

Effective CVs and Cover Letters



**Choosing and
managing your career**



**Developing you and your
skills for job seeking**



**Applying for jobs
or further study**



Students/Graduates

Introduction

This CV and Cover Letter booklet has been created as an introduction to the basics of writing your own CV and cover letters. It includes guidance on how to get started on creating your own effective CVs and cover letters, as well as a range of examples to inspire your content and structure. You can find more support, information and advice on the careers service website. Expectations of a CV can vary by industry and country. If you are applying to an academic job or jobs outside of the UK then please use the appropriate further resources as a supplement to this guide, as standards vary.

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Glossary

Tailoring – to alter the content of a document to fit a specific job or company.

Skills – A skill is the ability to do something well. This can be a transferable skill such as team work or communication, or a technical skill such as research, a programming language or a lab skill.

Reverse Chronological Order – A list sorted in date order. Starting with the most recent date and finishing with the least recent date.

ATS – Automated Tracking Systems. Software used to track and sort applications.

Further Resources

Here are some great useful resources. Some may require a login or for you to be on campus:

Get your CV checked online with [CV360](#)

All things career related, our [careers service website](#)

International CVs and job searching on [GoinGlobal](#)

Specific help with [CVs for an academic career](#)

Writing a Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Your CV is a marketing tool which 'sells' your knowledge, skills and experience to an employer.

Sections

Contact details

Your CV is a marketing tool which 'sells' your knowledge, skills and experience to an employer.

Education

Reverse chronological order.

Include key modules, group projects research projects.

School qualifications - list Advanced Highers/Highers, e.g. subject and grade achieved.

Work experience

Reverse chronological order.

You may use headings such as Relevant Work Experience, Other Work Experience and Volunteering.

Skills

Can be described under headings such as:
Technical/Laboratory Skills, Transferable Skills and IT skills.

Hobbies/interests

This gives a flavour of you as a person and can include sporting interests, membership of social and university clubs, travelling.

Additional information

This section could include:

Awards and Prizes e.g. Dean's List, Positions of responsibility e.g. Class Representative

Driving Licence (if required for the job)

Languages (with level achieved)

Visa requirements – for international applicants who require visa sponsorship

References

No need to provide full details, you can state 'References available on request'

Appearance

One or two full A4 sides

Clear headings

Use a standard font and keep font sizes consistent.

Be consistent with formatting e.g. spacing, bullet points and indentation

Logical structure

Key information

You have limited space so don't be tempted to use the exact same CV for every job.

Make sure it is clear how you fit the role and the company - tailor your CV for each job

Throughout your CV provide specific examples as evidence of your skills.

Top Tips

Tailor your CV. Look at the skills and competencies required in the job description and tailor the content of your CV to match.

Always proof read carefully. Check for spelling mistakes, grammatical errors and typos.

Make every section count. Each section should be relevant. Remove or minimise any irrelevant information.

Use keywords. Applicant Tracking Systems use keyword searches to match CVs to the skills required in the job description. Using the same terminology makes it more likely to be successful.

Be competitive. Think about what you want to tell the employer that makes you different from other applicants. Include your personal qualities.

Make it easy to read. Use appropriate headings, bullet points and a consistent format.

Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) Explained

Applicant tracking systems are a popular tool for recruiters, allowing them to sort and filter candidates in order of suitability. They work by scanning through each CV for key words and sections to find candidates that meet the essential criteria for the job role. It then ranks them in order of suitability.

If you're applying to a large company, chances are you'll face an ATS. If you're applying through any online form, you're applying through an ATS. Even job sites like Indeed and LinkedIn have their own built in ATS.

If your CV is tailored carefully to the job description, there is a good chance that the ATS system will score it highly and it will progress to the next stage which is to be read by the hiring manager or recruiter who will make the final decision on which candidates will be shortlisted for interview. The tips below will enable you to create your CV with ATS in mind and avoid any pitfalls that could result in rejection.

Success with ATS

DO:

- ☐ Save your file as a ".docx" if possible. Upload your CV in the format requested, if in doubt upload it as a Word document rather than a PDF.
- ☐ Carefully tailor your CV to the job description for each new application. Research the company, as well as the role you're applying for.
- ☐ Identify keywords from the job description and person specification and that are relevant to the industry in which you want to work. Make sure to include them on your CV.
- ☐ Use standard headings that will be easily recognised by an ATS such as 'Education' and 'Work Experience'.
- ☐ Use both the long-form and acronym version for qualifications and professional terms e.g. Master of Engineering (MEng) or Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA).
- ☐ Use a professional font e.g. Helvetica, Garamond, or Arial and be consistent with fonts and font sizes
- ☐ Use bullet points
- ☐ Use the CV360 platform to run a simulated ATS check and get detailed feedback.

