

## **DO**

### **Service: What can I do for you?**

Instead of going deeper into how the job will affect your life, write about how your qualities and skills could benefit the employer. Self evidently, you need some knowledge about the company's profile and activities to do this.

### **Audience-oriented: What do I know of you?**

Doing some research into a company before writing your cover letter enables you to write a true sales letter. You will be able to market yourself better when you know the company's needs.

Especially when writing unsolicited letters, doing some research is vital. Check the corporate website, read reports and mission statements.

### **Content: What am I writing?**

Nothing ruins a perfectly good letter as effectively as spelling mistakes. Use the spell-checker on your computer but do not completely rely on it.

Make sure that the paragraphs are set in a logical order and that your argument makes sense.

### **Style: How am I writing?**

Business writing does not follow the rules of literature. Kill your darlings, delete redundant adjectives, transform passive verbs into active ones, and shorten lengthy sentences. But always make sure that your letter retains its original meaning.

## **DON'T**

You're just 9 steps away from killing your letter

### **1. Don't be too presumptuous or arrogant**

Employers don't want you to tell them what to do.

Sometimes job ads specifically ask you to mention what wage you'd like to work for. Only when the future employer brings up this subject, should you talk about it. Otherwise there is quite a big risk of sounding arrogant and greedy, as the quote below indicates:

"Depending on your offer, I would be very happy to come and work for DocuMakers."

Stressing how quickly you learn new skills might be taken for arrogance as well. Furthermore, employers do not always look forward to another on-the-job learner.

"... so even though applied mathematics is not exactly my field, I am convinced that I will be of an indispensable worth to your company. After a short training I will be discussing the most technical matters with your most senior scientists and engineers ..."

Note that self-assuredness in cover letters is disproved of in many European countries, but that it is quite normal in the US.

### **2. Avoid negativity**

Starting off negatively can never lead to a positive result

**3. Make sure not to sound desperate or humble. Never beg.**

Trying to get the employer to pity you, does not work. Saying how much you crave for a job only creates an aversion

**4. Don't try to sound too lofty or intelligent**

Creates aversion and does not sound genuine

**5. Avoid autobiographies**

It is not necessary for any future employer to know exactly where you got your experience. Even if you have not really got any experience, it is not a good idea to try to fill the entire page.

Also avoid regurgitating your CV. Your cover letter gives you the opportunity to display some of your personality and enthusiasm for the job. Do not drone on about things that are clear from your CV. If you do, there might be the risk of boring the reader.

**6. Avoid information overload and lengthy paragraphs**

Offering too much information at once causes the reader to give up. Rather than being impressed, your employer will get bored. Don't forget to use different paragraphs for different topics in your cover letter. It is vital for your cover letter to look easily readable.

Especially in opening paragraphs, boring the employer *kills* your letter. Various studies have shown that employers rarely spend over one minute reading cover letters. If you bore your reader from the start, your letter might not even be fully read. Your opening paragraph has to persuade them to read on.

**7. No "neutral" letters**

If you use a one-size-fits-all letter for various recipients, there is a chance that you will not get invited by any employer. It is vital for a letter to be tailored for one job and one recipient only. Indicating knowledge of a specific company is impossible if you intend to copy/paste the body of your letter. If the reader spots any apparent ignorance about his or her company in your letter, your letter will end up in the dustbin.

**8. Don't overuse passive verbs**

You should sound dynamic. Passive verbs give rise to the impression that you lack initiative.

**9. No ethics, no politics**

Since you never really know who will be reading your letter and what their politics are, it is a good idea to steer well clear of any political or ethical statement.