



How to write a CV or Resume for English-speaking countries

CV

A CV (curriculum vitae) is used in the United Kingdom and Ireland to give a detailed overview of the applicant's employment history, qualifications and personal information. The optimal length of a CV is at least 2 pages. A photo of the applicant should only be included if specifically required.

A CV comprises the following sections and information:

1) Personal details:

- The applicant's name has to be written at the top in bold big letters.
- The personal details further include: address, telephone number(s), and current e-mail address. The receiver of the application should be able to contact the applicant easily.
- Date of birth, nationality and marital status are **optional!**

2) Education and Qualifications:

- This section starts with the most recent qualification or education.
- Relevant projects or modules should be highlighted.

3) Work Experience:

- The most recent work placement, summer job, voluntary work, internship, etc. is stated first. All work experiences should be included.
- The most relevant duties of each work experience are to be described in a succinct manner.

4) Other Skills and Achievements:

- This section is not obligatory but recommendable if work experiences are limited.
- Examples: driving license, languages, Internet and Word-processing competences

5) Interests and Activities:

- They help to underline the skills employers are looking for such as team work, organizing, motivation, leading, self-discipline, etc.
- A detailed description of possible memberships, positions, and responsibilities is recommended and helps to present the personality of the applicant.



6) Referees:

- State names and contact details of referees (tutors and/or employers). Note: Job applications outside Germany usually do not include certificates and “Arbeitszeugnisse”. Instead, former tutors or employers that may be contacted by the new potential employers to give feedback about the applicant or write a specific recommendation are mentioned. They are called “referees”. Before mentioning a referee on the CV, it is recommended to contact the person and ask if she/he may be mentioned as a referee. It is helpful to provide information about the job the applicant is



Résumé

A résumé is used in Canada, the United States and Australia. It is similar to a CV, but substantially shorter (maximum of one page). The main focus of the résumé is skills and education. While work history is included like a CV, the major difference is that the focus is clearly on the applicant's skills or relevant education. A very nice feature of résumés is that irrelevant or disadvantageous information should be left out. The résumé should only mention information that is relevant for the job you are applying for.

There are two 'flavors' or 'streams' for a résumé, the executive/professional and the creative/inspirational résumé

The Executive/professional résumé is similar to the CV in terms of visual style.

- No colors, borders, or graphics
- Use classic font types sized between 10 and 12
- Bullet points for detail items
- Information that might be disadvantageous for the applicant should be left out

The creative/inspirational résumé is when a person uses the résumé itself to showcase their skills, and talents. This allows for a document that is full of color, character, or other eye-catching enhancements. (An internet 'image' search for 'creative résumés' will show many samples of what is possible and effective.)

- Drawings and graphics are large and easy to see.
- The images or composition of the résumé clearly fit the job being applied for.
 - Example 1: A person applying as an animator may decorate the résumé with cartoon characters they have created
 - Example 2 A person applying to be a textile designer could place a patterned background on the résumé to make it look like a fabric sample
- Information that might be disadvantageous for the applicant should be left out

The sections of a résumé are the following:

1) Contact Information

- Name, current mailing address, email address, and phone number need to be included in this section.



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- In the United States, no personal details like date of birth, nationality or marital status should be mentioned on the résumé. It should also not include a photo. These would be considered to be discriminatory and your application would be rejected.
- 2) Key Competencies and Skills
 - This section is meant to show a future employer in what skills the applicant has. Can the applicant's skills enhance the company? Skills should reflect all other experiences described in the résumé.
 - 3) Education
 - Here information about the university, faculty, major, the aspired degree, and (if possible) graduation date should be provided.
 - 4) Work Experience
 - This section includes information on each company or organization the applicant worked for and the specific tasks the applicant was responsible for. All descriptions should begin with strong action verbs, e.g. "managing", "developing", or "organizing".
 - 5) Relevant Coursework
 - Courses that are relevant to the aspired position – not every class ever taken – are listed.
 - 6) Extracurricular Activities/Community Service/Volunteering
 - In addition to academic and work experience, employers are also very interested in how involved the applicant is on campus and beyond. The organization descriptions, activities, and any leadership roles need to be mentioned.
 - 7) Experience-Special Projects, Academic Projects, Relevant Experience, Project Experience, Other...
 - Special projects and other experiences the applicant deems important may be listed here.
 - 8) International Experience/ Study Abroad
 - If the applicant has international experience which may be important to the position applied for, this section should be placed directly under the education section at the top. In addition to the country, time frame and activity abroad, applicants should point out what they learnt, aside from the normal "Completed coursework in xyz" or "Enhanced language and culture skills in another country." More examples are: "Demonstrated adaptability to unique learning styles while interacting with people of various cultures", "Gained an understanding of how to handle cultural differences in the workplace", "Effectively adapted to situations of change", or "Undertook tasks that were unfamiliar".



Cover letter

A cover letter (also called a covering letter) is a letter of introduction. It is no more than a page long and accompanies other documents in an application such as a CV or a résumé.

The cover letter includes the following parts:

- 1) Header: The applicant's and the recipient's contact information and the date need to be listed here.

- 2) Introduction: Who is the applicant? Why and for which position is he or she applying? If possible, a reference to where the vacancy was published is helpful. We recommend an introduction that is targeted and catches the attention of the reader. This should be in reference to the company. What makes the company special? The reader knows you are applying to more than one company. However, you want the reader to think that this application is the only one that matters to you, because this is the company you WANT to work for. It may be something that the applicant has in common with the employer (a product he/she is fascinated with, a current project he/she may help with, a contact person the applicant and employer both know, a former meeting on a career fair or a conference, an article the applicant read about the employer, etc.).

- 3) Skills, Abilities, Experiences: In this section the applicant highlights why the company should be him or her and shows that his or her skills, abilities, and experiences meet the requirements of the job. More than in Germany, the cover letter aims at selling yourself. So the skills mentioned need to be relevant for the job and should be backed up with former experience or specific training.

- 4) The company or institution: Why is the applicant applying for this company or institution? Here the applicant should show that he or she has done research.

- 5) Positive conclusion: Sentences like "I am available for interview at your convenience and would welcome the opportunity of meeting you" are suitable here. If the letter is addressed to a named person, it ends with "Yours sincerely". If it starts with "Dear Sir or Madam", the ending should be "Yours faithfully".



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Sources and further information and examples:

Careers Centre of the University of Leeds (n.a.): CVs and Cover Letters.
<http://careerweb.leeds.ac.uk/info/19/cvs> (download: 05.08.2013)

Career Services of the University of Pittsburgh (n.a.): A Guide to Creating a Behavioral Resume.
<http://www.cba.pitt.edu/careers/prepare/resume-guide.pdf> (download: 05.08.2013)