

How to write a CV + Cover Letter

What you'll learn...

1. 4 common CV mistakes and how to avoid them
2. How to go the extra mile
3. How to write a cover letter
4. Answers to your questions
 - a. Frequently asked questions
 - b. Q & A session

Interactive

Say hi to your neighbour

Why did you come to this workshop?

What do you hope to gain from today's workshop?

4 common mistakes

What type of mistakes do people usually make when writing CVs?

4 common mistakes

1. Too general
2. Forgetting the “why”
3. Too long
4. The wrong tone

Too general

To sell yourself... become a marketer

- Most people don't like the idea of marketing
- Good marketing doesn't try to sell to people who don't want to buy
- Good marketing shows people - in a really specific way - **how a product or service can solve their problem** or make things better.

CV - personal marketing

- Potential employers are like customers
- 1st rule of marketing: *think like a customer*

2 steps

1. Identify the need or the problem (in the job specification)
2. Show how you meet their needs or solve their problem

“communicate effectively” - show that you’re a good communicator in your CV!

Apply it

Medical Assistant

- Ability to communicate effectively with patients, visitors, and other medical personnel in person and on the phone
- Proficiency in medical procedures and medical terminology
- Treat clients, team members and the public with courtesy, respect and present a positive public image.
- Work as a team member

How could a candidate show that they meet these needs?

Think about experience, skills and personal qualities

Apply it

- What jobs are you thinking of applying for? What requirements are there?
- How can you show potential employers that you meet their requirements?

Think about experience, skills and personal qualities

Remember the “why”

Use the “so what” technique

Thesis: the effect of cognitive behavioural therapy on nicotine consumption

*Imagine your future employer is standing behind you and saying “so what?”
about everything you write.*

The “so what” technique

Thesis: the effect of cognitive behavioural therapy on nicotine consumption

- Qualitative and quantitative research methods; MATLAB

Add a sentence to explain why your experience/skills are good news for your future employer

Applying it

- Think of a qualification, work experience or skills you have
- Imagine your future employer is standing behind you asking “so what?!”
- Explain why your qualifications or work experience will help them.

Too long

- 1 - 2 pages long
- Any longer and employees might not read it
- Show that you can distinguish important information
- Show that you are practical and concise

Too long

Make it shorter

- Avoid full paragraphs: use bullet points instead (scannable)
- Avoid full sentences: use “action-result” e.g. *mentored first year students, became adept at helping and motivating others with less experience.*
- Decide when to let go - what isn't important?
- Don't include unnecessary or obvious detail (e.g. duties as waiter)

Apply it

- Think about your work experience or qualifications. Write an “action-result” bullet point about how this helped you develop important skills/qualities.

e.g. mentored first year students, became adept at helping and motivating others with less experience.

The wrong tone

- Too modest or too arrogant
- Pronouns: “I” sounds unprofessional; “he/she” sounds pretentious
- Negative
- Over-enthusiastic or under-enthusiastic

The right tone

Confident: not too modest, not arrogant

1. Don't hide your strengths
2. Don't use superlatives
3. Talk about your achievements with clear language and concrete examples

Strong communication skills helped build trust between staff and patients

The right tone

Avoiding pronouns

No need to write full sentences

1. Use verbs instead: *mentored first year students*
2. Use adjectives: *strong communication skills*
3. Use bullet point lists

The right tone

Stay positive

- If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all!
- Don't criticise or draw attention to weak areas

The right tone

Over-enthusiastic or under-enthusiastic

- Don't use words like "love", "excited" or "enthusiastic"
- Don't use words like "good" or "satisfactory"

Words with a professional tone

Committed, focused, dedicated, attentive, committed, methodical

Applying it

Write about an achievement, skill or quality you would like to include in your CV

Keep the tone confident, positive and professional. Avoid the use of pronouns.

Cover letters

What's the purpose of a cover letter?

How is it different to your CV?

Cover letters

What is it?

- Continuous prose
- The first stage in the marketing process
- Employer's chance to evaluate your personality and suitability for job
- Introduce yourself and show that you are a good fit for the company

Cover letters

How to write a good cover letter

- Personal (never use a standard letter)
- Show the reader why you are a perfect fit for their company
- Explain why you want to work for the company
- Highlight strengths and elaborate on RELEVANT experience (don't repeat CV)
- Short and simple (no longer than a page, often much shorter)

Applying it

Which type of companies will you apply to? What information could you include in the cover letter to show them that you are a good fit for the company?

Going the extra mile

You don't have to be crazy to stand out from the crowd

- Make it **easy to read**
- **Avoid overused vocabulary:** passionate, motivated, hard-working
- **Be specific:** avoid words that don't mean anything: (skillful, passionate)
- **Do your research** - find out about the role and the company
- State facts clearly and **give examples** to make it convincing.

FAQs

Should I translate my grades?

- Don't translate for universities - *get in touch with admissions department for more information.*
- For business you can translate into a percentage or the local system - *be transparent: explain the translation and give the original in brackets or italics.*

FAQs

Can I use the Europass system?

- Not as common in the UK
- OK to use but adapt for specific purposes
- Avoid photos

FAQs

What if I don't have enough experience?

- Go into more detail about education.
- Which courses did you take?
- What activities did you do?
- What skills did you learn that will be useful for future employees?

FAQs

Which order?

- Education first for academic applications or recent graduates; work experience first in other cases
- From most recent to least recent

Should I include my high school qualifications?

- Only if you don't have a university degree/specialised training.

Questions?

Further reading

The Guardian

<https://www.theguardian.com/careers/career-advice>

Monster

<https://www.monster.com/career-advice/>