

The Covering Letter

Once you have found a suitable vacancy, your application will generally comprise the following documents:



1. Covering letter
2. Curriculum Vitae with recent photo (in Germany)
3. Attachments

In your written application, you want to attract the employer's attention and emphasize why you are the right person for the position. It is important that your covering letter be tailored towards the vacancy and potential employer. In your application you are advertising yourself, and you have to show that you are up to the job.

Formatting and formalities of your covering letter

Regardless of the content of your application, there are in Germany certain formatting standards and formalities that you should observe in your covering letter.

Your covering letter should have the same format as a business letter:

- Your top **margin** should be 4.5 cm, bottom margin 2.5 cm, left-hand margin 2.5 cm and right-hand margin 2 cm.
- Use a 12-point **font**. If, however, you have problems fitting your text onto one page, you can reduce the size of your font to 11 points.
- The most common **fonts** today are Arial and Times New Roman.
- Write the **recipient's address** on the top-left of the page. If you have a contact person, include their name in the address beneath the company name.
- Write the **place and date** flush with the right-hand margin beneath your own address.
- The **reference line** begins two lines beneath the date and can be written in bold. In the reference line, make it clear that this is a job application and indicate the position for which you are applying, giving the reference number where appropriate. Your reference line should not exceed two lines. It is no longer usual to precede it with "re:".
- For example: **Application for position of simulations engineer, Reference No: 12345**
- Two lines beneath the reference line, begin your letter with "Dear ...". If you do not know the name of your contact person, write "Dear Sir/Madam".

- If you have named a contact person in the address above, name them personally: “Dear...”
- Begin the main body of your letter one line beneath the salutation.
- After you have written the main body of your letter, leave one line and sign off with “Yours sincerely” if you have named the addressee, or “Yours faithfully” if you have written Dear Sir/Madam.

At the end of your covering letter, indicate that you are enclosing documents by writing “Encl”. You do not have to list all the enclosures.

- Your covering letter should not be longer than one page.

The content of your covering letter

You want to awaken the employer’s curiosity at the beginning of your covering letter.

To start with, you have to clarify how you found out about the vacancy and why you are

interested. You should also indicate any contact you have already had with the firm (whether it was at a fair, by phone or by email).

Dear Mr ...

I am aware that you are looking for an innovative development engineer with experience in methods. I am a Master’s graduate in and would be happy to offer my skills to your expert team.

Dear Ms ...

According to your current company brochure, you are intending to expand your business in Mexico. I am a graduate of business economics and speak fluent Spanish. I would therefore be delighted to have the opportunity to work with you.

Dear Ms ...

Thank you very much for the friendly telephone conversation last Wednesday. As agreed, I am sending you my written application for the vacancy of junior network administrator.

Dear Mr ...

During the VDI Recruiting Day in Dortmund on 20 September, I was informed about your company’s trainee programme. I was particularly attracted by the wide scope for development and the opportunity to gain an insight into the various company departments.

In the **main body** of your covering letter, you should write about who you are; what you have studied; what the main focus of your studies has been; and what practical experience you have. Avoid a mere repetition of your CV or a list of lectures and seminars you attended. Instead, create a link between the qualifications the vacancy requires and your own experience and skills.

Your description should make it clear why you fit the job profile and why you are suited to the company. Emphasize how your skills correspond to the job requirements. Concentrate on what is relevant to the vacancy. When you refer to employers and universities, use their full name and avoid abbreviations.

The next paragraph describes your **soft skills**, such as team compatibility, determination, creativity and organization skills. Again, refer to the soft skills demanded in the job advertisement. And again, avoid merely listing your soft skills, but emphasize how you have been able to apply them and put them to the test.

In this paragraph, you can also mention your language and computing skills. Again these should be connected to the vacancy.

Following this, give details of when you could start the job and of your salary expectations, if requested in the job advert.



Finally, ask to meet the employer personally, writing, for example, “I would be happy to discuss my suitability and motivation personally, and I look forward to hearing from you.”

Finish your letter with “Yours faithfully” or “Yours sincerely” and your handwritten signature.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us for individual advice:

<http://www.uni-due.de/abz/career.php>

Good luck with your applications!