

# How to write a successful CV



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Probably the first CV was written by Leonardo Da Vinci 500 years ago. You can view it [here](#). Since then things have moved slightly on, and now it's essential to have a well presented professional CV, but still many graduates get this wrong. The following page will give you all the tips to make an impressive CV

## What is a CV?

**Curriculum Vitae:** an outline of a person's educational and professional history, usually prepared for job applications (*L. lit.: the course of one's life*). **Another name for a CV is a *résumé*.**

**A CV is the most flexible and convenient way to make applications.** It conveys your personal details in the way that presents you in the best possible light. **A CV is a marketing document** in which you are marketing something: yourself! You need to "sell" your skills, abilities, qualifications and experience to employers. It can be used to make multiple applications to employers in a specific career area. For this reason, **many large graduate recruiters will not accept CVs** and instead use their own application form.

An **application form** is designed to bring out the essential information and personal qualities that the employer requires and does not allow you to gloss over your weaker points as a CV does. In addition, the time needed to fill out these forms is seen as a reflection of your commitment to the career.

**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 below. It can be on paper or on-line or even on a T-shirt (a gimmicky approach that might work for "creative" jobs but not generally advised!).

## When should a CV be used?

- When an employer asks for applications to be received

Often selectors read CVs outside working hours. They may have a pile of 50 CVs from which to select five interviewees. It's evening and they would rather be in the pub with friends. If your CV is hard work to read: unclear, badly laid out and containing irrelevant information, they will just move on to the next CV.

Treat the selector like a child eating a meal. **Chop your CV up into easily digestible morsels** (bullets, short paragraphs and note form) and give it a clear logical layout, with just the relevant information to make it easy for the selector to read. If you do this, you will have a much greater chance of interview.

in this format.

- When an employer simply states "apply to ..." without specifying the format.
- When making **speculative applications** (when writing to an employer who has not advertised a vacancy but who you hope may have one).

## What information should a CV include?

What are the most important aspects of CV that you look for?

One [survey of employers](#) found that the following aspects were most looked for

(From the brilliant [2010 Orange County Resume Survey](#) by Eric Hilden)

45%	<b>Previous related work experience</b>
35%	<b>Qualifications &amp; skills</b>
25%	<b>Easy to read</b>
16%	<b>Accomplishments</b>
14%	<b>Spelling &amp; grammar</b>
9%	<b>Education</b> (these were not just graduate recruiters or this score would be much higher!)
9%	<b>Intangibles:</b> individuality/desire to succeed
3%	<b>Clear objective</b>
2%	<b>Keywords added</b>
1%	<b>Contact information</b>
1%	<b>Personal experiences</b>
1%	<b>Computer skills</b>

### Personal details

Normally these would be your **name, address, date of birth** (although with age discrimination laws now in force this isn't essential), **telephone number and email**.

British CVs **don't usually include a photograph** unless you are an actor. In European countries such as France, Belgium and Germany it's common for CVs to include a passport-sized **photograph** in the top right-hand corner whereas in the UK and the USA photographs are frowned upon as this may contravene equal opportunity legislation - a photograph makes it easier to reject a candidate on grounds of ethnicity, sex or age. If you do include a photograph it should be a head and shoulders shot, you should be dressed suitably and smiling: it's not for a passport! See our [Work Abroad](#) page for more about international CVs

### Education and qualifications

Your degree subject and university, plus A levels and GCSEs or equivalents. Mention grades unless poor!

### Work experience

- Use **action words** such as developed, planned and organised.
- Even **work in a shop, bar or restaurant** will involve [working in a team](#), providing a [quality service](#) to customers, and dealing tactfully with complaints. **Don't**

*Some employers may spend as little as 45 seconds skimming a résumé before branding it “not of interest”, “maybe” or “of interest.”*

[BI Business School](#)

*Succinct, eloquent, well-structured.*

Towers Hamlyn

**mention the routine, non-people tasks** (cleaning the tables) unless you are applying for a casual summer job in a restaurant or similar.

