



CVs & Covering Letters

INTRODUCTION

Your CV needs to be a powerful marketing document which aims to market you to a prospective employer. It is important to realise that the purpose of a CV is not to get a job, but to get an interview.

Whilst there are certain rules to be followed, every CV is different because it reflects an individual. If you send out CVs to different employers, then each CV should be adapted and tailored to the organisation and the vacancy to which you are applying. Recruiters may only spend a few seconds 'skim' reading CVs on the first sift, so your CV needs to make immediate impact. Therefore, thorough preparation is essential for each separate job application if you want your CV to be effective.

CREATING YOUR CV

Writing a CV gives you the freedom to choose what format to use and what information to include. The main message you will be trying to get across is 'I can do this job', so it is up to you to select the bits of information about you (skills, competencies and characteristics) to persuade the employer to interview you.

Aim to ensure that the content of your CV matches the needs of the organisation you are applying to. It should highlight your education, academic history, skills and any work experience you may have, using evidence to demonstrate that you can provide the skills the company needs.

You can find out what the company is looking for by researching the employer and looking closely at the job description and person specification if there is one. Remember, you will need to adapt the information on your CV for each job you apply for.

A good CV will:

- Be crisp and concise
- Be targeted and relevant to the job you are applying for
- Look attractive
- Be no longer than two pages

3 simple rules to effective CVs

There are three main aspects to making your CV really effective: knowing what you have to offer, understanding what the employer wants and presenting your information clearly in a way that highlights the most relevant points.

1. Analyse your skills by using a tool such as Prospects Planner on the Prospects website or via the Bangor Employability Award, where you will need to visit the skills related segments within the core programme. What experiences can you think of that demonstrate your skills and qualities in action?
2. You need to understand what the employer wants by finding out as much as you can about the role for which you are applying and the organisation you want to work for.



3. Your CV needs to be well set out, with consistent headings and spacing. In terms of content, decide which sections should be on the first page of your two page CV, to attract the employer to the relevance of your previous experience – whether this is your qualifications, your skills or your work experience.

Analysing the job description

Firstly, before you start targeting your CV, go through the job description & person specification, highlighting anything that tells you about the organisation: their values, how they operate and who they work with. You need to include your reasons for choosing that particular organisation or company in your covering letter. Ask yourself: what more could I find out and where could I find further information?

Secondly, highlight what they are looking for in terms of: qualifications, skills, experience. Ask yourself: do I meet these requirements and how can I evidence these?

Thirdly, ask yourself: How do I feel about this company and their interests? Am I interested to find out more? Brainstorm your experiences and skills to see what evidence you can provide that will match the employer's criteria for the role. If you are writing to an employer to enquire about employment opportunities rather than applying for a job, this is called a speculative enquiry. There may not be a particular role that you are applying for, but you will probably have one in mind that you would like to carry out. Make sure you find out as much as you can about the organisation or company, and reflect this in your covering letter.

Employers' perspective

Research with employers has found that CVs are not successful in three main ways:

- 1 Failure to make it relevant to the job and organisation in question. Sometimes applicants send out the same CV to many employers in a blanket approach, but this is rarely successful.
- 2 Making mistakes – with spelling & grammar. Some employers with large numbers of applicants screen these by cutting out those who have seemingly poor levels of literacy.
- 3 Not showing that you have researched the job and the company. They really want you to be genuinely interested and motivated to work for them.

CHOOSING A CV FORMAT

There is no set CV format, but it is important you choose a style which you feel comfortable with and which you feel will work for you. There are three main types of CV:

- **Chronological** – an historical account of your career path so far which lists information in reverse chronological order (most recent activity first). This is the format most people are familiar with and can be most effective if you have directly relevant work experience or previous employment
- **Functional/skills based** – places emphasis on your skills and strengths which demonstrate how you can meet the requirements of the employer. This may provide you with more flexibility to demonstrate your suitability for the post. It can be particularly effective if you do not have directly relevant experience, or are changing career direction, as it enables you to draw the



employer's attention to your relevant skills (regardless of where you developed them) and away from previous job titles.

