

How to Write a Cover Letter

This piece of writing is *always* your first chance to impress your prospective reader, whether it be a prospective funder or journal editor. Here are few tips to remember when writing a cover letter:

Your writing needs to impress your reader, so pay close attention to coherence, cohesion, structure, conventions, spelling and grammar. You need to both capture your reader's interest and convince your reader that you are a good candidate funding etc...

Always follow the requirements for your cover letter. In general, one page is sufficient.

Your cover letter will follow a similar format to a formal business letter. For example, it must include the address of both yourself and your intended reader.

Greeting:

- Always address the letter to a person, never "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Sir/Madam"

Introduce Yourself:

- Who are you?
- Where did you study?
- What do you currently do?

Highlight the reader's organisation:

- What is special/interesting about this organisation?
- Why are you applying to *this* journal/scholarship?
- What makes you/your work a good fit?

Highlight yourself:

- Why are you best suited for the job (align it with their specific requirements)
- What can you offer the organization?
- What skills/experience do you have?
- Are you involved in any community work?
- What are your strengths?
- What benefits will you gain from your association with this organization?

Conclusion:

- Thank your intended reader. Welcome an interview session at their convenience.

Remember to be confident but not arrogant in your tone!

Everybody has their own style of writing and there is no single format that fits every situation. However, there are some essential elements that editors and funders pay attention to.

Example of a cover letter:

Your Address

Date

Intended Address

Re: Application for the (name) Scholarship

Dear Mr/Mrs/Dr (name)

I am a PhD student in the Evolutionary Genomics Group in the Department of Molecular and Cell Biology at UCT. My research focuses on the sociogenetic population structure of a local termite species, *Microhodotermes viator*, with regards to relatedness, behaviour and chemical communication.

The (name) scholarship has a legacy of fostering the development and support of graduate students, and it is only due to the generous donations of such philanthropists, that South African students can continue to produce excellent research. This is a legacy I would be proud to be a part of.

Currently there is a large void in our knowledge where my species of interest, *M. viator*, is concerned, and, given it's extensive colonisation of up to 25% of the land surface area of the Western Cape (Picker *et al.*, 2007), my research will provide novel and valuable insight. I feel, and the literature shows, that this work is of great importance both scientifically and environmentally, with implications for climate change studies.

Funding from the (name) Scholarship Program would be extremely appreciated and make a real difference to my life, providing me with more financial security and peace-of-mind, allowing me to focus more clearly on my research.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to consider my application, and I optimistically look forward to a favourable response.

Sincerely

(Your name)

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FHS

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WRITING LAB