

Effective Cover Letter Writing for Healthcare Professionals

Reading time:

Jayson Nagpiing

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A cover letter for your CV serves as a prospective employer's first impression of you and your abilities. In the healthcare industry, your potential employer could be a healthcare practice or a hospital and hiring people is just a small part of their long work day. In most cases, their time is limited, and a cover letter can make a material impression. It may also determine whether the employer reads further to view your resume/CV.

The cover letter should be a summary of your resume/CV. When buying a book, everyone goes to the summary to see if that book will interest them. In the same way, an employer reads the cover letter before getting into the details of your resume. If your cover letter is not interesting enough, there's a big chance that your whole application will be relegated to the archives or discarded.

A good approach is to relate your skills to the job requirement. There is no better way to illustrate why you are fit for the job than in your cover letter. Be succinct and don't be afraid to spruik the facts of your skills and abilities. This is the best advertisement you have to convey why you are the best person for the job.

A cover letter helps employers focus on your strengths. Your resume could primarily contain information that is relevant and irrelevant to the job you are applying for. Discussing in the cover letter the key points that relate your skills to the job will ensure that your potential employer will be able to quickly identify if you are a good fit for the role. There may be little point in discussing your experience as an Emergency doctor if you are applying for a pathology training position.

It is helpful to outline interest in the position and the employer by demonstrating your knowledge in their organisation/company. Prepare by doing some research on the company and position you are applying for and include that information in your cover letter. You may also like to mention your accomplishments in the last year and how it impacted the community in a positive way.

Lastly, a cover letter is your chance to communicate your work preferences and limitations. It is always good to make your potential employer aware of any limitations you might have in relation to the role. This helps avoid wasting both parties' time. For instance, if you have any non-negotiable preferences like work timing or availability, it would be good to mention straight away. There is no point in considering someone for a full-time position if they can only work three days a week.

Cover letter Tips

Now that we have covered the reasons why cover letters are important, here is a list of things that make a good cover letter.

- 1. Length and format**

A good cover letter should be concise. It is recommended that it is kept to an A4 in size, adequately spaced and ensure the font consistent with the accompanying resume. Some jobs require you to use a particular font and size, when responding so make sure you check the job application specification for these.
- 2. Language**

Be sure to make your letter clear but formal. Where appropriate use verbs which demonstrate action, such as 'manage' and 'supervise'. Since you are addressing healthcare professionals, you can use technical terms to illustrate your points. That will provide the reader with a gauge of your knowledge in the field.
- 3. Layout**

Ensure the layout is clear and includes an introduction and identification of the position. For example, start by quoting the job reference number and the full job title, then follow up with your reason for applying and why you are fit for the job.
- 4. Substance**

List all your skills and expertise relevant to the job requirements. Be sure to take note of important keywords in the job advertisement and address those elements.
- 5. Name, Title and Address**

This is an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the role. Find out the details of the contact person (check your spelling) in the organisation and address your letter accordingly. Likewise, don't forget to include your address, phone number and email too.
- 6. Motivation**

State the motivation behind your application. Let them know what captured your attention while you were reading the job

description. This will give your employer a feel for what part of the job interests you and whether you are likely to stay in the position for a considerable time. Determining whether you will stay in the role is as important as whether you are fit for the job.

7. Negative information

Don't include negative information. It will do more harm than good. Focus on the positives, but always be helpful.

8. Gimmicks

Skip the gimmicks. Cover letters are important in differentiating you from the other applicants, however ensure you draw attention to your skills in a professional way. Make yourself unique by the way you write and convey your credentials, and not through gimmicks like neon coloured papers or artistic fonts.

9. Don't repeat your resume

Use your cover letter to show personality, curiosity, and an interest in the field you are applying to work in. Discuss the essence of your resume; there is no need to go into too much detail.

10. Ending

End your cover letter on a high note. End it like you started it: in a strong, professional manner. Include a statement that will make the employer remember you.

11. Proofing

Always check over your cover letter and resume. One misspelled word could draw the line between professional and unprofessional. Read your letter a few times looking for spelling and mistakes. A second set of eyes checking your cover letter for you is advisable.

Sample of a cover letter

Name

Street Address

Suburb State Post Code

Phone:

Mobile:

Email:

4 September 2018

Dr John Citizen

Clinical Superintendent

Always Caring Hospital

E: john.citizen@example.com.au

Phone

Dear Dr Citizen

RE: PGY3 Resident Medical Officer Positions

I wish to apply for the position of PGY3 Resident Medical Officer with reference no. 123456Y as advertised on LinkedIn. Please find my resume attached.

I am a MBBS graduate of the University of Melbourne, nearing the end of my PGY2 year at Royal Melbourne Hospital.

Completing the core rotations during my internship including shift work and a rural placement through John Smith Hospital has shown me the different medical environments.

Throughout my time at Royal Melbourne Hospital I participated in the BPT journal club, was on the committee for HMO Society and where possible attended multi-disciplinary meetings, I undertook these extracurricular activities as I felt that these gave me a good mix to engage with other members of the team.

I enjoy working in an environment which provides support and will allow me to learn from my peers, with my strong interpersonal and communication skills I tend to have good working relationships with peers and have been active in teaching the medical students and juniors.

As I have a strong interest in Basic Physician training, I have joined the RACP, and have always been willing to assist colleagues in areas which have allowed me to increase my knowledge in this area.

Thank you for considering me for the position, if you require any further information, please contact me on the phone numbers above. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Candidate
