

A quick guide to

CVs &

Applications

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**myCareer**

A CV is an essential part of any job search, not to mention a great way to put all your skills, experience, and qualifications in one place. In fact, a well written CV could be the difference between getting an interview and not being considered for the role.

Some employers may ask you to submit a CV and covering letter, whereas others may ask you to complete an application form. However you are asked to apply, you will be drawing on similar information - your past experience, qualifications, and suitability for the job. There is no such thing as a perfect CV but this guide will help you understand what they are all about, and how to make yours work harder for you.

Have a go at the CV Builder, an interactive tool to help you write your own CV on myCareer.

# The basics

There is no one format for a CV, but it must do a good job of selling you to a prospective employer. Employers will only take a brief look so your CV needs to be short, punchy and emphasise the information relevant to each job.

Your CV could generally include:

## Your name

First name and surname.

## Your contact details

Your location; email address; telephone number; LinkedIn URL (if you have a LinkedIn profile, make sure it contains a professional photo and relevant information).

## Personal profile

A short 'selling' statement summarising what you can offer relevant to the job.

## Relevant experience

Include information on your employer; job title; your start/ end dates. Then use bullet points (starting with a verb) stating what your role involved and what impact you had on the company and/or its customers.

## Education & qualifications

Include names of relevant degree modules and, if you have completed/are completing a dissertation or relevant coursework, what this has focused upon.

## Skills

Relevant skills for the job role.

## References

Can state 'references available on request', or two work and study contacts.

## Ace that personal profile

Your personal profile sits at the top of your CV below your name and contact details. It is an introduction to you, explaining your skills and strengths and what you are looking for.

It should be no more than 4 or 5 lines, and it may be the section that will encourage an employer to read on or not! This can be the hardest part to get right, to sum up and sell yourself, whilst not over generalising or making wild claims.

### Three things to include:

- **Who you are:** e.g. 'An Environmental Studies graduate from the University of Worcester, with extensive fieldwork experience in natural habitat surveying.'
- **What you can offer:** e.g. 'With a proven track record of time and project management, along with technical skills.'
- **Your career plans:** Even if you are not sure about your longer term plans, try to steer clear of general statements such as 'I want to take on new challenges.' Instead be specific and relevant to the opportunity. e.g. 'Now looking for an environmental surveying opportunity in the construction industry to utilise and further my surveying skills.'

Keep it short. Don't forget your covering letter will also give you the chance to highlight your achievements and show how they are relevant to the employer.

## Make the most of your achievements

All too often achievements are hidden on the second page, or within a dense block of text. Your past achievements are a great way of showing how you have skills which could be useful to an employer.

### Map out your achievements

Think about the things you have done which you are really proud about, whether this is through study, work experience, part time work or other activities.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Managing a team
- Achieving the Worcester Award
- Reaching or beating targets
- Academic scholarships
- Reducing costs
- Simplifying an activity or process
- Writing a blog
- Starting a new business

### Draw out your skills

What skills do these achievements demonstrate? For example:

- Commercial awareness
- Leadership
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Determination
- Time management
- Resilience

If possible include a measure of success, e.g. 'As Social Secretary of the Cheerleading society, I increased attendance at social events by 30%.'

Complete the Prove Your Employability skills audit on page 20 to think about which skills you can demonstrate.

## CV checklist

Is your CV looking its best? Review your CV alongside the following questions to find out:



Is the most relevant information on the first page?



Is the most space allocated to the most appropriate information for the role?



Does your personal profile highlight:  
a) your current situation;  
b) your strengths for the role;  
c) the type of role you are seeking?



Are the skills you have highlighted specific to the job and evidenced with examples?



Does your experience highlight action and impact rather than duties?



Does it have a clear structure and consistent format?



Is it 2 pages or less?



Has it been checked and re-checked for spelling, punctuation and grammar?

... and here are some things that shouldn't be included:



Age or date of birth



Photograph



Marital status and children



National insurance number



Salary details for previous jobs



Driving licence details (unless the job involves lots of driving)

# Example CVs

There are two most frequently used formats for CVs. Many people create a CV that is a combination of both. It just depends what works for you!

