

CVs & Cover Letters

Develop a strong CV and cover letter for graduate roles, internships, placements or part-time jobs.



Cover letters

Your CV should be accompanied by a one-page cover letter. It should highlight your relevant skills/strengths, experience and explain your motivations for applying to the role and organisation. Create a good impression with content that is written and set out professionally.

For more information on writing cover letters, go to www.ncl.ac.uk/careers/making-applications/applications/cover-letters/

Name of person
Job title (if available)
Name of organisation
Full address
Postcode

Your full address and postcode
Date (DD/MM/YYYY)

**Address it to the right person
and ensure their name and job
title are correct**

Dear... - use title and surname. If you're unsure about their title, you can use their full name. If their name isn't given, research and find out who this is. If you can't find out their name, use a generic term such as 'Dear Recruitment Team' or 'Dear Hiring Manager'.

Introduction - briefly explain what you're doing now and why you're writing. If the position was advertised, include where you saw it and mention that you've attached your CV. If you're applying speculatively, be specific about what you're looking for.

The order of the paragraphs below is up to you

Why you? - summarise the key selling points from your CV to show why the recruiter should consider you. What have you got to offer them? Include relevant experience, knowledge and skills, using specific examples.

Why this role? - explain why you're interested in this role. Demonstrate your motivation and understanding of what it involves.

Why them? - show that you've researched the organisation and be specific about why you want to work for them. Don't just repeat what you've read on their website. Consider their values, services, culture, clients, projects and any contact you've had with people who work there.

Additional information (optional) - you can share further information that you'd like the organisation to consider, e.g. to explain international qualifications, circumstances for lower grades, or ask for reasonable adjustments. Book an appointment if you want to talk to us about sharing personal information in your covering letter.

Sign off - end in a polite and friendly way, e.g. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for considering my application.

Yours sincerely - use this if you are writing to a named person. Use 'Yours faithfully' when using a term such as 'Dear Recruitment Team'.

Your name

CV for graduate jobs, placements and internships

Your CV should be targeted to the opportunity you're applying for and should be one to two pages long.

Your name

Full address (include one address only)

Phone number (check that your voicemail is activated)

Email address (keep your email address professional)

LinkedIn profile URL (optional)

Personal profile or career objective (optional)

Only include a profile if it adds something to your CV. Give a one or two sentence summary of who you are, your key skills and/or experience and the role you're seeking. For example, 'Final year fine art student with experience of working in galleries and visual merchandising, seeking a graduate role as an exhibition designer'. Profiles are particularly useful if you can't provide a covering letter.

Education

Put your most relevant qualification first (usually the most recent), then work backwards.

Dates studied, full title of your degree/Masters/PhD, state class obtained or predicted, name of university, location (if not apparent from name)

- List modules relevant to the role, but no more than five or six.
- Provide details of relevant projects/activities, e.g. dissertation, thesis. Include achievements and give specific examples to evidence your skills, e.g. 'Worked effectively in a team of five to deliver an assessed group presentation. As team leader, supported group members, allocated tasks fairly and ensured the project deadline was met'.
- If your subject of study is not relevant to the role, focus on relevant skills you've gained. Remember to provide examples as evidence.

Dates studied name of school/college, location (list institutions and dates separately, if relevant)

A-levels (or equivalent): list subjects and grades across the page to save space.

GCSEs (or equivalent): state the number and grades obtained, e.g. 9 GCSEs, grades 9-7.

Work experience (paid and voluntary)

Use the job advert/description (if available) to identify what the organisation is looking for and give specific examples to demonstrate your relevant skills and experience.

How you market your work experience can really help your CV stand out. If you don't have any work experience, book an information appointment to talk to us about finding opportunities.

Dates worked, job title, organisation, location (no need for full address)

Write briefly about your duties to set the context, giving specific examples. Focus on how you carried out those duties, i.e. the skills you used.

- Mention particularly relevant experience first and emphasise with headings. Your CV could have two sections, 'Related experience' and then 'Additional experience', where you can highlight any other paid or voluntary work.
- You can include part-time jobs, internships, placements or voluntary work in the work experience section. The setting may not seem relevant but the skills you gained could be.

- Be specific, don't just list skills. Compare 'Developed team working and communication skills working in a busy restaurant' to 'Worked in a team of six, with sole responsibility for 15 tables in a busy city centre environment. Worked quickly and efficiently over the lunchtime period to maintain turnover'.
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Achievements or positions of responsibility (optional)

This is a chance to show your individuality and give different examples of relevant skills. Focus on more recent experiences, i.e. less than 5 years. Only include something older if it is outstanding.

Examples you could include are:

- online courses or virtual internships
- membership of societies
- student rep
- sporting activities
- charity/fundraising

Think about what you did. Did you have any specific responsibilities? What skills did you gain from these experiences?

Additional skills

Give details of other relevant skills that you have, such as IT skills (e.g. software), driving licence, language skills or certificates, e.g. first aid, food hygiene or sports coaching. You could add this section before Education if these skills are particularly relevant to the position you're applying for.

Interests (optional)

Mention any interests you have that are related to the position you're applying for, or which allow you to demonstrate useful skills. Don't just list the different activities you enjoy, give more detail.

References (optional)

Referees are people who can confirm details of your work experience or academic ability, character and skills. If including references always ask their permission first. Two referees are standard. One could be a university academic. The other could be someone you have worked with professionally, e.g. an employer, or a volunteering supervisor.

Name
Job title/relationship to you
University and department
Full address, including postcode
Telephone number
Email address

Name
Job title/relationship to you
Name of organisation
Full address, including postcode
Telephone number
Email address

CV for part-time jobs

CVs for part-time/casual work are slightly different from graduate, internship and placement CVs. However, they should still be targeted and relevant to the post. Your CV should be one to two pages long.

Your name
Full address (include one address only)
Phone number (check that your voicemail is activated)
Email address (keep your email address professional)

Personal profile (optional)

Only include a profile if it adds something to your CV. Keep it brief and specific. You can give a one or two sentence summary of who you are, your key skills and/or experience and the role you are seeking. For example: 'History student at Newcastle University with 12 months hospitality experience, seeking a part-time position in retail to further develop customer service skills'. Profiles are particularly useful if you don't have the opportunity to provide a covering letter.

Work experience (paid and voluntary)

If you have previous work experience, add this section before Education. Practical skills are usually more important to the employer than your degree.

Dates worked, job title, employer, location (no need for full address)

- Use the job advert/description (if available) to identify what the employer is looking for and give specific examples to demonstrate your relevant skills and experience.
 - Focus on your achievements. Include relevant tasks rather than giving a detailed job description, e.g. 'Updated window and shop floor displays to promote seasonal stock.'
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Education

If the job isn't related to your course, the employer is less likely to be interested in your studies. Only include modules or projects if the skills you've gained are relevant.

Dates studied - Course title, university, location

Dates studied - Name of school/college, location (list institutions and dates separately, if relevant)

A-levels (or equivalent): list subjects and grades across the page to save space

GCSEs (or equivalent): state the number and grades obtained, e.g. 9 GCSEs, grades 9-7. Only include specific subjects if relevant, e.g. maths, to demonstrate numeracy.

Additional skills

Give details of other relevant skills that you have, such as IT skills (e.g. software), driving licence, language skills or certificates, e.g. first aid, food hygiene or sports coaching. You could add this section before Education if these skills are particularly relevant to the position you're applying for.

Interests (optional)

Mention any interests you have that are related to the role you're applying for, or which allow you to demonstrate relevant skills. Don't just list the different activities you enjoy, give more detail.

References (optional)

You don't have to include them, but if you have space, you can include the contact details of two referees - always ask their permission first.

Action words

'Action words' help you to create a strong impression of achievement, ability and activity. They demonstrate that you have the skills and qualities an employer is seeking. Avoid passive terms such as 'I had to...', 'I was required to...', 'I was involved in...'. Use active, positive verbs instead to describe your role and the impact you made, such as:

achieved	coordinated	developed	initiated	organised	produced
analysed	created	edited	led	planned	researched
budgeted	delivered	evaluated	liaised	prepared	solved
completed	demonstrated	improved	managed	presented	supervised
conducted	designed	increased	negotiated	prioritised	trained

Checklist

Key things to consider:

- Are your CV and covering letter tailored to the opportunity you have applied for?
- Are they clear and easy to read?
- Do they demonstrate that you meet the recruiter's criteria?
- Has every piece of information earned its place?
- Have you checked spelling, punctuation and grammar?
- Have you explained your contribution to activities and included evidence to support your skills?
- Is the font and format consistent and professional?

CVs:

- Is the most relevant information first?
- Have you used subheadings, bullet points and white space and avoided long paragraphs?
- Have you used a professional sounding email address?
- Is it no more than two pages in length?

Covering letters:

- Have you addressed the letter to a named contact? If not, use a generic term such as 'hiring manager'.
- Have you highlighted your relevant skills/strengths and explained why you're interested in the organisation and the role?
- Have you kept it to one side of A4?

Need more help?

The Careers Service website includes example CVs and covering letters and advice. Scan here to:

- upload your CV and/or covering letter to our automatic CV checker for instant feedback
- book an appointment to get 1:1 feedback from an adviser
- attend workshops on writing CVs and covering letters
- see Academic CVs for further support

