

Use the following checklist as guideline to review your motivation letter.

1. Structure

- Is your motivation letter no more than one page of A4?
- Have you addressed your letter to the hiring manager or recruiter?
This small detail can make a large impact as taking the time to address an individual shows you are detail-oriented and that you put effort into finding out a little more about the company and indicates you have a real interest in the role and company. Avoid using the common phrase "Dear Hiring Manager" as it demonstrates lack of effort.
- If you are applying for an open vacancy, have you in the first paragraph explained where you saw the advertisement and quoted any reference numbers?
- If you are making a speculative application, have you made it clear about what type of role you are interested in?
- Have you explained why you want this type of work and why you are interested in this employer e.g. include some information that shows you have done some research and understand what the company does and what the job might involve?
- Have you explained what you are offering the employer, relevant for the job i.e. relevant aspects of your skills, knowledge and experience?
- Have you closed your letter with a positive call to action to the employer e.g. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss my application further?

2. Writing style

- Have you used plain, clear language? Avoid using overly emotional language such as 'passionate about' and 'love to' in your letter. Other terms such as 'enthusiastic' or 'committed' are probably better.
- Are your sentences and paragraphs short and snappy? Have you applied the 20 second rule i.e. any paragraph that takes longer than 20 seconds to read is too long?

- Have you used powerful words such as 'contributed', 'influenced', 'managed' and 'negotiated', which are proactive and indicate that you have the initiative and ability to make things happen? This style of writing stimulates the reader to want to learn more about you.

3. Spelling and Grammar

- Have you spell-checked your letter and confident there are no mistakes?
- Have you checked the grammar and punctuation carefully and are you confident there are no mistakes?
- Is capitalisation used correctly? (BSc and not Bsc; capitals used for names of roads - 10 Acacia Avenue, etc.)

4. Things to avoid

- Have you avoided the use of clichés? Clichés suggest a lack of imagination and independent thought.
- Have you been precise? Indeterminate, vague words may give the impression that you aren't really sure about your qualities or achievements.
- Have you avoided any reference to being apologetic or highlighting any negative aspect of you or your background? Some things, such as your age, are what they are. There's no need to assume that they are a difficulty or apologise for them.
- Have you avoided using generalisations and unsupported claims? General claims, unsupported by specific evidence, will not help the employer have faith in your abilities or pick you out from the crowd.

Finally, MOST important: does your motivation letter really make the match between your background, motivation and the organisation?

Original Example Motivation Letter

Dear Recruiter,

I would like to apply for a summer internship position with Innovation. I learned of your company through the faculty internship office at TU Delft University.

I am a 2nd year MSc student in architecture and will receive my degree this spring. While I have a comprehensive architectural background, my emphasis is on rehabilitation and renovation. I feel that your firm places prominence in similar areas and having the privilege of serving as an intern with you will give me that further exposure I need to advance my career.

Upon graduating, I hope to work for a firm that specializes in rehabilitation and renovation architectural development and eventually start my own firm. With the right opportunities and experience to cutting edge projects and designs, I believe I can achieve this goal. I hope to with your firm's help.

I previously held a summer internship at Smithers & Associates, a Delft-based architecture firm. While there, I used CAD technology to help design floor plans for a multi-level retail space. I also used the drafting techniques. I learned on the Digital Terrain Monitor (DTM) to assist on the redesign of a movie theater in Delft. This could be of interest to you, as I recently read on your website that Innovations will be renovating three entertainment venues in the coming year.

I would like the opportunity to meet with you to discuss any internship opportunities you might have. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like to see some work samples. You can reach me by [phone number] or by email at [mail address].

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Djairo Hogendorp

1. This para is factual and explains the reason for writing, however the writing style lacks formality.
2. Good to explain specialisms and how the internship will support your career goal.
3. This para isn't useful as it's a duplicate of the information re: career goal and motivation for the role.
4. Expressing your expectation doesn't add any value. Instead, include content that conveys your skills and experiences.
5. If skills are mentioned, ensure they are relevant to the position.
6. Good to reflect on strategy and what you consider as important for the role.
7. The final para doesn't explain why you would be a good fit for this position.
8. Don't expect the recruiting company to contact you re: this point – include the offer of reviewing your portfolio in the previous sentence to build engagement.
9. This sentence doesn't add value. Motivation letters should be written on a formal letter template so contact details will be visible at the top of the letter.

Revised Example Motivation Letter

Dear Mr. Scheck,

Re: Application for summer internship position

I am writing to apply for a summer internship position within Innovation which I recently learned about through the faculty internship office at TU Delft University.

I am a 2nd year MSc student in architecture and aim to graduate in July 2018. While I have a comprehensive architectural background, my interests is on rehabilitation and renovation. Upon graduating, I hope to work for a firm that specializes in this field. From my research, Innovation places prominence in similar areas and having the privilege of serving as an intern with you will enable me to obtain further exposure of working with cutting edge projects and designs in this arena.

I previously held a summer internship at Smithers & Associates, a Delft-based architecture firm. Whilst there, I organised drawing sets and other documentations and conducted research and site survey for the design team. I also used CAD technology to help design floor plans for a multi-level retail space. I had the opportunity to apply drafting techniques and the Digital Terrain Monitor (DTM) to assist on the redesign of a movie theater in Delft. This could be of interest to Innovation, as I recently read on your website that Innovations will be renovating three entertainment venues in the coming year.

As a result of my work experiences and academic background, I fully understand the importance of communicating effectively and of producing detail-oriented work. I have also demonstrated my skills in cooperating with co-workers to deliver the projects on time and budget.

I would value the opportunity to meet with you to discuss my application further and show you my portfolio of work to date.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Djairo Hogendorp

1. Important to take the time to find out the name of the recruiter/manager.
2. Clearly labelling the letter makes it easy for all people involved in the hiring process.
3. The reason for writing and where the position was advertised is clearly stated in the 1st para.
4. Good to explain motivation for applying to this company and the link to their career goal is clear.
5. Good to highlight and substantiate relevant skills and experiences.
6. Good to include a para describing your interpersonal skills.
7. Good to include a clear call for action to the employer.