

Your CV

There are no strict rules about writing a CV and no single template that everyone should follow, but there is a lot of advice we can give you to help you make your CV effective. Follow the tips in this guide and use the sample CVs to give you ideas for your own CV.

Creating a good CV takes time and effort, and the process is never really finished. You need to keep revising your CV and reassessing its content in the light of how your experience and plans have changed. An up-to-date CV is essential for

- Applying quickly to job advertisements;
- Making speculative applications to employers;
- Networking to develop experience, knowledge and contacts;
- Handing to employers at Careers Fairs;
- Organising your experience, skills and qualities so that you are ready to present them in an application form or an interview.

Because preparing a CV involves you in thinking about all the things you have achieved and are good at, as well as the things you want to achieve in the future, it is an important part of your career planning process.

Presentation

Presentation is crucial. If your CV is untidy and badly organised, an employer will not get as far as considering the content, no matter how brilliant that is. Use good quality A4 paper and a single, modern typeface, such as Arial or Helvetica. Be consistent in your layout. For example, if your dates are on the left hand side in your *Education* section, put them on the left hand side in your *Employment* section. Align columns carefully and make sure all indents and bullets are in line. Don't have too many indents; two is usually enough. Keep your CV uncluttered by avoiding extraneous punctuation; for example, there is no need to use colons after your headings or full stops at the end of your name and address. Don't cram too much onto the page; there should be plenty of white space around the text to make it easier for an employer to read. Embolden text for headings, rather than underlining, as underlining is a convention of handwriting.

Accuracy

Double check all your spelling and grammar; you could rule yourself out of consideration just through carelessness. It is very easy to read over your own mistakes without noticing them, so get someone else to check for you. Don't rely on the spell-checking facility on your computer.

Language

Use positive, active language. In practice this means using lots of verbs to say what you do and have done. Avoid repetition and unnecessary words. Short, punchy phrases following on from a bullet point are often more effective in a CV than sentences in paragraphs. Use the vocabulary of the industry you wish to enter, without resorting to jargon or abbreviations. Don't distance yourself from the action by using phrases such as 'I helped to...', 'I was involved in ...', or make it sound as if you only did something because someone else made you, e.g. 'As part of my degree I had to...'

Target your CV

Your CV needs to change depending on the job you are applying for. Highlight the skills and experiences that are most relevant to the role you are seeking. Use all the information you have about the career, the organisation and the vacancy to make sure you highlight the right things. Use the same kind of vocabulary as you have come across in your research.

This is particularly important when describing experiences that aren't immediately related to the role that you are applying for. For example, perhaps you are writing about your job as a waiter in your application for a mentoring role in a school. As a mentor you'd be supporting, teaching and encouraging underperforming children to achieve their potential so on your CV, it is inappropriate to highlight your practical waiting-on duties (taking orders, serving food, writing bills and cleaning). Instead you should

emphasise activities and people skills that relate to mentoring. For example:

- Treated customers as individuals and built rapport with them; resulting in the business gaining many regulars
- Trained, mentored and encouraged new staff including young people between the ages of 16-18 with limited work place skills

Other ways of targeting your CV are by including a *Career Aims* section and by customising your headings to point out the most relevant experience to an employer. For example if you are applying for a marketing position and have lots of work experience, only some of which is in marketing, you could highlight your marketing experience by having a *Marketing Experience* section and then an *Other Employment* section.

It should be obvious to anyone reading your CV what kind of job you are looking for.

Allocation of Space

Factors that are most important should take up most space in your CV and should, generally speaking, come in a prominent place, i.e. near the top of your CV or on the first page. As a current or future graduate, your CV should normally fill 2 pages. There are some exceptions, for example, for some jobs in the creative industries, a one page CV might be expected. However if you are in any doubt, always opt for a 2 page CV. Even if you have a vast range of qualifications and experience, going onto a third or fourth page does **not** automatically make your CV better. Being concise and selective is a skill in CV writing. Consider what an employer would be able to read and assimilate in one or two minutes.

Your covering letter

Here is your opportunity to show your enthusiasm and commitment and clarify your motivation. Draw the employer's attention to the highlights of your CV, but don't repeat the facts in it.

CV Samples/Templates

Look at a range of sample CVs, in this leaflet, in books and on the Internet, and use the ideas you gain to help you create your own CV. However don't copy the structure or phrasing of any one CV completely; your CV should be individual and nobody else's CV would be

exactly right for you. For the same reason, it is inadvisable to use the CV templates you sometimes come across on the Internet. These are restrictive and it is always obvious when someone has used one. Occasionally students and graduates consider paying a CV writing service to compile a CV for them. This is an unnecessary expense, makes updating difficult, and, in any case, how can such a service know you well enough?

