

CVs

What is a CV?

- CV stands for Curriculum Vitae, meaning course of life and is a summary of your qualifications, skills and experience, usually used to show your suitability for a job opportunity or course, which may be advertised or speculative (not advertised). UK employers tend to use the term CV rather than Resume, which is commonly used in Europe and North America.
- The aim of a CV is to get you shortlisted for an interview, by presenting your evidence to show how you meet the selection criteria for a job or course.
- A CV is usually one or two pages in length. Academic CVs can be longer than two pages.

How can I make my CV stand out?

- Personalise and tailor your CV to the opportunity you are applying for.
- Check spelling and grammar and get your CV checked before sending. Use a consistent font, such as Arial or Calibri in size 10-12, with clearly labelled headings one or two font sizes larger. Format information using concise paragraphs and bullet points.
- Your CV should be accompanied by a covering letter tailored to the opportunity and organisation or institution. Documents should be saved using your full name as a PDF to maintain the format.

What should I include?

- **Name** - use your name as the heading, include the name you like to be known as if this is different from your official name. Use capital letters for the first letter of your first name and surname.
- **Contact details** – you can include your full address, or if you prefer, your location e.g. Reading. Only include your location if you are uploading your CV to online job portals.

Include your contact phone number and a professional looking email address, which includes your name. You can add a link to your Linked in account if it is up to date or creative portfolio/ website link.

- **Profile** - You can choose to include an optional short profile or summary paragraph below your name and contact details.

A good profile should convey your enthusiasm and key selling points for the role you're applying for by making factual statements and a summary of your key achievements. State which year of your degree you are in e.g. Final year Economics student. You can also use a profile to give some context to your application; to describe the main relevant strengths, qualifications and experience you have to offer in relation to the selection criteria.

In speculative applications, it's useful for explaining what you're looking for e.g. a graduate opportunity/ one year work placement/ summer internship/ part time employment/ work experience.

Profile Example: High performing Final year Economics student with excellent data analysis, presentation and report writing skills gained through university projects and industry experience at Global Finance. Strong team member with experience of working towards shared goals in international teams and the ability to build strong relationships with clients and colleagues, in addition to the ability to work autonomously. Experienced in using MS Office, including the advanced features of Excel. Seeking a graduate level Analyst opportunity.

Skills – A key skills section can be added in addition to or in place of a profile, outlining the relevant skills you possess and where you gained them and include the skills the employer has listed as being essential to the role e.g. Ability to develop excellent relationships with customers and colleagues, gained through two years retail experience. These may also include MS Office, social media skills, languages, to specialist software and technical knowledge and scientific techniques/ equipment.

- **Education** – Start with your current course and include the full course title and date you started to present and university e.g. September 2019-Present BA English Literature, University of Reading and include results if required. Many internship, placements and graduate roles require certain grades.

Your degree will often be the most recent major piece of experience, so you'll need to talk about it in a way that shows the relevant skills and experiences you've had.

Consider phrases like 'Relevant modules include: ...' to help indicate that you've listed those closest to the attributes they have listed in their selection criteria. Remember that the reader probably isn't familiar with your course – they don't know if you had group activities, presentations, dissertations or theses, and they don't have time to look it up. List them, indicating the skills, you used along the way.

Include secondary/ high school qualifications and results.

- **Experience** – Whether it's part-time work in retail – don't forget to include if you have had supervisor responsibility or trained new staff, volunteering, summer internships, informal shadowing, employer insight days, student positions of responsibility – such a course representative, mentor or ambassador research experience or a placement, it's all great experience. If you have created your own business, are a social media influencer or have used your technical skills to help others, add it in! Also include any IT or company systems you used and if you dealt with customers face to face, by phone or email.

Include the date range you completed the experience and ensure any acronyms are written in full e.g. Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme (UROP), so that they can be clearly understood.

Use subheadings like 'Positions of Responsibility' and 'Volunteering' to group the experiences (whether paid or unpaid) together so that those with most of the elements the employer is looking for are found first on your CV.

Relevant Experience- you could consider splitting your experience into Relevant Experience and Additional Experience sections, which will allow you to put the experience and skills most relevant to the job role or industry you are applying to first, this could include paid and unpaid experiences.

Positions of Responsibility – this can include any responsibilities you've held in club or society, community group, as an ambassador, brand/ campus or course representative e.g. September 2018-May 2019 Treasurer, Drama Society, University of Reading

Include how you've represented the group at events or presentations, supported social media campaigns/ updates, organised events and activities, reporting, including who you worked with e.g. committees, RUSU and outline any ideas you initiated, achievements and results such fundraising, creating change or increasing membership.

- **Volunteering** – volunteering can give you a wide range of skills and experiences and can be a great way to develop your confidence and demonstrate your commitment to a chosen charity, cause or professional body. Many students choose to complete the Reading Experience and Development Award (RED Award), explain what the programme is so that it is clear to those outside the university

and ensure you describe the activities you carried out and the skills and achievements you gained with dates included.

- **Additional Information** – this section could information you have such as languages, driving licence, sports or training certifications, professional body membership and technical skills.
- **Interests** - Your interests section is important. It gives the employer a sense of your personality, and can help you make a connection with your reader.

“Reading, cycling and going to the cinema” is true of many people, and doesn’t give them a sense of the real you. It’s a list which anyone could have written.

“My first love is music. I listen to a range of styles and have played bass guitar in several bands, most recently playing at several summer festivals” gives more detailed information about an interest, and the level of commitment.

You can also show how you keep up to date with your industry news and developments.

How do I explain gaps in my experience?

- Include any gap year experiences, voluntary work, previous courses, even if they were not completed and industry experience. Acknowledge any substantial time gaps (i.e. not vacation time) if you were unable to work or study due to other reasons, such as for health or family reasons, you do not have to disclose details. If you have had periods of unemployment, show that you were job seeking and include any personal development you undertook.

Which CV style should I use?

Chronological CV - This is the most common CV style. It groups qualifications, experience, complete with details of achievements and skills used into sections. Each section is ordered in reverse chronological order i.e. putting your most recent experience first. Skills are clearly communicated within the context of their achievement.

Skills based CV- Key skills form section headings, with details of achievements using that skill listed under each. Finally the details of roles held, complete with dates, job title and organisation name are listed briefly in a section which summarises the employment history. This style useful for more experienced candidates, those changing direction having gained skills in a very different context, and those who have had significant experience in similar roles.

Academic CV - These are used for academic and research roles. They are usually longer than two pages, with more focus on research, teaching and academic experience. Additional headings might include Honours, Grants, Conferences, Publications, Posters, Teaching Experience, Research projects and Research interests. Examples can be found on vitae.ac.uk and jobs.ac.uk

Creative CV - these used for jobs in creative industries such as artistic, design and creative marketing roles and may include colour, images, animation and video and demonstrate use of creative software, such as Photoshop. Search Instagram #creativecv and [Pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com) for more examples.

Some countries include a passport style photo, marital status, or age, which are not necessary in the UK. In Europe, the Europass CV was an attempt to provide a standard style across the EU. It isn’t advised for UK graduate level jobs, but it could be used for seasonal or short-term work in Europe. Use the careers resource [GoinGlobal reading.ac.uk/careers/goinglobal](http://GoinGlobal.reading.ac.uk/careers/goinglobal) for country specific CV and recruitment information.