

Applicant guide to:

Writing a CV and Cover Letter

Interview Techniques

Finding an Apprenticeship



How to write a CV and Covering Letter

What is a CV?

A CV is a document that is used to apply for jobs or introduce yourself to an employer as part of a speculative application – when you write to an employer who does not have an advertised job vacancy at the present time but who you might have one coming up in the future.

You will need to tailor your CV for each job that you apply for to show the employer that you have got the skills and experience they are looking for. Employers are busy people, so to ensure an easy read your CV must be neat, well presented and no more than two sides of A4.

CV Top Tips:

- Spell check it - Ensure you read through carefully to avoid any spelling or grammar mistakes, it can help to ask someone to double check it for you! Employers may often discount any CV's and Cover Letters regarding an error being found.
- Unique – Make the CV individual to you, use positive words that highlight your achievements and strengths, this can help you show the employer that you have something other candidates may not have.
- Length – No more than 2 pages of A4.
- Match up – Make sure your CV matches what the employers are looking for by using the job description for the role.
- Your address – To safeguard your personal information, if you are emailing your CV to lots of companies or uploading it online, it is safest not to include your home address.

Cover Letter

A cover Letter is used in response to a job you have seen advertised and want to apply for, it is your first chance to leave a positive impression on the employer. The Cover Letter is used to highlight the key points on your CV that relate to the experience you have that is relevant to the job role.

Speculative Letter

A speculative letter is used to approach an employer that you would like to work for even if they do not currently have any jobs advertised. A speculative letter that impresses an employer may mean your details are kept on file if any suitable job arises.



How to best present your skills

When applying for an Apprenticeship through CV, application form or interview you will be asked to showcase your skills in order to impress the employer to obtain the role. You also need to ensure these skills match with the skills required on the job description.

What skills do you have?

Communication Skills

Listening well
Speaking clearly
Using the telephone
Writing legibly
Explaining ideas
Presenting
Writing concisely
Translating
Negotiating
Persuading
Training or teaching

Practical Skills

Making things
Repairing or fixing
Using tools/machinery
Installing activities
Operating activities
First Aid
Constructing
Painting/plastering
Electrical work
Woodwork
Filing

Numeracy Skills

Budgeting
Handling Cash
Measuring
Estimating
Weighing
Calculating
Statistic

Skills and Qualities

Honesty
Reliability
Politeness
Being positive
Timekeeping
Using Initiative
Perseverance
Responsibility
Ambitious
Sense of humour
Organised

Artistic/Creative Skills

Drawing, illustrating
Painting, sculpture
Photography
Creative Writing
Web design
Being original
Display
Marketing
Composing
Inventing
Choreography or dance
Developing ideas
Acting, singing
Designing
Food Preparation

Thinking Skills

Planning
Examining
Questioning
Preparing
Researching
Inspecting
Innovating
Editing
Enquiring
Exploring
Being logical

People Skills

Helping people
Caring for others
Understanding
Customer care
Networking
Teamwork
Leadership
Motivating
Liaising
Mentoring
Counselling
Empathising
Comforting
Co-operation
Consideration
Challenging

Business/IT Skills

Programming
Web design
Word processing/typing
Accounting
Emailing
Using specialist software
Scanning
Using Microsoft Office
Using databases
Using CRM programmes

Useful Words

Below you will find a list of useful words that will make an impact on your CV, Cover Letter and interviews. Using these words will help you avoid using 'Able to', 'knowledge of' or 'responsible for'.

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| - Accomplished | - Expanded | - Ordered |
| - Achieved | - Facilitated | - Performed |
| - Administered | - Formulated | - Processed |
| - Advised | - Founded | - Promoted |
| - Analysed | - Generated | - Redesigned |
| - Approved | - Guided | - Reduced |
| - Arranged | - Identified | - Reorganised |
| - Assessed | - Implemented | - Represented |
| - Attained | - Improved | - Resolved |
| - Categorised | - Improvised | - Reviewed |
| - Compiled | - Increased | - Revised |
| - Conducted | - Initiated | - Scheduled |
| - Coordinated | - Inspired | - Sold |
| - Created | - Instigated | - Solved |
| - Delivered | - Interacted | - Specified |
| - Demonstrated | - Interpreted | - Started |
| - Developed | - Introduced | - Strengthened |
| - Devised | - Launched | - Structured |
| - Directed | - Logged | - Supervised |
| - Distributed | - Maintained | - Supplied |
| - Documented | - Managed | - Tested |
| - Encouraged | - Modernised | - Uncovered |
| - Engineered | - Monitored | - Updated |
| - Ensured | - Observed | - Utilised |
| - Established | - Obtained | - Widened |
| - Evaluated | - Operated | - Won |



Getting started with your CV

Personal Details

The first step in writing your CV is making sure you have the relevant contact information. Make sure your email address is a professional one, you do not need to include your date of birth. To safeguard your personal information, if you are emailing your CV to lots of companies or uploading it online, it is safest not to include your home address.