DON'T:

- ☐ Don't use columns, graphics, logos or tables as most ATS system algorithms can't read them, just use simple formatting.
- ☐ Don't use too many colours, two or three at most if at all.
- ☐ Don't include a photograph.
- ☐ Don't use headers or footers as the information might get lost or cause a parsing error
- ☐ Don't make the CV more than 2 pages in length.
- ☐ Avoid just filling your CV with keywords and clichés to try to beat the ATS. Remember your CV will be read by someone eventually so it has to make sense.

George Brown

48 The Street, Glasgow, G3 8BW

myname@gmail.com

Phone: 0777 777 777

www.linkedin.com/yourpersonalisedlink

Currently a second year LLB student, studying both Scots and English Law, I am looking for a Summer internship to gain practical experience in a legal setting. I have a particularly strong interest in Commercial Law. With legal, customer service and voluntary experience, I have developed relevant skills and attributes that make me a valuable addition to your firm.

Education

2019-2023

University of Strathclyde

LLB(Hons) Scots and English Law

Core Modules: Commercial Law (65%), European Union law (68%), Public Law 2 (69%)

Achieved Merit on completion of first year.

2012-2018

Local High School

Highers: English (A), Modern Studies (A), Business Management (A), Maths (A), Chemistry (B)

Advanced Highers: English (A), Business Management (A), Maths (B)

Skills

Working in a team

- In my role at Subway, I work successfully within a team in a fast paced, customer facing environment.
- Quickly developed new relationships to deliver challenging group projects with randomly assigned teams, as part of my LLB.

Organisation

- Balancing my university studies with a part-time job and my volunteering has required high levels of organisation and time management skills, and I have never missed a deadline.
- Regularly organised engaging activities for a troop of 30 scouts, including travel and logistics.

Communication

- Producing essays and reports to a high standard as part of my LLB demonstrates my excellent written communication skills.
- Advocate on behalf of classmates at staff meetings, in my role as class representative.
- Demonstrated high level verbal communication skills delivering verbal arguments as part of the Mooting process.

Analytical thinking

- Applied analytical thinking to legal concepts and source materials as part of producing quality written work for my LLB coursework, achieving high grades.
- As part of the Strathclyde Mooting I take an analytical approach to appraising sources and constructing arguments.

Problem solving

- Resolved practical issues as they arose when leading Scouting camping expeditions.
- When supporting a Law Society event, I solved a crisis created by a last minute speaker cancellation. I rearranged the schedule of speakers and identified a stand in speaker at the last minute.

IT skills

- Competent user of Microsoft Office applications including Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint
- Familiar with legal databases such as Westlaw, Hein online and Lexis Nexus.

Languages

English – Native Speaker Spanish – Intermediate

Legal Experience

June 2019

Shadowing (Criminal Defence)

Law Firm Is Us

- Sat in on client interviews, accompanied the staff to court appearances and was afforded the opportunity to discuss the legal merits of individual cases. This was a valuable experience of putting theory into practice.

Nov 2018- Present

Mooting Participant

University of Strathclyde

- Working as part of a team to examine legal cases and advocate on behalf of a fictional client.
- Making submissions based on well-reasoned arguments and detailed legal research.

Employment

June 2017 – Present

Sandwich Artist

Subway

- The role required dealing with high numbers of customer orders and payments whilst maintaining a high attention to detail in a fast-paced environment.
- Adhering to rigorous health and safety standards.

Volunteering

Oct 2018 – Present

Member of the University of Strathclyde Law Society

- Attended career talks and networking events with representatives from a range of legal firms
- Assisted committee members with the running of events and organising speakers.

Sept 2018 – Present

Class Representative

University of Strathclyde

- Represented my peers at meetings with academic staff.
- Completed Class Representative training.

Nov 2015 – June 2018

Young Leader

Scouting Association

- Assisted in the organisation and running of my local Scout troop.
- Arranged outdoor adventure activities, and completed relevant safety certificates to support this.

References

References available on request

Jay Jones

25 Market Street, Glasgow, G71 1HZ

Mobile: 07770445555

Email Address: jayjo@gmail.com

LinkedIn URL: www.linkedin.com/in/jayjones

Personal Statement

A third year student studying Pure and Applied Chemistry at the University of Strathclyde with an overall grade average of 75 %. My course has given me a good grounding in practical analytical chemistry and I have developed strong technical and critical analysis skills. I am keen to pursue a career as an Analytical Chemist and am looking for a summer placement to gain an understanding of the role and where I can learn from experienced professionals.

