



# Your CV Roadmap

TARGETED CV  
What is a CV?  
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Checklist  
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Top Tips

For further information check our website  
[careerweb.leeds.ac.uk](http://careerweb.leeds.ac.uk)

# What is a CV?

Your CV (curriculum vitae) is your **marketing** tool. It is often your only chance to convince a prospective employer that you have the skills, experience and aptitudes that make you a strong candidate for their job or other opportunity, such as work experience or internship.

A CV is a flexible record of your education, experience, skills and strengths and the layout of your CV will change for different applications and throughout your life.

## What makes a good CV?

A good CV cannot exist in isolation, but only in so far as it demonstrates your suitability for the role for which you are applying. There are no magic formulas to putting together a first-class CV; the only hard and fast rule is that it must be targeted to each different opportunity for which you are applying.

You should dedicate more space to your most relevant selling points for that particular application, as well as placing these points earlier in your CV, and less space to less relevant factors.

Employers may only spend a few seconds skim-reading CVs in the first sift. It is therefore essential that you present yourself in such a way that enables them to see in those few seconds that you match their criteria. Using formatting techniques such as bold, bullet points, underlining and so on can help you do this effectively (but be selective in which techniques you use – don't overload!)

## When should I use a CV?

- When one is specifically requested
- If it says 'apply in writing' or if no other application method is specified
- When approaching an employer on a speculative basis

## CV or application form?

These days, many employers will require you to complete an application form, either instead of, or as well as, submitting a CV.

An application form enables employers to quickly compare applicants across a range of pre-specified criteria using the same format.

With a CV, you have more flexibility to draw their attention to your most relevant selling points for that application.

## How do I build my CV?

**There is no 'one best way' to construct a CV;** it is your document and can be structured as you wish within the basic framework outlined in this booklet.

A number of good examples are on our website ([www.careerweb.leeds.ac.uk](http://www.careerweb.leeds.ac.uk)). These examples are pointers to ways you might develop your own CV.

By using the guidelines in this booklet you will gain an understanding of the recruitment process and be well prepared to use your own judgement & discretion on how to present yourself most effectively to future employers.

The Q&A section will throw light on some common tricky areas. However, remember if you have specific questions you can call at the daily Careers Centre drop-in service to speak to the advisers.

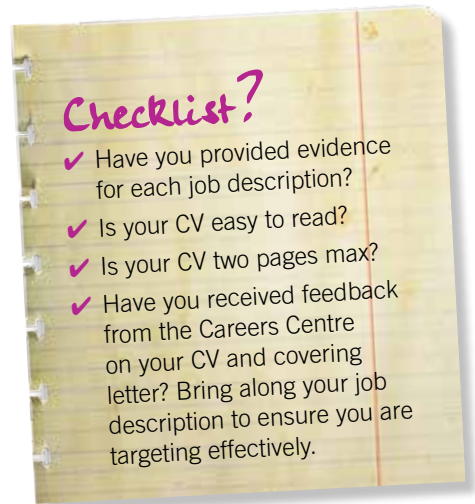
## Where do I start?

A CV is not a list of everything that you have done – it is a targeted marketing document.

1. Who are you targeting? Research each employer/company and target your CV to them. When they scan your CV for 30 seconds, you need the skills and experience relevant to that employer to stand out.
2. Think about your skills/best selling points – make it clear what you can offer the company. Look at the skills/attributes that they require (from job advert/person specification/ your research). The more you can show that you possess the skills required, the more likely you are to be called for an interview.
3. For each job requirement think about what you learnt from your past experiences and your achievements in each position. EG 'Handled 200 calls each week' and be prepared to talk about them at interview. Make sure you provide evidence for each requirement.
4. Decide on the sections you need in your CV, then consider the order that is most relevant for the job/employer.
5. Make sure that there are no spelling and grammatical mistakes. Check, check and check again.
6. Use bullet points.
7. Write a covering letter to accompany your CV.

## What to include

1. Your name and all contact details (ensure your email address sounds professional!)
2. Educational record – but no need to list every GCSE.
3. Relevant skills, knowledge.
4. Work experience / job history.
5. Hobbies/leisure (don't always need to include but can help you stand out – keep it brief.
6. Referees.



For further information check our website  
[careerweb.leeds.ac.uk](http://careerweb.leeds.ac.uk)

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# COVERING LETTER

Your address

Postcode

Write to a named individual

Their address

Postcode

Date

Dear Named Individual

**Paragraph 1 – Introduction – Who you are and why you are writing. Indicate your present situation.** The opening paragraph should let the reader know who you are and why you are writing to them. If you are writing to apply for a position with their company/organisation, make clear which position you are applying for and where you saw the advertisement. Give the title and date of the publication that the vacancy was advertised in. For speculative letters, outline and be specific about the kind of work you are looking for.