## Standard format

Where you list your most relevant experience and qualifications. This is most commonly used by students and new graduates who have more limited work experience

Before you start writing, read the advert carefully so you know what skills and experience the employer is looking for and therefore what you need to show in your CV. Check if there is a person specification which lists the requirements in full.

## Skills based format

Where you group your achievements or activities under headings relevant to the job role. This can be used to good effect if you have plenty of skills and experiences from different parts of your life, or if you are a job changer.

The following section gives examples of CVs in both formats in response to the job advert below:

## Marketing Assistant Spotted Gecko

**Location:** Worcester

**Salary:** £24,000 per year

We are a dynamic and fast-expanding marketing agency based in the heart of Worcester. We're now seeking a Marketing Assistant to help us to expand our client base and our use of social media.

### The successful applicant will:

- Have excellent verbal and written communication skills
- Demonstrate a good understanding of digital marketing, including paid social, email, and web
- Be qualified to degree level (or equivalent)
- Have an aptitude for data analysis, including Google analytics or similar
- Possess IT skills including use of Microsoft Excel, Word and PowerPoint
- Be a proactive self-starter with strong attention to detail
- Work well under pressure

In return we offer a starting salary of £24,000 per year, a pension scheme and 20 days holiday.

If you're the person we're looking for, please send us a CV and covering letter.

## Example of standard CV

Make sure that you edit your URL as the one allocated by LinkedIn can look rather long and untidy.

A profile with impact should summarise:  
1. Who you are  
2. Your strengths for the role  
3. The role you are seeking

Use a verb to start each of your bullet points. This will have more impact and you will sound more capable.

Concrete data demonstrates how effective you were, and employers can imagine what you can do for their company.

As we read English from left to right, make sure key information is on the left hand side of the page. Dates are less important and should be on the right hand side.

### Jake Williams

12 Hyacinth Avenue, Worcester WR16 2FH  
wiljake24@gmail.com - 07623 444213 - uk.linkedin.com/jwill24

#### PROFILE

A final year BSc (Hons) Psychology undergraduate with 3 years experience working in a range of marketing-related roles. Adept at using social media to reach a wider audience, resulting in increased engagement and company revenue. Communicates well verbally, in writing and through electronic means. Now seeking a marketing role that will utilise and develop existing marketing skills and expertise.

#### MARKETING EXPERIENCE

##### Student Ambassador, University of Worcester

October 2021 - Present

- Represented the University at a variety of on and off-campus activities including taster days, open days and campus tours.
- Assisted prospective students and their families to find out more about higher education and student life at the University of Worcester.
- Produced and developed presentations using PowerPoint and Prezi to audiences of up to fifty people.

##### Events Officer, Entrepreneurs' Society

October 2021 - July 2022

- Organised events: invited external speakers; booked rooms and refreshments; designed and issued flyers; advertised events using print, online and social media.
- Devised copy for, and issued regular updates on, society events using Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
- Arranged and actively contributed to committee meetings, suggesting ways this new society could promote itself and widen its student membership.
- Increased membership by 50% in subsequent three months.
- Created and updated the society's website, using PHP.

##### Marketing Assistant (Summer Placement), Market First

June 2021 – August 2021

- Proof read marketing materials, both print and online.
- Drafted marketing emails and sent them to customers and sales prospects.
- Produced and analysed sales figures in spreadsheets and reports to inform the company's marketing campaigns.
- Presented findings at a management meeting, using PowerPoint and Excel, and answered questions.

##### Fundraiser, Macmillan Cancer Support

October 2020 - April 2021

- Initiated various fundraising campaigns on campus, including tea parties and bake offs, raising £2,050 to date.

## EDUCATION & QUALIFICATIONS

### University of Worcester

2020 - 2023

BSc (Hons) Psychology (expected to achieve a 2:1)

Relevant modules include:

- Research Methods: analytical and research techniques, including data analysis.
- Business Psychology: behaviour at work; human resources.
- Work-based: psychology in the work environment: motivation, leadership, conflict.
- Interpersonal Communication Processes and Skills: relationship formation.
- Applying Psychology to the Real World: how psychological theory and practice have infiltrated everyday life.

