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Youth Direction: Careers

Guide to Writing a Speculative Letter





Around 70-75% of jobs are never advertised. It is therefore important to target the hidden job market. This means that speculative approaches to employers should be an important part of your job search.

To help you to do this, you need to produce an effective CV and accompanying letter. In your letter, highlight skills that you have gained from work experience, subjects taken in school, if you have positions of responsibility such as being a prefect or mentor or if you play sports/athletics for the school etc. Also add skills from activities outside of school such as baby sitting, army/air/police cadets and so on. The following points are worth remembering when writing your covering letter.

Make the most of your speculative approaches by targeting suitable organisations. Those which are currently recruiting (not necessarily in your chosen field) expanding or moving into your area especially those which can use your skills and experience.

Use all your information sources e.g. newspapers; trade journals; business and personal contacts, to identify a list of initial targets. You can obtain lists of organisations by checking in the Yellow Pages, Thomson's or Business directories which you can obtain from public libraries or online information on national companies is contained in Kompass directories.



...highlight skills that you have gained from work experience...

- ▶ Always try to write to a suitably named person you can find out who to contact by telephoning the company. Do not write to the Personnel Officer assuming that they are a man as this will not endear you to them if they are a lady! It may also be more appropriate in some cases to contact department heads or site managers as you want your letter to land on the right desk.
- ▶ Your letter should ideally be word-processed. If this is not possible, write clearly in black ink on good, quality, plain, A4 paper.
- ▶ Put your address and telephone number at the top right of the letter. The date, name and address of the organisation should be on the left hand side. Keep paragraphs short and try to avoid the use of the word "I" too much (please see the sample given.)
- ▶ Letters should be clear, concise and easy to read. Your opening paragraph should explain why you are writing and mention that your CV is enclosed.

Your opening paragraph should be followed with one or two short paragraphs drawing attention to particular skills and experiences relevant to the employer's needs.

You should also indicate the area of work you are interested in. The concluding paragraph should indicate that you are available for interview or further discussion at any time. It is good practice to follow up your letter by telephoning after a week or so.

When writing to a named contact, end your letter "Yours sincerely". If you have been unable to find a named contact, then begin "Dear Sir/Madam" and end "Yours faithfully". Ensure that under "Yours sincerely/faithfully" leave a space for your signature and print your name underneath.

Before sending your letter, check it (and any accompanying CV) for spelling or grammatical errors and ask someone to double check it. If you find mistakes, rewrite it – do not use correction fluid. Ensure that at the foot of the letter you indicate "CV enc".

Keep copies of everything you send and note the date sent and any follow up action to be taken. The examples of speculative letters on the next page assume that you are applying for the areas indicated at the top. However, you can change the format relating to skills etc. to suit yourself.

...indicate the area of work you are interested in...

...include any voluntary work you might do or any positions you hold in school such as prefect...

Please see example overleaf...

Speculative letter example

Ima Applicant
1 University Street
Stockton-on-Tees
TS1 1AB
Tel: 01642 333333

Date:

Smith Print Co. Ltd
Alma Street
Middlesbrough
TS5 5DS

Dear Mr. Smith,

You may be interested to know that I am currently working towards (indicate subjects and predicted grades) or I have recently completed my GCSEs/ NVQ level 2/3/AVCE/A/AS in.....with.....which you may be aware is the equivalent of 5 GCSEs/2 /3A levels.

May I draw to your attention that I have gained a great amount of experience in my placement /during my course with Bloggs Print Co. in their administration section where I was involved in the input and retrieval of information using.....?

I have also done IT where I have used data bases, spread sheets (and so-on).

I was also involved in taking and processing orders from clients and resolving problems. Or use subjects like English, Maths, Business Studies and ICT and relate what you have done in these to the job as above.

I am now interested in developing these skills and am seeking a position in a similar organisation and would be very grateful if you could advise me if you have any opportunities for apprenticeships/data processors/administration staff within your organisation, now or in the near future

You will not mind, I hope, my enclosing a copy of my CV to demonstrate the relevance of my experience which I believe may add value to your organisation.

Please note that I can be available for an interview at any time.

I shall look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