CVs in this leaflet

This leaflet shows you two versions of the same person's CV – a chronological version and a skills based version. These terms are commonly used to describe different types of CV, but you will see that there is information about skills in the chronological version and chronological information in the skills based version. However the emphasis is different and you might need to combine aspects of each type of CV in order to ensure you market yourself in the best way.

Please note that Sally Barker, whose CV is used in this leaflet, is not a real person, and many details of organisations and courses mentioned in her CV are imaginary. The sample CVs aim to give you ideas on possible structures, layouts and language for an effective CV, but do not aim or claim to represent fact.

Chronological CV (Example 1)

- This CV is a chronological record of what Sally has done. Reverse chronology (i.e. most recent experience listed first) focuses the reader on the most recent thing you have done, which is normally the most relevant.
- It is common and effective to use your name as the title, rather than the words Curriculum Vitae.
- Make yourself as easy to contact as possible by including postal, phone and email contact details. Use a suitably business-like email alias on your CV and consider the implications of including a mobile phone number. Many people speak very casually on mobiles and take calls in circumstances that would make it hard to sound professional, e.g. on a bus, in a pub.

- The CV is about the right length. Avoid finishing halfway down the second page.
- A *Career Aim* is used to show that the current application fits into Sally's career plans, and indeed that she *has* a career plan. It signposts her academic level and experience very briefly and should engage the interest of an employer and make him or her want to read the rest. A Career Aim is more effective than the much less specific Personal Profile that many people include. The whole CV is a personal profile; a list of your qualities (hard working, determined etc.) tends to be waffly and say little. Anyone would say they were friendly, or at least nobody would say they were unfriendly! Instead, let your personal qualities come across through the evidence of your skills you give in the rest of your CV.
- Notice that Sally's degree takes up a lot more space than her previous qualifications. You need to give some detail about your degree. Don't assume that the title of your degree will automatically tell an employer what you know, what you can do or where your interests lie. Highlight some of the modules that are most relevant to the application you are making, but limit this between 4 and 6 modules. An employer would be most unlikely to read a full year by year list of all your modules.
- At this stage it is unnecessary to list all your GCSEs, just say how many you have at grades A – C and indicate if this includes English and maths. Do not draw attention to subjects and courses you have failed. Never lie about your grades.
- The *Employment* section describes the skills and qualities Sally developed and demonstrated in her jobs, rather than being a list of duties. Remember that many skills are transferable to different jobs, so never dismiss any job as irrelevant to your current application. Common alternative titles for this section are *Work Experience*, but this is reminiscent of the two weeks you spent with an employer while you were at school, or *Employment History/Work History*, but as you are wanting to show how this experience links to your future it is better to avoid the word *history*.
- Bullet points make it easy to read, and make it possible to use more pithy, straight to the point phrases. Aim to have an active and positive word straight after the bullet point; a verb in the past tense works well, e.g. completed, achieved, developed.
- Your *Interests* section can help the employer see what you are like as a person, but it is also an opportunity (often wasted) to demonstrate other skills and qualities that are desirable to an employer. Consider the activities that you could include in this section then analyse the activity to say why it makes you more employable. Don't expect an employer to read between the lines. Say in your CV what skills and qualities this interest gives you. You can often reframe your interests into *Skills and Achievements* which helps to make them appear more career-related.
- Give full contact details of two referees on your CV and say what their relationship to you is, e.g. personal tutor, line manager. Always check that they are willing to provide a reference and keep them posted on what you are applying for and why, so that they can make meaningful comments. It is normally better to avoid saying *References available on request*, as this can make it look as if you have not got the agreement of appropriate referees, implying that you are not very well organised, or even that you have something to hide. As a student or new graduate you would normally be expected to have an academic referee from the University and a referee from a work perspective.

Skills-based CV (Example 2)

- This is Sally's skills based CV. This approach makes it easier to combine skills, strengths and experience gained from a variety of situations. It is particularly helpful if you have gained the skills relevant for your chosen job from your study or interests, rather than paid employment. It can also be useful for mature candidates who are seeking a career change, and want to emphasise transferable skills rather than experience which, without this kind of

analysis, appears to be unrelated to the job they are applying for.

- It can be easier to structure a skills based CV so that it reflects the skills demanded by the employer in the job description. You can use headings from the person specification. This makes targeting easy.
- Sally is applying for a post as an Assistant Tourism Officer with her local council and has analysed the job advert

or job description to identify the main skills required and then used these as headings in her skills profile. She has illustrated each skill with evidence of how she has used and developed it through her studies, work and interests.