Education

The University of Strathclyde - MChem in Chemistry (2018-2023), on track to achieve 2:1

Key Modules

Analytical Chemistry (Chromatography, spectroscopy, statistics and mathematics), Inorganic Chemistry (Main Group Chemistry, Transition Metal Chemistry, Frontiers in Inorganic Chemistry); Fundamental Organic Chemistry (Synthesis and Spectroscopy); Physical Chemistry 1 (Thermodynamics, Kinetics, Electrochemistry and Energy Resources) and Forensic Trace Analysis.

- Achieved distinction in Year 2 - average theory grade was 73%. My average practical grade was 79%.

Laboratory Skills

- Practical classes involved moving from one type of laboratory to another every four weeks so we could gain practical experience in four branches of chemistry (analytical, inorganic, organic and physical).
- In the laboratory I learned how to use a number of instruments including: HPLC, GC; a pH meter; an autoanalyser and spectrometers (IR, C13 and proton NMR).
- I also became familiar with a number of laboratory techniques including: how to interpret IR, C13 and proton NMR spectra; how to make up standard solutions and how to validate chemical experiments.

Work Experience

September 2019 – present Barista, Costa Coffee, Glasgow

- Trusted to set and uphold high standards of presentation and quality.
- Responsible for training new staff demonstrating leadership and communication skills.
- Providing a high standard of customer service ensuring repeat custom.
- Efficient at juggling multiple tasks at once showing attention to detail and focus.

International Volunteering

During the summer of 2018 I was a volunteer Camp Leader at a summer camp in the Czech mountains. This involved working with other leaders to provide a programme of outdoor activities for children aged 12-16.

Skills

Adaptability

- Before attending the International Camp in the Czech mountains I had to reach the rendezvous point in Prague. This involved travelling around an unknown city where I did not understand the language.
- In my part-time job I am sometimes called upon to deputise for the manager when they are away. This demonstrates responsibility and willingness to be flexible to meet the needs of the company.

Computing

- I am proficient with a number of software packages including: Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft PowerPoint and ChemBioDraw.

Communication

- Oral Communication: I can speak confidently in front of large crowds. This skill was developed when I took the main speaking role in my Boys' Brigade Company's 125th Anniversary Service.
- Written Communication: I gained consistently high marks for my laboratory reports. I received certificates for this in both first and second year.

Strong Work Ethic

- Once assigned a task I will dedicate myself to it until it is complete. While volunteering at the summer camp I took on a number of tasks including: organising daily activities, planning sightseeing trips and co-ordinating the duty rota for all of the leaders.
- I am often called upon to cover extra shifts in my part time job. In addition to my University work this can mean working seven days a week to ensure that deadlines are met for coursework and group projects.

Organisational Skills

- The volunteer Camp Leader role involved fundraising £1500 to cover the cost of travel and accommodation. I raised it over 6 weeks demonstrating both commitment and organisational skills.
- During my fifteen years of service with the Boys' Brigade I achieved my Queens Badge/Silver Duke of Edinburgh. This 18-month process involved: volunteering within the Brigade (as a Junior Section Leader) and the community (as a classroom assistant); a physical activity (playing Badminton); developing a skill (driving); a three-day expedition in the Ben Volrich Area and passing a completion course.

Teamwork

- I generally get along well with the people around me and can work effectively with them to achieve shared goals.
- Working effectively as part of a team in a fast paced hospitality environment is crucial to the smooth running of the café and to ensure customer satisfaction.
- In the International Camp I worked with people from different cultures as part of group tasks developing my cultural awareness and an appreciation of our similarities and differences.

Interests

Hill walking: I enjoy the personal challenge and sense of accomplishment that achieving the summit of a mountain offers. I have so far climbed 38 Munros and it is my ambition to 'bag' all 283 of them.

Additional Information

Full, clean driving license

References available on request

Susan Sitwell

24 Main Street, Glasgow G55 5SS

Telephone: 079090902111

Email: sue.sitwell@internet.com

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/suesitwell

PROFILE

A final year MEng Mechanical Engineering student at the University of Strathclyde with a firm grasp of key engineering concepts and relevant industrial experience. A positive approach and can-do attitude throughout my time at University with the capability to balance the demands of academic study, part-time work and sporting commitments.

EDUCATION

2016-2021 - University of Strathclyde, MEng Mechanical Engineering (2:1)

(Course accredited by IMechE, Student member of IMechE)

Core modules: Engineering mechanics, Thermodynamics, Applied Engineering Mathematics, Engineering Materials, Energy system modelling and Engineering design gaining

International experience: Erasmus study abroad semester, The Czech Technical University, Prague, August 2015 – May 2016.

