

YOUR GUIDE TO CREATING A SUCCESSFUL CV



WHAT'S INSIDE?

Welcome to our CV guide. Whether you're writing your first CV or updating an old version, here you'll find all the tips and advice you need to ensure it gets noticed by a recruiter who can put you forward for your desired roles.

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01

WHAT TO THINK
ABOUT **BEFORE**
YOU BEGIN



WHAT TO THINK ABOUT **BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

It can be tempting to dive straight into writing your CV to kick off your job search.

But, if you want to create a document which is going to deliver the results you're looking for, it's important that you first take some time to think about what you really want in your next move.

So, before going any further, ask yourself these questions:

- 1** ► **WHY ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A NEW ROLE?**
- 2** ► **WHAT SALARY AND BENEFITS PACKAGE ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?**
- 3** ► **WHICH ROLE WOULD BE A SENSIBLE STEP TOWARDS YOUR LONG-TERM CAREER GOALS?**
- 4** ► **WHICH TECHNICAL AND SOFT SKILLS ARE YOU LOOKING TO DEVELOP?**
- 5** ► **WHAT KIND OF CULTURE AND WORK ENVIRONMENT WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN?**
- 6** ► **WHAT ARE YOUR DEAL-BREAKERS?**
- 7** ► **WHAT ARE YOU PREPARED TO BE MORE FLEXIBLE ABOUT?**

Once you're clear on exactly what you're looking for, search for similar job descriptions online. Review them and list the most commonly occurring keywords and skills found in the job descriptions - you can incorporate these words into your CV later.

02

DECIDE THE
STRUCTURE
OF YOUR CV



DECIDE THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR CV

Now you’re ready to start creating your CV: one that both reflects you as a professional and the type of role you are suitable for. First, plot out the structure of your CV in a Word document:

1. NAME, ADDRESS AND CONTACT DETAILS

List the phone number and the professional email address you use most often. You should also add links to professional online profiles, provided these are up to date and synced with the details on your CV.

2. PERSONAL STATEMENT

Summarise your career story in a few sentences, highlighting why your skills are a good match and what you feel you can offer to the employer.

3. EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Provide details of your work history, including any paid work, plus any relevant volunteer or work experience placements.

4. ACHIEVEMENTS

Give a list of your relevant achievements which clearly highlight your suitability for the roles you are applying for.

5. SKILLS SUMMARY

Add a brief bulleted list of your skills, focusing on those which are most relevant to the roles you are interested in.

6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

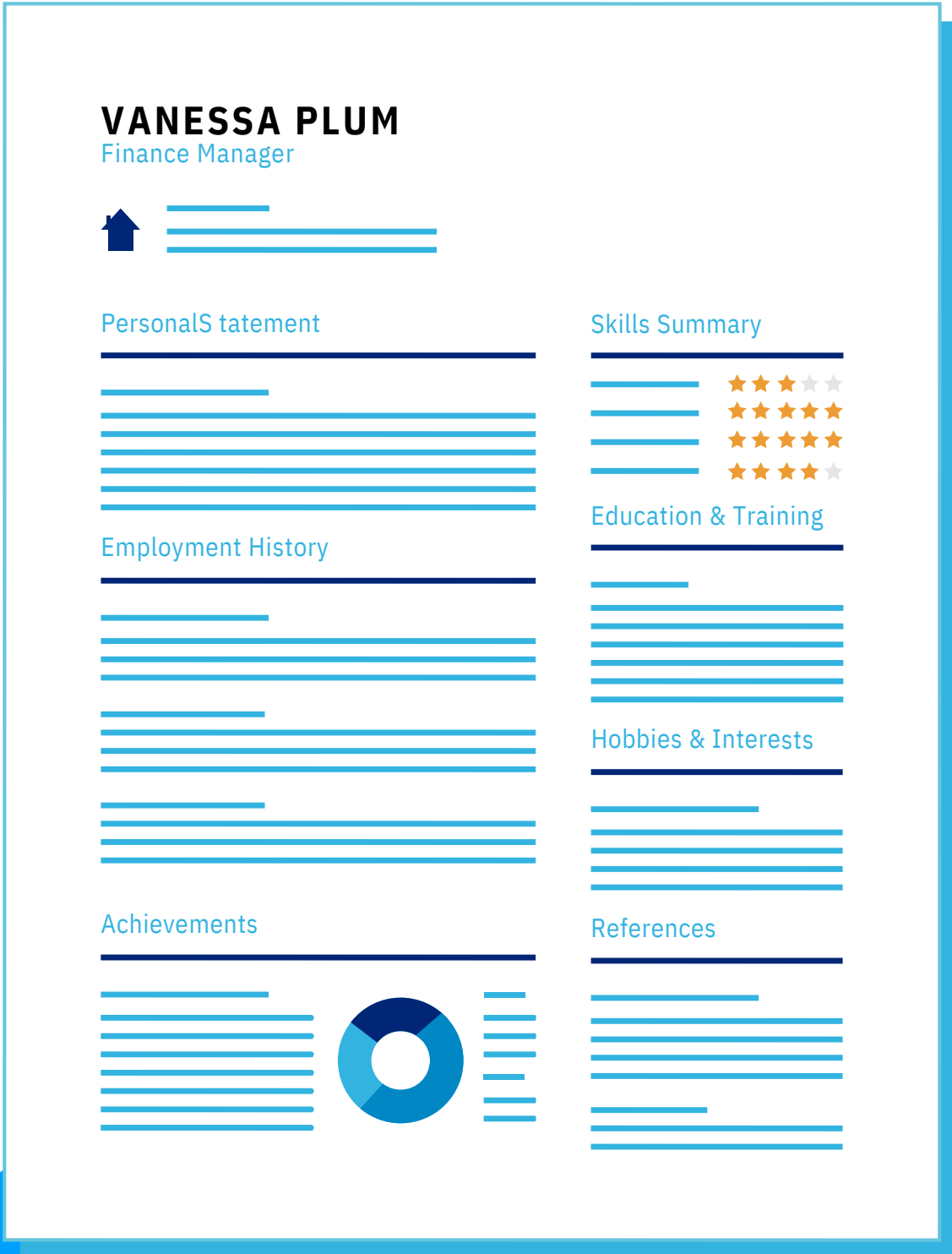
Keep this relevant and remember to include any training courses which relate to the jobs you are applying for.

7. HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

Keep this very brief, and if possible, use the space to show how your personality is suited to the roles you are interested in.

8. REFERENCES

Actual references are rarely included on CVs; it is usually fine to simply write ‘References are available on request’.



03

WRITE YOUR
**PERSONAL
STATEMENT**



WRITE YOUR **PERSONAL STATEMENT**

Your personal statement should be added directly underneath your contact details. Remember, this is the first thing a recruiter or hiring manager will read on your CV, so you will need to impress.

Here's how to ensure yours does:



1. INTRODUCE YOURSELF

Tell the reader who you are and what level of experience you have.

"I'm a hands-on Finance Manager with strong stakeholder engagement skills and a results-driven attitude."



2. LIST YOUR SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

Outline your key skills and evidence the achievements which set you apart from the competition.

"With six years' industry experience, I'm able to increase visibility within a business, drive efficiencies and implement cost saving measures that increase profits and provide a greater return on investment."



3. EXPLAIN YOUR AMBITIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Finish by outlining what you are looking to achieve next in your career, ensuring it links to the role in question. This will instantly indicate to the hiring manager that you should be shortlisted for an interview.

"I would now like to develop my skills in a global business environment, where I can progress my career within financial management."

DOS AND DON'TS TO REMEMBER

- DO** include relevant action verbs to evidence achievements
- DO** use keywords from the job description where relevant
- DO** keep your personal statement to around 100-150 words
- DO** tailor your personal statement to each role you apply for
- DON'T** switch between the first and third person
(e.g. I have excellent interpersonal skills/Vanessa has excellent interpersonal skills)

04

PLOT OUT YOUR EMPLOYMENT HISTORY



PLOT OUT YOUR **EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

Now, it's time to plot out your employment history, starting with your most recent role. Remember to:

1. FORMAT EACH JOB IN THE FOLLOWING ORDER:

- Job title
- Company (and location)
- Dates of employment
- Key responsibilities and achievements

2. LIST YOUR SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

If you were unemployed for a period of time, explain how you made use of this time; whether it was job searching or travelling. Whatever your reasons, be as transparent as possible. Within each entry of your employment history, focus on the value you added, not what your duties were. If any of your roles were temporary, say so.

3. RESEARCH KEYWORDS

Identify keywords for the job vacancy you are applying for and use these where relevant in your role descriptions.

4. PROVIDE ADDED DETAIL

Be sure to add more detail to previous roles that are most directly linked to the role that you're applying for.