Sally Barker

22 Holly Gardens, Wolverhampton WV3 1 XZ
s.h.barker@wlv.ac.uk
0223 781 5672
0787 123456

Career Aim

Recent graduate in Tourism and French with experience of work in a busy tourist information centre and high level customer care skills, now seeking to pursue a career in the promotion and development of local tourism.

Education

- 2009 - 2013 **University of Wolverhampton**
BA (Hons) Tourism and French 2.1
- Modules include Visitor Attraction Management, Heritage Tourism Management, Marketing for Travel and Tourism, European Tourism
 - Final year project on Marketing the Black Country Museum outside the West Midlands region
 - Elected to spend a year as an exchange student at the University of Paris
 - Developed presentation, IT and teamwork skills
- 2007 - 2009 **Wolverhampton College**
A levels in Business Studies (C), French (D), German (D)
- 2002 - 2007 **Wolverhampton High School**
8 GCSEs (Grades A – C) including English and Maths

Employment

- 2011 - 2012 University of Paris
English Language Assistant
- Organised and delivered conversation classes to groups of students
 - Utilised a variety of teaching resources, including a language laboratory
 - Produced a leaflet for students to help them locate appropriate online resources to develop their English
 - Developed a resourceful, imaginative approach to teaching in order to inspire my students
- Summer 2010 Black Country Tourist Information Centre
Information Assistant
- Provided information, booking and retailing service in busy TIC
 - Used research and IT skills to produce popular series of leaflets on guided local walks
 - Specialised in advising disabled tourists on accessibility of resources
 - Developed high level customer care skills and ability to work efficiently under pressure

- Summer 2009 Bookworld, Coventry
Retail Assistant
- Handled cash, cheque and credit card transactions
 - Answered queries and located books for customers
 - Researched in online catalogues to locate or identify suitable books
 - Organised a successful series of story-telling sessions for children

Skills and Achievements

- IT
- Proficient user of *Word, Excel* and *PowerPoint*
 - Created my own website using *FrontPage*
 - Passed European Computer Driving Licence 2006
 - Desk top publishing skills developed through producing leaflets for TIC and teaching materials
- Languages
- Fluent and confident French speaker, with excellent written French; during exchange year at the University of Paris I attended lectures held in French and submitted assignments in French
 - Conversational German and Spanish
- Driving
- Clean driving licence

Interests

Hockey

I am president of the University Hockey team. I chair meetings of the committee and arrange fixtures with other universities. I am a keen player, and organise training sessions for the team.

Travelling

I am a keen traveller and have visited most European countries as well as Australia and the USA. I enjoy the challenge of planning a trip on a limited budget and the opportunity to enhance my language skills. I am fascinated by the culture and history of other countries.

Local History

I am a member of the Friends of Crossley Manor and am involved in many fund-raising activities for the manor. I act as a tour guide during open days and am involved in living history interpretations.

References

Dr James Peters
(Tutor and dissertation supervisor)
School of Sport, Performing Arts and Leisure
University of Wolverhampton
Walsall Campus
Gorway Road
Walsall
WS1 3BD
01902 322898
J.R.Peters@wlv.ac.uk

Ms Kathryn Benjamin
(Line Manager)
Tourism Manager
Black Country Tourist Information Centre
Main Street
Middleton
MD2 5RA
01999 987654
K.Benjamin@bctic.org.uk

Sally Barker

22 Holly Gardens
Wolverhampton
WV3 1XZ

Email s.h.barker@wlv.ac.uk
Telephone (Home) 0223 781 5672
Mobile 0787 123456

Career Aim

Recent graduate in Tourism and French with experience of work in a busy tourist information centre and high level customer care skills, now seeking to pursue a career in the promotion and development of local tourism.

Skills and Achievements

Research

- Used research and IT skills to produce popular series of leaflets on guided local walks for Tourist Information Centre
- Carried out survey of visitors to Black Country Museum as part of my final year project, collated and presented findings in report
- Researched in online catalogues to identify and locate suitable books for customers in book shop
- Completed module on Research Skills for my degree

IT

- Proficient user of *Word*, *Excel* and *PowerPoint*
- Passed European Computer Driving Licence 2002
- Desk top publishing skills developed through producing leaflets for TIC and teaching materials
- Produced a leaflet for French students to help them locate appropriate online resources to develop their English
- Created my own website using *FrontPage*