Achieved the 'Worcester Award' which recognises work experience and participation in employability and personal development activities. Assessed via written application, interview and presentation.

### Pleasant Hills Secondary School

2013 – 2020

3 'A' Levels: Psychology; Business Studies; Biology  
8 GCSEs (A\*-C): including English and Maths

## ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

### Sales Assistant, Galaxy Sales

September 2018 – December 2019

- Advised customers on company products, answering their queries and discussing benefits of items under consideration.
- Used electronic sales tills to log purchases and update stock system.
- Resolved customer complaints: utilised excellent listening and questioning skills.

### Volunteer Mentor, Pepsi Youth Project

May 2019 – December 2020

- Provided 1-1 mentoring support for young people aged 11-19.

## INTERESTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

**Music:** singing in a choir; playing the trumpet.

**Writing:** blogging about overseas travel experiences at [www.mytravelblog.com](http://www.mytravelblog.com)

## REFERENCES

The Registrar  
University of Worcester  
Henwick Grove  
Worcester WR2 6AJ  
Email: [reference@worc.ac.uk](mailto:reference@worc.ac.uk)

Marjorie Whitley  
Market First  
Summer Row  
Worcester WR9 3QQ  
Email: [mjwmarket1st@mfirst.org.uk](mailto:mjwmarket1st@mfirst.org.uk)  
Tel: 01905 333102

Mention any modules or coursework that may be relevant. Highlight subject knowledge, particularly if you don't have much other relevant experience.

You don't need to list all of your GCSEs and grades, unless the employer asks you to do so.

Voluntary and unpaid roles can give you valuable experience and skills to talk about in your CV.

If you are including information on your hobbies/ interests, be as specific as possible. E.g. if you enjoy reading, say what you like to read e.g. Contemporary Literature.

If you are seeking a reference from a University staff member, direct the employer first to the University's Registrar.

## Example of skills based CV

You don't need to start by telling people this is a CV. The first words on your CV should be your name, displayed in a larger font size than the rest of the text.

Rather than provide your full postal address, you may choose to give a broader location.

Mention any modules or coursework/ project work that may be relevant to the role. It can be especially important to highlight subject knowledge, if you have not had much direct experience of this career sector/role at this stage.

This CV is written in the skills/ functional style i.e. achievements & experience are grouped under the criteria the employer identified in the job advert.

### Anne Davies

Worcester, Worcestershire

adjdavies@sky.com - 07555 545523 - uk.linkedin.com/davies967

#### PROFILE

A final year BA (Hons) Business, Marketing & Advertising student seeking an entry-level position in marketing to utilise the data analysis, IT and communication skills developed through previous employment and voluntary work. Successfully combines study with work and other commitments thereby demonstrating enthusiasm, energy and ability to work well under pressure.

#### EDUCATION & QUALIFICATIONS

##### University of Worcester

2020 - 2023

BA (Hons) Business, Marketing & Advertising (expected to achieve a 2:1)

Relevant modules include:

- Strategic Marketing - Achieving Competitive Advantage
- Creative Communications - Ideas and Impacts
- Contemporary Marketing Communications - Selling and Sales Management
- Contemporary Advertising - Apps, Guerilla, Viral and More
- Independent Study: "Impact of COVID19 on hospitality"

#### RELEVANT SKILLS

##### Communication Skills

- Liaised with customers, prospective customers and suppliers: face-to-face, by telephone and via email.
- Drafted promotional leaflets on Charley Stanley's new products and created PowerPoint presentations for use during public tours of the manufacturing plant.
- Organised and attended promotional events to raise awareness of company products.
- Proof read public information materials whilst working for Rothermere Borough Council checking grammar, punctuation, spelling and attention to company style.