- **Academic** – one of the main differences in academic CVs is in length; it is perfectly acceptable for them to be longer than 2 sides of A4, as more detail is often needed. However, they still need to be targeted to the post for which you are applying. Again, it is up to you which specific sections, or in what order you present the information on your CV. For more information on academic CVs, section headings and what to put under them, see www.vitae.ac.uk

CV LAYOUT

Your CV should normally include the following:

- Your name and contact details at the top of the first page (you do not have to put your date of birth, marital status etc)
- Personal Profile or Career Objective (Optional)
- Education/ qualifications
- Employment and work experience
- Skills and interests
- Other information if relevant
- References

Very important:

- If writing a chronological CV put your activities in reverse chronological order (i.e. most recent first)
- Perfect spelling and grammar (remember that using spell-check is not always reliable as it is often in American-English)
- Consistent, logical and easy-to-read layout
- One font style is enough
- Use **bold** for headings
- Make statements – bullet points are most effective
- Avoid over-using the word 'I'
- Use action/power words at the beginning of each statement
- Do not be afraid of white space

Do NOT include:

- The words Curriculum Vitae
- Photographs
- Job descriptions
- Non-essential personal information
- Long sentences

You should prioritise relevant points and use words which reflect the type of job you are looking for. Do not worry if you do not have any relevant work experience - you can feature university, extra-curricular experiences, or projects if they support your objective.



Some Action/power Words:

Achieved
Assessed
Completed
Created
Discovered
Explained
Managed
Planned
Represented
Selected
Taught

Administered
Arranged
Conducted
Designed
Distributed
Increased
Monitored
Promoted
Researched
Sold
Tested

Advised
Budgeted
Controlled
Devised
Evaluated
Instructed
Negotiated
Recommended
Responsible for
Solved
Trained

Analysed
Calculated
Co-ordinated
Developed
Examined
Liaised
Organised
Reformed
Resulted
Supervised
Welcomed





Title

Just use your name in a slightly larger font in bold / capitals.

Personal Details

Include your name, address, telephone number and your email address. Write your name in bold and in a larger font, perhaps using size 12 or 14 font: it is you who is being marketed and you want the employer to notice and remember your name. It is recommended you write your name in the centre or the right hand side of the page for more impact.

If you have a professional LinkedIn profile you can also include the details in this section.

AMY ROBERTS

14 St David's Avenue, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 4PJ

Tel: 01248-123456

Mobile: 077631-123456

Email: aroberts@yahoo.com

Profile or Objective (optional)

If you decide to include a Profile or an Objective, keep it short and geared towards the type of work for which you are applying. Some examples can be found at www.prospects.ac.uk/cvs.htm.

Education

This section can do more than just list your educational achievements. You can highlight units, modules and projects from your degree course which are relevant to the job you are applying for. It is useful to promote your final year project as it provides evidence of project management skills – a competence highly regarded by employers.

2015 - 2018

Bangor University

BA Hons (2i) Business Studies & Finance

Optional modules studied:

- Financial Analysis
- Advanced Corporate Finance
- Marketing Strategy and Management
- Human Resource Management

Final Year Project

'Financial Forecast & Analysis of the Marketing of American Bakery Products in Wales'

2008 - 2015

Ysgol Tryfan, Bangor

Include your 'A' levels with grades but avoid a long list of GCSEs. A summary is better, e.g. 11 GCSEs (A* - B) including English (A) and Maths (A).

Employment/work experience

This is one section of your CV which raises more questions at interview, e.g. "Tell us more about your work with . . . ?" Give dates when you worked there, month and year are sufficient (e.g. *September 2014 – June 2015*). Include any voluntary work and other work experience. Be careful not to write a job

description but instead highlight your achievements in that job starting each entry with an action/power word (see list above).

July 2016 – present

Financial Assistant, Finance Direct, Bangor

- Dealing directly with customer enquiries on the telephone, providing advice on products, arranging meetings with financial advisers and data entry
- Developed knowledge of FSA regulations, confidentiality, customer relationship management software and customer service skills.

Skills (optional)

For a Chronological CV, you may wish to summarise your key skills, e.g. languages (and the level attained) and IT (state a qualification if you have one, familiarity with software, databases and word processing packages), as well as any other skills relevant to the job for which you are applying. Have you any familiarity with scientific or technical equipment? Do you have a driving licence?

Communication

- Excellent written communication skills demonstrated in achieving mid to high 2:1 grades in all written university assignments
- Oral communication skills honed in my experience at Storm FM where I sourced stories, interviewed guests and presented a regular show

Go to http://www.prospects.ac.uk/example_cvs.htm to see an example of how to present skills in a skills-based CV.

Additional Information / Interests / Achievements

Remember that the only purpose of this section is to make you seem interesting! You need to show further skills and qualities that you may not have demonstrated through your employment section. Use this section show motivation (for example, keeping fit), persistence (learning an instrument – say what level you attained), interest in other people and cultures (voluntary work or travel). Avoid any interests that are just the same as anyone else's – like watching tv or shopping – they are just not going to make you seem interesting.