Marketing

- Successfully completed degree module on *Marketing for Travel and Tourism* and a marketing module at the University of Paris
- Final year project on *Marketing the Black Country Museum outside the West Midlands region*
- Led a project to market children's books more actively at Bookworld

Presentation

- Organised and delivered conversation classes to groups of French students
- Used a variety of teaching resources, including a language laboratory
- Developed a resourceful, imaginative approach to teaching in order to inspire my students
- Organised a successful series of story-telling sessions for children at Bookworld

Customer Care Skills

- Answered queries and located books for customers
- Provided information, booking and retailing service in busy TIC
- Specialised in advising disabled tourists on accessibility of resources
- Developed high level customer care skills and ability to work efficiently under pressure

Education

- 2009 - 2013 **University of Wolverhampton**
BA (Hons) Tourism and French 2.1
- 2007 - 2009 **Wolverhampton College**
A Levels in Business Studies (C), French (D), German (D)
- 2002 - 2007 **Wolverhampton High School**
8 GCSEs grades A – C (including English and Maths)

Employment

- Jan 2013 – present Crossley Manor (National Trust)
Volunteer Guide and Living History Interpreter
- 2011 - 2012 University of Paris
English Language Assistant
- Summer 2010 Black Country Tourist Information Centre
Information Assistant
- Summer 2009 Bookworld, Coventry
Retail Assistant

Other Skills and Achievements

Languages

I am fluent in French and have good conversational skills in German and Spanish.

Sport

I am president of the University Hockey team. I chair meetings of the committee and arrange fixtures with other universities. I am a keen player, and organise training sessions for the team.

Driving

I have a full clean driving licence and my own car.

References

Dr James Peters
(Tutor and dissertation supervisor)
School of Sport, Performing Arts and Leisure
University of Wolverhampton
Walsall Campus
Gorway Road
Walsall
WS1 3BD
01902 322898
J.R.Peters@wlv.ac.uk

Ms Kathryn Benjamin
(Line Manager)
Tourism Manager
Black Country Tourist Information Centre
Main Street
Middleton
MD2 5RA
01999 987654
K.Benjamin@bctic.org.uk

Your covering letter

- Your covering letter is the packaging for your CV. You need to take care that it makes people want to read your CV. Sadly, many people think it isn't very important and waste the effort they put into their CV, by sending it with a poor covering letter.
- Use the same kind of paper for your covering letter and CV and the same font. They should match. Only send a hand-written covering letter if specifically asked to do so.
- One side is usually long enough for your covering letter.
- Set out your letter like a standard business letter.
- Never address your letter to *Dear Sir or Madam*, or worse still just *Dear Sir*. If the job advert or previous correspondence does not give you the name, you must ring and find out. Address the person correctly. If the person you are writing to is called Andrew Smith, write Dear Mr Smith, not Dear Mr Andrew Smith. The latter looks to be the result of a mail merge. A letter addressed to Mr Smith should conclude with *yours sincerely*.
- If you are submitting a CV electronically, you should still send a covering letter. Resist the temptation to be more casual just because you are emailing the letter; it should still be a formal, business-like letter.
- Your covering letter needs to be organised. Resist the temptation to waffle. Structure your letter carefully into paragraphs, each of which covers the answer to a particular question. A good structure might be as follows.

How you know about the job/company and why you are interested

Say where you saw the advert or how you know about the company, if it is a speculative enquiry. Show that you have done some research on the company and the role you are seeking. Mention any contacts you have had with the company.

Why you are suitable

Don't repeat what is in your CV, but draw attention to the highlights. Try to convey something of your enthusiasm and commitment to the opportunity. You might also be able to include information about how your career plans have developed and how this application fits into your overall career plans. Sally has split this section into 2 short paragraphs; the first is about her experiences directly related to tourism, and the second about other transferable skills which would be useful in this post.

What you want/expect to happen next

Be assertive here. Write as though they *will* be interested and reply. Be available for interview or further discussion of opportunities. If there are any good reasons (e.g. exams) why you are not available on a particular day, let them know.

Sample covering letters

The following letters show a sample response to an advertised vacancy and a speculative approach for work experience.

5 Holly Gardens
Wolverhampton
WV3 7AX

Mr A Smith
Head of Leisure Services
Midshire County Council
Civic Centre
Town Square
Middleton
MD1 1XX

4 May 2013

Dear Mr Smith

Assistant Tourism Officer (ref 123)

I am writing in response to your advertisement for an Assistant Tourism Officer, which appeared in the *Middleton Evening Post* on 1 May 2013. My ambition to work for the Midshire Tourist Board was confirmed by my experience as a Tourist Information Assistant in your Middleton office in summer 2007 and further strengthened by undertaking research with you for my final year dissertation. I am particularly impressed by your plans to develop the old industrial site at Alexander Lock into a country park with an education centre, and would like to play a part in making this project a success.