Gijon, Spain (Jan –May 2018) – Final year Masters Project.

Dissertation title: "Effective Removal of Space Waste" which addressed the problem of space debris and explored the effectiveness of using a space tug to capture waste by creating a computational control system to address complex dynamic issues.

2011-2016 - High School, Glasgow.

Advanced Highers in Physics and Mathematics, 4 additional Highers (grade A).

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Proficient in Ansys (FEA and CFD), Solidworks, Matlab, Autocad, Revit

IT Skills: proficient in Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Outlook).

ENGINEERING WORK EXPERIENCE

June - Sep 2020 - Mechanical Engineering Summer Intern, Jacobs, Manchester.

- Worked in the Building Service department under the guidance of experienced engineers.
- Responsible for conducting a survey on the condition of a large installed Heating and Cooling system. This allowed me to gain experience in communicating with the client on a daily basis in a professional manner, and an understanding of the time management and organizational skills required to conduct a project of this scale.
- Additional responsibilities included the full design and reconfiguration of a ventilation system for a small section of Manchester Airport using AutoCad and Revit.

ENGINEERING WORK EXPERIENCE (continued)

June - August 2019 - Continuous Improvement Engineer, (Internship), Howden Group, Glasgow

- Primary responsibility was to develop and ensure the implementation of Standard Work Procedures and Work Standard Instructions for the manufacturing processes.
- I was also responsible for testing and producing reports on the accuracy of testing equipment in the Research and Development department and assisting diagnostic teams in testing various compressors and determining the reason for failure.
- Gained insight into how a commercial engineering businesses operates.

Jan 2019 - April 2019 - Design and Manufacture Project, University of Strathclyde

- The project aim was to design and manufacture a remotely operated off road vehicle within a strict timeline. As nominated Team Leader my role was to ensure that goals were achieved.
- Through encouraging the team to put forward initial ideas to deciding on the final design process, I gained experience in using an iterative process while effectively working well in a team to achieve our objectives.

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

Sept 2019- May 2022 Bar Person, Central Hotel, Glasgow

- Working at a fast pace as part of a team to ensure that large functions run smoothly, and a high quality of customer service is delivered. It is essential that there is clear communication between colleagues to allow everything to run flawlessly.

June 2018- Sept 2018 Logistics Manager for Transient Summer Festivals

- Primary responsibility was to ensure the safe erection and dismantle of a large mobile shop and store room facilities.
- Throughout these processes it was essential to adhere to health and safety rules for each site; as manager it was my responsibility to ensure that my team followed them closely.

SPORTING INTERESTS AND VOLUNTEER WORK

- Captained Clydeside hockey team in the top Scottish league. I had to be personable and approachable and be able to communicate any worries or concerns to coaching staff. A high level of motivation was required to inspire the team and improve performance.
- Bicycle Repair and Maintenance course, learning about many different styles of bikes and how each component works on each mode I. Created a small bicycle repair service business fixing bikes for a small charge.

REFERENCES ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Yun Li

Yun.Li@email.com

Phone: +44 777 7777 777

www.linkedin.com/yourpersonalisedurl

Relevant Experience

Customer Adviser (Part-time) Tesco Bank

Nov 2020 – Present

- Used excellent customer service skills to resolve customer queries as efficiently as possible in a target driven environment.
- Developed knowledge of retail banking systems and common customer queries.

Business Solutions Internship RBS

June 2019 – Aug 2019

- Developed knowledge of finance in a large retail bank, including the challenges brought by new technology.
- Completed a research project to tight deadlines, which made recommendations on how the online platform could be made more customer friendly.
- Took an active role in coordinating the 'Fun in Fundraising' campaign to support local charities through a range of staff fundraising activities.

Team Member

Strathclyde Business Clinic

Sept 2018 – May 2019

- Worked as part of a team to deliver business solutions for live business issues.
- Utilised creative thinking and problem solving skills to create innovative solutions.
- Conducted in depth research and analysed data to provide a strong evidence base for recommendations.

Education

MSc Economics and Finance

University of Strathclyde

Sept 2020 – Sept 2021

Relevant Modules: *Analysis of Economic Data, Principles of Finance, Accounting & Financial Analysis, Corporate Finance, and Security Analysis.*

- Developed knowledge and understanding of economic concepts in a financial context.
- Demonstrated excellent time management skills balancing a heavy course load.