##### Social Media Skills

- Utilised social media - including Facebook; Twitter; and Instagram – to raise awareness of Charley Stanley's product lines. This helped to enhance public awareness of the company and increase their market share by 15%.
- Expanded the company's potential client database by undertaking research via social media: Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.
- Updated Charley Stanley's website, and created websites for friends and voluntary groups using PHP programming.



## IT and Analytical Skills

- Used Excel to analyse sales figures, reporting them to the manufacturing company's Marketing Manager to inform operational planning. Led to the identification of gaps in company marketing strategy and the targeting of advertisements for key groups.
- Used Google analytics to aid strategic planning – resulted in the development of two new products.
- Maintained and updated Charley Stanley's databases covering clients, prospective clients, product lines and pricing.
- Competent in use of Word, Powerpoint, Excel and Outlook. Everyday use for course work and previous employment.

## CAREER SUMMARY

**Sales Administrator, Charley Stanley LLP**                      October 2020 – August 2022  
Developed and maintained sales databases, liaised with external and internal customers and communicated on the phone and by email to sell a range of products.

**Office Assistant, Rothermere Borough Council**                      April 2018 – May 2020  
Produced reports and documents using Microsoft Word and maintained accounts in Microsoft Excel. Arranged meetings and organised room bookings, and updated the web pages.

## INTERESTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

- Creating websites: for local voluntary groups and friends' companies.
- Reading contemporary novels.
- Producing plays and pantomimes for local Amateur Dramatics Group.

## REFERENCES

Available on request

These headings relate to relevant skills from the Marketing Assistant role – see page 5.

Even though you have grouped your skills and achievements earlier in your CV, the reader will still need to know where you have worked and what your job titles were.

It is up to you whether you include your referees' details on your CV or not – it also depends on whether you have the room. Remember, if you do include information on your referees, to seek their permission first.

# Other graduate CVs

The same principles will apply to all CVs, which should be consistently formatted and logically structured, relevant to the opportunity sought, with the best information in the most prominent position. Visit [targetjobs.co.uk](http://targetjobs.co.uk) to see examples of sector specific CVs.



## Teaching CVs

Although most schools will ask you to complete a standard application, you may also be asked to complete a CV. Highlight your school and teaching experience including placements, paid or volunteer positions. List skills that will be useful in the role such as IT knowledge, languages and leadership ability and be sure to mention any interests relevant to teaching such as sports or musical abilities.



## Law CVs

Sometimes also known as a legal CV, this will generally be used when applying for training contracts. A legal CV will normally be 2 to 3 pages in length, and should be targeted towards specific employers, so it is important to do your research. A good covering letter is also very important to demonstrate your knowledge of that particular firm and why you want to work for that company.



## Creative CVs

These may be used for roles which require creative or artistic skills. These offer a great opportunity to showcase your talents and style, but don't go over board and confuse the reader. Sometimes a carefully selected font or touch of colour is all that is needed. Remember the basic principles of CV writing - the best and most relevant information should be most prominent, and think carefully about layout.



## Video CVs

These have been used in creative and customer facing roles, but the video CV is now being asked for in an increasing number of job applications. A good video CV can give an example of your personality and communication skills and can showcase your creativity.



## Academic CVs

These are used for research and teaching posts within universities and tend to have a different format. They are generally longer than standard CVs and focus more on publications and research activities than on general skills.

# CVs for part-time work

A CV is often required for part-time jobs, particularly in retail or hospitality. This should let the employer see at a glance what skills and experience you have, and whether you would be a good fit for their organisation.

It will often be shorter than a graduate CV, and will emphasise your skills and experience that are relevant to the role, such as customer service, communication skills, and reliability.

The most important information to the employer should be in a prominent position on the first page. For many employers offering part time work this will be your previous work experience rather than your study history.

The following two pages contain a couple of examples of CVs for part-time jobs. The standard CV may be more suitable if you have some work experience, whereas the skills based may work better if you do not.

Some shops, cafes or bars like you to take in your CV in person so that they can see your personal skills. So make sure you dress smartly and walk in with a smile and confident manner.

