



thriveherd

Guide to writing stand-out CVs

SAMPLE / TEMPLATE CV

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Tell them you are who they're looking for

PERSONAL STATEMENT
3-part statement
Top-reviewed customer service professional with 99% approval rating over 10 years of experience. Qualified negotiator and 3 times staff award winner at X Corp for operational excellence and customer liaison. Leadership of pilot tests for cutting-edge live support systems. Currently seeking a challenging, fast-paced operations and customer support role in an expanding sustainability-focused organisation, where I can add further value with my personal involvement in environmental responsibility.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE *Optional section – useful for career change or technical roles*

- Advanced negotiation
- Remote team leadership
- Sustainability expertise
- Live support super-user
- Bilingual (English - Spanish)
- In-house trainer qualification
- Multi-site co-ordination
- Operations management
- Mental Health First Aider

These must be keywords / essential or desirable criteria.

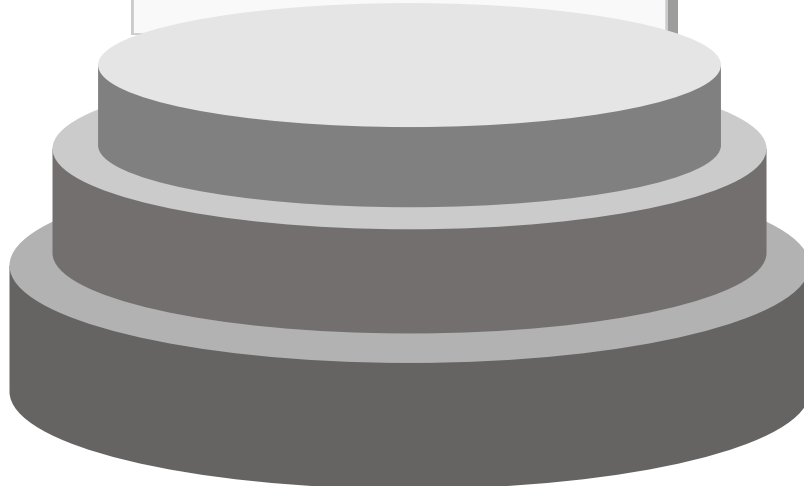
EXPERIENCE
Reverse chronological order
▶ **Customer Liaison & Operations Executive** (X Corp – 2015-present)
ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3 times annual staff award winner for performance
- Led 4 pilot tests of live support systems and made business case for investment
- Established vulnerable client taskforce & reduced discrimination complaints by 66%

RESPONSIBILITIES

- System testing
- Partner liaison
- Delivery coordination
- Warehouse supervision
- Remote team leadership
- Live support superuser

Keywords wherever possible



CV Writing

Your Promotional Material

Employers spend less than 2 minutes reading your CV.

In fact, that's a really long time by some estimates, which suggest it can be under 10 seconds, particularly if it's obviously not well constructed or uses bad spelling or grammar.

Fortunately, putting a good CV together isn't difficult, although it should take you some time, and the effort you put in will come across to the reader and work to your advantage.

In this guide, we'll cover 10 steps to make your CV as good as it can be:

1. Follow instructions
2. Do your homework
3. Format and length
4. Title
5. Personal statement
6. Experience section
7. Education section
8. Other sections
9. Final checks
10. Template / Example CV

CV Writing

Your Promotional Material

1 Follow instructions (!)

I know, I know. Really obvious stuff. But you'd be amazed how many people don't read the application guidance.

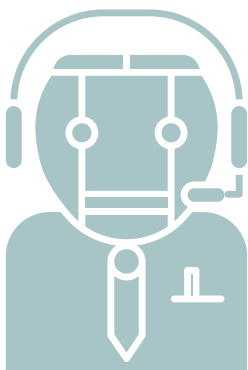
So send exactly what you're told to. If it's a form-based application and it says 'No CVs', don't send a CV hoping it will impress someone. It will do the opposite, or at best will waste a lot of your time.

2 Do your homework



Each CV must be tailored to the organisation and role you're applying to. Generic, unfocused CVs will be spotted immediately and binned.

So research the organisation. Conduct some informational interviews. Go through the job description and person specification with a fine-toothed comb and extract the keywords they're using. Make sure you use them prominently. There are no points for being a thesaurus here. It's not a vocab test. You need the right words to be picked up during a very quick scan of your document.



And that might mean a visual or a digital scan: many recruiters use Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) (not to mention the ever-unfolding AI landscape) which pick up specific words the company is looking for. Whether human or computer, make it easy for them to understand that you're in the running for the role.