Dissertation: *Fiscal Forecasts and the Implications of Forecast Revisions for the Efficient Policy Making*

- Further developed my research skills and deepened my understanding of fiscal forecasting.
- Enhanced my understanding of the practical implications of economic data.

BA(Hons) HR and Marketing 2:1

University of Strathclyde

Sept 2016 – May 2020

- Demonstrated excellent team working and research skills through the completion of group projects and presentations.

Dissertation: *Factors Influencing Customer Loyalty in the Mobile Phone Industry.*

- The project used my strong business research, and presentation skills to develop a 10,000 word report and presentation to a high standard.
- A strong attention to detail, project management and planning were all essential to gaining a high mark.

Other Experience

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Bartender | The Bar on the Corner | Oct 2017 – May 2020 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working in a fast paced environment, I delivered excellent customer service under pressure.• Developed skills in dealing with difficult customers and resolving complaints. | | |

- | | | |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Customer Service Assistant | Seven Eleven | June 2015 – Aug 2016 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accurately handled cash, and digital payments.• Assisted customers and met sales targets including selling up, and promoting offers. | | |

IT Skills

- Microsoft Office
- SPSS
- SQL, Python, Java

Languages

- English: Fluent
- Mandarin: Native Speaker

Interests

- | | |
|--|--|
| Strathclyde Business Network | Project Manager: Oct 2020 – Present |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Liaised with a network of alumni contacts and employers to support industry focussed events for Strathclyde students.• Supported the administration of membership and the organisation of large scale events.• Utilised my excellent time management skills to deliver this alongside my intensive Masters course. | |

- | | |
|--|--|
| Investment Society | Ordinary Member: Dec 2017 – Present |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developed commercial awareness and an understanding of investment practices.• Engaged with a range of contacts in the investment sector.• Enhanced my knowledge of the way the economy interacts with investments and recognised a real passion for the trends that impact the financial sector. | |

- | | |
|--|--|
| Volunteering | Lunch Club Volunteer: Nov 2016 – Nov 2017 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regularly and reliably volunteered at a weekly lunch club for the elderly.• Developed my interpersonal interaction skills, cultural awareness and my understanding of local accents.• Demonstrated my organisational skills through designing and delivering fun activities as part of some of the events. | |

References

References available upon request.

CV FAQs

Q. How long should my CV be?

A. Your CV can be up to two sides of A4 paper. A one-page CV may be fine if you don't have a lot of relevant experience, part-time work or volunteering experience. If you are given instructions for a vacancy, follow them.

Q. Should the education section always be near the top?

A. When applying for a graduate job or internship your degree qualifications will likely be an essential requirement and therefore should be on the first page near the top of your CV. Prioritise the content of your CV so that the important information comes first, e.g. if applying for a part-time job in a bar it would be better to emphasise relevant skills and experience first.

Q. Do I have to include a Personal Statement?

A. No, this is an optional section of your CV. A personal statement should focus on your key achievements, career interests and goals and avoid clichés such as 'a hard-working and reliable student'. There is no need for a personal statement when you are also sending a Cover Letter. You can dismiss the failed checks in CV360 for this section.

Q. Are hobbies and interests important?

A. Hobbies and interests that tell the employer something about your skills and personality should be included. Avoid stating generic interests such as reading or socialising with friends.

Q. Should I include the contact details of referees?

A. Don't include full details of your referees on your CV unless directed to do so in the application information. Writing 'References are available on request' is sufficient.

Q. Should I include a photograph?

A. For jobs in the UK you should not include a photograph, date of birth, religion, gender or marital status. Requirements in other countries vary so check first before submitting your CV.

Q. Should I detail all of my exam results?

A. No. List relevant modules from university/college and give a brief summary of your school grades. Look at our example CVs for ways this can be done.

Q. What format should I use to send my CV?

A. When emailing your CV send it as a PDF to ensure that the formatting will be retained. When uploading your CV to an online application be aware that ATS may specify the document format, so follow instructions.

Q. Should I give full details of every job that I have had?

A. No, include recent experience (last 5-8 years). If you have had several jobs unrelated to the job you are applying for you can summarise them, e.g. August 2016 – present, Various roles in a retail sales environment.

Q. My qualifications are not from the UK, how do I explain them on my CV?

A. You can ask at the Careers Service reception for a NARIC lookup to get a general comparison of your school qualifications and look at our further CV resources for more guidance on presenting international qualifications.

Further Resources

[CVs and Cover Letters](#) advice on our website

CV Checklist

Remember that you **MUST** make sure that you match your CV to the requirements of each job/placement that you apply for. Place a tick next to those you have completed. After going through the checklist you may want to use CV360 to run another check over your CV.

