my CV.

I **have a degree in** Graphic Design. A six-month placement in Germany gave me the opportunity **to put the theory** learnt on my course **into practice**, and to **acquire** a good working **knowledge** of German.

I have **become particularly interested in** interactive and multimedia work and now wish to **develop my career in that direction**. I would **welcome the chance to** work as part of a small, dynamic team where I could **make a significant contribution** while developing my skills yet further.



## Fourth, fifth paragraph

- summarise your strengths and how they might be an advantage to the organisation;
- relate the skills to the competencies required;

## Last paragraph

- say you look forward to hearing from them soon.

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I have become particularly interested in interactive and multimedia work and now wish to develop my career in that direction. I would welcome the chance to work as part of a small, dynamic team where I could make a significant contribution while developing my skills yet further.

Through my education and work I have **developed** excellent software **skills for** the programmes that you use. I have got used to **working long hours** and to **tight deadlines**.

I would **welcome the opportunity to** discuss the post in more detail. **Looking forward to hearing from you soon,**

## 6. Ending:

Letters which begin ‘*Dear Sir(s)*’ or ‘*Dear Madam*’ usually finish ‘*Yours faithfully*’ in BrE and ‘*Sincerely yours*’ in AmE;

Letters which begin with the person’s name usually finish ‘*Yours sincerely*’ in BrE and ‘*Sincerely*’ in AmE;

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**Your sincerely,**

## 7. Your signature:

Sign with your full name, but without writing any title, in black or blue ink with a fountain pen.

## 8. Your name:

Add your full typewritten name after your signature.

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Your sincerely,

**(signature)**

**Keith Parker**

## Proofread:

1. Proofread your cover letter at a later time and ask a friend to read it as well. Look closely for spelling and grammatical errors and make sure it's not too long.
2. Put yourself in the employer's shoes and decide if you would hire the candidate who wrote the letter. If not, go back and make revisions.

## Lack of Experience

1. It should not put you off applying for a job if you meet most of other requirements.
2. Make the most of your qualities: your skills, attitude, potential and enthusiasm.
3. Think from the employer's perspective - think of the most interesting situations where you have used relevant skills.
4. Voluntary or community involvement, work placements, coursework, personal projects and extracurricular activities can all be highlighted to show your suitability.