

Selling yourself on paper: CVs and Covering Letters

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Sort out your paperwork

Covering letters, CVs and application forms need to be well written and compelling!



CV Writing

Aim

To create enough interest to get an interview

How

To successfully meet the employers criteria

Research

What is this employer looking for?
What evidence can you provide?



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Many applications fail to even hit the target!



The job requirements	What I have got that matches

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CVs have to be written with a target in mind



The sort of work experience I want

Eg. Scientific, possibly laboratory based, or research focused or connected to heart disease or cancer research

What I have got or done that makes me suitable for this sort of work experience

Doing a science degree, done laboratory practicals on degree, done biomedical modules on disease, ran a half marathon to raise money for cancer research in memory of family member who died from cancer

How to prepare

Create a bucket file for all your

Education and qualifications

Work experience

Achievements and skills

Hobbies and interests

Details of referees



What is LinkedIn?

- Facebook for professionals? (But now students and graduates are LinkedIn's fastest growing demographic)
- Recruitment and headhunting platform
- World's top business networking website
- Home for your virtual CV and professional portfolio - but it's more than this



TRUE or FALSE



1. All qualifications ever taken should be listed
2. Only relevant work experience should be included on a CV
3. CVs should be in Times New Roman
4. It is worth including all achievements since the age of 11
5. Any health problems should be included
6. Personal details should include age, marital status and nationality
7. A CV should include 2 references
8. Qualifications should come before work experience

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First impressions

- less is more
- logical structure
- easy to pick out key elements
- consistency of style
- concise and interesting content
- Spelling and grammar checked
- Use positive, action language



Think target – style and content

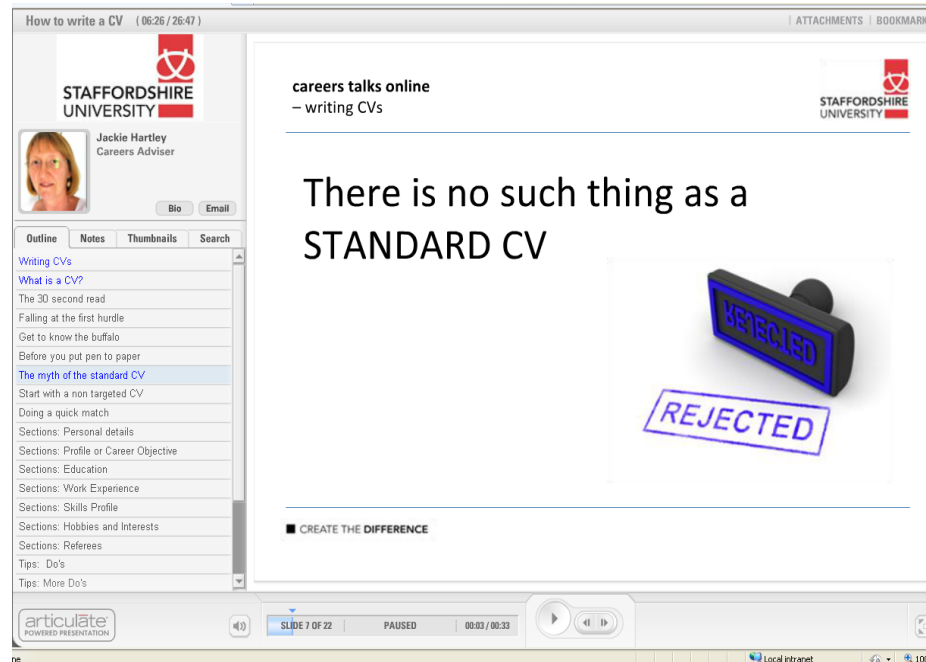
- Traditional chronological (reverse order)
- Skills-based
- Combination of these
- Creative/visual
- Academic



Examples of these styles can be found on

http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cvs_and_cover_letters.htm

- View the talk at www.staffs.ac.uk/careerstalksonline



The screenshot shows a presentation slide from a video titled "How to write a CV (06:26 / 26:47)". The slide content includes the Staffordshire University logo, the text "careers talks online – writing CVs", and the main message "There is no such thing as a STANDARD CV". Below the text is an image of two blue "REJECTED" stamps. At the bottom of the slide, it says "CREATE THE DIFFERENCE". The presentation interface includes a sidebar with a table of contents, a navigation bar with "articulate POWERED PRESENTATION", and a status bar showing "SLIDE 7 OF 22 PAUSED 00:03 / 00:33".

Outline	Notes	Thumbnails	Search
Writing CVs			
What is a CV?			
The 30 second read			
Falling at the first hurdle			
Get to know the buffalo			
Before you put pen to paper			
The myth of the standard CV			
Start with a non targeted CV			
Doing a quick match			
Sections: Personal details			
Sections: Profile or Career Objective			
Sections: Education			
Sections: Work Experience			
Sections: Skills Profile			
Sections: Hobbies and Interests			
Sections: Referees			
Tips: Do's			
Tips: More Do's			

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Example layout for a science CV

- **Objective / Profile**
- **Scientific Skills:** analysis of test results; accuracy and precision; use of microscopy; laboratory safety etc etc
- **Other Skills:** non-scientific skills – communication; teamwork etc
- **Education:** include relevant degree modules
- **Work Experience**
- **Interests:** show there's more to you than study – but make as relevant as possible!
- **References:** An academic referee and a work referee would be ideal, but two academics or an academic and a character reference would be fine. Make sure you ask beforehand!

