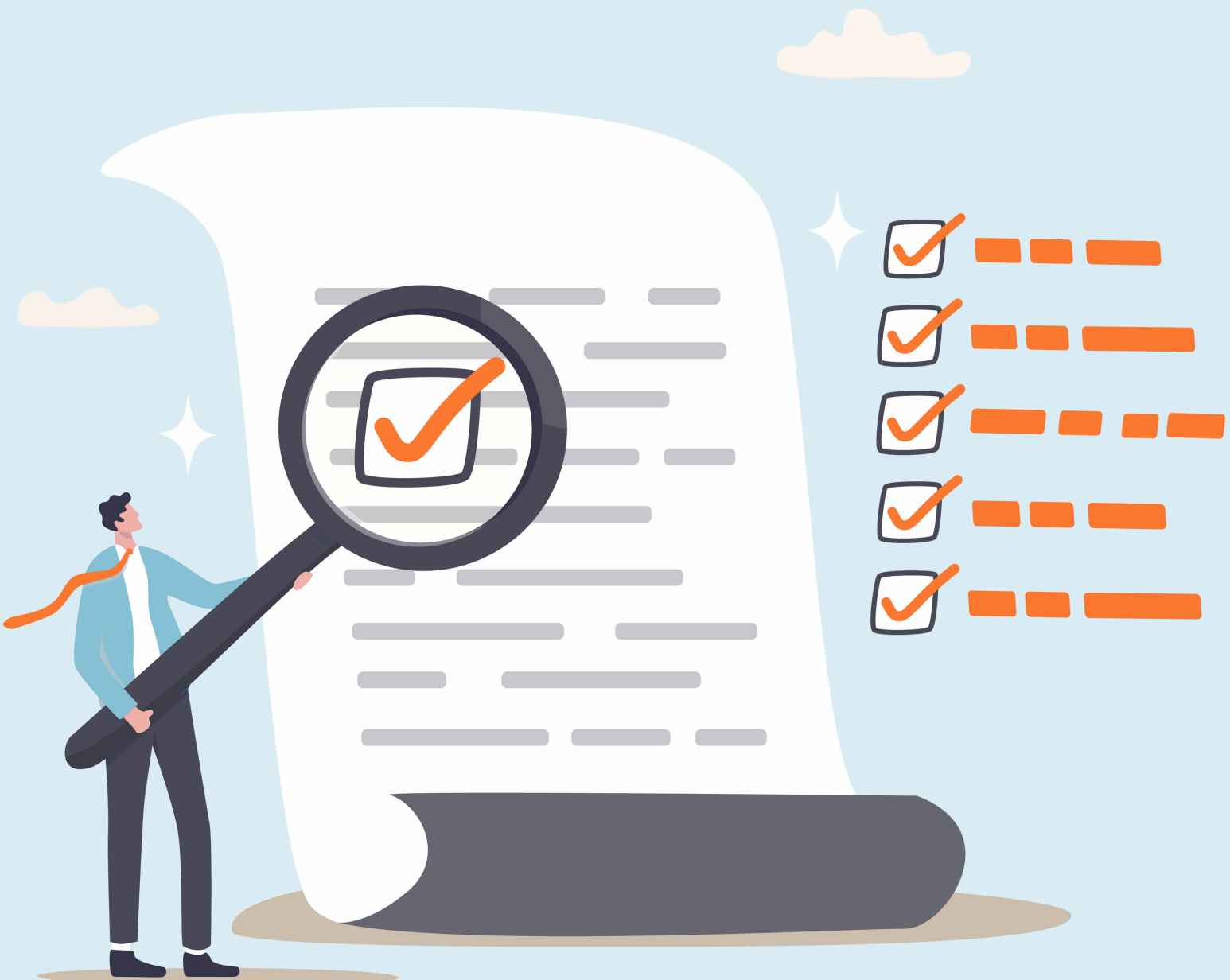


COVER LETTER CHECKLIST

9 STEPS TO SUCCESS

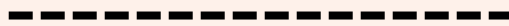
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Do Good. Do It Well.™



YOUR COVER LETTER MATTERS

Nothing turns off a recruiter or hiring manager more than a generic cover letter. It's important to always tailor your cover letter to the specific position and organization so that you're not wasting a valuable opportunity to explain why you are a perfect fit for this job.

If you want your cover letter to stand out, make sure you include these nine ingredients.



#PROTIP

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“A lot of people don't even upload a cover letter, but motivation is one of the first things we assess and is really crucial and important [for landing a job].”

Yana Makaveeva

Head of HQ Talent Acquisition, International Committee of the Red Cross

1. A LEADING POWER SENTENCE

After stating the position to which you are applying, go directly into a statement summarizing your key skills and qualifications that match the job requirements. Do not distract the recruiter/hiring manager by adding additional skills not required by this job. Focus directly on how you meet all (or most) of the criteria they seek straight off the bat.