CV Writing

Your Promotional Material

3 Format and length

Keep it brief. Your CV should be a maximum of 2 sides of A4 – as a rule.

In some cases, more than 2 sides is OK – for example, if you're going for a particularly technical role and it's common and expected to list a large number of skills or qualifications. Sometimes, academic CVs or CVs for particularly senior positions should take 3 or 4 pages. Rarely, you might find that some companies regularly appoint candidates on the basis of longer CVs

So do your research. Speak to people employed at the company you're applying to, look on Glassdoor and social media. But if you can't find anything to tell you otherwise, stick to 2 pages, however hard it might be to cut your experience down.

Font Font

Use a professional sans font (not Comic!) such as Arial or Calibri. The body text should be a maximum size of 11. Your section headings can be a little larger, say around 14, and can also be in bold.

Visuals

Your CV should look well laid out with plenty of white space to make it easy on the eye. Don't be tempted to try and stand out from the crowd by being kooky with colours or weird layouts.

Colours

You can use two colours, but keep it professional and minimal. It's OK to use a different colour for the headings or place a simple bar down one edge.

CV Writing

Your Promotional Material

When it comes to the digital format, provide whatever they ask for. Save a word version and a pdf version so that you can stay flexible.

Should you use CV templates? It depends. If they keep to all of these rules, then yes, you can. But be aware that most have been created by graphic designers and aren't backed up by solid evidence or recruiter advice.

A word about section order

The 'traditional' approach is to write your header, then your personal statement, then your experience, then your education, and then perhaps some skills and interests at the end.

This is fine if you're applying for a role that's a very close fit with your previous experience. But if you're changing career, or applying for a very technical role, it can often be a good idea to begin with a short section called 'Skills' or 'Professional Expertise' depending on the context.

Your skills section here is usually a bullet-point list (sometimes with a little information under each point) which really strongly SIGNPOSTS your suitability so that the hiring manager doesn't have to sift through your experience to pick it out themselves.

And to be clear: your skills are the KEYWORDS, i.e. write what they're looking for. The small information underneath can personalise it, if necessary.

See the CV template at the end for an example of how this works in practice.

CV Writing

Your Promotional Material

4 Title

Don't write 'curriculum vitae' at the top. The title is your name. It should be placed at the top of the first page, in larger, bold text. This is the title of the whole document but it also kicks off your contact section. So underneath / next to your name make sure you write your location (just the town, unless you've been asked to include your full address), your telephone number, and your email address.

RONNIE SCOTT

CONTACT

Location: London

07887 778777

ron@scott.com

ronscott.com

 ron-scott

Use a professional sounding email address. This doesn't mean you have to have your own domain. Great if you do, but otherwise just avoid nicknames and weird usernames and funny pseudonyms. Set up a new account with gmail or a similar provider and get an address as close as possible to yourname@gmail.com or similar.

You can also include your unique LinkedIn URL here, so long as it's up to date and optimised, and any other social media handles that you feel would add value, for example, because you use the accounts for impressive professional posting that's relevant to the position you're applying for. Have regard to your local laws - which almost certainly means don't include personal information such as age, date of birth, ethnicity, or marital status. Don't include a photograph unless it's standard practice in your country (it's not in the UK).

CV Writing

Your Promotional Material

5 Personal Statements

A personal statement is also known as a personal profile or a CV summary. This is a short paragraph underneath your contact section which summarises with impact who you are as a professional and what value you'd bring to the organisation.

Your CV personal statement has to be tailored very tightly to the application.

Your statement should be up to 5 sentences long, or between 50 and 200 words - but aim to achieve impact at the lower end of this scale. This is your chance to impress, or at least, entice the reader to move down to the rest of your CV. If they don't like your statement, they might not go any further.

So what should go in your personal statement? It should say:

1. **Who you are**
2. **What value you can bring to THIS organisation in THIS role**
3. **Your career goals**



CV Writing

Your Promotional Material

1. Who you are

So, who are you?

If your answer to this question is anything other than a very close match with the job description, think twice. It's certainly true that some people land roles despite being quite different from the job description and person specification. But this is rare, particularly for competitive positions.

To begin with, read through all of the bumph that comes with the job ad. Now put it all to one side, and write in one sentence on a new piece of paper who this company's ideal candidate would be. Imagine you're marketing this person as a commercial product.

For example, let's say it's a project manager role. You look at all the keywords cropping up in the description and specification, and you spot top themes of customer focus and commercial mindset.

So 'who you are' is a "customer-focused, commercially-minded project specialist".



But hold up a second. If the skills and experience on your CV don't support this, then don't write it.

