

Motivation / Cover Letter

A **motivation letter**, **motivational letter** or a **letter of motivation** is a letter of introduction attached to, or accompanying another document such as a résumé or curriculum vitae. The main purpose of a cover (motivational) letter is to persuade a specialist that you are the most suitable candidate for a given position.

What is the difference between a motivation and a cover letter?

The **motivation letter** is usually used when applying for something e.g. for acceptance to a university, to a student programme, to a non-profit organization for voluntary work etc. You have to explain why you are interested in the specific activity, your motives, why you want to study or attend the programme, why you choose the specific university or programme etc.

The **cover letter** is used when you apply for a job. You send both a letter and your detailed CV. In the cover letter, you must state clearly the position you are applying for and explain why your profile matches the position. To put it simply, it must answer the question "Why you?"

However, you must keep in mind that the cover letter should highlight you relevant skills and experience to relative to the position. Leave the details in your resume and take the chance to say things that cannot be expressed through your CV.

Always finish your cover letter by asking for an interview, and by saying how you can be contacted (e.g. by phone).

DOs and DON'Ts to write a good Motivation/Cover letter

Do:

1. Mention clearly why the university/company has to choose you for the study/job. Be concrete, convincing, without being arrogant.
2. If you know the name of the responsible person, start your letter with this name. This person will feel personally approached by your letter, which is always positive.
3. Start always with your positive points, weak points they will ask in the talk, so don't mention them in your letter.
4. Formulate your letter positive and future oriented.

5. Motivate your statements with facts and experiences. Use for example experiences in your personal life.
6. Collect information about the university/company. In this way you show interest and you can adapt your letter better to the university/company needs and function.
7. Put only the most relevant facts and experiences in your motivation/cover letter. Keep it brief and clear. Don't forget to tell something about you as a person.
8. Mention what you have reached for so far at educational and or professional level (former study/work or stages) and your career perspective.
9. Tell in which way you distinguish yourself from others with the same education and diploma.

Don't:

1. **"Average is not enough"**. Your motivation/cover letter has to be different than that of others. So don't copy your motivation/cover letter from others, but make sure that the letter is tuned to the university/company and study/job you are applying for. A motivation/cover letter is a personal letter, so use your own style to show who you are.
2. **"Stick to the point"**. Universities/companies want to know why you want to study/work in their programme/company, so don't use complex language constructions or long poetic phrases. Be as concrete as possible.
3. **"Don't let your motivation (cover) letter and your CV „echo"**. The motivation/cover letter should be complementary to your CV where you can highlight some of the relevant items of your CV. Don't list all the items of your CV in the motivation/cover letter.
4. **"Don't exaggerate"**. Make sure that you don't mention new items in your motivation/cover letter (work or education or other skills) which are not mentioned in your CV.
5. In case of sending your letter via e-mail: Make sure that you have a "serious" e-mail address (and don't use an e-mail address of you current employer in case you have a job).