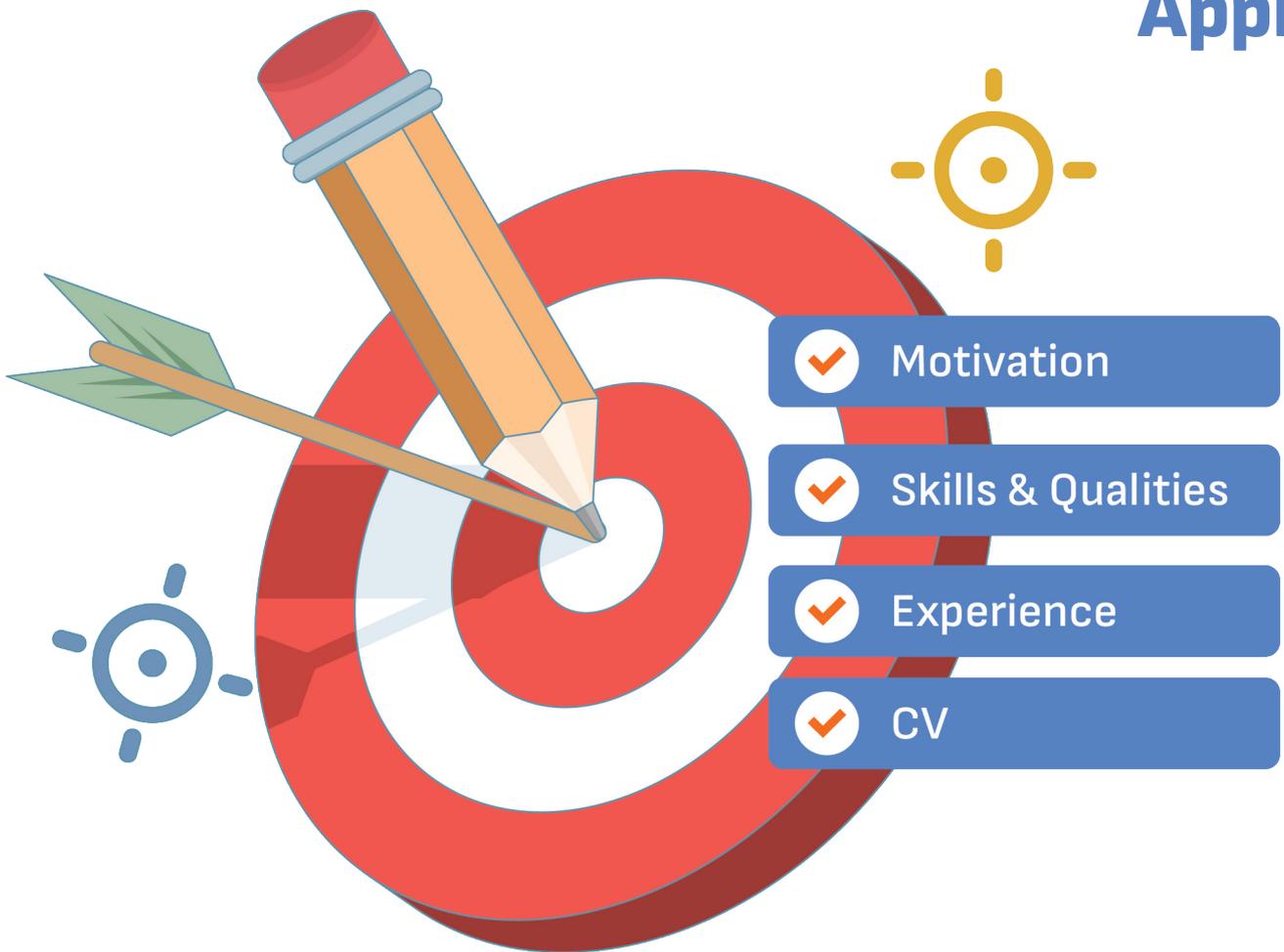


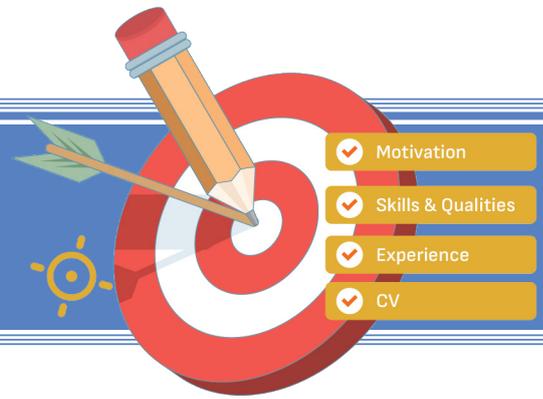
JOB SEEKING SKILLS

**Step 2:
Apply**



8: Writing a cover letter

Writing a cover letter



Applying by letter or email

If the method of application for a job is to send your CV, then a cover letter should accompany this.

Employers may ask for your CV and cover letter to be:



- sent by email
- uploaded on their recruitment website
- posted or handed in to the company. If you are completing an application form and posting it to an employer, you should also include a cover letter.