Consider instead whether this is a good investment of your time and energy if you're not a close match with the position.

CV Writing

Your Promotional Material

A word about reframing

People can get uncomfortable with this. Make no mistake: I never advise anyone to be too creative, or ever get fictional.

But let's get real. Your CV is PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL and you need to REFRAME your skills and experience to convince others of the value you bring. Other people are doing it, so you need to as well, unless of course you already happen to be a perfect fit.



So, in summary, when you start your personal statement, you want them to read that you're exact who they're looking for.

You could write this in the first person, and that wouldn't be wrong, but it has more impact and professionalism if you write in the third person in a truncated way.

So instead of saying "I am a top-reviewed customer service professional" you might say "Top-reviewed customer service professional (with... / who...)"

CV Writing

Your Promotional Material

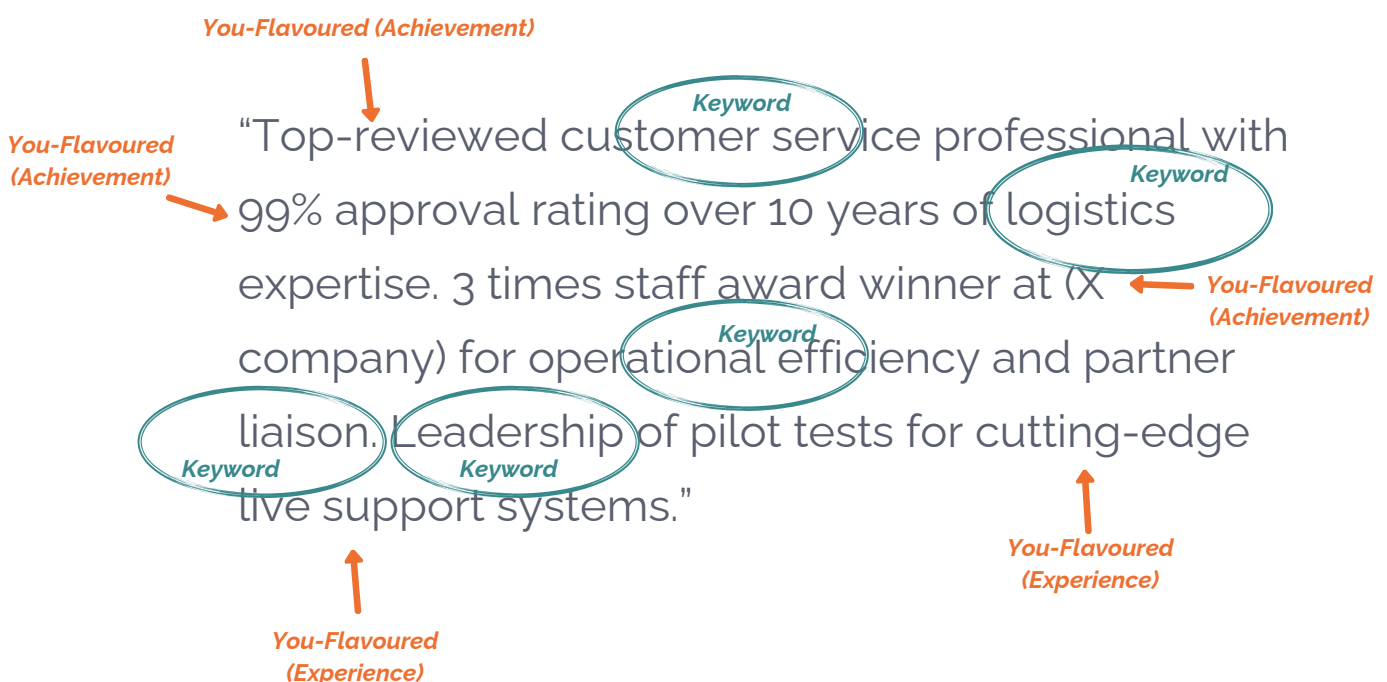
2. What value you offer

Here, you're looking to sell yourself by combining your key strengths, skills and achievements to match what this particular organisation is looking for.

Do this by cherry-picking the most impressive skills, experience and achievements from the CV content you've listed under your statement.

You could also see this as re-writing the job description or person specification (PS). But whereas the PS is generic and bland, your statement is punchy and you-flavoured. Give them the most important keywords from the job ad, but in the context of your skills and experience.

Don't just throw general claims in this sentence or two, but back it up with some hard data.



CV Writing

Your Promotional Material

3. Your career goals

Don't go long-term, general or inflated here. A vague, generalised career objective has been shown in research to be worse for outcomes than no objective at all.

