The purpose of the application letter is to get you a job interview. Your letter of application is often the first contact an employer has with you so it should impress with its appearance, content and style. It accompanies your resume and should entice the employer to read your resume for further information and make them interested in meeting and interviewing you. As with every other step in the job seeking process, the key to success is preparation! Before you can write a letter of application you need to take the following steps.

The Ground Work

Step 1: Obtain details of the position

Where positions are advertised, it may be possible to gain additional information about the position through a job description. The advertisement may ask you to ring or email the contact person to ask for a job description. If this is not available, you might consider finding out as much as you can about the organisation (see Step Two).

Most job advertisements and job descriptions usually contain two sections:

1. Describes the duties you would be expected to carry out.

2. Describes the selection criteria and outlines the skills, experience and qualifications that are required to do the job. Pay particular attention to this section, as your letter will need to be targeted to the selection criteria. Note particularly key words such as mandatory, essential, desirable, preferable, ideal. These will tell you if you are qualified for the position. If you lack a preferred quality you may still be able to apply for the position, providing that you can persuade the employer that your experience is relevant.

Where positions are not advertised you may have to write an unsolicited letter to an employer. Students requiring fieldwork experience or course related vacation work, for example, might need to write directly to employers to enquire about work experience placements. In these situations, where you do not have an advertisement or job description to guide you, you must target your letter to the needs of employers.

How do you target your job application to an employer?

- Check job advertisements in the same or similar field to identify common qualities/abilities that are sought after.

- Place yourself in the position of the employer and ask yourself: What skills and abilities would be valuable in this work environment?

- Try to gain their interest by highlighting how you can be of value to their organisation.

- Research, research, research – finding out about the organisation and tailor your skills to their requirements & needs.

Step 2: Find out about the Employing Organisation

Your letter will stand out if you target your application to the employing organisation. For company/organisation details look at:

- Their website
- Annual reports (RMIT Library)
- Publicity material (CD&E Library)
- Employer directories (RMIT Library)
- Speak with people who work there
- State or local libraries
- Professional associations
- Business magazines or trade journals

Information that is likely to be helpful includes:

- Organisational structure
- Organisational culture and climate
- Main activities and site locations
- Client profile
Step 3: Identify What You Have To Offer

It is essential that you address all of the selection criteria, as you may eliminate yourself from consideration if you only pick one or two.

Make a list of the criteria and beside each point write examples from your experience. Consider your skills and experiences gained through study, paid or voluntary work, sport and leisure activities. For example, if teamwork is called for, you can use your experiences gained in team sport or group projects at university.

After compiling your list of examples, carefully select the examples that are most relevant to the job, or are the strongest example of when you demonstrated a particular skill. Also consider the order in which the skills are listed in the job description. Most jobs put the most important skills first and least important last. Prioritise your skills and examples in the same way. Try to spend more time on making sure you have really strong examples for the most important skills listed in the job description.

Successful applications are those that provide evidence of your ability to meet the key selection criteria. *(Tip - keep your list, as other examples may be useful to use in the interview!)*

**The Look**

A letter of application is a business letter and should adhere to that style and format. The following points should be noted:

- One page – start to finish – is about right for a letter of application. Think twice about anything much longer or far shorter.

**Tips for success**

- Make that first paragraph is interesting to read. Spend a bit of time making sure your first paragraph has real impact.
- Incorporate some of the enthusiasm you feel for the job in the letter.
- Try not to start every sentence with ‘I’
- Use concise and simple language. Make sure your sentences aren’t too long.
- The letter should flow in a way that takes the reader from one point to another naturally. Avoid long, complicated sentences where points can get lost or short, stilted sentences that do not flow smoothly.
- Avoid impersonal phrases e.g. ‘as per your advertisement’
- Use active verbs (see CD&E Fact Sheet ‘Action Words’ for examples)
- Limit the letter to one page.
- Check your spelling and grammar.