- **Try to relate the skills to the job.** A finance job will involve [numeracy](#), analytical and [problem solving skills](#) so focus on these whereas for a marketing role you would place a bit more emphasis on [persuading and negotiating](#) skills.
- *All of my work experiences have involved working within a team-based culture. This involved planning, organisation, coordination and commitment e.g., in retail, this ensured daily sales targets were met, a fair distribution of tasks and effective communication amongst all staff members.*

## Interests and achievements

- Keep this section **short and to the point**. As you grow older, your employment record will take precedence and interests will typically diminish greatly in length and importance.
- **Bullets** can be used to separate interests into different types: sporting, creative etc.
- **Don't use the old boring cliches** here: "socialising with friends".
- **Don't put many passive, solitary hobbies** (reading, watching TV, stamp collecting) or you may be perceived as lacking people skills. If you do put these, then say what you read or watch: *"I particularly enjoy Dickens, for the vivid insights you get into life in Victorian times"*.
- Show a **range of interests** to avoid coming across as narrow: if everything centres around sport they may wonder if you could hold a conversation with a client who wasn't interested in sport.
- **Hobbies that are a little out of the ordinary** can help you to stand out from the crowd: skydiving or mountaineering can show a sense of wanting to stretch yourself and an ability to rely on yourself in demanding situations
- Any **interests relevant to the job** are worth mentioning: current affairs if you wish to be a journalist; a fantasy share portfolio such as [Bullbearings](#) if you want to work in finance.
- Any **evidence of leadership** is important to mention: captain or coach of a sports team, course representative, chair of a student society, scout leader: *"As captain of the school cricket team, I had to set a positive example, motivate and coach players and think on my feet when making bowling and field position changes, often in tense situations"*
- Anything showing evidence of **employability skills** such as team working, organising, planning, persuading, negotiating etc.

### Writing about your interests

*Reading, cinema, stamp-collecting, playing computer games*

Suggests a solitary individual who doesn't get on with other people. This may not be true, but selectors will interpret the evidence they see before them.

**Cinema:** *member of the University Film-Making Society*

**Travel:** *travelled through Europe by train this summer in a group of four people, visiting historic sites and practising my French and Italian*

**Reading:** *helped younger pupils with reading difficulties at school.*

This could be the same individual as in the first example, but the impression is completely the opposite: an outgoing proactive individual who helps others.

## Skills

- The usual ones to mention are **languages** (good conversational French, basic Spanish), **computing** (e.g. "good working knowledge of MS Access and Excel, plus basic web page design skills" and **driving** ("full current clean driving licence").
- If you are a **mature** candidate or have lots of relevant skills to offer, a **skills-based CV** may work for you

## References



- Many employers don't check references at the application stage so unless the vacancy specifically requests referees it's fine to omit this section completely if you are running short of space or to say "References are available on request."
- Normally two referees are sufficient: one academic (perhaps your tutor or a project supervisor) and one from an employer (perhaps your last part-time or summer job). See our page on **Choosing and Using Referees** for more help with this.

The **order** and the **emphasis** will depend on what you are applying for and what you have to offer.

For example, the **example media CV** lists the candidate's relevant work experience first.

If you are applying for more than one type of work, you should have a **different CV tailored to each career area**, highlighting different aspects of your skills and experience.

A **personal profile** at the start of the CV can work for jobs in competitive industries such as the [media](#) or [advertising](#), to help you to stand out from the crowd. If used, it needs to be original and well written. Don't just use the usual hackneyed expressions: "*I am an excellent communicator who works well in a team.....*"

You will also need a **Covering Letter** to accompany your CV.

## What makes a good CV?

**There is no single "correct" way to write and present a CV but the following general rules apply:**

- It is **targeted on the specific job** or career area for which you are applying and brings out the relevant skills you have to offer
- It is carefully and **clearly laid out**: logically ordered, easy to read and not cramped
- It is **informative but concise**
- It is **accurate in content, spelling and grammar**. If you mention attention to detail as a skill, make sure your spelling and grammar is perfect!