So don't say "I'm ambitious and want to rise up the ranks to the top leadership" or anything anywhere near that dreadful. Put simply, tell them you're looking for this kind of role at this kind of company. So, in the last step you made the PS you-flavoured. Now it's time to make your career goals **them-flavoured**.

But don't overdo it. If this is a role that's presented in a unique way it's pretty unlikely it was your exact intended move.

"Top-reviewed customer service professional with 99% approval rating over 10 years of logistics expertise. Qualified negotiator and 3 times staff award winner at (X company) for operational efficiency and partner liaison. Leadership of pilot tests for cutting-edge live support systems. **Currently seeking a challenging, fast-paced operations and customer support role in an expanding sustainability-focused organisation, where I can add further value with my personal involvement in environmental responsibility.**"

← You-Flavoured

CV Writing

Your Promotional Material

Some other tips for writing your personal statement

KEYWORDS NOT FLUFF

Use the words they want you to use. If they say they want someone ambitious or a 'team player', use those words. But more often than not, 'ambitious' and 'team player' are cringeworthy. Avoid cliches or general words that aren't backed up by hard evidence.



- I am a...
- I have done this keyword.
- I have also done this other keyword.
- I am now looking for a (this kind of role).
- I would like to move to a (this kind of company) because it fits with my (interests / values / ambitions etc).

STRUGGLING TO WRITE THIS?

If this kind of narrative is difficult for you to write, you could consider bullet points instead, but follow the same overall process.



CV Writing

Your Promotional Material

6 Experience section

YOUR CV IS NOT A RECORD OF YOUR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE.



Your CV is **promotional material**. What you're trying to promote is you as the *ideal candidate* for this role. As before, think of it as re-writing the job advertisement, but *you-flavoured*.

If you don't make this mistake, you'll instantly put yourself ahead of most other candidates.



Key point

That means you shouldn't write everything you've done in your career.

In an ideal world, there would be nothing in your CV that isn't asked for in this job description or person specification. In practice, there will be some things. For example, a gap in your employment history needs explaining. And if your last job was different – say, a data entry supervisor – you probably have to say part of the role was supervising people entering data – even if it's not what you're currently applying for.

But the important point is this:

There will be some things in your career that you're especially proud of, which you feel make you very impressive, and which you think every employer should want to know about. You need to stop yourself. If it doesn't relate strongly to proving your value to THIS organisation in THIS role, you must force yourself to leave it out.

CV Writing

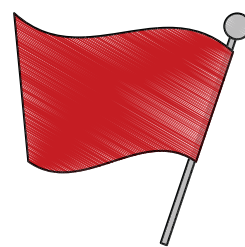
Your Promotional Material

Specific tips

- Use keywords to match your responsibilities and achievements to the current application and use statistics to back up your achievements. Did you improve or reduce something? By what percentage? How many people did you help?
- Write using strong active verbs, i.e. 'led' / 'delivered' / 'generated', rather than 'did' or 'was required to' or 'was part of'.
- You don't need to include experience over 10 years old, unless you feel it will add particular value.

Employment gaps

An UNEXPLAINED gap can be a huge red flag to a recruiter, so if your CVs have been hitting a brick wall and you have a gap you haven't acknowledged, that's probably got a lot to do with it.



Reframe it, don't hide it. How you reframe it will obviously depend on the reason for the gap, and on the position you're applying for.

However you approach it, make sure you demonstrate that you were productive during that time. What did you purposely achieve? How did you stay up to date with industry news and developments? Be honest, but avoid unnecessary detail. If the gap is now, make sure you give a positive professional reason why you're returning to work.

CV Writing

Your Promotional Material

7 Education section

Clearly provide your qualification, subject, grade, institution and date of achievement. Don't include modules or coursework unless they're highly relevant.



If you're really experienced, this section can probably be shorter. If you have a brief professional record, you can make this longer as long as you don't dilute it, so use the extra depth to highlight relevant strengths, skills and achievements.

8 Other sections

You could choose to include all manner of other sections, if appropriate for the role, and if it's something it will be valuable to highlight – but ONLY if it's genuinely useful. For example:

- Publications
- Teaching
- Research
- Memberships and Accreditations
- Hobbies and Interests

CV Writing

Your Promotional Material

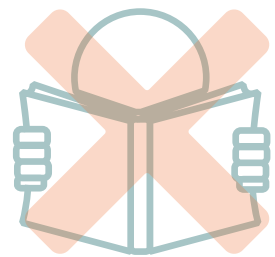
A word about Hobbies and Interests

This is a tricky one. Hobbies and Interests is perhaps the most common additional section gobbling up lovely blank space at the bottom of your already-crammed CV.

