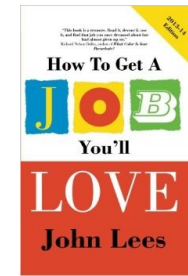


Plan for 2015

We have been alternating between Choosing a direction - Job hunting

- Choosing a direction: Career Hot Buttons 16 Jan
- Job hunting: Finding Opportunities in Cambridge 23 Jan
- Choosing a direction: Understanding Ourselves – House of Knowledge 30 Jan
- Job hunting: Planning and Process of Job Hunting 6 Feb
- Choosing a direction: General Discussion 13 Feb
- Job hunting: Speculative Applications 20 Feb
- Choosing a direction: Choosing a Sector 27 Feb
- Job hunting: Getting the most out of LinkedIn 6 Mar
- Choosing a direction: Building a Skills Inventory 13 Mar
- Job hunting: Making Contacts to Find a Job 20 Mar
- Job hunting: Interview Top Tips 27 Mar



Choosing a Direction based on John Lees
“How to get a job you’ll love”
johnleescareers.com

What topics would you like covered over the next few weeks?

Importance of Cover Letters

Employer attitudes to cover letters vary:

Some will read cover letters before the CV

- If they are not good and interesting enough they screen out the application and CV
- They might not even read CV if there was no cover letter

Some focus more on the CV and don't read cover letters

- They go straight to CV and get the information they need from there
- The cover letter might be looked at for background if the CV is interesting

Since you don't know you should always create a good cover letter

- However they are not used when applying through agencies



For more info sign up for Future Learn: Writing Applications
<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/writing-applications>

What Are Cover Letters For

Framing the application

- It allows you to explain why you are attracted to the job and the organisation
- Makes the match between your skills, knowledge and experience, and what they need
- Brings all the key elements from your CV together

Covering difficult issues in your past

- Explain how you have coped with setbacks like poor exam results, periods of unemployment
- Allow you to compensate for lack of relevant experience
- Show how you overcame negatives and highlight positive qualities such as determination or persistence

Length and Format

Less than one page

- Aim for about half a page of text for the main part
- Rest of the page is business letter formatting

Properly formatted as a business letter

- Add your address and contact details at the top right and then the date.
- Add their address on the left
- Include the name of the person you are applying to if possible

Include the employer's reference to the job

- The company may have several vacancies and you want to make sure you end up in the right pile

For emails could include cover letter as attachment or in the body of the email

- Attachment can look more professional and formal and may stay with CV
- In the body of the email is more likely to be read by HR but may be separated from CV
- Can add the formatted version as an appendix to the CV

Writing Style

The writing style should be professional

- Use terminology that is appropriate to the organisation and position you're applying for
- Check your spelling and grammar carefully

Try to limit the number of sentences beginning with 'I'

- Can become repetitive after a while
- Show that you are capable of communicating effectively in writing

Use plain clear language

- Watch out for and avoid clichés
- Avoid using overly emotional language such as 'passionate about' and 'love to' in your letter

Use powerful words

- Which are proactive and indicate that you have the initiative and ability to make things happen
- Such as 'contributed', 'influenced', 'managed' and 'negotiated'

Suggested Structure 1st Paragraph: Explain what the letter is about

Give your letter a subject heading

- Stating the job title and reference for an advertised position

If it is in response to an advertised vacancy

- Say where and when you saw it advertised

If you are making a speculative enquiry

- Be clear about the type of work you are asking for

Suggested Structure 2nd Paragraph: Say why you are a good candidate

State clearly how you match what the recruiter is asking for in the advertisement

- Cover the skills, experience, qualifications, etc they mention
- Use their words/language where possible

Refer to the evidence in your CV

- Don't repeat sentences from the CV - expand on the information in it
- Draw attention to the most relevant experience and skills

Describe a recent example from your CV

With a speculative application,

- Think about what you would expect them to be looking for given the nature of the opportunity that you are seeking

Suggested Structure 3rd Paragraph:

Say why you'd like the job and why this employer

Could be two separate paragraphs but can work just as well with one

Describe what motivates you and attracts you to this opportunity

- Show that you have a realistic understanding of the role
- Draw parallels with positive experiences you have already had in a similar role or a different setting
- Try to show how your previous experience makes this opportunity the logical next step for you

Say why this organisation appeals to you

- Use your research to explain what appeals to you about the organisation
- Try and find something that is unique to them
- Don't waffle or make it up
- Focus on real reasons as you may be asked them in an interview

Suggested Structure 4th Paragraph:

End with a positive conclusion

Summarise yourself and your positive attitude

Probably appropriate for you to express your expectation of a reply

- eg, "...I look forward to hearing from you in due course."

If appropriate, indicate when you are/are not available for interview

Review

Make sure that someone else reads it through

- Look for any typing and grammar problems
- Make sure that the main point that it matches the job description