**If your CV is written backwards on pink polka dot paper** and it gets you regular interviews, it's a good CV! The bottom line is that if it's producing results don't change it too much but if it's not, keep changing it until it does.

If it's not working, ask people to look at it and suggest changes. Having said this, if you use the [example CVs](#) in these pages as a starting point, you are unlikely to go far wrong.

## What mistakes do candidates make on their CV?

**One survey of employers found the following mistakes were most common**

- Spelling and grammar 56% of employers found this
- Not tailored to the job 21%
- Length not right & poor work history 16%
- Poor format and no use of bullets 11%
- No accomplishments 9%

When asked what would make them automatically reject a candidate, employers said:

- CVs with spelling mistakes or typos 61%
- CVs that copied large amounts of wording from the job posting 41%
- CVs with an inappropriate email address 35%
- CVs that don't include a list of skills 30%
- CVs that are more than two pages long 22%
- CVs printed on decorative paper 20%
- CVs that detail more tasks than results for previous positions 16%
- CVs that include a photo 13%
- CVs that have large blocks of text with little white space 13%

[CareerBuilder](#)

- Contact & email problems 8%
- Objective/profile was too vague 5%
- Lying 2%
- Having a photo 1%
- Others 3% (listing all memberships, listing personal hobbies, using abbreviations)

## How long should a CV be?

There are no absolute rules but, in general, a new graduate's CV should cover **no more than two sides of A4 paper**. In a survey of American employers 35% preferred a one page CV and 19% a two page CV with the others saying it depends upon the position. CVs in the US tend to be shorter than in the UK, whereas the 2 page CV still dominates for graduates, but I do see a trend now towards one page CVs: as employers are getting more and more CVs, they tend not to have the time to read long documents!

If you can summarise your career history comfortably on a **single side**, this is fine and has advantages when you are making speculative applications and need to put yourself across concisely. However, you should not leave out important items, or crowd your text too closely together in order to fit it onto that single side. **Academic and technical CVs may be much longer:** up to 4 or 5 sides.

## How do I get my CV down to two pages from three?

- First **change your margins** in MS Word to Page Layout / Margins/ Narrow - this will set your margins to 1.27 cm which are big enough not to look cramped, but give you extra space. See [www.kent.ac.uk/careers/cv/word-cv.htm#margins](http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/cv/word-cv.htm#margins) for how to do this.
- Secondly **change your body font** to Lucida Sans in 10 pts size. Lucida Sans is a modern font which has been designed for clarity on a computer screen. For more on fonts see [here](#) A good rule of thumb is to have your name in about 18 points, your subheadings such as education and work experience in 14 points and your body font as 10 points.

## Choose a sensible email address!

One survey found that 76% of CVs with unprofessional email addresses are ignored. Here are some (modified) graduate email addresses that you should NOT emulate!

- [death\\_metal\\_kitty@hotmail.com](mailto:death_metal_kitty@hotmail.com)
- [demented\\_bovine@gnumail.com](mailto:demented_bovine@gnumail.com)
- [so\\_kiss\\_me@hotmail.com](mailto:so_kiss_me@hotmail.com)
- [platypus\\_mcdandruff@gnumail.com](mailto:platypus_mcdandruff@gnumail.com)
- [busty-beth@gnumail.com](mailto:busty-beth@gnumail.com)
- [flockynockyhillipilification@gnumail.com](mailto:flockynockyhillipilification@gnumail.com)
- [virgin\\_on\\_the\\_ridiculous@hotmail.com](mailto:virgin_on_the_ridiculous@hotmail.com)
- [yourmywifenowgraham@gnumail.com](mailto:yourmywifenowgraham@gnumail.com)
- [original\\_madcow\\_jane@gnumail.com](mailto:original_madcow_jane@gnumail.com)
- [circle-of-despair@gnumail.com](mailto:circle-of-despair@gnumail.com)
- [rage\\_against\\_the\\_trolley\\_fish@mail.com](mailto:rage_against_the_trolley_fish@mail.com)
- [sexylikewoaaaah@hotmail.com](mailto:sexylikewoaaaah@hotmail.com)

## Bullets make CVs more readable

Our brains love lists: they create a reading experience with more easily acquired information. We process lists more efficiently, and retain information with less effort. Bulleted lists appeal to our tendency to categorize things since they divide information into short, distinct items. They also help to alleviate the "Paradox of choice": the problem that the more options we have, the worse we feel.