EXAMPLE:

FINANCE MANAGER [INSERT COMPANY NAME] JULY 2019 – JANUARY 2024

- Management of monthly management accounts and P&L
- Planning and managing budgets
 - Preparation of balance sheet schedules
 - Analysis of key accounts and expenses
- Supporting in year-end audit

VANESSA PLUM
Finance Manager

Personal Statement

Skills Summary

Employment History

Education & Training

Hobbies & Interests

Achievements

References

05

BRING YOUR
ACHIEVEMENTS
TO LIFE



BRING YOUR **ACHIEVEMENTS TO LIFE**

As you write your employment history, make sure you use action verbs to communicate your successes and evidence your achievements.

EXAMPLES OF ACTION VERBS:

CREATIVE SKILLS



Built, crafted, devised, implemented, pioneered, initiated, established

EFFICIENCY



Enhanced, advanced, capitalised, maximised, leveraged, improved

LEADERSHIP



Headed, coordinated, executed, managed, operated, organised

IMPROVEMENTS MADE



Refined, remodelled, strengthened, upgraded, transformed

MANAGEMENT SKILLS



Guided, fostered, motivated, recruited, enabled, united

CONTRIBUTIONS



Reduced, decreased, consolidated, saved, yielded, increased

ACHIEVEMENTS



Awarded, exceeded, outperformed, earned, surpassed, granted

ACTION VERBS IN ACTION:

COMMUNICATION SKILLS



‘Wrote’, ‘published’, ‘edited’ or ‘swayed’

ORGANISATION SKILLS



‘Facilitated’, ‘programmed’, ‘arranged’
‘coordinated’ or ‘allocated’

TARGETS MET



‘Reached’, ‘surpassed’ or ‘accomplished’

06

REPLACE
ANY CLICHÉS



REPLACE **ANY CLICHÉS**

Action verbs may emphasise your skills, but clichés will dilute them. Below is a list of the most common clichés to avoid:

“WORKS WELL INDEPENDENTLY”

If working independently is a genuine strength of yours, then give an example of a time you showcased this strength and the results. For instance, try “I independently developed a new strategy that increased customer engagement by X percent.”

“A GREAT TEAM PLAYER”

Team spiritedness is an important trait to have, but when every candidate claims to be “a great team player”, this CV cliché can become a little meaningless. Stand out from the competition by providing evidence that you can work well with colleagues to reach a common goal. For instance, “I worked with our international and local marketing teams to implement a global rebrand across 12 countries.”

“A FAST LEARNER”

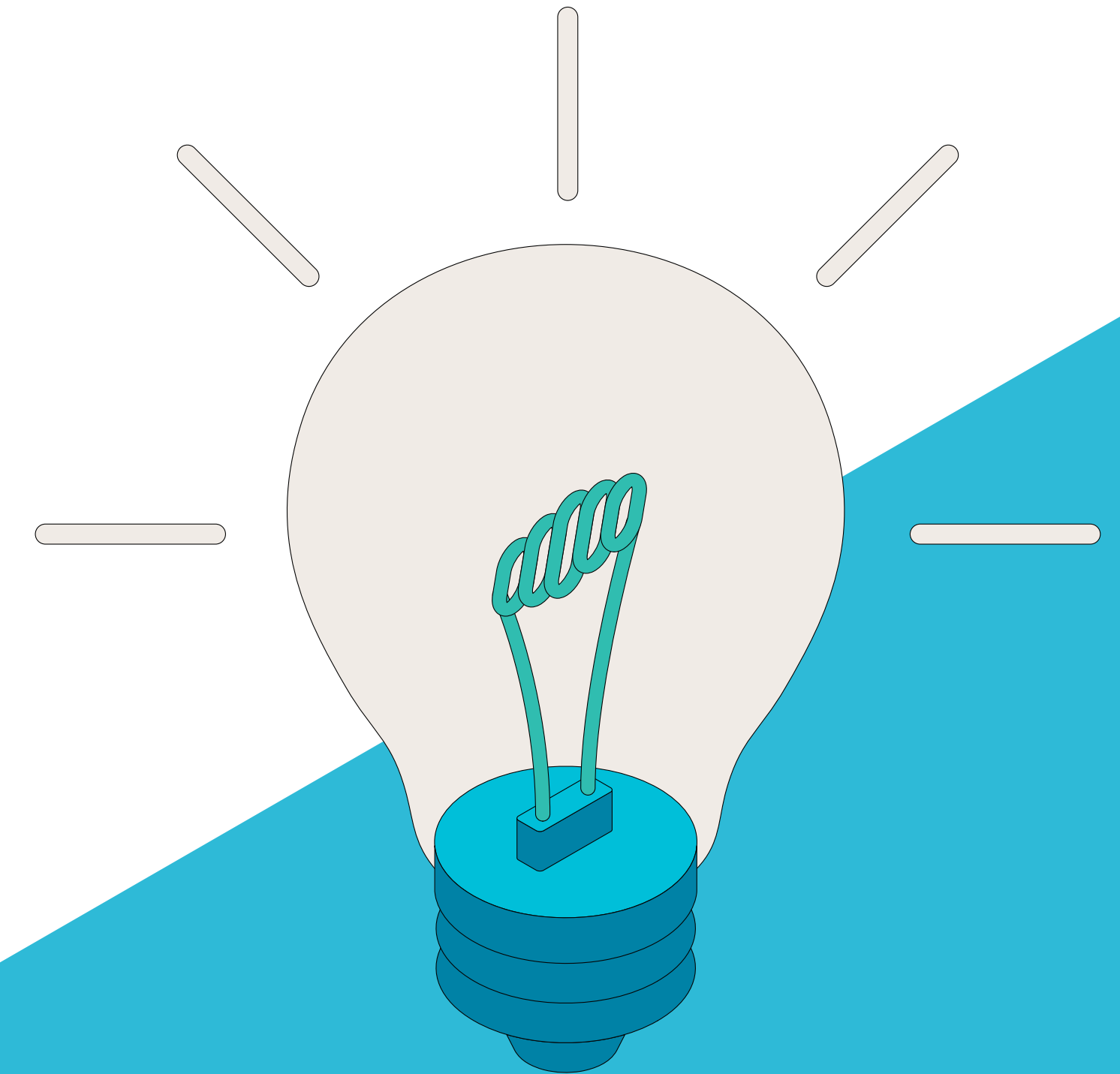
If you really want to demonstrate your aptitude, you need to put your money where your mouth is. Describe a time you grasped a new concept quickly.

“GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS”

Be more specific by giving examples of situations in which your communication skills have really shone through, such as a presentation or sales pitch you gave which won a new client for your business.

“RESULTS DRIVEN”

Instead of simply stating you are results driven, you should support this claim with facts. Ensure that you give quantifiable evidence of your results, such as “I increased sales by 25%.”



07

SHOWCASE
YOUR
SKILLS



SHOWCASE YOUR SKILLS

Next, it's time to draft your skills summary - a bulleted list of your skills which relate to the role you are applying for. These skills can also be referenced in your personal statement and employment history sections of your CV and should include the keywords that you have picked out from the job description.

Remember to include:



SOFT SKILLS

These are your personal attributes that allow you to work well with others and achieve your goals. For example:

- Communication
- Decision making
- Time management
- Conflict resolution
- Problem solving
- Stakeholder engagement
- Business acumen



TECHNICAL SKILLS

These are the skills which you have gained throughout your professional career, which are either required or desirable for this role. For instance:

- Microsoft Office (Excel, PowerPoint, Word, Outlook)
- IFRS
- PowerBI
- SAP
- Any languages spoken

If you are stuck, think about the transferable skills you may have learnt in previous roles or whilst you were studying. For instance, you may have honed your listening skills at university. Also, think about when you have taken it upon yourself to upskill in any way - for example, you might have taught yourself how to use WordPress when writing your personal blog.

08

ENSURE YOUR
CV IS ERROR-FREE



ENSURE YOUR CV IS ERROR-FREE

You've come this far and worked so hard to craft the perfect CV. Don't undersell yourself by forgetting to proofread properly. Here are the most common CV errors to look out for:

1. SPELLING MISTAKES AND GRAMMATICAL ERRORS

- Use the spell-checking software on your computer (ensure it is set to the correct language)
- Print off your CV and/or cover letter - you will find it easier to pick up on mistakes
- Read your CV aloud - again, this will highlight any glaring errors to you
- Ask a friend or relative to proofread the documents for you
- Make use of free online software such as [Grammarly](#), [Slick Write](#) or [Paper Rater](#) to help you spot any grammatical errors

2. A LACK OF CONSISTENCY

- Ensure you are consistent in your use of abbreviations and capitalisations
- Consistently use the same simple font and font size throughout your application – the same goes for bold and italicised copy
- Don't switch from writing in the first person to the third person, and vice versa
- Similarly, ensure you maintain a professional tone throughout
- Ensure the content aligns with your profile on professional platforms such as LinkedIn

3. FORMATTING ISSUES

- Keep it simple – avoid the temptation to get carried away using backgrounds, borders or clipart
- If using Word, zoom out of the document to get a clearer view of formatting
- Print the documents out to quickly flag formatting errors – this way, you will soon see if something doesn't look quite right
- If your CV is more than one page, ensure your page transitions are smooth. For instance, don't start a sentence at the bottom of the page that finishes at the top of the next
- Once you are happy with the formatting, try converting the document into PDF, which should ensure the formatting stays as you intended it
- Check your CV reads well on desktop, mobile and tablet devices
- When uploading your CV to your LinkedIn profile, ensure all formatting is correct



You can read more advice on how to avoid errors on your CV [here](#).