Here the thing: if you do include a hobbies section, it needs to be impressive. It must make you stand out from other candidates in a way that this particular employer is likely to find notable.

This could be something to do with the requirements or subject matter of the role, or something more widely about the organisation, whether it's the values or mission of the company or the likely cultural fit.

At all costs, avoid saying generalities like 'reading' or 'socialising'. Both might be true, but unless they're relevant and you write them in a more specific and impressive way, you may actually harm your chances of being hired.



A word about References

You shouldn't add the full details of referees to your CV unless asked to. If there's space, just write 'References available on request'.

CV Writing

Your Promotional Material

Optimise your CV: Final Checks

When you've finished your draft and you're looking it over, give your CV a bit of SPIT and polish:

S

Send and Save: have you double-checked the requirements? Are you confident they want a standard CV? Do they want it in Word, pdf or some other format? Have you saved a copy before you send it, and if you've modified a previous CV, have you 'saved as' so that you keep both versions? Use your name in the filename so that it's obvious and manageable through the chain.

P

Professional: is the format clear, minimal, with plenty of white space and minimal colour use? Are the headings distinct from the body text? Is your font style and size appropriate? Is your language snappy and formal, and well proof-read? Have you promoted yourself, rather than listing your work history?

I

Impact: does your personal statement pack a punch? Put yourself in the shoes of your intended reader. Would they be impressed? Is your statement concise? Does it tell them who you are, the value you can bring, how you're different from the competition, and how this role is a great match for your career objective? Do your experience, qualifications and skills clearly match the role? Do you highlight your achievements using hard data?

T

Tailored: Do you use all the right keywords from the job description and person specification? Do you avoid generic cliches? Remember that from the hiring manager's perspective, this document is really about them and their organisation, not you. Are you offering them what they've asked for? Does it demonstrate an awareness of who they are and what they want?

ALEX WILLIAMS

LOGISTICS CUSTOMER EXPERT

Tell them you are who they're looking for

CONTACT

Location: London

07123123456

alex@awilliams.com

awilliams.com

 alex-williams-89

PERSONAL STATEMENT

3-part statement

Top-reviewed customer service professional with 99% approval rating over 10 years of logistics expertise. Qualified negotiator and 3 times staff award winner at X Corp for operational efficiency and partner liaison. Leadership of pilot tests for cutting-edge live support systems. Currently seeking a challenging, fast-paced operations and customer support role in an expanding sustainability-focused organisation, where I can add further value with my personal involvement in environmental responsibility.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE

Optional section – useful for keyword placement, and otherwise particularly for career change or technical roles

- Advanced negotiation
- Remote team leadership
- Sustainability expertise
- Live support superuser
- Bilingual (English - Spanish)
- In-house trainer qualification
- Multi-site co-ordination
- Operations management
- Mental Health First Aider

These must be keywords / essential or desirable criteria.

WORK HISTORY

Reverse chronological order

► Customer Liaison & Operations Executive

(X Corp – 2015-present)

ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3 times annual staff award winner for performance
- Led 4 pilot tests of live support systems and made business case for investment
- Established vulnerable client taskforce & reduced discrimination complaints by 66%

Specific info & stats

RESPONSIBILITIES

- System testing
- Delivery coordination
- Remote team leadership
- Partner liaison
- Warehouse supervision
- Live support superuser

Keywords wherever possible

► Customer Support Assistant

(Waddleston Deliveries – 2011-15)

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Designed staff rota leading to 15% call wait decrease
- Volunteer Waste Reduction Marshall
- Acting customer support manager 2014-15

RESPONSIBILITIES

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| • Customer satisfaction | • Quality Assurance | • Health & Safety monitor |
| • Bilingual call monitoring | • Self-tasking | • In-house trainer |

► Delivery technician

(Tanker Breweries – 2008-11)

ACHIEVEMENTS

- 100% audit pass rate
- Manager commendation for performance
- Increased near-miss reporting by 50%

Can reduce detail for older roles unless directly relevant.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| • Warehouse safety monitor | • Delivery completion | • Database administration |
| • Manual handling | • Partner liaison | • Audit officer |

EDUCATION & QUALIFICATIONS

- Advanced customer negotiator (CPD, 2023)
- Conflict and negotiation skills (CPD, 2019)
- Leading teams safely (2017)
- In-house trainer qualification (CPD, 2016)
- Customer communications management (2014, 2018)
- BSc Environmental Studies (Warwick University, 2010)

*Keep it relevant.
Keep it brief.*

REFERENCES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST
