



# What to include in a cover letter

 **BARCLAYS** | LifeSkills



# Module overview

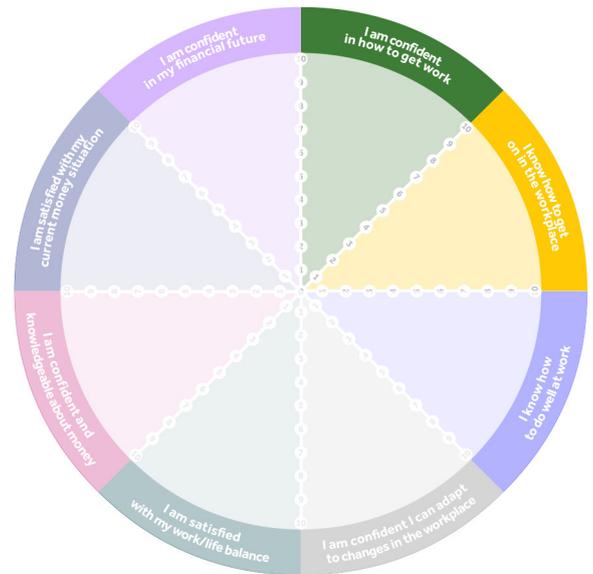
This module will explore why sending a covering letter/covering email with a CV is recommended and will provide top tips and examples of how to structure a covering letter.

Time	Key learning outcomes	Which will lead to
45 mins	<p>By the end of the module, learners will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore and understand why a covering letter/email is needed when applying for a job</li> <li>Understand how to structure a covering letter/email and what information should be included — and how to source it; for example, who the covering letter should be addressed to</li> <li>Understand what information to exclude to avoid unconscious bias, for example, any mentions of gender, race, religion etc.</li> <li>Understand the common mistakes of writing a covering letter and how to avoid them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved capability in writing a suitable covering letter/email</li> </ul>

## Important

Introduce the activity and theme and remind your learner of the coaching-based approach. Agree the desired outcome of the session with your learner.

Throughout the activity, we have included **'do now'**, **'do soon'** and **'do later'** actions which may help your learner to think about the next steps they could take. Alternatively, you could use the 'do now', 'do soon' and 'do later' headings to help your learner come up with their own actions.



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# Introduction

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
🕒 2-3 mins	<p>Refer back to your learner’s LifeSkills wheel and discuss how they scored themselves in relation to this module.</p> <p>Discuss what they need to know/do to be able to increase how they rate their satisfaction with this area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners are reminded of where they are now and what they need to do to reach a higher satisfaction score in this area</li> </ul>

## Core activity one

### Explaining the importance of a cover letter

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
🕒 3-5 mins	<p>Open a discussion with your learner about the difference between a covering letter/email and a CV.</p> <p><b>Prompt them with questions such as:</b></p> <div style="background-color: #e0f2f1; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p><b>Have you ever sent a covering letter with your CV when applying for a job?</b></p> <p><b>How did you feel about writing your covering letter?</b></p> <p><b>What do you think should be included in your covering letter?</b></p> <p><b>What makes a covering letter stand out?</b></p> </div> <p>Explain what a covering letter is and its purpose in supporting a job application.</p> <p><b>Discuss with your learner that a covering letter/email:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps to introduce them to the employer</li> <li>Helps to give a good first impression and demonstrates to the employer that an individual has made an effort with the application</li> <li>Helps an individual to put across all the points about why they feel they’d be a great candidate before the employer gets to the CV</li> <li>Helps the employer to decide whether or not to read an individual’s CV</li> <li>Explains to the employer why an individual is interested in the job they are applying for</li> <li>Allows an individual to highlight their strengths</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners should gain an understanding of why it is necessary to write a covering letter/ email to accompany their CV when applying for a job</li> </ul>

# Core activity two

## What to include in a cover letter

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
 10-15 mins	<p><b>Run through when a covering note would be required by email and when it would be a more formal letter:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cover email:</b> Explain to your learner that, typically, online job applications and those made via job boards should include a cover note written in the body of the email. The same applies if an employer asks for a CV to be emailed to them directly, or states something along the lines of 'Contact Ian via email to apply'</li> <li>• <b>Cover letter:</b> Explain that a covering letter is different from a cover email. It can still be sent by email, but it should be sent as an attachment and structured like a formal letter. Covering letters go into much more detail about why the individual wishes to apply for the job, what their strengths are, and why they'd be a good fit</li> </ul> <p><b>Offer your learner five top tips about what their covering letter should include:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Their name and contact details so that the employer knows who the letter is from and how to get in touch</li> <li>2. The name of the recruiter and the recruiter's address. Explain that they can normally find this information on the job advert. However, if only the name is included but not the address, a quick Google search of the company will typically provide them with the information they need</li> <li>3. The name of the recruiter should also be who the letter is addressed to. For example: 'Dear Ruth' or 'Dear Mrs Burns' – Not 'Dear Sir/Madam' or 'To whom it may concern'</li> <li>4. The reason they are applying for the role and why they particularly want to work for the company</li> <li>5. An overview of their experience and why they feel they'd be a great fit for the position</li> </ol> <p>Also explain that they should not add any information in their covering letter that could leave them open to discrimination or unconscious bias. This could include references to age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, or whether they do or do not have children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners should gain an understanding of when to use a cover note in the body of an email, and when to use a more formal covering letter</li> <li>• Learners should also gain an understanding of what a covering letter should include and should not include</li> </ul>

