

CV vs Cover Letter: What are the Differences?



Discuss:

What is their purpose?
What should they include?

Useful links:

CV templates: <https://resumegenius.com/resume-templates>

Cover letter templates: <https://resumegenius.com/cover-letter-templates>

Resources and tips for interviews: <https://resumegenius.com/blog/interview>

¹ Chan, Eva. "CV vs. Cover Letter: What's the Difference?" Resume Genius. Accessed October 21, 2024.
<https://resumegenius.com/blog/cv-help/cv-vs-cover-letter>.

What's the difference between a CV and a cover letter?

The differences between a CV and cover letter are their purpose, length, content, and format.

Although there are several differences, a CV and cover letter are also similar because they're both essential documents that recruiters use to decide whether you're the right person for the job.

Purpose of a CV

A CV's purpose is to provide the recruiter with an overview of your skills, experience, and educational background. A CV should summarize your entire career. In a standard one, the first page lists your publications, research, and education before moving onto other common CV sections.

Purpose of a cover letter

By contrast, the purpose of a cover letter is to highlight your communication skills and introduce you as a suitable candidate for the role. The beginning of the cover letter should also cover your professional background — but in a more communicative tone. Then, the rest of the letter gives you space to talk about yourself, your ambitions, and why you're the perfect person for the job.

Length of a CV

The length of a CV depends on the job you're applying for. For example, job seeking CVs for tech and engineering roles are usually one page long. However, if you're looking for a job in academia, your CV could be as long as five pages. Your CV length should successfully showcase the relevant hard and soft skills and experience for the job you're applying for.

Length of a cover letter

On the other hand, the length of a cover letter is always one page.



Avoid making your cover letter longer than a page, as recruiters receive many job applications for each position and will reject letters that are lengthy and take up too much of their time.

Content that can be included in a CV

- [CV header](#) (with your contact details)
- [CV objective](#) or [CV summary](#)
- Research experience section
- [Work experience section](#)
- [Education section](#)
- Relevant accomplishments
- [Hard and soft skills](#)
- Publications
- [Awards and honors](#)
- Grants and fellowships
- Conferences you attended or contributed to
- Teaching experience
- [Volunteer experience section](#)
- [Language skills](#)
- [CV references](#)
- [Additional skills section](#)

Content to include in a cover letter

- [Cover letter header](#) (with your contact details)
- [Cover letter salutation](#)
- Opening paragraphs
- Body paragraph(s)
- [Cover letter sign off](#)

THE OXFORD TIMES, 24 APRIL

The Waltonian School of English

is looking for a

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES ORGANISER

*to help organise and develop their
social programme*

You must be friendly, approachable and flexible.

You should enjoy working with people.

If you are interested in this post and would like to know more about it, write to the Principal, John Blackwell, saying why you would like the job, why you feel you would be suitable for it, and when you are free to attend an interview.

Please also say when you can start work, and send details of your previous work experience.

Read the letters some people sent to apply for this job and decide if they're suitable or not. If you think they're not, what improvements should be made?

1

Dear Manager,

I'd like to apply for the job advertised in the paper the other day, which looks nice. Please send me more information.

I'm 22 years old and an English student at a school in Oxfordshire. Next month I'm going to do the First Certificate.

I want this job because I'm keen to make new friends and help people. I'm friendly, approachable and flexible, and I work really hard. If you want proof of this, you can ask the last person who employed me, and you'll find her name and address on the paper attached to this letter.

I don't mind when I come for an interview. Any time is fine by me. Give me a call and we can sort something out.

If you want to know anything else about me, give me a call, but not before 5 o'clock as I don't get home until then.

Get in touch soon.

Best wishes,

Menno

2

Dear Mr Blackwell

I would like to apply for the post of Social Activities Officer advertised in the Oxford Times of 24 April, and would be grateful if you would send me more information.

I am 24 years old and am currently studying English at the Edderson School of English in Wheatley, Oxfordshire. I will be taking the Cambridge First Certificate in June and would be free to take up the post after that.

I am interested in applying for this post as I enjoy working with people and am keen to develop my English in a real-life context. I feel I would be suitable as I consider myself to be friendly, approachable and flexible.

I am free to attend an interview at any time.

As you requested, I enclose details of my previous work experience. If you would like any more information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can usually be contacted on the above number after 5pm.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Téphany

3

Dear Mr. Blackwell,

I would like to apply for the job advertised in the Oxford Times a few days ago. It looks very interesting. Could you send me some details?

I am 25 years old and am studying English at the Boydwell School of English. My English is probably quite good because I am going to do the First Certificate.

I would like this job because I like meeting people and helping them. I'm a very helpful person and I work hard. My last employer can tell you this. I also think I'm friendly, approachable and flexible, so you would not be disappointed with me.

I can come for an interview whenever you want.