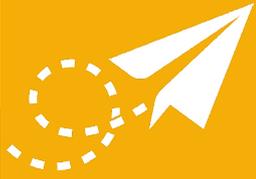
Regardless of the method of delivery, you need a good cover letter that is tailored to the job you're applying for.

The purpose of a cover letter

A good cover letter tells an employer:



- why you are interested in the job or type of work – your motivation
- why you're a great candidate – your skills, qualities and experience
- relevant information you haven't included in your CV, for example, if you are about to sit a driving test.



Cover Letter Guidelines

The Introduction

- Your address, including your postcode, should be in the top right-hand corner.
- The name of the person you are contacting and/or their job title, and the employer's name and address should be below your address and on the left-hand side.
- The date should be under the employer's address.
- Then address the person you are writing to, for example "Dear Ms Green" or "Dear Sir/Madam".
- Give the letter a title or subject heading – put the name or job title and any job reference number (this should be in bold), for example "Re: Travel Services Apprenticeship (Ref. TSMA YP1)".

Now you're ready to start writing the main part of the letter.

Part 1

- Say what you are applying for, for example "I wish to apply for the above post..." or "I would like to be considered for..." or "I am very interested in your recent advertisement for..."
- Say where and when you saw the vacancy advertised.
- Mention that you have enclosed, or attached, a copy of your CV for their consideration.

Part 2

- Tell them a little bit about yourself, and why you're a good applicant for the job. For example, "I have recently completed some training courses in Microsoft Office and business admin" or, "I completed a work placement in a letting agency office as part of an employability programme, which helped me improve my IT and customer service skills."
- Mention your relevant skills and experience, but keep it short. Focus on the skills specified in the advert. Add to what you've said in your CV.
- Say why the job and their company or organisation interests you. As well as saying what you can bring to the company, give a specific example, if possible, of how it would benefit you to work there. Make it clear that you are really keen!

Part 3

- Thank them for considering your application, and say that you look forward to hearing from them.

The Ending

- Yours sincerely (if you know the name of the person who will be reading the letter)

OR

- Yours faithfully (if the letter is addressed "Dear Sir/Madam")
- Leave a space and type your name.
- If emailing or uploading the letter, you don't need to physically sign it. If posting or handing it in, sign the letter above your typed name.



Tips for a great cover letter

- Be positive about yourself and what you have to offer.
- Be enthusiastic about the job and the company or organisation.
- Keep the letter short – no more than one page of A4 paper – around 150 to 250 words should suffice.
- It's best to type up your letter on a computer, rather than writing it by hand (unless this is specifically requested). Use the same font type you used for your CV.
- Tailor your letter to the job you are applying for and to the employer.
- Spell check the letter, and then check it again yourself for mistakes. Ask someone else to check it for you.
- Remember to sign it (unless sending by email or uploading)
- Don't use a cover letter example as anything other than a guide.
- Don't forget to attach your CV, or send it by email with your CV.
- Save a copy of the letter, preferably electronically, for future reference.



Activity 1: Cover Letter Builder

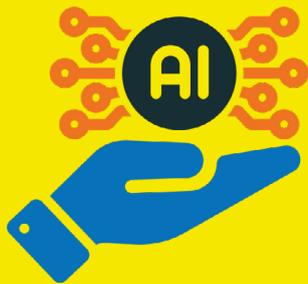
Using [Cover Letter Builder](#), you can now have a go at creating your first cover letter. Use the same example job that you used in [7: Match your skills to a job](#).

Cover Letter Builder

- Open [Cover Letter Builder](#).
- Work your way through each section, following the instructions.
- If there are any sections that you want to complete later, you can click through to the next section.
- View the [Activity 1 Sample Letter](#) to see an example cover letter and what kind of information can be included.

If you are completing this as a paper-based exercise, use Word to create your own cover letter. Use the [Activity 1 Sample Letter](#) to guide you.

Using Artificial Intelligence (AI)



It's becoming more common for people to use AI when it comes to job applications. It can provide some inspiration for what to include in a cover letter and providing you use the right prompts/questions, it can give some really useful information.

[Take a look at this example](#), which demonstrates the pros and cons and how it's still important to use your own input.

Sending your CV with a cover letter by email



Applying by email is one of the most common ways of applying for a job. It usually involves sending the company an email message and attaching an electronic copy of your CV and cover letter.

The email message

In most cases, the email message is almost like a cover letter, however a little shorter – just three or four short paragraphs. Each paragraph should include only one or two sentences.

The main aim of the message is to persuade the employer that your CV is worth looking at more closely.

Here is what a typical email looks like.

