13 Ways to Improve Your Cover Letter

1. Don't write the letter from your perspective, but rather from the perspective of the employer: "What can I offer the employer in terms of my skills and work?" not "What can the employer offer me?" Leave out descriptions of your expectations such as "The described position does not just meet my expectations for a suitable workplace, but it also matches my subject specific knowledge of quantitative social research."

2. The first paragraph must be sufficiently interesting, that the employer wants to read on. So set out arguments for why you are the right candidate for this position and what you would intend to do for the business. "During the search for a promising role, your position caught my eye..." or "I hereby apply for this..." is a no go, as it looks like you’re not very motivated.

3. If there is a company slogan, for example "Think different", "Designed for driving pleasure" or "Advancement through technology": Work this into your first sentence and associate it with you and your working style. This shows identification and parallels and is a great individual start.

4. Where possible show engagement by reading the press releases of the company/institution or news about them and link these to your cover letter (as long as they are relevant to the subject or relevant to you personally)

5. Use active and positive words when writing your application. What have you done? You didn’t just passively acquire knowledge at the university but you actively worked to gain this knowledge.

6. If you use a subjunctive, do not write what you would do, but rather what you would like to do. In a cover letter, it’s all about motivation and suitability.
7. It's also about showing a good personality! Who wouldn’t rather have a communicative, open team player on board instead of a grumpy, arrogant lone-wolf. Therefore, write in a friendly tone e.g. you speak directly to people, your team, your projects – you would like to strengthen these, support them, actively engage with them etc.

8. Place and date entry: don’t write "London, on the 08/09/2015", but write "London, 08/09/2015"

9. Always give 1-2 examples of the tasks that you have undertaken for the activities you mention in your cover letter. These can be different to those in your CV, but don’t have to be. Therefore vary your examples.

10. Include the required skills and competencies from the job description as much as possible. For example, software and soft skills such as the ability to communicate, and give an example of where you have already applied these skills. Make sure you do not repeat the whole job description word for word, just pick out a few key terms.

11. Don’t list attachments one by one, just add the word 'attachments' at the bottom of the cover letter.

12. Letters such as cover letters should always be written left aligned, single spaced and with a ragged right margin. They should not be justified. This is because they are business letters, which have to conform to the standard DIN 5008.

13. Don’t use a subjunctive in the closing statement but rather: "I look forward to an invitation to discuss this further in person."

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Created for you by your Career Service

Do you still have questions? We are happy to provide personal advice:
http://www.uni-due.de/abz/career.php

Good luck with your application!

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