In this letter, you'll also find some notes I've made about the other jobs I've had. If you need to know anything else, please give me a call. After 5 o'clock is best for me.

Hopefully hear from you soon,

All the best,

N. Laudebat

4

Dear John

I saw your ad and I thought it looks like a great job. I want it. Please send me some details.

I'm 21 years old and I'm a student. I'm going to do the FCE soon.

My friends say I'm really friendly, and I've got loads of girlfriends, so this must be true. I love going to nightclubs and meeting people, so I'm energetic as well. I can play football and tennis, so I could keep all those kids entertained.

Anyway, I think I'd be great for your job because I work hard. If you don't believe me, you can write to my last boss (I did some work last holiday for her, but didn't like it as it was really difficult and so I left). She thought I was brilliant!

I've made a few notes about my life on a bit of paper.

If you want a chat about this job, give me a ring on my mobile or drop me a line and we can get together to talk about it.

I can't wait to hear from you.

Regards, Julian

5

Hi there John,

I would like to have the job that's going. Tell me more about it – it looks absolutely brilliant!

I'm a student at the moment, but won't be for much longer because I've got some exams soon and then I'm free.

I'm friendly and great fun to be with. I've got loads of energy and I can work really hard. People really like me, and kids think I'm really funny. That's why I'd be good at your job. My last boss told me this, so it must be true.

Take a look at my work experience on the other sheet. As you can see, I've done loads of things. That's because I'm so flexible, you see.

You really should get in touch, and then I can tell you all about myself. You won't regret it.

Anyway, must go now. Take care.

Byeee,

Paul

Look at the e-mails below. In each case, complete the second version which has a more appropriate tone. Use the words and phrases in the box.

Could you please I would like to advertised on Further to
Best regards Regarding Please find I look forward to
do not hesitate to I'm afraid you attached document I regret to say
take this opportunity to thank With regard

a

Hi there, Mr Watts. I was browsing your website the other day and saw the ad for a sales rep. I thought I'd like to apply. It sounds great and I'd love to work for such a cool company. I'm sending you my cv. I'm young and full of energy. I hope you give me an opportunity. Anyway, please reply soon. All the best, Ana.

Dear Mr Watts,
_____ apply for the post of sales representative _____ your website. The job seems very interesting, and your company has a very good reputation. _____ my CV as an _____. I am a dynamic young person and I am very keen to show that I can make the most of any opportunity I am offered. _____ hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,
Ana Hudson

b

Hello Ana. I got your application for the sales rep job. Is there anyone who can give you a reference? It doesn't say anything on your CV. John Watts

Dear Ms Hudson,
Thank you for your application for the post of sales representative. _____ to your CV, it does not include your referees. _____ supply me with the names and e-mail addresses of two people who can provide an up-to-date reference for you?

Best regards,
J M Watts

c

Hi there, Mr Watts. I got your e-mail about my references. Here's the information about my referees. It's in an attached document. Tell me if you need more details. Catch you later. Bye for now. Ana

Dear Mr Watts,
_____ our previous correspondence, please find the attached document with information about my referees. Please _____ contact me if you need more details. I hope to hear from you soon.

_____,
Ana Hudson

d

Hello, Ana. I've thought about your application but I can't offer you work. You haven't got the right qualifications or enough experience really. Sorry about that. Thanks anyway and good luck finding a job somewhere else. Mr Watts.

Dear Ms Hudson,
_____ your request for work, _____ that I am unable to consider your application. _____ do not have the necessary qualifications or sufficient experience. Please let me _____ you for your interest in our company and wish you every success in your search for employment.

Best wishes,
J M Watts

A job application

Read the advertisement and the job application. What is the function of each of the three main paragraphs in Carine's letter?

79 Rue Daguerre
Paris 75014
France
Tel (00.33) 47.07.83.85

Mrs B H Albion
Restaurant Angélique
The Royal Parade
Brighton BN1 5JS

September 7th 1995

Dear Madam

I would like to apply for the position of cook advertised in this month's issue of *The Lady*.

As you will see from my CV (enclosed), I served a three-year apprenticeship at the Hotel Meurice in Paris. On completion of my apprenticeship, I left the Meurice to work at La Rotonde, where I stayed for 15 months. I was feeling that my career plans were likely to be hampered by my lack of English, so I left La Rotonde to spend six months studying English in Brighton. My English is now fluent, and adequate to meet any social or professional situation, as my examination results attest.