EXAMPLE:

DEAR SIR OR MADAM, IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE THAT I SUBMIT MY APPLICATION FOR THE ADVERTISED EXPERTS FOR TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO IRAQ POSITION. FLUENT IN ARABIC, I HAVE OVER 18 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IMPLEMENTING AND PROVIDING TECHNICAL ADVICE TO GOOD GOVERNANCE, INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMS IN POST-CONFLICT COUNTRIES, WITH SPECIFIC EXPERIENCE IN IRAQ AND THE MIDDLE EAST.



2. DETAILS ABOUT YOUR SOFT SKILLS

Elaborate on soft skills that are harder to quantify in a CV. But rather than simply listing them, give examples of how you applied these skills in similar contexts and with results.

EXAMPLE:

WHILE WORKING AS A TECHNICAL EXPERT FOR XXX ORGANIZATION ON THE XXX PROGRAM IN IRAW, I ADVISED THE PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET COMMITTEE ON BUDGETARY REVIEW AND ANALYSIS AND PUBLIC FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT. THIS ROLE REQUIRED ME TO COORDINATE WITH ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING SENIOR OFFICIALS AND THOSE AT A TECHNICAL LEVEL. UNDER MY GUIDANCE, THE PROGRAM WAS ABLE TO SUCCESSFULLY XXX...

#PROTIP

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“Candidates should think outside the box with some examples that they can share ... that show who they are as a person and demonstrate their ability to collaborate and to learn quickly.”

Yannah Preta

Global talent acquisition manager, Mercy Corps

3. THE REASON YOU WANT THIS JOB

Explain why you are interested in this specific position and organization. But don't make it about you. A need to pay rent, further your skills, or gain experience that will help you land your absolute dream job down the road are not compelling reasons for hiring you. However, an opportunity to leverage your past experience and technical skills with an organization whose values and missions match yours is something an employer can get excited about.

EXAMPLE:

MY RECENT EXPERIENCE IN IRAQ HAS PROVIDED ME WITH IN-DEPTH KNOWLEDGE OF THE POLITICAL, CULTURAL, AND ECONOMIC CLIMATE UNDER WHICH THIS PROJECT WILL OPERATE. I AM CONFIDENT THAT THIS CONTEXT WILL ALLOW ME TO TRANSITION INTO THE ROLE. HAVING WORKED ON THE XXX SIDA FINANCED PROJECT, I AM ALSO FAMILIAR WITH THE RULES AND REGULATIONS SPECIFIC TO THIS DONOR.



4. EXPLAINING EMPLOYMENT GAPS

Explain any employment gaps that exceed three months. The project-based nature of development means employers have a higher appetite for employment gaps than other industries, but significant gaps could raise red flags. These are best explained succinctly and with a focus on how you used that time.

EXAMPLE:

MY CV, WHICH IS ENCLOSED, DETAILS MY BACKGROUND. ALTHOUGH I HAVE NOT WORKED ON A PROJECT FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, I HAVE HARDLY BEEN IDLE. I VOLUNTEERED MY SKILLS WITH XXX NON-PROFIT AND TOOK AN ONLINE COURSE IN XXX TO ADVANCE MY SKILLS IN XXX.

#PROTIP

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“Consider talking about [career gaps] from a positive standpoint in terms of what you got from that career break. It might have been pursuing a personal goal that helped you reflect on your career and where you want to take it next, for example.”

Stephanie Mansueto

Principal recruiter, Abt Global

5. WHY YOU'RE A STRONG FIT

Telling an employer that you are definitely the best candidate for the job can appear arrogant and, in many cases, naïve. A confident statement on why you are a strong fit based on the qualifications shows that you know your value. However, be sure to hold back on the hyperbole and over-the-top language.

EXAMPLE:

BEING OF IRAQI DESCENT, I AM PASSIONATE ABOUT HELPING TO STRENGTHEN THE PUBLIC FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND TO IMPROVE THE GOOD GOVERNANCE IN IRAQ. MY EXPERIENCE BOTH WITH THE COUNTRY AND SUBJECT MATTER WILL BE AN ASSET TO YOUR ORGANIZATION AND THE PROJECT.



6. DETAILS ABOUT YOUR AVAILABILITY

If you are applying to a domestic position outside your hometown, give dates when you plan to be in town and can attend an interview.

EXAMPLE:

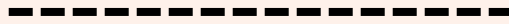
I AM AVAILABLE TO START IN SEPTEMBER 2024 AND COULD COMMIT TO THE 34-MONTH DURATION. I WILL BE IN YOUR AREA THE WEEK OF XXX AND CAN BE AVAILABLE TO MEET IN PERSON TO DISCUSS THIS ROLE FURTHER. ALTERNATIVELY, I CAN BE AVAILABLE FOR A PHONE OR VIDEO INTERVIEW AT YOUR CONVENIENCE.