# Core activity three

## Reviewing cover letters to identify strengths and weaknesses

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
⌚ 7-10 mins	<p>Look together at the three <b>covering letter examples</b> and ask them to try and identify the strengths and weaknesses of each.</p> <p>Congratulate them on their efforts and point out any they may have missed.</p> <p><b>Cover letter example A:</b></p> <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Addressed correctly</li> <li>2. Clearly states the position applied for</li> <li>3. Indicates previous relevant experience</li> <li>4. Leaves contact details for follow up</li> </ol> <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does not use the recruiters name after "Dear..."</li> <li>2. States age, which could be a discriminating factor</li> <li>3. Mentions they are unable to use software that would be vital to the role</li> <li>4. Does not include full name in sign off</li> </ol> <p><b>Cover letter example B:</b></p> <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Addressed correctly</li> <li>2. Uses recruiter's name correctly</li> <li>3. Leaves contact details for follow up</li> </ol> <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Too short</li> <li>2. Does not go into any detail about why they are suitable for the role</li> <li>3. Assumes the recruiter will call for an interview</li> </ol> <p><b>Cover letter example C:</b></p> <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Addressed correctly and uses the name of the recruiter</li> <li>2. Introduces themselves and why they wish to apply for the role</li> <li>3. Uses several examples of why they'd be a great fit and their motivation for applying for this particular role</li> <li>4. Backs up experience with relevant education</li> <li>5. Signs off correctly and provides relevant contact details</li> </ol> <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The only real negative here is the mention of why they left their last job. This could be construed as not directly relevant to the application. However, they then mention that the experience helped them with their career, so could also be argued that it should stay in the letter</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners should gain an understanding of what a covering letter should include and should not include</li> <li>• Learners should feel confident knowing what they could include in their own covering letter</li> </ul>

# Core activity three

## Reviewing cover letters to identify strengths and weaknesses (cont'd)

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
⌚ 5 mins	<p>Next, hand your learner the <b>Covering letter template</b> and ask them to jot down any relevant information that they would use to write their own covering letter.</p> <p><b>Do now:</b> Make a note of any relevant information you would use to write your own covering letter. Is there anything else you could add?</p> <p><b>Do soon:</b> Set aside time to research the job roles you are interested in and highlight key words/ phrases in the role description that you should include in the cover letter</p> <p><b>Do later:</b> Write a draft cover letter for a job role you are interested in, using the notes you made in the session as a checklist. How does your CV compare to the example CVs you reviewed in the session?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners should feel confident knowing what they could include in their own covering letter</li> </ul>

## Wrap up

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
⌚ 5-7 mins	<p>Discuss the module with your learner and ask them if they feel they have any gaps in their knowledge about writing covering letters. Address any concerns that they have.</p> <p>Revert your learner back to their LifeSkills wheel and check if they are closer to achieving their desired score.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners should feel confident knowing what they could include in their own covering letter</li> </ul>

## Optional extension

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
⌚ 10-20 mins	<p>Learners should now be encouraged to write their own covering letter based on their newfound knowledge.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners should gain experience writing their own covering letter</li> </ul>

# What to include in a cover letter

## Covering letter: example A

Rachel Myers  
Home address  
Town  
Postcode

Mr R. Hall  
HR Director  
Any Company  
Any Town  
Postcode

18th December 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find my CV attached in application for the position of Office Administrator as advertised on your website.

At 54 years old, I have been recently made redundant from my role as a restaurant supervisor, where I have spent the last ten years of my career. I am now seeking a career change and this position looks very interesting.

I am a passionate worker, who thrives in a busy environment. In my previous role, I was in charge of a small team of five waiting staff, and ensured they carried out their duties to provide excellent service to all our customers.

Although I am comfortable with the use of some technology, I am not yet fully trained with server software but would be happy to undertake some training in this regard.