## Top tips

- Keep it to the point, exclude irrelevant information. One page if possible.
- Contact details, previous employer's names and dates should be easy to read at a glance.
- Emphasise your most relevant skills and experiences.
- Check your spelling and grammar!

## Standard CV for part-time work

A profile should be short and snappy. Show that you are looking for part time work, and what previous experience you have.

List your relevant experience before other unrelated experience. This can include both paid and unpaid.

Think about the skills most likely to be required for that role and offer examples of when you can show these.

There is no need to go into your Education in detail unless this is relevant to the role.

### ZOE SMITH

4 Elgar Way, St Johns, Worcester, WR2 7FG  
zsmith21@hotmail.com 07989 333 222

#### Profile

An enthusiastic and outgoing university student with several years of retail experience within busy targeted environments that required high levels of customer service. Now seeking a part-time retail role whilst studying.

#### Relevant Experience

##### Retail Assistant: Morrison's

Sep 2021 - Aug 2022

- Ensured that shelves were well stocked and products were attractively displayed. Worked quickly under pressure, demonstrating good observational and organisational skills.
- Served customers on tills: handled cash and credit/debit card transactions.
- Mentored new part-time staff, clearly explaining routines and duties.

##### Customer Services Assistant: TK Maxx

Sep 2019 - Aug 2021

- Consistently met individual monthly sales targets.
- Organised item transfers between stores, using stock control system.
- Successfully dealt with queries and resolved complaints: remained welcoming, polite and professional.
- Confident in asking for help when needed.

##### Shop Assistant (Volunteer): RSPCA

Jul 2019 - Aug 2021

- Designed eye-catching window and shelving displays.
- Served customers using cash till.
- Sorted donated items, including clothing and toys.

#### Relevant Skills

- Communication: enhanced communication skills when working with customers at Morrison's and TK Maxx.
- Organisation: successfully combined work and study by planning ahead and anticipating potential problems before they arose.
- Teamwork: played for school netball team; contributed to fundraising events.

#### Education & Qualifications

- BSc (Hons) Geography: University of Worcester 2021 - 2024
- 3 A Levels and 6 GCSEs, including English and Maths 2014 - 2021

References available upon request

# Skills based CV for part-time work

## JASON COTTERELL

Bromsgrove, Worcestershire  
jj.cotterell2@me.com 07998 234 876

### Profile

A responsible and reliable first year Business Management student with strong organisational ability. Reliable and flexible in relation to working hours. Seeking a part-time role in a retail or customer services environment whilst studying.

### Relevant Skills

#### Communication

- Delivered presentations during degree course: prepared PowerPoint slides and presented to students and senior lecturers; produced written reports and assignments.
- Mentored younger students at school, to enhance their English skills.

#### Numeracy

- Confident with numbers: achieved Maths A level and helped Year 9 students with maths homework. Currently undertaking finance module as part of degree.
- Led a team of 4 students to produce a business plan for an assessed project: encouraged each group member to work to their strengths, and kept team to time and on target.

#### Responsibility & Reliability

- Looked after neighbours' properties whilst they were away, trusted to ensure the security and maintenance of their homes.
- As captain of the school football team, always set a good example, attended training and coached younger students and team members.
- Working towards the Worcester Award, demonstrates initiative to go extra mile.

#### Education & Qualifications

University of Worcester 2022 - 2025

- BA (Hons) Business Management

Christopher Whitehead Language College 2015 - 2022

- 3 A Levels: Mathematics (B) Business Studies (B) and French (C)
- 9 GCSEs grade A\*-C, including Mathematics and English

#### Interests

Competing in the local football league, swimming, and playing the guitar.

References available upon request.

If there is room include your interests as these may give employers an indication of who you are.

# Covering letters

A covering letter is a tailored one-page letter that you send with your CV when applying for an advertised job. A good letter will increase your chances of getting an interview - it's worth sending a covering letter even if the employer does not request one.

In a covering letter, you should cover the following topics (in this order):

**Paragraph 1:** State what role you are applying for and where you saw it advertised.

**Paragraph 2:** Say why you are interested in the role and in the company.

**Paragraph 3:** Provide some examples showing how your skills, strengths and experience match those required by the role.