Having very much enjoyed my time in Brighton, I have decided to look for a job in Britain rather than return to La Rotonde. I am particularly keen to work in Brighton, where I have many good friends. I am available for interview at any time.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Carine Colbert

Enc: CV

Model answer

reason for writing → { I am writing in response to your request for writers, which appears in this month's edition of 'Global Concerns'.

relevant experience → { I am an active member of the Green Society at my university, where I am currently studying marine biology. The aim of the society is to raise awareness of environmental concerns amongst students and within the local community. As well as organizing debates on matters of local and global importance, we also publish a monthly journal to which I regularly contribute.

separate paragraphs for each issue → { The economy of my region is largely based on forestry, farming and fishing and since it is likely that many of your readers live in areas with similar characteristics, I am sure they would be interested to read about the problems facing us. Last summer, for example, the petrol tanker 'Intrigue' sank off our coast, spilling large quantities of oil into the sea with devastating effects for marine wildlife and the fishing industry.

expressing suitability and desire for the job → { In addition, the forestry industry here has recently come under heavy criticism from environmentalists. The fast-growing eucalyptus is planted instead of trees which are native to the region. Unfortunately, however, the eucalyptus allows nothing else to grow below it, preventing other plants and animals from surviving on the forest floor. Readers who are unaware of this situation might learn a great deal from an article on it.

{ I am convinced that issues like these would be of interest to people in other countries and I would very much like to have the opportunity to write about them for your magazine.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Lisa Blanco

appropriately formal register

reasons why the issues would be of interest to readers

Useful phrases

Paragraph 1

I wish to apply for the post of . . . which was advertised in today's 'Daily Telegraph'.

With reference to your advertisement in the 'Guardian' of January 5th, I should like to apply for the position of . . .

Paragraph 2

As you will see from my enclosed CV, I have four years' experience in hotels and catering

At present I am employed as a . . . by the local Tourist Office, a position I have held for three years.

In the course of my present job, I have been responsible for the planning and organization of . . .

My duties have included secretarial work as well as . . .

I graduated in Business Administration from Dundee University in 1990.

I was employed as a cashier with Barclays Bank from 1988 to 1992.

I attended the Lycée Paul Bert, where I obtained the baccalauréat in 1989.

During my apprenticeship I obtained practical training in all aspects of the catering trade.

I am used to working under pressure / working to a deadline / working as part of a team.

I am familiar with Word for Windows / recent developments in the industry . . .

I also have some knowledge of accountancy, having kept the books for my father's business . . .

Paragraph 3

I believe the post you offer will give me the opportunity to . . .

I am especially keen to work in an organization such as yours which has a reputation for . . .

I feel that my present position offers little prospect of promotion

I will be glad to supply you with any further information you may need.

. . . have agreed to act as my referees.

Writing a covering letter

A covering letter (*NAmE* cover letter) accompanies a CV/résumé or an application form. In Britain and North America they are usually typed on a single page. A good letter uses formal language and presents some key arguments for why your application should be taken seriously.

Mrs F Hunter
Human Resources Manager
Timson Office Supplies
Unit 5 Males Industrial Estate
Cambridge CB7 9HD

Flat 3
19 Strangelands Road
London
NE23 6ZB
Tel: 0207 337 34589
20 January 2010

For advice on layout see
Formal letters pages

The date could also be
January 20, 2010, 20/1/10
(BrE), or (NAmE) 1/20/10

Dear Mrs Hunter

Senior Accounts Clerk

I am writing to apply for the post of senior accounts clerk advertised in the Cambridge Evening News of 17 January.

In a cover letter use the words **post**, **position** or **vacancy**, not *job*.

As you will see from my enclosed CV I am currently an accounts clerk in a medium-sized printing firm. In addition to my normal bookkeeping duties, I am responsible for invoicing and chasing up late payments. I also deal with credit checks on potential customers.

Avoid contracted forms such as *I'm*.

I am committed to pursuing a career in management accounting and am currently studying for further professional qualifications by distance learning. I am particularly interested in your post as it would enable me to gain experience of working in a larger company with the opportunities for professional training and development that this brings. In addition to my skills and experience as an accounts clerk, I would bring to the post a proven ability to deal successfully and tactfully with customers and clients.

Use **Yours faithfully** here if you have begun Dear Sir or Madam.

I am available for interview for the next three weeks.

Sign your name and print it in full underneath.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Enc. or encl. shows you have enclosed something.

Dilip Patel
Dilip Patel
Enc. CV

Key phrases

Paragraph 1 states your purpose for writing. Say which job you are applying for and how/where you heard about it.

Paragraph 2 outlines your current job and responsibilities. Make it relevant to the post you are applying for.

Paragraph 3 says why you want the job and what you can bring to the company. It is very important to say what you can do for them.

Paragraph 4 gives other relevant information and when you are available for interview.

Language bank

*Since graduating from... , I have...
I have considerable/extensive experience in (the field of...)
I consider/feel that my qualifications and work experience could/might be of interest to the company.
If called for (an) interview, I would be available at any time convenient for you.
Please find attached a copy of my curriculum vitae/résumé for your consideration.
I look forward to hearing from you in due course.*