Layout:

- ☐ Are the main sections of your CV clearly laid out? Is it easy to read?
- ☐ Does the running order of your CV make sense? (e.g. if you have relevant work experience is that highlighted before your part-time hospitality/customer service jobs?)
- ☐ Are your titles, fonts and styles consistent? (TIP: don't use a font smaller than size 11)
- ☐ Have you double-checked there are no spelling/grammar errors or typos?
- ☐ Your CV should be either one or two pages (N.B. not 1.5 pages, fill each page)

Content:

- ☐ Have you included current Contact Details? For example: phone number/email address.
- ☐ An Objective or a Personal Profile is an optional section at the top of your CV and not necessary when you are including a Cover Letter. It should be personal and include something that differentiates you. (TIP: try to write no more than 4 lines)
- ☐ Have you included your Education, stating the start date and year of graduation for your degree, using the correct name, e.g. MChem Chemistry, and stated where you are studying?
- ☐ Have you mentioned key modules/projects and reflected on what you learnt/skills developed?
- ☐ Have you mentioned any academic recognition or awards you have received? e.g. Deans List
- ☐ If you have had an International/Erasmus Study Exchange or an International Internship Experience, this is an opportunity to talk about professional and personal development e.g. how you challenged yourself, experienced different cultures or learned a new language etc.
- ☐ Have you included your high school or college education and listed your qualifications, with grades? (no need to include details of qualifications below Scottish Higher qualification level.)
- ☐ Have you highlighted Relevant Work Experience? Have you described it in a way that clearly indicates what you have gained from it?
- ☐ Have you made the most of your Other Experience, highlighting skills that are transferable?
- ☐ Are your Key Skills clearly mentioned in your CV (mentioned throughout or in a separate skills section)?
- ☐ Does your Interests section give the reader an indication of what you have gained from them or have you merely written a list?
- ☐ Have you included Additional Information that is relevant to the post or that would interest your potential employer, e.g. Positions of Responsibility/driving licence/first aid qualifications/additional courses or skills such as IT, languages spoken?
- ☐ Have you mentioned **References** (even just to say 'References are available on request')?

Writing a cover letter

A cover letter should always be included with a CV unless you are specifically told not to.

It is there to summarise why you are a good candidate for a specific vacancy, express your motivation, and direct an employer to the relevant parts of your CV.

Appearance

- Formal letter format
- No more than 1 page in length
- Use the same visual style as your CV
- Must be no smaller than 11pt font

Structure

Opening Sentence:

Briefly state what you are applying for and where you found the vacancy.

Paragraph 1:

Introduce yourself, enthusiastically explain why you are interested in this job and working for this company. This should be based on good research about the company and job.

Paragraph 2/3:

Briefly summarise the key skills, experience and expertise that make you a good candidate for this specific vacancy. Use the job description to help you identify what is relevant.

Paragraph 4:

Thank them for their time and include a brief, confident conclusion.

Signature:

If you addressed it to a named person sign off with “Yours sincerely”, if you used a general greeting sign with “Yours faithfully”.

Key information

Address it to a named person if you can. Contact the organisation to ask if it’s not in the job advert.

Research the company thoroughly before you start writing. This will help you to target your application.

Use the job description to help you identify the essential skills and experiences the employer is looking for. Cover as many as you reasonably can in one page.

Refer to your CV. Use phrases such as “as you can see from my CV” to refer to relevant sections of your CV, rather than repeat them.

Give evidence. Don’t just say that you have skills, say where you demonstrated or developed them.

Speculative Applications

If you are applying for a job that has not been advertised, then you can research the skills to include in your cover letter by looking at:

- A job description for a similar job at another company.
- From the LinkedIn profile of someone doing a similar job. Or by using the LinkedIn tool in Microsoft Word 365.
- Job profiles in our occupational resources section and prospects.ac.uk

Top tips

Always proof read carefully. Check for spelling mistakes, grammatical errors and typos.

Never reuse a cover letter. They should be very specific to the job and company you are applying to.

Keep a copy! Always keep a copy of your application so you can refer to it at later stages of the application process.

Cover Letter Template

Your address
Town
Post Code
Date

Name
Job Title
Organisation
Address
Town
Post Code

Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms... or (if you cannot get a name) Dear Hiring Manager,

.....}

State the vacancy applied to and where you found it.

.....}
.....}
.....}

Introduction, explain who you are and demonstrate a clear, researched, interest in the company and the role.

.....}
.....}
.....}
.....}
.....}
.....}
.....}

Demonstrate how you best exemplify the skills and requirements of that particular role use their required skills, qualities, key language and desired attributes in line with your own experience and successes and present evidence to illustrate how you are perfect for this role in particular.