My CV outlines the experiences, qualifications and skills I have gained through my degree and my employment. I have demonstrated excellent research, marketing and IT skills throughout my degree, particularly in my final year dissertation on marketing the region throughout the UK. Besides my work at the Tourist Information Centre, I have been involved in working on a voluntary basis at Crossley Manor for several years. I am particularly interested in local history and over the years I have built up considerable knowledge of local museums and historical buildings.

I have experience of teaching, which has enhanced my presentation skills, and I am sure that my linguistic skills would usefully contribute to your plans to investigate opportunities to market the region in mainland Europe. I take great pride in the high level of customer care skills, which I have developed through my work in the tourist and retail industries.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future and am available for interview at any time. Please contact me if you would like any further information about my qualifications and experience.

Yours sincerely,

Sally Barker

Sally Barker

Example 2: Speculative approach requesting work experience

Ivy Lodge
10 High Street
Wolverhampton
WV1 7TZ

Mr K Jones
Smith, Jones and Evans (Solicitors)
14 Park Lane
Middleton
MD2 7LL

4 July 2013

Dear Mr Jones

I will graduate in law from the University of Wolverhampton in 2014 and am writing to apply for work experience with your firm in the summer of 2013.

My interest in the legal profession began with a successful work experience placement and since that time the desire to represent clients in difficult situations has grown. In addition, entering the profession will allow me to utilise my strengths in communication, teamwork, business awareness, negotiating and leadership, which I have gained through my extensive work experience in the retail sector and my study of law.

At university I have excelled in all aspects of my law degree, and have become increasingly attracted to criminal law, because of the range and complexity of the issues involved and its relevance to everyday life. I am particularly attracted by the opportunity of working for a large criminal practice such as yours, owing to your involvement in many cases referred to the Criminal Cases Review Commission and other landmark cases, including your recent role in questioning the use of expert witness testimony. Having completed vacation work with Walker, Andrews and Taylor, I have had some practical experience in criminal law work including helping prepare cases for litigation, attending court and briefing counsel.

My experience of work, my expected high level law degree, and most of all my commitment to both the issues and clients involved in criminal defence would enable me to make a positive contribution to your work. I am available for interview at any time and flexible to fit in with your requirements regarding the timing of any work placement with you.

Yours sincerely

Steven Morgan

Steven Morgan

Further information

www.prospects.ac.uk >jobs and work>
applications and interviews
<http://targetjobs.co.uk/> >careers advice>
applications and CVs
<http://careers.guardian.co.uk/cv>
National Careers Service
<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

Reference books

We have many books and articles about CVs in the Careers Centre including:

Joyce Lain Kennedy and Lois-Andrea Ferguson: *CVs for Dummies* (2nd ed.), John Wiley & Sons Ltd, West Sussex, 2009

Jim Bright and Joanne Earl: *Brilliant CV*, Pearson Education, Harlow, 2001

Bill Faust and Michael Faust: *Pitch Yourself: The CV and Interview, Masterclass* (2nd ed.), Pearson, 2005

Corinne Mills: *You're Hired! How to Write a Brilliant CV*, Trotman, Surrey 2009

Graham Perkins: *Killer CVs and Hidden Approaches*, Pearson Education Ltd, Harlow 2001

Lynn Williams: *Readymade CVs*, Kogan Page Ltd, London 2000

Lynn Williams: *Readymade Job Search Letters*, Kogan Page Ltd, London 2004

Workshops

We run workshops on CVs. Check our latest events programme on www.wlv.ac.uk/careers and book a place on line. If you are one of a group of students who would all like CV help, why not contact us about organising a session just for you, or ask your tutor to arrange it with us for you?

Help with your CV

Why not get an expert and unbiased opinion on your CV before you send it off? You are encouraged to bring a draft of your CV along to show one of the Careers Advisers, who will give you useful feedback and advice. Advisers are available in the Careers Centre on MD

Concourse from Monday to Friday: 11:00am – 4:00pm in term time and from 1:00pm – 4:00pm during vacation. Special arrangements operate on other campuses. Ring 321414 or see our website for details.

Titles in our *Employability Skills* series

- Job Hunting
- **Your CV**
- Interview Skills
- Effective Application Forms
- Presentations
- Assessment Centres
- Psychometric Tests
- Getting the most from Volunteering
- Personal Branding
- Creative Job Search Strategies

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