I am available for interview immediately and can be contacted on 01234 456789 or by email [r.myers@noreplyemail.com](mailto:r.myers@noreplyemail.com)

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel.

# What to include in a cover letter

## Covering letter: example B

Joshua Abbey  
Home address  
Town  
Postcode

Mrs B. Singh  
Recruitment Officer  
Knot Any Wood Furniture Co.  
Any Town  
Postcode

18th December 2019

Dear Mrs Singh,

I am writing to apply for the position of Deputy Warehousing Manager. My CV is attached.

Please call to arrange an interview on 01234 456789.

Thank you,

Josh Abbey

# What to include in a cover letter

## Covering letter: example C

Rebecca Morris  
Recruitment Director  
Any Shop Online Co.  
Any Town  
Postcode

18th December 2019

Dear Rebecca,

I am writing to express my interest in the position of Senior Customer Service Representative. Please find attached my CV.

With a strong early grounding in customer services and administration, I have developed well-rounded experience during my career with customer-focused companies including The Auction Site and Glide Airways.

Most recently, I was promoted to Senior Customer Service Agent in The Auction Site call centre, working my way up from a call centre agent to supervisor during the last three years. I now feel I am ready for a new challenge and the role with your company would offer me the opportunity to rise to my full potential.

Previously, I worked with Glide Airways, where I started my customer services career as an apprentice. I began flight crew training but struggled with the irregular hours and the amount of time spent away from home, and therefore left the company to join an online auction service. However, my training with Glide Airways gave me insight into first-class customer support and this is something that has shaped the rest of career.

My key motivation for applying for this role is to support Any Shop Online Co. to become one of the leading ecommerce companies in the world by providing exceptional service to your customers. Working at the online auction service, I understand that customers demand the very best support and it can be damaging to the brand if this is not provided. I believe my skills and experience in this area will be of great benefit to your customer service team.

My experience is backed by an NVQ level 5 in customer service and a BTEC in business administration, for which I achieved a distinction grade. Furthermore, I understand that the role requires someone with additional language skills. I spent three summers in Germany with family, and am bilingual, which means I can deliver excellent customer service in both languages.

I am immediately available for an interview and can be contacted on 01234 456789 or via email [beth@noreplyemail.com](mailto:beth@noreplyemail.com).

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Bethany Tyler

Bethany Tyler  
Home address  
Tel: 01234 456789  
Email: [beth@noreplyemail.com](mailto:beth@noreplyemail.com)

# What to include in a cover letter

## Covering letter template

Your name  
Your address  
Your telephone number  
Your email

Name of recruiter/hiring manager  
Their job title  
Their company name  
Town  
Postcode

Date

Dear <First Name> or <Mr/Mrs/Dr Surname>,

I am writing to express my interest in the position of name of position. Please find attached my CV.

[Briefly introduce your level of experience as it relates to the job, so the recruiter knows that you could be a good fit. *For example: With a strong early grounding in customer services and administration, I have developed well-rounded experience during my career with customer-focused companies such as an online retailer or travel service.*]

[Explain in a little more detail what you do/have done most recently and how you got there. Then write a sentence on why you wish to apply for this position. *For example: Most recently, I was promoted to Senior Customer Service Agent in a call centre, working my way up from a call centre agent to supervisor during the last three years. I now feel I am ready for a new challenge and the role with your company would offer me the opportunity to rise to my full potential.*]

[Write a sentence that explains any relevant previous experience that boosts your credibility as a candidate for this position. *For example: Previously, I worked with Glide Airways at Anytown Airport, where I started my customer services career as an apprentice. My training with BA gave me insight into first-class customer support and this is something that has shaped the rest of career.*]

[Offer the recruiter a solid reason why you are applying for this position. In particular, something that especially interests you about working for their company. Researching the company is always a good idea to make sure their vision aligns with your own. Back this up with a sentence about how your experience is a good fit for this business. *For example: My key motivation for applying for this role is to support Any Shop Online Co. to become one of the leading ecommerce companies in the world by providing exceptional service to your customers. Working at the online auction service, I understand that customers demand the very best support and it can be damaging to the brand if this is not provided. I believe my skills and experience in this area will be of great benefit to your customer service team.*]

[If you have any education, hobbies, interests, or special skills that are relevant to your application, here is a good place to add them. *For example: My experience is backed by an NVQ level 5 in customer service and a BTEC in business administration, for which I achieved a distinction grade. Furthermore, I understand that the role requires someone with additional language skills. I spent three summers in Germany with family, and am bilingual, which means I can deliver excellent customer service in both languages.*]

[Reaffirm that you would like to meet with the company for an interview and how you can be contacted. *For example: I am immediately available for an interview and can be contacted on 01234 456789 or via email beth@noreplyemail.com.*]

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

<Full name>