09

TAILOR YOUR
CV TO THE ROLE



TAILOR YOUR CV TO THE ROLE

When you write your CV, you should create a 'generic' version. This should include everything that a recruiter or hiring manager would be interested in, from your complete employment history to your skills and achievements.

However, **do not** send this as part of an application.

Instead, take this generic CV as your starting point and adapt it for each role that you apply for. Taking the time and effort at this stage of the process will pay huge dividends.

1. LOOK AT THE JOB DESCRIPTION

Highlight the keywords and phrases in the job description and sort them by category: experience, technical skills and soft skills. Copy these onto another page so you're ready to incorporate them into your CV.

Remember that hiring managers and recruiters will use keywords when searching for candidates, so it's important that yours are relevant and reflect you accurately.

2. RESEARCH THE COMPANY

Learn what you can about the employer from their website, as well as any recent news stories and their social media (LinkedIn is a great place to start). Think about what would be relevant to your role.

ROLE - SENIOR FINANCIAL ANALYST

Your new role

This is a broad and varied role with key duties and responsibilities including:

- Partnering with senior leaders to support business plans and strategic direction of divisions
- Preparation of forecasts and progress vs plan
- Supporting the annual budgeting process
- Performance analysis and support on planning
- analysis
- KPI development

What you'll need to succeed

You will need to be a qualified accountant with experience within a legal or professional services environment. You will need strong budgeting, forecasting and analysis skills with a strong desire to learn, progress and develop in your role. You will need to be a strong communicator, orders.

TAILOR YOUR CV TO THE ROLE

Next, it's time to use this information to tailor your CV:

3. REWRITE YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Explain why you don't just want to work in this specific industry or field, but for the hiring company in particular. Portray yourself as someone with the qualities and experience sought in the job description.

4. TWEAK YOUR WORK HISTORY AND SKILLS

To demonstrate your suitability for the role to which you're applying, adapt the content of your CV by highlighting the responsibilities and skills mentioned in the job description. Consider any duties in past roles that aren't so relevant for this opportunity, then remove them or cut them down to keep this application on topic.

Please note: tailoring the content of your CV does not mean adding the skills the company is looking for to your resume, but not having them really. Your job here is to identify and highlight the qualities you have and are important to the company, or to unify your terminology with the company's terminology.



10

ADD YOUR
COVER LETTER



ADD YOUR COVER LETTER

A cover letter isn't part of your CV per se. However, submitting one to complement your CV can boost your chances of standing out to the recruiter or hiring manager.

Here are some tips on drafting one:



DO

1. RESEARCH BEFORE YOU START WRITING

You should have done this when creating your CV, but you'll have additional opportunities here to make reference to the hiring company's industry, culture and values.

2. PERSONALISE IT

Don't copy and paste your cover letter for every application with a few minor adjustments. It's worth taking the time to write one from scratch, since the reader will know when you've just edited a few words of the same cover letter that you send to everyone.