- Use **tables with two or three columns** for your academic results and references. See a CV using tables for modules and references [here](#) and an explanation of how to do this [here](#)
- Use bullets for content, rather than long paragraphs of text. (See the box to the right)
- Finally, **set line spacings to single space**

But don't bullet everything on your CV or it will look boring! Bulleted lists are great for lists of skills or interests but are necessarily limited in content and nuance, and so contain less depth than paragraphs. See [Maria Konnikova's article](#) for more about this.

If after all these tricks you are still on three pages you have to be ruthless with your content: read every single word and remove it if it doesn't add value to your CV!

### The one page lean and mean CV!

In certain sectors such as investment banking, management consultancy and top law firms, a one page, highly focused, highly objective CV, now seems to be preferred. All of these areas have in common that they are highly competitive to enter and it may be that selectors, faced with so many CVs to work through prefer a shorter CV.

There is no point putting lots of detailed information into a CV which doesn't add any value, and in fact, just dilutes the impact. This is called the presenter's paradox. These CVs normally have lots of single line bullets and no personal statement at the beginning. They are full of factual, as opposed to subjective, content. You must make every word count. They focus on achievements, initiative and responsibilities more than on tasks and duties. When carefully designed, these can be the very best CVs, but also the hardest to write!

See our page on **Zen and the art of CV writing** for more about this.

### Tips on presentation

- Your CV should be **carefully and clearly laid out** - not too cramped but not with large empty spaces either. Use bold and italic typefaces for headings and important information
- Never back a CV - **each page should be on a separate sheet of paper**. It's a good idea to put your name in the footer area so that it appears on each sheet.
- **Be concise:** a CV is an appetiser and should not give the reader indigestion. Don't feel that you have to list every exam you have ever taken, or every activity you have ever been involved in - consider which are the most relevant and/or impressive. The best CVs tend to be fairly economical with words, selecting the most important information and leaving a little something for the interview: they are an appetiser rather than the main course. Good business communications tend to be short and to the point, focusing on key facts and your CV should to some extent emulate this. The longer and more dense your CV is, the harder it is for an employer to comprehend your achievements. As Mark Twain said: *"If only I had more time, I would write thee a shorter letter"*.

HireRight, a candidate due diligence company, found that 63% of applicants provide incorrect information to potential employers. Steve Girdler of t HireRight, commented: *"The challenging employment market created by the economic downturn has increased the number of inaccuracies in CVs and job applications, yet most businesses don't check the claims of those they are about to employ."*

- 38% exaggerated or lied about their education

- **Be positive** - put yourself over confidently and highlight your strong points. For example, when listing your A-levels, put your highest grade first.
- **Be honest:** although a CV does allow you to omit details (such as exam resits) which you would prefer the employer not to know about, you should never give inaccurate or misleading information. **CVs are not legal documents** and you can't be held liable for anything within, but if a recruiter picks up a suggestion of falsehoods you will be rapidly rejected. An **application form** which you have signed to confirm that the contents are true is however a legal document and forms part of your contract of employment if you are recruited.
- The **sweet spot** of a CV is the area selectors tend to pay most attention to: this is typically around the upper middle of the first page, so make sure that this area contains essential information.
- If you are posting your CV, **don't fold it** - put it in a full-size A4 envelope so that it doesn't arrive creased.

- 35% included incorrect details in their employment history
- 31% made false statements about professional qualifications and memberships.