Skills required in science

Planning and organising

Carrying out complex analysis

Carrying out routine/ repetitive tasks accurately

Following strict methodology

Problem solving

Researching/ Searching scientific literature

Devising and conducting research

Using clinical laboratory procedures for investigations

Communicating with a wide variety of individuals (staff, patients, clinicians)

Attending meetings and conferences

Recording data and writing reports

Optimising results and trouble shooting

Monitoring and assessing



Personal Profile



Hardworking	Reliable	Punctual
Enthusiastic	Friendly	Passionate
Works well in a team	Works well alone	Gets on well with people at all levels

Include a career objective / profile

A second year BSc _____
undergraduate with laboratory skills and a
passion for biochemical research; now
seeking a short work placement in a
research setting where I can gain insights
into pharmaceutical manufacturing.



Emphasise your relevant studies

EDUCATION

2011 – 2014

Staffordshire University

BSc Biological Science

Modules include: Introduction to Scientific Practice.
Molecules to Cells, Biology of Organisms and Biological
Processes

Practical skills: Laboratory work including experiments in ____:
using a range of scientific equipment including ____; gathering
and analysing research data relating to ____.

Projects undertaken: A study of the biological ...



Emphasise your relevant skills and experience



LABORATORY SKILLS

At university 60% of my study time has been spent in laboratories undertaking research into This has given me valuable experience of using scientific equipment such as I have also learnt how to record and document findings accurately and used software to analyse my findings. All laboratory work has been undertaken working to strict protocols And so on.

RESEARCH SKILLS

As part of my degree I have undertaken research on This required me to study the work of and consider the findings from I am now a competent user of a range of research tools including ...

A Targeted CV for Graduate Level Work

- 2 page CV is usually enough
- Include a career objective/profile
- Emphasise your relevant education
- Emphasise previous relevant experience (if you have any)
- Evidence your employability skills
- Now think about writing a covering letter



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- Emphasise relevant skills and experience
- Highlight achievements, awards and other qualifications
- Make the most of any non-science work experience or involvement in voluntary or university societies, by selling the transferable skills you have acquired
- A good covering letter should entice the recruiter to read your CV and demonstrate why you want to work for them.



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Covering letters

One side of A4

Properly addressed

Correctly laid out

Spell and grammar check

Clear and simple

Correct salutation

Keep a copy

Your address
Telephone number
Email

Name
Title,
Company address

Date

Dear (name), Sir/Madam

Re:

Letter in short paragraphs

Yours (sincerely) faithfully,
Sign it
Print your name

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Covering letter – 4 parts	
Introduction – why are you writing?	<p>I would like to apply for the post of __,as advertised in ____, on____. Or...</p> <p>I am contacting you to ask if there is any possibility of work experience with your company</p>
Motivation – why them and this job?	<p>I am interested in this vacancy because...</p> <p>I am keen to be considered for this position because my research shows that your company is</p>
Suitability – why are you a good candidate for this job?	<p>I believe I am a strong candidate for this position because...</p> <p>I would like to be considered because..</p>
Polite and positive ending	<p>Should you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be available for interview at your convenience. I look forward to hearing from you.</p>

Covering letters need ...

To make you stand out from the crowd

Make the employer want to read your CV

Make you memorable

A bit of Wow factor!



WHAT TO AVOID - Generalisations

“I am seeking work experience with your dynamic company (**why is it dynamic?**) as I think it will offer me a challenging opportunity (**why is it challenging?**) where I can develop my transferable skills (**which skills?**).”



WHAT TO AVOID – Waffle!

“I am secretary of the university chess club, a role which involves organising tournaments against teams from other universities. In order to do this I have to be highly organised and efficient and communicate with a wide range of people from caretakers (to organise for rooms to be cleared and open at the right time), to secretaries in other clubs (to agree dates and other arrangements), to club members (to let them know what is happening) to catering staff (to provide sandwiches and drinks for visiting teams).”



WHAT TO AVOID – Lying / over hyping

“I am a keen skier.”

“I have travelled extensively
throughout Australia and the Far East.”



WHAT TO AVOID – Over playing it

“I was given the award for best student in both years of my Diploma course. This means I had the highest marks overall in all my modules (with full marks in 5 of the 12 modules, something not achieved before by any student) and 100% attendance during both years.”



WHAT TO AVOID – Underselling

“I am President of the Multi-Cultural Society, which I helped to set up this year.”

(practice humble boasting)



WHAT TO AVOID – Overwordy, flowery language

“I believe that if one is to encourage effective learning in adolescents one needs to combine a sound pedagogical approach with interactive exercises designed to allow for differentiation.”



WHAT TO AVOID – **Fancy fonts** and Naff Layouts

Choose a modern font

- Don't have

- Too many

- ❖ different bullets

- and indents

Keep **formatting** ***simple and minimal***



Further help

Visit your Careers Centre and get feedback on your CV

Go online to view resources to help you write CVs and applications and prepare for interviews

http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cvs_and_cover_letters.htm

<http://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/job-hunting-tools-downloads>

and for more information on LinkedIn

UK Students site: <http://students.linkedin.com/uk>



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Application Howlers!!

- I am someone who knows my own destiny, but I have no definite long term plans
- I was closely involved in every aspect of my former company, right up to its bankruptcy
- Hi, I want 2 get a job with U
- If called to interview I would like to discuss the salary, pensions and sickness benefits
- I believe in helping other people so I am a blood and organ donor
- Received a plague for salesman of the year
- I hope hear from you shortly
- I am a perfectionist
- I am a conscious individual....
- Being a Virgoan, my sense of assertiveness and resilience has prompted me to continue with my ambitions to be a solicitor in a major city law firm...I am also a seventh generation descendant of a Chinese princess and a Sulawesian warrior, which makes me...both an amiable and energetic person.

Adjustments

If you require a copy of these slides or any of the information mentioned in an alternative format please let us know.

careers@staffs.ac.uk