3. START WITH A STRONG INTRO TO HOOK THE READER IN

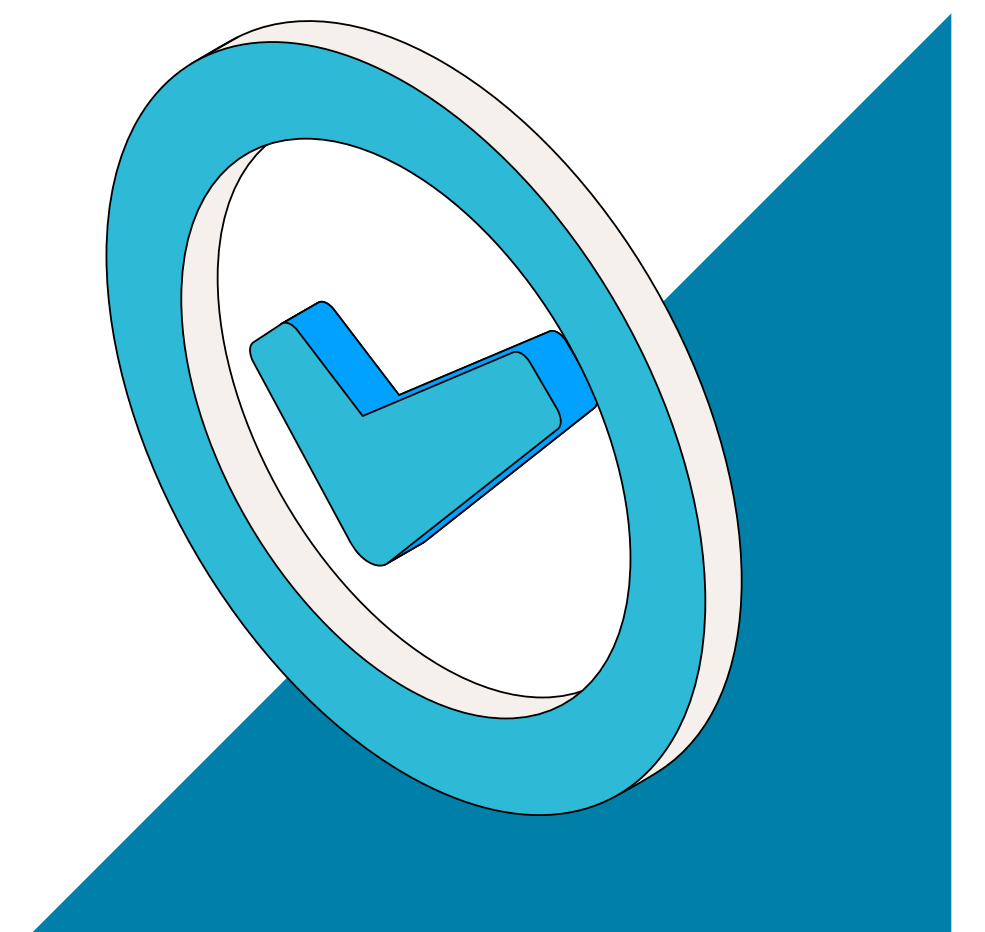
The first sentence will either grab the reader's attention or lose it. Instantly tell your story and communicate how you're the solution to the hiring manager's problems, instead of the generic "I'm applying for the role of XXX."

4. MENTION WHETHER YOU'VE COME ACROSS THIS OPPORTUNITY VIA A FRIEND OR CONNECTION WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

It could be that it was suggested to you because they thought you were a good fit for the role, or you crossed paths as an intern or an employee at one of the company's suppliers or competitors?

5. WHERE POSSIBLE, SUBMIT YOUR COVER LETTER AND CV IN THE SAME DOCUMENT

This will help to avoid your cover letter being lost if the employer uses an automated online applicant tracking system.



ADD YOUR COVER LETTER



Find out more do's and don'ts, as well as an example of a strong cover letter, [here](#).

DON'T

1. USE WORDART OR UNUSUAL FONTS

To maintain consistency in your application, it's a good idea to use the same font as on your CV. Use a standard professional font like Arial, which is readable and clean. In fact, the automated scanning systems used by applicant tracking systems can sometimes struggle with more unusual fonts.

2. REPEAT WHAT YOU'VE SAID ON YOUR CV

Yes, there will be some overlap between your cover letter and your CV. However, the purpose of this letter is to complement what the CV already tells the reader, thereby enhancing your story. What is it about your hobbies, interests and background that made you especially interested in this position?

3. GO OVERBOARD WITH THE FLATTERY

This could risk you coming across as insecure, insincere or sycophantic. Professionalism, maturity and authenticity are vital qualities to communicate from the beginning of your relationship with the employer.

4. DRONE ON

Keep your cover letter succinct, the ideal length is approximately 1/3 of A4 page size. The reader is interested in facts rather, than quirkiness or clichés.

5. OVERLOOK THE DETAILS

Have you taken the time to find out the name of the recipient so that you can address them personally? What about confirming your availability towards the end of the letter, and signing off appropriately?



FURTHER JOB SEARCH ADVICE

At Hays, we are your lifelong career partner, so can support you throughout each stage of your job search.

YOU MAY FIND THE BELOW ADVICE USEFUL:

- [Step-by-step interview guide](#)
- [8 tricky interview questions](#)
- [Accepting a job offer](#)
- [Starting a new job](#)
- [Get in touch with your local Hays team](#)

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