Also see **CV lies could lead to 10 years in jail** and **Students threatened with jail for telling 'white lies' on CVs**

### Research by forum3 (recruitment and volunteering for the not-for-profit sector) suggested:

- **Graduates sent out 25 letters per interview gained.**
- **The average graduate will send out about 70 CVs when looking for their first graduate job.** Of these, the average number of responses will be 7 including 3 to 4 polite rejections and the remainder inviting the graduate to interview or further contact.
- **There was a direct link between the number of CVs sent out and the number of interviews gained:** the more CVs you send out the more interviews you will get.
- **Applicants who included a covering letter with their CV were 10% more likely to get a reply.**
- **60% of CVs are mailed to the wrong person:** usually the managing director. Applicants who addressed their application to the correct named person were 15% more likely to get a letter of acknowledgement and 5% more likely to get an interview.
- **Applicants sending CVs and letters without spelling mistakes are 61% more likely to get a reply and 26% more likely to get an interview.** "In the age of the spell checker, there is no excuse for spelling mistakes". The most common mistakes to not show up in a spell check were: fro instead of for, grate instead of great, liased instead of liaised and stationary instead of stationery.
- **Set your spell checker to UK English** (assuming you are British) or you will get **center** instead of **centre**, and **color** instead of **colour**.
- **Other turnoffs include:**
  - misspelling the name of the company or the addressee;
  - not having a reply address on the CV;
  - trying to be amusing;
  - Using lower case i for the personal pronoun: "*i have excellent attention to detail*".

*"To say things like 'I get on well with people' is meaningless unless it is backed up by example"*

Selector for a retail bank

### Why you need to use a spell checker

- I would like a job in the servillian police
- I am applying for a mini-pupiledge
- i am a perfectionist and rarely if if ever forget details.
- Instrumental in ruining an entire operation for a chain operator
- I was an administrator in a busy office.
- Suspected to graduate early next year
- For a PR job: I have a long term interest in pubic relations

- Proven ability to track down and correct errors.
- I have good written communication skills.
- Lurnd Word Perfect computer and spreadsheet pogroms.
- Develop an annual operating expense fudget.
- Good custermer service skills.
- I am death in my left ear.
- In my 3rd year of BA houners English.

### And why you must read it carefully as well

- I was a prefect and pier mentor
- I would like to do a law conversion cause
- Extra Circular Activities
- But I was not aloud to be captain
- At secondary school I was a prefix
- In my spare time I enjoy hiding my horse
- I hope to hear from you shorty
- I have a desire to work with commuters
- Dear Madman (instead of Madam)
- My hobbits include - instead of 'hobbies'
- I am sicking and entry-level position
- I have a friendly manor
- Oversight of an entire department
- Restaurant skills: Severing customers
- In charge of sock control - instead of 'stock control'
- I'm an accurate and rabid typist
- Over summer I worked for an examinations bored.
- Abilty to meet deadlines while maintaining my composer
- Cleaning bathrooms and hovering hallways.
- Have made speech's at Open Days
- I can make models using a verity of different materials
- Working Kills. (This may very well be true in the long term but Working Skills might just be a better heading.)
- Reason for Living: Relocation

- I want experience in a big sex practice
- Vox pox for BBC Radio enhanced my ability to analyse information
- A 'full shit system' instead of 'a full shift system'
- Enthusiasm was needed to communicate in an interesting manor.
- As indicted, I have over 5 years of analysing investments.
- On an application to work with teenagers: I am experienced in teaching marital arts
- Relevant work experience': followed by 'Irrelevant work experience'
- My role included typing in details of accounts, customer liaison and money-laundering duties.
- I am a genital person (instead of gentle!)
- I would be happy to work in any part of England or Whales.
- I am still under sided on my career.
- That will test my ability's and give me the ability to work on something may can have a real impact.
- I'm from the European Onion.
- I own and maintain a volts wagon beetle.
- I have a full/clean driving license and own a cat (Kent graduate)
- Language skills: German: intimidate (instead of intermediate!)
- Sense I was young.