The diagram shows an email template with several callout boxes providing instructions:

- To:** john.thomson@sjs.co.uk (Callout: Double check the email address - even a small mistake can stop your email getting to the right person.)
- Subject:** Amy McDonald: Application for Clerical Assistant Post (Ref. No. E1276) (Callout: Say what you are applying for, if the vacancy has a reference number add it. Also give your name. The example we've given says exactly what the employer needs to know.)
- Body:**
 - Dear Mr Thomson, (Callout: Keep things business-like.)
 - I am writing to apply for the post of clerical assistant (Ref. No. E1276), as advertised on S1 jobs on Friday 7 May. (Callout: Name the vacancy, any reference number and where you saw it.)
 - I became interested in legal administration during my work experience placement last year with McSorley & Partners in Buchanan Street, Aberdeen. They have offered to provide me with a reference if required.
 - I'm available for interview at any time.
 - I have attached my CV and cover letter as requested, and look forward to hearing from you. (Callout: Follow the instructions given by the employer.)
 - Yours sincerely (Callout: 'Regards' is also acceptable.)
 - Amy McDonald**
 - Tel: 0978 345 789
 - Mobile: 02786 654987 (Callout: List your contact details)
 - Email: amy.mcdonald@test.com (Callout: Your email address should be something sensible that is appropriate for a business situation.)



Things to remember

First impressions count!

- **Don't use casual language.** This is a business email, so write it in the same formal way as you would a business letter.
- **Use an email address that incorporates your name,** so that the employer can link it with your application.
- **Make sure you know exactly what the employer wants to receive by email.** For example, is it your CV, your CV and a cover letter, an application form or all three documents?
- **Don't hit the 'send' button** until you have checked that your CV is attached, and any other relevant documents. It's very easy to forget!



Uploading your CV and cover letter

Some employers may have an online facility for uploading a CV and cover letter. You will need to register on their website first, inputting your personal and contact details.

Employers advise the file format they prefer you to upload, with Microsoft Word being the most common. There is usually also a file size limit, for example 2MB.

Make sure that you follow the instructions and that you don't make any mistakes when inputting your contact details, as you will receive a confirmation email once your application is received.

Making speculative job enquiries

Employers sometimes fill vacancies without advertising, so it can be well worth contacting them directly about any future employment opportunities.

This is particularly true if you are applying for:



- popular Modern Apprenticeship or trainee opportunities where you need to find an employer to sponsor your training, like the construction trades
- entry level jobs in sectors that rarely advertise, like the media and creative industries
- specialist companies or organisations that attract a lot of interest, from airports to computer games developers.

First, you need to do some research and it's important to be thorough.



You need to show that you:

- know about the organisation
- understand what it is that they do and who their customers are
- have valuable skills and abilities to offer.

You should have a good understanding of what your skills and values are from completing [1: All about you](#) and you practised researching companies in [4: Recruitment and organisation websites](#).

Use your research to make a list of the companies and/or organisations you plan to contact and keep a record of those you do contact.

It's a good idea to list their address, phone number, what they do, the date you contacted them, the name of your contact and the outcome of your call.



- Check how to spell their name if you're not sure.
- This could be the owner if it's a small business, the human resources manager or the head of a department. You may be able to find the right contact name on their website, or by phoning and asking them who deals with recruitment.



Speculative letters or emails

When writing to a company 'on spec' in the hope that they may have a suitable vacancy, always include a copy of your CV, which is tailored to the type of job you are looking for.

For example, if you're looking for an administration post, highlight any skills and experience that shows good communication skills, organisation skills, using a computer and working as part of a team.

Where possible address your letter to a named person in the company.

The letter should state clearly:

- the type of job you are looking for
- the skills and qualities that you can offer
- some reference to the work of the company you are approaching
- why you are interested in working for the company.



This shows you have done some background work and makes a good impression on the employer.

Sample speculative letter

26 Red Crescent
Peterhead AB42 0YY

Telephone 07123 456789

13 June 2025

Mr B Gray
Sales Director
XYZ Ltd
5 Main Street
Peterhead AB42 9II

Dear Mr Gray,

I read on the Press and Journal website this week that your motor spares company has plans to expand due to increasing customer demand and record profitability.

I am writing to enquire if, as a result of your planned expansion, there might be an opportunity for someone with my background in the parts department.

In 2020 I successfully completed a Modern Apprenticeship programme run by the Aberdeen Car Components Training Association and achieved an SVQ Automotive: Vehicle Parts Operations at SCQF Level 6.

You will note from my enclosed CV that I have also had 2 years' experience in the Parts Department of Car City Garage. I had to take a break from work for personal reasons, but I'm really keen to get back into this career. I am enthusiastic and motivated towards securing further experience and a full time position in parts.

I would be pleased to attend for an interview at any time and look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

GRAHAM JONES



Activity 2: Writing a speculative letter

Think of a company that you would like to work for and the job you would like to do and have a go at creating a speculative letter. You can use Word or [Cover Letter Builder](#), which you used in Activity 1. Although it includes fields for a job title and reference, you can ignore these.

Use the sample letter provided as a guide.

If you were contacting a company by email, you would follow the guidelines from this module, but make sure that the email states the points mentioned.

Now you know more about writing cover letters and emails, you can move on to

[9: Completing a job application online](#)

Or [click here](#) to return to the main screen.