7. FRESH INFO THAT'S NOT ON YOUR CV

Remember, recruiters will likely only see your cover letter after looking at your CV and liking what they see. This means that there's no need to repeat what is already in your CV.

You should, however, focus on highlighting relevant skills and experiences that you have developed over the course of your career, which can be harder to describe in the itemized format of a CV.



#PROTIP

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“You don't want to regurgitate the content that's on your resume as much as shape it in a way so that the reader can see how it is specific to the job you're applying for.”

Mike O'Connor

Career consultant and founder, The Actualized Self

8. CAREFUL EDITING

Before sending your job application, make sure that you are:

- a) addressing the letter to the right person
- b) naming the right hiring organization
- c) referencing the correct job title

Forgetting to change these details when sending out job applications en masse is one sure way to have your cover letter end up in the wastebasket.



9. THE RIGHT LENGTH

Cover letters should be one page only.
No exceptions!



WHAT A STAND-OUT COVER LETTER LOOKS LIKE

Your address
City, State, Country
Date

Dear Sir or Madam,

It is with great pleasure I submit to you my application for the advertised Experts for Technical Support to Iraq position. Fluent in Arabic, I have over 18 years of experience implementing and providing technical advice to good governance, institutional development, and public administration programs in post-conflict countries, with specific experience in Iraq and the Middle East.

While working as a technical expert for XXX organization on the XXX program in Iraq, I advised the Parliamentary Budget Committee on budgetary review and analysis and public financial oversight. This role required me to coordinate with all levels of government, including senior officials and those at a technical level. Under my guidance, the program was able to successfully XXX.

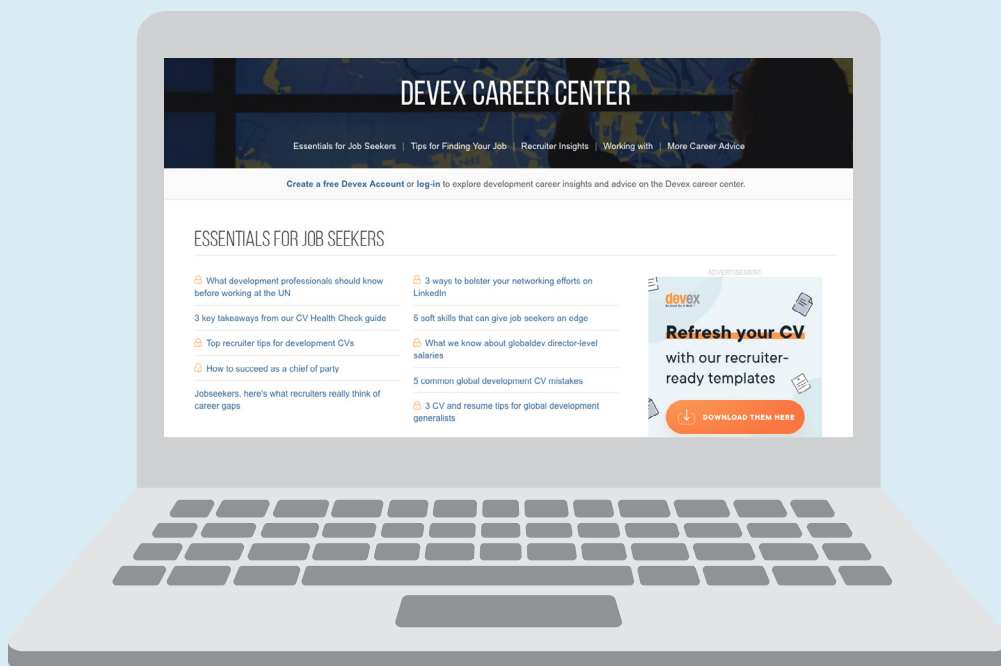
My recent experience in Iraq has provided me with in-depth knowledge of the political, cultural, and economic climate under which this project will operate. I am confident that this context will allow me to transition into the role. Having worked on the XXX Sida financed project, I am also familiar with the rules and regulations specific to this donor.

My CV, which is enclosed, details my background. Although I have not been on a project for several months, I have hardly been idle. I volunteered my skills with XXX non-profit and took an online course in XXX to advance my skills in XXX.

Being of Iraqi descent, I am passionate about helping to strengthen the public financial institutions and to improve the good governance in Iraq. My experience both with the country and subject matter will be an asset to your organization and the project.

I am available to start in September 2024 and could commit to the 34-month duration. I will be in your area the week of XXX and can be available to meet in person to discuss this role further. Alternatively, I can be available for a phone or video interview at your convenience.

Sincerely,
Suzy Candidate



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recruiters and [visit our career center](#) for expert
advice on how to navigate your job search