



CV, Covering Letter Job Application Forms



CV

A CV is a short summary of your qualifications, skills and work experience. It is your first chance to promote yourself to an employer. A good CV can get you to the interview stage.

You only get one chance to make an impression. The job market is competitive, even more so with the covid-19 pandemic.

Some vacancies can attract a high volume of candidates and you want to make your CV get noticed. There may be many people with the same qualifications, skills and work experience. When this happens, they may look for other ways to rule someone out. Such as spelling mistakes, unexplained gaps in employment etc.

Contents

Your personal details

Name, Phone Number, Email Address

Personal Statement

Key Skills, What you are looking for

Employment / Work experience

Job title, Company, Dates, Key Duties

Education, Training and Qualifications

Training Provider, Qualification, Grade

Interests and Achievements

Hobbies, Interests and Key achievements

Any additional information (if needed)

Driving Status

References

State Names/Contact details or 'Available upon Request'

Types of Layout

There are different styles of CV. Use the one that matches the stage you are at in your life career and the one that suits the type of role. Choose wisely. A creative industries based CV can use images and a fancy design. This would look out of place for a role within accountancy or business.

Chronological (Classic)

This is the most common format. Information is placed in date order. The most recent goes at the top.

Skills Based

This emphasises your skills and personal qualities.

Hybrid

Sticks to the date order of a chronological, but puts more emphasis on skills rather than responsibilities.

Technical

Common in IT roles, focussing on technical skills such as programming, systems, platforms etc.

Creative Industries

More graphical with image and design. Used to show someone's design skills.

Academic

Often longer than a traditional CV and can be used for teaching or research roles.

Best Practice

Tailor your CV

Ensure that your personal statement is relevant to each job that you apply for. If you apply for a role in Construction, but your personal statement talks about how much you would like to be a chef then you are highly unlikely to be shortlisted for interview.

Place most important information at front

Whichever layout you use, make sure you put the most important information at the top.

Example (Classic CV)



If you need to save space:

- Place Contact details on a single line
- Put 'Available on Request' for references

Keep a clean and tidy layout

Ima Candidate
10 street, Town, Postcode
01234 567890 | name@email.com

Profile
This is a personal statement. It is personalised to the role that I am interested in. I have used it to state my key skills and attributes and what I would like to do now or in the future.

Work Experience
ROLE | From - To | Company
Key Skills.Achievements: and Main duties. Emphasise anything that is relevant to role applying for.

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Both of these have the same content. The top one is clearer. It uses left alignment and has consistent headers. The bottom one looks messy. It uses centre alignment and it is not as easy to read.

Things to avoid

Making your CV too long

A CV should be 1 - 2 pages long. Especially if you are early in your career. If you have had lots of different jobs, give more details about your most recent jobs and use bullet points or short summaries for the older ones.

Over use of Jargon/Acronyms

Do not make any assumptions that the person that reads your CV will understand acronyms or jargon. Stick to clear terms.

Include Curriculum Vitae as the title

A CV is a standard document. You want to put your name at the top. Avoid putting the word Curriculum Vitae at top. This is a waste of space and will make it harder to stand out in a large stack of applications.

Handwriting or using Funny fonts

Make sure your CV is easy to read. Use a clean and crisp font. Avoid using handwriting or using fun fonts. You only get one chance to make an impression.

Use funny email address

Your email address should reflect you as a person. If you want to be taken seriously, avoid silly names.

PartyGrrl00@gmail.com













AmySmith00@gmaill.com

Use a template and fail to complete

Many job sites offer templates. These can be good to get a clean layout. Make sure you complete all of the sections. Don't leave elements unfinished. i.e. "insert address here".

Top reasons a CV is rejected

First impressions count and time is precious. Most recruiters, especially with popular jobs will spend 10-30 seconds looking at a CV before they make a judgement call. If a CV is shortlisted, but they need to cut down the list further, they will look for things that set a CV apart. This could be positive (i.e volunteering) or it could be negative. Below is a list of the things that may put a CV into the reject pile.

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Rediculous email address, especially if the role is senior |  Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar mistakes |
|  Unexplained gaps in employment or education |  Poor formatting |
|  Too much or too little detail |  Too much focus on hobbies/interests |
|  False or over-exaggerated information |  Silly fonts |
|  Personal statement not tailored to job role or industry |  Lack of employer details in work experience |
|  Weird or worrying hobbies (i.e. I like to shoot guns) |  Writing about yourself in the third person |

Covering Letter

Ensure that you review the vacancy to see whether a covering letter is requested. If a covering letter is requested and you fail to send it, you will be rejected.

Contents

First Paragraph

State the job you are applying for
How you found out about it
Your availability to start

Second Paragraph

Why you are interested
Why the company attracts you

Third Paragraph

Summarise your strengths
Relate your skills to what is required

Fourth Paragraph

Mention any dates you are not available for interview
Thank them for considering your application
End with looking forward to hearing from them soon

Top tips

- ➔ Keep it short and relevant, try to aim to 1 side of A4
- ➔ Check Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar
- ➔ Make it personal. Why do you want to work for them?
- ➔ Highlight your unique selling points
- ➔ Relate your skills to the job you are applying for

More Tips

Personalise

If the advert includes a named person, address it to them. Ensure that you keep your covering letter focussed on the role and the organisation.

Consider your opening line

Covering letters are formal, but you want to emphasise how keen you are "I am excited to apply..." or "I am very interested in your..." are good examples.

Emphasise skills

Share the skills you bring. If there are any that you don't fully have, share how you are willing to expand your skills. Where possible, highlight transferrable skills that are similar.

Anecdotal evidence

If relevant to the job you are applying for, mention any outcomes / key achievements in your previous role(s).

Job Application Forms

A job application form is designed to get information from you. Some will appear on your CV. When completing one, ensure to have your CV to hand. In some cases they may ask you to complete the form AND upload a CV. If this is the case make sure that information on your CV and the application form does not differ.

Key tips

- ➔ Refer to the job description whilst completing the job application form.
- ➔ Make sure that there are no details that differ from your CV. Ensure they are consistent.
- ➔ Read the questions carefully and answer all questions in full.
- ➔ Concentrate on quality over quantity. Be succinct.
- ➔ Do not lie or over-exaggerate.
- ➔ Check for Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar. Ask someone else to review it, if possible.

A job application form will have some straightforward sections, i.e. Personal Details, Work Experience and Education. This information will be the same as on your CV. Make sure you ensure that they are all correct. If you have any gaps in employment explain them.

Types of sections

The 'Why' sections

Many job application forms ask 'Why' Questions.

- Why are you interested in the role.?
- Why are you the right person for the job?

The key focus is to be positive.

Emphasise what you would bring to the role and organisation.

Include elements such as:-

- Your knowledge and skills of sector or organisation
- Key relevant skills and relevant transferrable skills
- Knowledge of relevant systems and processes
- Any other skills you feel are beneficial to the role

Strengths and Weaknesses

Most people have no difficulty writing about their strengths, but find it difficult to admit to their weaknesses. Ironically, it is a sign of strength to be able to recognise your weakness.

Everybody has weaknesses. The key is to focus on those that are work based.

Try not to make them too big, you don't want to give them a reason to reject you.

Keep it succinct. Where possible make references to how you are mitigating this.

i.e. "I get nervous when presenting to a large audience, I ensure that I am fully prepared and do a dry run with a colleague to ensure that I am as confident as can be.

The competency sections

Applications may ask you questions based on the key competencies that they have identified as important to the role.

These will be around key competencies of the role. i.e. Decision Making, Problem Solving etc. When answering these consider the STAR method

S - Describe the Situation

T - Task

A - Action taken

R - Results achieved / Reflection

This can help form your answer and provide the right level of detail and emphasise not just your competency skill, but how you have put it to use and the impact this has had.

Unusual Questions

Some forms will include 'think outside the box' questions.

i.e. "If you were an animal what would you be" or "If you were stranded, which items would you use to survive"

These questions do not have a right or wrong answer.

The purpose of these is to see how you think and how you are able to convey your thought process within the answer.

For instance with the animal one, can you relate it to the job you are applying for? With the items to survive, the items don't really matter, it's how you think you can use them and your ability to share your reasoning that they are assessing.

Types of sections... Continued

Open-ended Questions

Many application forms have a section towards the end to allow you to add any other information. Use this section wisely.

Add value to your application, such as key skills that did not fit in other areas naturally. Avoid using this section to make demands such as salary.

Wherever possible your answers should be personalised to the role and organisation.

Diversity Monitoring

This may be part of the application form or as a separate sheet. Do not skip this. Organisations request information to check that a diverse range of people are applying for their roles.

If they find that they aren't attracting key diversity groups i.e. Women, Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic groups or key age groups - they can research ways to improve their engagement with these groups.

If it asks about criminal convictions, it is important not to lie on this section. Some roles, may require a DBS check and if something comes up through that, which was not declared, it could lead to losing the role.

References

This should be a work or education reference. The person you name needs to know enough about you to be able to provide a good reference.

If a form asks for a 'character' reference, this should not be a relative or someone who only knows you as a friend. It needs to be someone you have worked with or done a project with.

i.e. a Team member in a sports team. Named representative from an organisation you volunteer with or a friend that you do a regular project with that can convey some of your skills.

Top Tip!

Do not submit your application until you have checked it through thoroughly.

First impressions count. You only get one chance to make one.

If you submit with an error, you may be able to re-submit, but the initial error may count against you, especially if you are up against some strong candidates

Where to find more help

Career Guidance

- ➔ <https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/employment-help-young-people/>
- ➔ <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/>

Finding Vacancies

- ➔ <https://www.charityjob.co.uk/>
- ➔ <https://uk.indeed.com/>
- ➔ <https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/>
- ➔ <https://opportunities.efficiencynorth.org/apprenticeships/>
- ➔ <https://www.reed.co.uk/jobs>
- ➔ <https://www.gov.uk/find-a-job>