**The Next Step**

If you need further help go to the:

- CD&E Website *(www.rmit.edu.au/careers)*
- Careers Library – it contains a range of books/leaflets on writing successful job applications. There are also a number of videos available for viewing, e.g., “Write Giving Full Details”, “The Written Edge” and “Looking Good on Paper”.

**Examples**

- Structure of an Application Letter
- Letter of Enquiry
PLEASE NOTE: This structure is appropriate to use if you are directly applying for an advertised or non-advertised position. Make sure you have your letter checked by someone with appropriate experience. You may leave your letter and resume at the Career Development and Employment office in the City (Bld 14.4) or Bundoora HUB (202.2) for checking or email careers@rmit.edu.au

Applicant’s Address
Suburb, State. Postcode
Telephone Number (After Hours)
Mobile Phone (Business Hours)
Email

Date

Employer’s Name (wherever possible)
Position
Company/Organisation
Address
Suburb, State. Postcode

Dear (If the employer’s name is known address it to Dear Mr/Ms/Mrs/Dr Brown not Dear Ben or Dear Julia Brown. If the name is unknown then address it to Dear Sir/Madam)

Reference Number (if applicable)

In your introductory paragraph, clearly state the purpose of the letter. If you are applying for an advertised vacancy, state the title of the position and when and where it was advertised. Alternatively you may be inquiring about the possibility of work experience or vacation work or writing an unsolicited letter to a potential employer. If appropriate to the position, include details of your educational background.

The middle two to three paragraphs are critical to a successful application; this is where you demonstrate your suitability for the position by addressing the selection criteria. Link your skills, qualifications and experience to the selection criteria (see preparation section). Refer to the examples that you have prepared and mention any other points in your favour. Explain why you want this particular job.

Employers are interested to hear what you know of their organisation, so indicate that you have done your homework by including a paragraph that mentions your interest in the organisation and the advertised job. You may wish to place this information in the first paragraph and so grab the attention of the employer immediately.

In your final paragraph express your willingness to attend an interview to support your application and refer to any enclosures i.e. resume, transcript of results.

Yours sincerely, (If you have written Dear Mr/Ms/Mrs/Dr Brown.
If you addressed the letter to Dear Sir/Madam use Yours faithfully)

Full Name (Don’t forget to sign your letter)

Encl. Resume
Academic Results
STRUCTURE OF A LETTER OF ENQUIRY

PLEASE NOTE: This structure can be used for seeking co-operative, work experience or industry placement positions where you are not directly applying for a position, but rather seeking out whether there is potential for a placement. Make sure you have your letter checked by someone with appropriate experience. You may leave your letter and resume at the Career Development and Employment office in the City (Bld 14.4) or Bundoora HUB (202.2) for checking or email careers@rmit.edu.au

Applicant’s Address
Suburb, State. Postcode
Telephone Number (After Hours)
Mobile Phone (Business Hours)
Email

Date

Employer’s Name (wherever possible)
Position
Company/Organisation
Address
Suburb, State. Postcode

Dear (If the employer’s name is known address it to Dear Mr/Ms/Mrs/Dr Brown not Dear Ben or Dear Julia Brown. If the name is unknown then address it to Dear Sir/Madam)

Paragraph 1:
• State why you are writing
• Explain what sort of position you are looking for concisely (e.g. vacation, cooperative or graduate position). If applying for a cooperative position, include the URL of the RMIT Cooperative website

Paragraph 2:
• Brief details about your course
• Highlight relevant subjects/achievements

Paragraph 3 – 4:
• Describe your other experiences and the skills that they have developed that are relevant to a position in the field.
• Detail the practical things you can do that indicate why you would be a useful addition to the organisation

Paragraph 4
• State why this organisation appeals to you (Research is important at this stage)

Paragraph 5
• Concluding paragraph indicating your willingness to attend an interview and noting any attachments e.g. resume or academic results.
• Specify a time that you will ring the employer regarding this “Letter of Enquiry”

Yours sincerely,

Full Name (Don’t forget to sign your letter)