

Covering and speculative letters

Covering and speculative letters are your first chance to sell yourself to a prospective employer. **If you don't get it right, you may not get a second chance.**

A covering letter should:

- * be sent with a CV or application form that has been asked for by the employer.
- * clearly state the job you are applying for.
- * contain the key information that will most 'grab' or impress the employer.
- * be short and punchy. You don't want to put them off before they even get to read your CV/ application form.

A speculative letter should:

- * be sent to an employer with a CV in the hope they may have a vacancy to suit you. It is a great way to tap into the 'hidden' job market - all those vacancies that never make it into the newspapers, job centres or vacancy websites.
- * not repeat everything you've put in your CV, but highlight the key skills and experiences that would really interest the employer.
- * show that you have done some research into the company
- * be sent to a named person. Telephone the company in advance and ask who would be the most relevant contact for the type of work you are looking for.

- * clearly state why you are contacting the employer, for example, full time work, part time work, an Apprenticeship, work experience, placement or holiday work.
- * state when you could start work.

General dos and don'ts

- * **Do** keep your letter to one page of A4 white or cream paper [match it to your CV]. Use a good quality envelope too.
- * **Do** keep the letter short, uncluttered and to the point. Use five or fewer lines per paragraph and alter the length of sentences.
- * **Do** spell check and proof read all documents. Ideally get someone else to do this.
- * **Don't** forget to enclose either your CV or the application form.
- * **Don't** mass copy letters - personalise them.
- * **Do** make it sound as if you have chosen them above all others. Find out a little about them, for example how long they have been operating, if they specialise in a particular product.

- * **Do** make sure you emphasise your skills and the needs of the company.
- * **Don't** forget to ask for an interview and ensure you are going to be around to go for one if asked. It won't look good if you post a pile of speculative letters then disappear on a three week holiday!