.....}
.....}
.....}
.....}
.....}

Confident and assertive close – briefly reiterate your skills and how you are suitable for this particular role / sector. End by thanking for their time and assertively clarify that you are looking forward to discussing this further at the next stage i.e. Interview.

Yours sincerely
(or)
Yours faithfully

Signature NAME (Printed)

Example: Job Description and Tailored Cover Letter

This example of a graduate job advertisement details key responsibilities and the essential skills required. It also refers to the company values which explain the ethos of the company and how they wish to present themselves to their customers and stakeholders. On the next page you can see an example cover letter that has been tailored for this particular vacancy. The cover letter demonstrates enthusiasm and explains how the applicant is a good fit for both the role and the company.

Networks and Infrastructure Graduate Programme: ACME International

The world of computer platforms is transforming. More and more capability is moving to the edge, as smart devices become ubiquitous. Our challenge is to join this together and manage it in a way that delivers business outcome centric platforms. That's why we'll need you to help us to develop a range of platform solutions, from cloud service to dedicated private infrastructures, to integrating components in the internet of things.

Key responsibilities

- Ensuring seamless integration and operations in hybrid environments.
- Forming vital links between information and operational technology.
- Managing product upgrades, safeguarding infrastructures, introducing innovative new tools, Building servers and network security protection from scratch.
- Supporting on integration and service management.

Why apply?

We'll provide you with on-going technical training aligned to your role, both on the job and via formal courses, allowing you to fast track your career. On top of this, as a vital member of a highly skilled and close-knit technical team, you'll develop essential transferable working skills. Including strategies to work well under pressure, organisation through effective prioritisation and strong communication skills. There is also an opportunity to move into team leader and management positions.

Essential skills

- Motivated to work as part of a team.
- Good communication skills, both written and verbal.
- Strong analytical and diagnostic skills.
- The ability to develop good relationships with customers.
- A strong interest in technology is a must.

Our Values:

At ACME International everything we do is underlined by our key values which are:

Team Work – collaboration is the key to our success, we support our staff to develop professionally so that our multi-functional teams have the expertise required for the challenges of tomorrow

Customer Focus – the customer is at the heart of everything we do

Quality – we pride ourselves on using innovation and creativity to ensure that our services are of the highest quality.

Trust – we aim to develop long-lasting customer relationships based on trust. We promise to ensure confidentiality and security of information and our employees can be relied upon to work to the highest professional standards.

1 Deacon Road
Glasgow
G1 1AB

XX/XX/2019

Recruitment Team
ACME UK Ltd
Business Headquarters
London
SW19 0CD

Dear Hiring Manager,

I expect to graduate from the University of Strathclyde with a 2:1 Honours degree in Computer Science in June 2019 and am writing to apply for the Networks and Infrastructure Graduate Programme with ACME International as advertised on Gradcracker.

The idea of being at the forefront of emerging technologies is very exciting and has fuelled my passion to study Computer Science. There are many global challenges for business, global economies and the individuals who live and work in them. Working to ensure that networks and infrastructure are secure, fit for purpose and able to develop at speed to meet changing demands of customers and stakeholders is a challenge that would give me immense satisfaction.

I enjoy working together with others and the multi-disciplinary team environment at ACME International strongly appeals to me. The opportunity to deliver effective network and infrastructure solutions to your clients will involve effective communication and problem solving skills, key strengths that I have developed throughout my degree and during my part-time job in a fast-paced retail environment. In addition, I am impressed by the global reach of your company and potential opportunities to work internationally to develop platform solutions and digital workspaces that will transform the way people around the world will work in the future.

I aim for continuous professional development to ensure that my work is of a high quality. In my spare time I stay informed of the latest technology developments through reading journals and articles and have developed new coding skills through completion of online training modules. In addition, I have demonstrated a positive, can-do approach to problem solving through taking part in a recent hackathon where we placed second overall in the competition.

Thank you for taking the time to read my application, I look forward to discussing my suitability for the role in more detail at interview,

Yours faithfully,

Sarah Pixel

Example: Speculative Cover Letter

Jane Smith
Flat 2/2
127 Main Street
Glasgow
G2 8XX

Mr John Doe
Head of HR
Generic Marketing Company
250 Main Street
Paisley
G48 8XX

Dear John Doe,

I am writing to enquire about the possibility of undertaking an internship with your company this Summer.