**Paragraph 2 – Why you? – Why are you interested in the job? What particular skills/abilities/experience do you have to offer? Sell yourself on the basis that these skills meet the requirements of the job.** Explain why you want to work there and emphasise what you can do for the company. Avoid using phrases like 'I think I could gain valuable experience with your company' or 'this is an area of my skill I have always wanted to develop'. The employer will hire you for what you can do for the company, not for what you think you can get from working there. Be keen, but genuine and avoid using clichéd phrases.

**Paragraph 3 – Why them? – Try to show you have done your research.** You need to show an interest in the position you are applying for and that you have some knowledge of the employer/organisation. Find out about the company by looking for other advertisements it may have, search the Internet for its website, look through the company's literature and scan business journals and newspapers for other general information. When doing a Google search, click news on the top left of the page, then select 'Last month' on the left hand side of the search results to find up to date news stories. Refer to any recent (positive) news about the company, this will show you understand what the company is about.

**Paragraph 4 – Positive conclusion – when you are available for interview and that you look forward to hearing from them etc.** Don't let your letter fizzle out at the end with just a bland 'Yours sincerely'. Finish the letter with a strong, proactive phrase that sets the scene for the next stage – being called in for an interview, e.g. 'I am available for interview at your convenience and would welcome the opportunity of meeting you'. If you have addressed the letter to a named person, you should end the letter with 'Yours sincerely', if you wrote 'Dear Sir or Madam', it should end with 'Yours faithfully.'

Yours sincerely



Andrew Student



# YOUR CV ROADMAP

## Your Name

Telephone Number

Email address

**Term Address:** (until 2nd June)

**Home Address:** (from 2nd June – 9th September)

## Education and Qualifications

**2008 – 2011 Full title of your degree/Masters/PhD, class obtained or expected,  
Name of University**

- Reverse chronological order – start with most recent education.
- Detail included would depend on how relevant your degree is to the opportunity you are applying for. If particular technical skill or academic knowledge is required then include it but steer clear of overkill.
- If subject of study is not relevant to the opportunity, focus on the skills you have gained providing examples as evidence.

**2001 – 2008 Name of School/College and Location (if not obvious from name)**

- A-levels (or equivalent) – list all subjects and grades – consider listing them horizontally to save space.
- GCSEs – list number gained and grade range (e.g. 9 GCSEs Grades A-C), you may wish to include grades in particular subjects if they are asked for (e.g. including Maths – A and English – A\*)

## Work Experience (including paid and voluntary)

**Dates worked, Job title, Employer, Location (no need to include full address).**

- Mention most relevant work experience first, this could be put under a separate heading e.g. 'Relevant Experience' or 'Marketing Experience' and then 'Other Experience'.
- Include ALL relevant experience, this could include paid work, work experience, internships, industrial placements, vacation work, voluntary work or shadowing. Employers are looking for candidates who have taken the time to match their experience and abilities to the employer specification.
- Do not focus on your duties, mention these briefly but highlight the skills you have gained and your achievements.
- Be specific! A list of skills is not enough. Back them up with relevant evidence.

- Use STAR: Situation, Task, Action and Result.

This format demonstrates how you could apply skills to an employer's workplace

- For example, instead of: *'Developed time management and communication skills working in a busy restaurant.'*

Try: *'Developed excellent communication and time management skills through having sole responsibility for table bookings and liaising with customers, front of house and kitchen staff in a busy city centre restaurant. This was recognised and I was promoted to head waitress within 6 months.'*

## Achievements and Awards/Positions of Responsibility

- Use additional headings as required.
- A chance to show how you have gained skills from other areas. Again it is important to highlight how these experiences have enhanced your skills that are relevant for the opportunity you are applying for.
- You could include sporting achievements, membership of societies or committees, extracurricular activities, academic achievements.
- Try to use examples that are within the past three years, employers want to know about your most recent experiences.
- You may also wish to highlight an additional skills section where you can include a driving license, qualified first aider, IT skills, typing speed or any competence with languages.

## Interests

- Again ensure this section is relevant to the employer, mention any interests that may be related to the opportunity you are going for e.g. you may enjoy cooking which would be relevant to a Supermarket chain who stress a 'passion for food'.
- Don't just list your interests but give the employer more detail enabling you to use this section to demonstrate your personality.