### Thesaurusitis (using the wrong synonym!)

- I demand a salary commiserate with my extensive experience
- I am a strenuous student.
- Reason for leaving last job: maturity leave
- i am a conscious individual with good attention to detail (Kent grad.)
- Received a plague for salesman of the year.
- I was formally in a music group in which I performed in three conservative years.
- I have a degree in orgasmic chemistry.
- I have a doable award in science

## Fonts

- **TIMES NEW ROMAN** is the standard windows "serif" font. A safe bet - law firms seem to like it but it isn't easy to read on the screen, especially in the small font size you may need to use to get your CV on one or two pages. If you do prefer to use a serif font, try **CAMBRIA** which has been designed for screen readability. See the example fonts to the right to see how much clearer Cambria looks than Times New Roman.
- **I personally prefer sans fonts** - sans fonts don't have the curly bits (called serifs) on letters. **ARIAL** is a standard Windows "sans" font and is now used by the BBC web site which used to use Verdana. As you can see sans fonts are cleaner and more modern than Times or **Cambria** and also look larger in the same "point" size (the point size is simply how big the letters are on the page). However Arial and Times New Roman are so common that they're a little boring to the eye.
- Classier choices might be **VERDANA** or **LUCIDA SANS** which have wider letters than most fonts but, if you are running out of space, then Arial is more space saving, as is **TAHOMA** which is a narrower version of Verdana. Notice how, in the example to the right, Verdana looks bigger and easier to read than Times New Roman. **CALIBRI** is now the standard MS Word font but is smaller and perhaps less clear than Arial, Verdana or Lucida Sans (see the examples to the right again). Never use **COMIC SANS** of course!
- **FONT SIZE** is normally 12 points for the normal font with larger sizes for subheadings and headings.
- Or 10 points. **My favourite CV body text font is 10 point Verdana or Lucida Sans** with 12 or 14 points for sub headings.
- 14 points is too big for the normal body font - wastes space and looks crude.
- and 8 or 9 points too small to be easily readable by everyone, especially in Times New Roman which should not be used in sizes less than 11 points
- Although many people use 12 points, some research on this suggested that **smaller point size CVs** (within reason) were perceived as **more intellectual!**
- **Most CVs are now read on screen** rather than on paper. It's no coincidence that **Serif fonts are rarely used on the web** - they are much less readable on screen (Times Roman was first used on Trajan's column, 2,000 years ago!), and some fonts, such as **Verdana**, were designed with screen readability in mind. **This web site is set in Verdana** which, as you can see, is clear and easy to read.
- If you find fonts interesting see the following:
  - [BBC article](#)
  - [Periodic Table" of Typefaces](#)
  - [Helvetica: How did one typeface conquer the world?](#)
  - Video: The History of Typography [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOgIkxAfJsk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOgIkxAfJsk)

This is Arial in 10 points

This is Calibri in 10 points

This is Verdana in 10 points

This is Tahoma in 10 points

This is Lucida Sans in 10 points

This is Times New Roman in 10 points

This is Cambria in 10 points

Unnecessary use of complex words or hard to read fonts gives a bad impression: people who use simple, clear language are rated as more intelligent.

The Recruitment and Employment Commission says that about half of all CVs received by recruitment consultants contain spelling or grammatical errors.

Candidates aged between 21 and 25 are most likely to make these mistakes and **graduates in this age group are twice as likely to make mistakes as those who did not go on to university**. See <http://careers.guardian.co.uk/cv-mistakes>

Using bold for job titles and schools

Deer Sur, I wud reely lyke a job wid yur  
~~organys~~ ~~orginyz~~ firm .....

It's a good idea to use the "bold" style for job titles and employer names in your work experience and education to make these stand out.

E.g.

**2003-2010 St. Paul's Girls' School, London**

**A-levels:** Chemistry B, Biology A, Maths C

**Summer 2011 Next Retail (Sales Assistant)**

The job entailed working in the busy sale, taking deliveries, stock control and dealing with customers with high quality customer care.