Name:	
Address:	
Tel:	
Email:	

Personal Profile

A short summary about you, your strengths, qualities and career aspirations in about 4 sentences.

Personal Profile:

Skills and Achievements

What have you got to offer? How do you match what the employer is looking for in the job description? Include the skills you have that relate to the types of jobs you are seeking.

Skills and Achievements:

Education

In this section you are required to list the qualifications you have gained from the schools, colleges or university you attended. You can also list expected qualifications and predicted grades but be sure to update when they have been achieved.

School or College Name:		
Address and Postcode:		
Date Started:		
Date Left:		
Skills and Achievements:	Grade:	Date Achieved:

Employment and work experience

Employer's name, job role, dates and duties carried out in the role.

Company Name:	
Address and Postcode:	
Date Started:	
Date left:	
Duties:	

Company Name:	
Address and Postcode:	
Date Started:	
Date Left:	
Duties:	

Additional Information

Mention any activities you do on a regular basis. Include any other information in support of your application.

Additional Information:

References

You will need to ask 2 people who know you well that would be happy to provide you with a reference. One should be your teacher/tutor and the other could be a past employer or another responsible adult. Remember to get their permission before you put them down as a referee.

Name:	
Address and Postcode:	
Contact Tel:	
Email:	

Name:	
Address and Postcode:	
Contact Tel:	
Email:	

CV and Cover Letter Example

CV Example

Jack Smith

1, The Road, Poshland, Peterborough, PE1 4DZ

01234 567891

astarstudent@hotmail.com

Personal Profile

A hard-working school student with excellent communication skills and an ability to work as part of a busy team developed in my role as a catering assistant. Working part time helped to improve my confidence and customer service skills. My subjects at school have taught me the importance of meeting deadlines, being punctual and provided an insight into how business organisations operate to be successful. Reliable, trustworthy and positive; seeking a part time job in a retail sales position to use my people skills to meet customers' needs and expectations.

Key Skills and Achievements

- Successfully completed the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award, which included 12 months of volunteering as a Befriender with Age UK, visiting people who had little social contact with others.
- Part of the Young Enterprise group run through my Business class at school, being a representative for them along with my fellow students.
- Completed the Peterborough Half Marathon in October 2016, setting myself this goal to improve my personal fitness and am now training for a triathlon.

Education

Ken Stimpson Community School (September 2018 - present)

- Business Studies
- English
- Maths

Ken Stimpson Community School (September 2013 – June 2018)

- GCSES – English (B) Maths (A) Science (C) Geography (C) PE (B)

Employment and Work Experience

Catering Assistant, Stokehampton Café, Cathedral Road, Peterborough (August 2017 – August 2018)

My duties involved the following:

- Welcoming customers, taking their orders and serving food and drinks.
- Operating the till, handling cash and card payments in a friendly and effective manner.
- Laying the tables and cleaning all working surfaces and floors.
- Preparing food especially prior to opening hours.

Volunteer Youth Worker, Youth Work Project, Youth Club, Peterborough (September 2016 – July 2017)

My duties involved the following:

- Engaged with small groups of young people to encourage positive behaviour in the community. Organised games and activities to promote respect and teamwork.
- Worked as part of a small team of volunteers alongside permanent staff to provide services and support to young people.

Additional Information

In my spare time I keep fit by running, cycling and swimming regularly each week. I also have a keen interest in creating and making my own music using computer programmes.

References

Available upon request.

Preparing for the Interview

Before the Interview

Interviews require research and planning, generally it is recommended that you do the following when preparing for an interview:

- Anticipate potential questions and prepare answers accordingly.
- Consider how you'll explain problematic aspects of your CV i.e. leaving an employer or limited skills, interests and experiences the employer is looking for.
- Prepare questions to ask the interviewer.
- Read the organisations website, social media, and any key literature (e.g. business plan, financial reports and corporate social responsibility strategy) be prepared to share your views and ideas.
- Review your CV and application form.
- Plan your outfit the night before and get plenty of sleep.
- Plan your route to arrive 10 minutes before.
- On the day eat a good, healthy breakfast.

What to take

Your interview invitation should detail everything that you need, but generally you should take:

- Details of the person you are asking for upon arrival.
- Exam certificates, examples of your work and any further evidence of your past successes.
- Pen and notepad
- Photo ID (e.g. passport or driving licence)
- The job description and person specification

Dressing for an Interview

First impression's count in interviews, it may not be fair but its an unavoidable fact that this counts in any interview situation. Looking credible and confident can suggest you are the right person for the job. The key to dressing for an interview is to dress appropriately for the company which you are applying to and keep things simple. Do your homework and see how the company presents itself on a daily basis, for instance a suit may be totally inappropriate for a laid- back design agency, but for a solicitor's office it is a must.