A hard working Marketing student at the University of Strathclyde, I am greatly interested in gaining experience in Digital Marketing or Social Media Marketing to allow me to further develop practical experience in my field of study. I am particularly interested in your company because of the brilliant marketing campaign you did for the Lagoon Leisure Centre last year. I thought the combination of dry humour and fun outlook, mixing traditional media with an effective social media campaign was both innovative and executed to an extremely high standard, and I would be excited to learn from your team.

As you can see from my CV, I have previously delivered social media campaigns to promote my blog 'Blog Title', and for the Dr Who Society at Strathclyde. The campaign for my blog increased traffic from unique users by over 300% and attendance at Society events increased by 20%. From this I learned valuable lessons about effective content writing and search engine optimisation, as well as developing my creative and problem solving skills.

Through my degree I have gained a grounding in Marketing theory and an understanding of the broader business context. I have especially enjoyed the classes that focussed on market research and how this can be used to inform a marketing plan. Through group projects I have developed my team working and communication skills and balancing my studies with my volunteering and work responsibilities demonstrates my excellent organisational and time management skills.

From my broader work experience, detailed in my CV, I have developed a range of transferable skills including working under pressure, customer service, negotiation skills and the ability to hit the ground running. I believe these would be of great use in a fast paced marketing environment.

In summary, I think the combination of marketing experience and academic knowledge, along with my strong transferable skill set make me an excellent candidate. Thank you for taking the time to consider my application and I look forward to discussing it with you further.

Yours Sincerely,

Jane Smith

Cover Letter FAQs

Q. What is the point of a Cover Letter?

A. A cover letter introduces you and your CV to a potential employer and is an essential part of your application. It should tell them what your interest in the role and organisation are, and why you are a good fit for this specific position.

Q. How does a Cover Letter differ from a CV?

A. A CV is summary of your skills and experiences. A cover letter puts your CV in the context of the specific role you are applying to, introduces you and tells the story of why you are a good candidate for this position.

Q. How long should a Cover Letter be?

A. A cover letter should be one page of A4 in business letter format. See examples on pages 16-19.

Q. Why do I need to show that I am interested in the company? Surely they know that because I am applying.

A. Unfortunately, not all candidates research jobs and companies properly before they apply. Hiring managers want to know that you are genuinely interested in working at their organisation, taking this specific opportunity and understand what it will involve.

Q. What kind of things should I say about a company to show my interest and research?

A. Company projects, values or achievements that you find interesting or identify with.

Q. Doesn't the fact that I have spent time studying a relevant degree show that I am interested in the job?

A. No. It shows you have an interest in your subject, but you will not be interested in every job related to your degree. You need to tell an employer what it is about this role in particular that interests you.

Q. Does that mean I need to change my cover letter for each job I apply for?

A. Yes! Every job in every industry is unique. Sending the same cover letter in every application is something that companies can spot and will lead to your application being rejected.

Q. What Contact Information should I include in the Cover Letter?

A. Your Address should be in the top right hand corner. You may also want to include an email address or phone number here but it is not necessary as this information appears on your CV.

Further Resources

Careers Service website [CV and cover letter guidance](#)

Prospects advice on [Cover Letters](#)

[Grammarly](#)

Cover Letter Checklist

Remember that you **MUST** write your cover letter specifically for each opportunity that you apply for. Place a tick next to those you have completed.

Layout:

- ☐ Is it structured as a formal letter?
- ☐ Have you been concise and to the point? Remember to keep it to **one side of A4**.
- ☐ **Opening sentence** – Does it tell them why you are writing to them?
- ☐ **First paragraph** – Does it clearly say why you want this job and to work at this company? Are you convinced?
- ☐ **Middle Paragraphs** – Have you demonstrated how your skills and experiences match the specific requirements of the job description? Keep it brief and refer to key points on your CV.
- ☐ **Last paragraph** – Have you thanked them politely and included a confident conclusion?

Content:

- ☐ Is it addressed to a named person with the correct job title? If you do not have this information, phone/email the organisation to request it.
- ☐ Have you made sure you have got the company name and other key details right?
- ☐ Have you related your skills to the job advert and highlighted anything that makes you stand out?
- ☐ Have you shown genuine enthusiasm? Use positive language and avoid emphasising negative points.
- ☐ Is it clear and easy to read? Avoid overly long sentences, jargon and clichés
- ☐ Have you closed with the right signature? Writing to a named individual close with Yours sincerely or if beginning with Dear Hiring Manager, be sure to end with Yours faithfully.
- ☐ Have you proofread? - always double-check your spelling and grammar don't just rely on a computer spellcheck program.

Overall Effect:

- ☐ Have you used the same style, font and font size as on your CV?
- ☐ Have you saved it in an appropriate file type such as PDF. Is the file name appropriate?