

# Cover Letters



BPP CAREERS SERVICE

January 2007

Your covering letter is the bridge between your reader and your CV or application form. The employer will read your letter first, so it is important that you bring your reader's attention to the essentials of your background. Your letter must show that you have (or will have) the qualifications for the job, why you are applying to the firm or chambers and why you are a suitable candidate for the position on offer.

Your letter must also be specific to the reader and you should make references to the firm or chambers; a standard letter feels exactly that and will not attract the attention or interest of the reader. Read the firm's/chambers' brochure, relevant press and visit the website to understand not only what the firm or chambers does, but also how it organises and sees itself. Give at least two or three specific reasons for applying, demonstrating that you have researched the firm/chambers.

Your letter should state what your unique selling points are, making clear how they relate to the role in question and match the requirements of the firm/chambers. These will depend on your particular reader - a human rights practice will not necessarily be impressed by the same factors as a commercial practice - and so you will need to reconsider both your letter and your CV for each application.

As with any application, keep it specific: 'I was promoted because I had shown I could lead the team' or 'My supervisor's reports praised my interpersonal

skills' are better than 'I am good with people'. Remember any claims must be supported directly by the evidence in your CV.

Always go for quality rather than quantity in what you write. This applies both to the length of your letter and to the number of applications you make. Every word and every target must be carefully chosen. Wastage in words detracts from your essential message. Wastage in choosing your targets is unnecessary and expensive - and demoralising, as it will not lead to success.

As well as the content, pay attention to the presentation of your covering letter. It should be no more than one side of A4, clear and to the point. Remember that how you present yourself is as important as what you present. If you take care with the design and presentation of your application, you are more likely to be taken seriously as a well-organised and professional person. It is well worth spending time on your covering letter in order to get it as good as you can before sending it out.

# Cover Letters Sample Layout



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Your address

The employer's name and address

Date

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Always send a covering letter addressed to a named person - never use their first name.

Heading: Application for Pupillage/Training Contract September 2006

## 1) Purpose of your letter

An introductory paragraph detailing why you are writing e.g. applying for a training contract or pupillage starting in September 2008, a placement during Easter 2007.

## 2) Your career summary/ what you have to offer

Include a summary of your career and your career plans. State what your unique selling points are, making clear how they relate to the firm's/chambers' requirements. Support what you say about your particular strengths and skills by referring to highlights from your CV.

## 3) Why you have chosen the firm / chambers

Show you have done some research – are you applying because you have spoken to trainees and like the sound of the firm's/chambers' working environment - have people you met seemed approachable and friendly perhaps? Have you researched their work and found a specific case/area interesting - do they have high-profile clients and strong global links? Do you have relevant industrial experience? Do you have a language or are you from a country that they have clients/offices in or overseas work opportunities? Is there something specific about the training that appeals to you?

## 4) Ending

End with something simple and positive such as 'I look forward to hearing from you'. Include a time scale for following up if you are making a speculative application.

'Yours sincerely', if you have a named contact or 'Yours faithfully', if you do not have a named contact.

Signature

Name

Careers Service Contact Details:

[lawcareers@bpp.com](mailto:lawcareers@bpp.com)

0207 430 5306 or 0207 633 4539