## Referees

- You need to include an academic and a professional referee.
- You would normally quote a personal tutor or member of academic staff who knows you well e.g. seminar leader or dissertation supervisor as your academic referee.
- The second referee should be a previous employer or someone else who knows you well.
- ALWAYS ask them first.
- Include their name, job title, address, telephone number and email.
- It is acceptable to put 'Available upon request' under Referees on your CV if you are running out of space.

# FAQ's

## Q. Do I send my CV with an application form?

**A.** Generally, only if they request it as an additional upload with the application form. You may want to consider converting your CV to a PDF file to ensure the format is not altered when uploading. Ensure your CV is targeted to this particular role highlighting the relevant experience and skills for this employer.

## Q. I have very little work experience how can I develop my CV?

**A.** Demonstrate your skill development through extra-curricular activities, voluntary work and broader travel experiences. Use a skills based format and target this to the person specification or job description. Your CV is indicating your potential and needs to express your confidence. It would be advisable to consider getting some relevant work experience throughout your time at University, check out our vacancies at <http://mycareer.leeds.ac.uk/>.

## Q. Should I include a personal statement on my CV?

**A.** If attaching a cover letter with your CV, a personal statement is not generally required as you will find you are merely repeating yourself. If you do decide to include a personal statement be sure to keep it brief and ensure it is not generic, encourage the employer to want to continue reading.

## Q. Should I use a traditional or skills-based format for my CV?

**A.** The choice is down to you but consider which format would best sell your experience and allow you to target effectively for the particular job/opportunity you are applying for.

A traditional format is great if you have lots of work experience which is relevant to the opportunity that you are applying for. Ensure that when detailing your work experience, you go beyond your duties to outline your contribution to that role, key achievements and the skills you developed.

A skills based format is brilliant for directly targeting to the opportunity that you wish to apply for and works particularly well when you want to draw attention away from your work experience to the skills you have attained from your other achievements – academic, voluntary,

extra-curricular etc. Ensure that the skills you use as your headings are directly applicable to the opportunity you are applying for.

## Q. Should I attach a photograph to my CV?

**A.** Not unless you are specifically asked to do so.

## Q. What font type and size is best?

**A.** Choose a clear and legible font such as Arial or Calibri and do not go below font size 10 or 11, depending on the font chosen, as it will be too difficult to read. Consider using larger font size or bold for headings and sub headings.

## Q. I want to send my CV to employers abroad. Do different countries expect a different CV format?

**A.** Yes they do. Have a look at these sites to see examples and advice.

[http://www.prospects.ac.uk/country\\_profiles.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/country_profiles.htm)

<http://careerweb.leeds.ac.uk/go/goingglobal.asp>

This is a database subscribed to by the Careers Centre. The site also allows you to search for specific vacancies and employers in different sectors. If you create a personal account using a computer in an ISS cluster you will be able to access it away from campus too.

## Q. I've just finished my PhD and want to go for an academic role – what should I do?

**A.** The same rules given in this booklet apply, except it can be longer and you should look to include:

- Past, current and ongoing research interests
- Published research and articles
- Details of professional memberships and responsibilities
- Details of presentations made at conference
- Any prizes and awards received
- Teaching and administration experience where relevant.

For more information see [www.vitae.ac.uk](http://www.vitae.ac.uk)

Any further questions can be answered at drop in meetings at the Careers Centre 9am – 4pm Monday to Friday and on our website [www.careerweb.leeds.ac.uk/go/cv.asp](http://www.careerweb.leeds.ac.uk/go/cv.asp)

# Top Tips for Success

1. Target your CV to each employer/vacancy. A general CV will end up in the bin!
2. ALWAYS check spelling and grammar.
3. Know your skills! Use the Leeds for Life website to help you reflect on the skills you have gained from your experiences.
4. Always include a covering letter (unless the employer tells you otherwise).
5. Use the Careers Centre drop-in to get your draft CV and cover letter checked.
6. Do not just list your activities, highlight achievements, responsibilities and skills gained that are relevant to the employer.
7. Use bullet points – keep it punchy, precise and relevant.
8. For some examples, check out our CV bank at [www.careerweb.leeds.ac.uk](http://www.careerweb.leeds.ac.uk)

## Further information

For further information visit the Careers Centre website

[www.careerweb.leeds.ac.uk/go/cv.asp](http://www.careerweb.leeds.ac.uk/go/cv.asp)



## The University of Leeds Careers Centre

5-7 Cromer Terrace  
University of Leeds  
Leeds LS2 9JT

(we're around the corner  
from the Students' Union)

Opening hours: 9.00am – 5.00pm  
Monday to Friday

**T: 0113 343 5295**

**W: [careerweb.leeds.ac.uk](http://careerweb.leeds.ac.uk)**



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