- Language Skills (with fluency/attainment level)
- IT skills (give details of what you can use competently)
- Driving (e.g. 'full clean driving licence since 2010)
- Positions of responsibility
- Memberships of clubs and societies
- Travel
- Music – instrument etc.
- Sport – outline your involvement
- Prizes won

Referees

Before you use anyone's name, you should have already asked them for their permission to do so. Your referees should be able to provide an effective reference on your behalf. One referee should be an academic one – perhaps your tutor or dissertation supervisor. Add full contact details including email

address and telephone number. If you haven't enough space it is fine to write 'References are available on request'.

COVERING LETTERS

A CV should never be sent without a covering letter. It is the introduction to your CV and is more personal than the formal document it is introducing. You can write it to project an air of enthusiasm, particularly in demonstrating your understanding of the company's goals and how you would like to contribute to the ongoing success of their organisation.

A good covering letter will give you the edge over other applicants and should make the reader want to find out more about you. It serves a different need to the CV in that you can state why you want to work for them, opening the door for further communication.

DOs

- Be creative – the opening sentence should grab your potential employer's attention
- Write as though you are talking to the reader – be natural
- Use business letter format
- Refer to your CV but do not repeat it
- Address it to an individual, perhaps the head of the department where you want to work – especially if you are writing a speculative application.

DON'Ts

- Repeat what is in your CV
- Send it to a department or to 'Dear Sir or Madam' unless you are responding to a specific job vacancy
- Make your letter sound like you have sent it to several employers – try to personalise it to that particular employer
- Write too much – one side of A4 only. Less is more.

SUGGESTED LAYOUT - Aim to keep your letter to about four paragraphs:

First paragraph -	introduce you, why you are writing, where you saw the post advertised
Second paragraph -	why you should work for them (about you)
Third paragraph -	why them; show that you've done your research and your enthusiasm for the company and the job
Fourth paragraph -	proactive conclusion

RESOURCES FOR CVs & COVERING LETTERS

Prospects – for advice on writing all types of CVs and covering letters with examples

<http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cvs.htm>

http://www.prospects.ac.uk/covering_letters.htm

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/applying-for-jobs>

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/working-abroad>

(advice about applying for jobs abroad)

General advice on CVs / covering letters



Journey to Work (AGCAS) – CVs & Applications (13 minutes)

<http://www.bangor.ac.uk/careers/students/careervids.php.en>

<http://www.careerplayer.com/tips-and-advice/general-advice/polish-up-your-cv.aspx>

(DVD clip with employers talking about what they are looking for in a CV & covering letter)

<http://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/applications-and-cvs>

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/cvquestions.htm>

Careers & Employability Service – December 2016

CV CHECKLIST

Title & Personal Details	yes / no
Have you used your name (large bold type) as a heading for your CV?	
Have you included your telephone, postal and email addresses? Make sure your email address includes your name, so that you are easily identified.	
Personal Profile / Objectives (optional)	
Is this short and direct? Maximum of 3 or 4 lines	
Do you outline your current situation and your aims, and mention skills / experiences relevant to the job?	
Could this information be included elsewhere on the CV or covering letter, with detailed examples where appropriate?	
Academic Qualifications	
Have you listed your qualifications in reverse chronological order? Start with your most recent qualifications and work backwards.	
Have you included details of when (months & years) and where (the institution) each qualification was taken?	
Have you made sure that you have given the correct name of the course and qualification / accreditation gained?	
Have you given some detail of the range and breadth of your studies and picked out aspects of your studies / dissertation that are relevant to the application?	



Employment	
Have you listed your employment (paid and unpaid – unless you have a separate section for work experience and voluntary work) in reverse chronological order?	
Have you included details of when (months & years) and where (the name of the organisation / employer) you were employed for each period of employment?	
Have you give the correct job title with details of your role and responsibilities? These need to be tailored to the skills and experiences needed for the job you are applying for?	

Skills (optional)	yes / no
Does your Skills section reflect the employable skills required by the job description and person specification for the employment you are applying for?	
Does it also include skills you know will be needed for the job from your research into this role and work sector?	
Have you included specific examples from your experiences to back up your claims?	
Additional Information / Interests	
Have you included other competencies, with enough detail to make it interesting, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • driving licence – when gained • speaking other languages – fluency / ability level • which IT software / hardware you can use in some detail • sports – ability level and duration of interest • music – ability level and duration of interest • travel – where, level of independence, any projects you were involved with 	
Have you woven in skills and experiences relevant to your job application?	
Referees	
Have you given two referees – one academic / one employer? You need to ask each referee for permission before including them on your CV.	
Have you included their job title and organisation?	
Have you given their email and address? Not all referees wish to be telephoned, so you need to check this with them first.	

Overall	yes / no
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Does your CV fit on to two sides of A4?	
Is the font easily readable (10 – 12 point minimum)?	
Is the CV well and evenly spaced, to look attractive and easy to read?	
Has someone checked your CV for mistakes, omissions and jargon?	