In a survey of American employers

- 33% preferred the use of bold on **job titles** in the candidate's work history
- 7% preferred the use of bold on **employer names** from candidate work history
- 31% preferred bold on both
- 29% had no preference

## Different Types of CV

- **Chronological** - outlining your career history **in date order**, normally beginning with the most recent items (reverse chronological). This is **the "conventional" approach and the easiest to prepare**. It is detailed, comprehensive and biographical and usually works well for "traditional" students with a good all-round mixture of education and work experience. Mature students, however, may not benefit from this approach, which does emphasise your age, any career breaks and work experience which has little surface relevance to the posts you are applying for now. **See an example chronological CV here**
- **Skills-based:** highly-focused CVs which relate your skills and abilities to a specific job or career area by **highlighting these skills and your major achievements**. The factual, chronological details of your education and work history are subordinate. These work well for **mature graduates** and for anybody whose degree subject and work experience is not directly relevant to their application. Skills-based CVs should be closely targeted to a specific job. **See an example skills-based CV here**

A survey of US employers found that:

- 49% preferred a traditional reverse **chronological CV** (all jobs listed in reverse chronological order including duties)
- 6% preferred a **skills-based CV** with skills related to the job highlighted
- 39% liked a **combination of both** the above styles
- 2% liked a **portfolio** with examples of completed projects
- 4% had **no preference**

**If you are applying for posts outside the UK**, remember that employers in other countries are likely to have different expectations of what a CV should include and how it should be laid out. The "Global Resume and CV Handbook" (available from Reception) will help you prepare CVs for overseas employment. **See our work abroad page.**

# Targeting your CV

If your CV is to be sent to an **individual employer** which has requested applications in this format, you should research the organisation and the position carefully.

In the present competitive job market, untargeted CVs tend to lose out to those that have been written with a particular role in mind. For example a marketing CV will be very different from a [teaching](#) CV. The [marketing](#) CV will focus on [persuading, negotiating](#) and similar skills where as the teaching CV will focus more on [presenting](#) and [listening](#) skills and evidence for these.

If your CV is to be used for **speculative applications**, it is still important to target it - at the very least, on the general career area in which you want to work. Use our [I Want to Work in .... pages](#) and sites such as [www.prospects.ac.uk](#) to get an idea of what the work involves and what skills and personal qualities are needed to do it successfully. This will enable you to tailor the CV to the work and to bring out your own relevant experience.

Even if you are using the same CV for a number of employers, you should **personalise the covering letter** - e.g. by putting in a paragraph on why you want to work for that organisation.

For **example CVs, application forms and covering letters** see [www.kent.ac.uk/careers/cv/cvexamples.htm](#) with notes highlighting points relating to the content and style.

## Emailed CVs and Web CVs

- **Put your covering letter as the body of your email.** It's wise to format it as plain text as then it can be read by any email reader.
- Emails are not as easy to read as letters. **Stick to simple text with short paragraphs and plenty of spacing.** Break messages into points and make each one a new paragraph with a full line gap between paragraphs. DON'T "SHOUT": WRITE IN UPPER CASE!
- **Your CV is then sent as an attachment.** Say you'll send a printed CV if required.

### How NOT to do it

One graduate had emailed out over 80 CVs without getting a single reply and was puzzled as to why.

I asked him to show me what he had sent out. He had sent identical CVs and letters to all the companies in one mass email. Recruiters opening the email could see the names of the 80 companies he had applied to in the "To: " box of the email!

## In which format should you send your CV?

A survey of American recruiters found that:

- 63% preferred **MS Office Word** format .docx
- 36% preferred **Adobe Acrobat** format .pdf
- 1% preferred **rich-text** format .rtf
- 0% preferred **text** format .txt
- 0% preferred **web** page format .html

[According to Professor Tom Jackson](#), of Loughborough University, "*Misunderstandings occur frequently via written communication. In fact, 68 per cent of employees said the emails they receive are sometimes difficult to decipher, whether it be a misinterpreted tone or rushed*

**PDF (portable document format)** is perhaps becoming a widely used format now. There are PDF-readers for all platforms (Windows, MacOS, Linux). This also guarantees that you can be confident that it will look as you intended, no matter what reader is used to view the document and it is also secure. Modern versions of Microsoft Word contain a PDF export function or you can download a free pdf converter such as [Cute pdf](#): you install it and then "print" the document to a folder on your PC. PDFs can however sometimes prevent keyword-scanning software on job boards or applicant-tracking systems from picking up information that allows you to be found.

You can also use **MS Word (.docx) format**. .docx files may not always open on computers using Linux and Apple platforms. .docx files may also contain sensitive information such as previous versions of a document perhaps leading to embarrassment. MS Word documents can contain [macro viruses](#), so a few employers may not open these.

Some employers, though, may prefer Word as they can edit it, e.g. to add notes to refer to at interview. There is the possible problem that Word formatting can sometimes change on different computers so it is a good idea to email your CV to a friend to check that it comes out OK before sending it to employers.

There is no one "best" format as there are so many types and versions of software that you cannot always be certain that the recipient will be able to open your CV without any problems, especially if it has been produced on a PC and is being read on a Mac, or vice versa.

It is also fine to attach your CV in both Word and PDF and allow the employers to choose which they prefer!

**Rich Text Format (.rtf)**, or **html** (web page format) are other alternatives but, as can be seen from the above survey, are not usually preferred.

**If in doubt send your CV in several formats. Email it back to yourself** first to check it, as line lengths may be changed by your email reader.

Also see **How to Send a Resume by E-mail**

## **Web CVs and Electronically Scanned CVs**

*explanations."*

### **The most common mistakes made via email include:**

- Accidentally clicking send before the email is ready;
- Embarrassing spelling and grammar mistakes;
- Accidentally sending a kiss at the end of a message;
- Copying a client into an internal email about them;
- Forwarding an inappropriate email trail;
- Forgetting an attachment; and
- Forgetting to blind copy (BCC) on an email (see the example above!)

The credit company Iprofile recommended that **CVs posted on-line should not contain your date of birth, place of birth, marital status, address and phone number** as they can allow fraudsters to carry out identity theft and perhaps open bank accounts or apply for credit cards in your name.

**When emailing your CV to a potential employer it's probably wise to leave out your date of birth, place of birth and marital status**

**Web CVs use HTML format.** You can include the web address in an email or letter to an employer. They have the advantage that you can easily use graphics, colour, hyperlinks and even sound, animation and video. The basic rules still apply however - make it look professional. They can be very effective if you are going **for multimedia, web design or computer games jobs** where they can demonstrate your technical skills along with your **portfolio**.

if you have any doubts about the validity of the organisation you are applying to. Due to age discrimination legislation in the UK you no longer have to disclose your age on a CV but if you wish to, you could give this rather than your date of birth.

**Electronically scanned CVs** have been used by Ford Motors and others. Resumix is one package used for this: it has artificial intelligence which reads the text and extracts important information such as work, education, skills. For more information on this, see our page on **on-line applications**

## **LinkedIn**

It's a good idea to have your profile and CV (without personal details such as your address of course: see right) on [LinkedIn](#). In 2011, 89% of businesses planned to use social networks for recruitment and LinkedIn was by far the most popular one for this purpose with 86% of companies wishing to use it, 60% were considering Facebook and 50% Twitter. Make sure that your Facebook page doesn't carry evidence of any of your indiscretions that employers might view - making your page private and viewable only by friends and family is wise!

**If you reply to a job advert, be careful about what information you give.**

The following are not needed by employers but can lead to identity theft. Don't include:

- Date of birth
- Place of birth
- Marital status
- Copies of birth certificate/passport documents or details of your bank
- You only need to give your first and last names, not your middle name.