Remember the do's and don'ts

Do

- Test drive an outfit to ensure it fits well and makes you feel confident.
- Dress in layers so you can be comfortable regardless of the temperature.
- Pay attention to details and check how you look from head to toe before leaving for the interview to make sure everything – including your hair, nails and shoes is presentable.
- Choose simple jewellery and be subtle with makeup.

Don't

- Assume you can 'dress down' even if you know the company has a very casual atmosphere.
- Wear anything uncomfortable, such as an itchy fabric. Interviews can take a long time.
- Show up sporting wrinkled clothes or unkempt hair.
- Overdo your use of perfume or cologne.

Tackling those awkward questions

Tell me about yourself...

This is a common opening question for most interviews partly because interviewers want to know a bit more about you but also, they want to see how you react when put on the spot. This is where you have the control and should therefore take full advantage of this. Keep your answers to the point and on topic that show you in a good light.

Why is there a gap in your work history?

Where ever possible, be honest. If it was due to personal reasons then say that. Otherwise say something along the lines of 'taking a break whilst looking for a new career direction' this should be enough to move the interview along.

Why do you want this job?

Companies want to hire candidates that are passionate about the job, therefore you should have a good answer as to why you want the position. Firstly, identify some key factors that make the role a great fit for you and then say why you like the company.

Why should we hire you?

However forward or intimidating this question may seem it is a good way for you to sell yourself and your skills to the hiring manager. Your answer should cover three things, you can not only do the work, you can deliver great results and you will fit in with the team and culture.

What are your greatest strengths?

When it comes to answering this question make sure you are sharing your true strengths and not those you think the interviewer may want to hear. Choose strengths that are most targeted to this particular role followed by an example to back up your response. This way you can prove these strengths whilst showing the employer that you're the right candidate.

What do you consider to be your weakness?

With this question your interviewer is trying to identify major red flags to gauge your self-awareness and honesty. Try and balance the answer by thinking of things you struggle with but you're working on to improve for example "I am not strong at public speaking so I volunteer to run meetings to help me feel more comfortable when addressing a crowd."

What are your salary requirements?

The key to this question is researching what you should be paid. It is worth remembering that most jobs have a salary range and so it is best to stay within that range.

Finding an Apprenticeship

An apprenticeship is a way for you to learn while you earn, you can do this through gaining valuable work experience with the outcome of a recognised qualification upon completion within the industry you wish to work for. Apprenticeships require you to be in paid employment for a minimum of 30 hours work per week and no more than 40, whilst also attending college to complete your qualification. The minimum age for an Apprenticeship is 16 with no maximum age, you will undertake a course which can vary between a minimum of 13 months up to 4 years. The minimum wage an employer can pay you is £3.90 (from April 1st 2019), however, various employers will pay more for Apprentices. Following your apprenticeship, it could lead to a permanent position within the company.

There are two ways for you to find an apprenticeship:

- 1) Find an employer of your own who is willing to take you on and support you as you complete your apprenticeship.
- 2) Apply directly online from a variety of available Apprenticeships found on www.peterborough.ac.uk/apprenticeships, www.theskillservice.co.uk and www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship.

How to apply?

Own Employer

If you manage to find your own employer who is willing to take you on, then you can apply for an apprenticeship course online or request for one to be sent directly to you via email from the employer. Once you are in possession of an application form, it is required to be completed by yourself and your employer and returned to the apprenticeship provider i.e. college.

Online vacancies

When applying online for a vacancy on www.findanapprenticeship.gov.uk you will be able to create an online profile yourself, this can include uploading your CV and Cover Letter providing any additional information about yourself which may be relevant for the role you apply for and selecting your interests of what industries you'd like to work within. Once completed you will be able to apply for any positions which you feel may be suitable for you.

What's next?

Once you have submitted your application, if you meet the criteria for the role, you will be invited in to the college you'll be doing your apprenticeship through for a pre-interview and Maths and English assessment. Successful candidates will have their CVs and Cover Letters forwarded to the employers, who will then decide who they wish to interview which will allow them to determine who will be successful for the position. If you are unsuccessful for the role, do not let this put you off as there are always new vacancies added on a regular basis which you can apply for.

Other Information

Useful Links

Find an Apprenticeship: www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship

Update your CV: bit.ly/2ElmFxU

Cover Letter: bit.ly/2OBYWV8

Interview Tips: <https://www.ucas.com>

Study Tips: <http://bit.ly/2Fh4Dnh>

Apprenticeship Advice: <https://www.ratemyapprenticeship.co.uk>

Apprenticeship Blog: <https://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk>



Created by KSCS IT Services