**Paragraph 4:** Say that you look forward to hearing from them and that you have attached your CV. Mention any dates when you are not available for interview.

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If you are emailing someone your CV, the text of your email should be your covering letter (don't attach it separately).

Make it easy for the recipient to read your email covering letter by:

- using plain text (no fancy formatting!)
- writing in short paragraphs
- putting spaces between paragraphs.


Remember to name your CV file with your name, e.g. 'CV - Zoe Smith'. It's surprising how many people attach a document simply called 'CV' - this creates extra work for the employer as they will need to rename your document to incorporate your name.

Now take a look at the example of a covering letter shown opposite.


## Covering letter checklist

Are your covering letters up to scratch and ready to send to employers? See how your letters match against the checklist below:


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 Is it addressed to a named person? If not, call and find out who to send it to.


---

 Does the format of your letter follow the structure outlined to the left?


---

 Does it focus on the needs of the company rather than your own?


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 Is it signed off correctly?  
If you know the person's name - then end your letter with *Yours sincerely*.  
If you don't know the person's name, and are saying Dear Sir or Madam, then end the letter with *Yours faithfully*.


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 Has it been checked and re-checked for spelling, punctuation and grammar?

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 If you are sending your letter via email, have you put the cover letter in the body of the email and attached your clearly named CV?

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 If you are sending a paper version, have you used a formal letter format? Does your CV and covering letter appear as a package with both using a similar style and font?

Ann Davies  
37 Petunia Close  
Worcester  
WR19 4FH

Ms P McBridge  
Spotted Gecko  
Petticoat Way  
Worcester  
WR1 11DF

2<sup>nd</sup> May 2023  
Job Reference: XQ/4567/J

Dear Ms McBridge

I am applying for the role of Marketing Assistant as advertised on indeed.com in April 2023. As a final year BA (Hons) Business, Marketing & Advertising student - predicted to achieve a 2:1, and with a range of relevant experience – I believe my skills and experience to be highly relevant to your requirements for the above position.

I have researched your company, and am particularly interested in your marketing campaigns, particularly the 'Working for You' campaign that you undertook for Worcester City Council - it addressed the public awareness issues that I experienced whilst working for a Council in North East England. I am also inspired by your company values of innovation and distinction and, if invited to interview, can provide examples of how I demonstrate them in my work, university and personal life.

My interest in marketing developed through the two roles that I held prior to embarking upon my University degree course: I worked as an office assistant within a local council and as a sales administrator in a manufacturing company. This led to my choice of degree course which I have thoroughly enjoyed.

Whilst working in the public and private sector I gained first-hand insights into marketing processes which will help to inform my work, if appointed, at Spotted Gecko. I learned how to develop positive and productive relationships with clients by answering customer queries, resolving their complaints, telephoning potential customers and utilising social media to expand the manufacturing company's client base and reach. In addition, I particularly enjoyed gathering and analysing data on sales and customers, and finding ways to increase customer awareness and sales through the use of social media.

I look forward to hearing from you and have attached a copy of my CV which provides further details on my career history and qualifications. I am available for interview at any time.

Yours sincerely

Anne Davies

Mention the job reference if the advertisement shows one.

Address the letter to the named person wherever possible, however 'Dear Sir or Madam' is acceptable as a formal greeting.

Give the title of the role. Say where you saw the role advertised.

Explain what led to your interest in the area and demonstrate your company research.

Demonstrate how you meet the skill requirements shown within the job advert.

State when you are available for interview.

Remember to sign off the letter correctly - see the guidance on page 14.

# Speculative letters

An increasing number of jobs are never widely advertised – these jobs are often filled through word of mouth or by people who have sent in a ‘speculative application’ by contacting a firm, with a CV and speculative letter, to say that they would like to be considered for a future vacancy.

## Which companies should I contact?

Identify companies that offer the type of work you are interested in. You can do this by:

- Looking at social media such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter; and/or searching for people doing your ideal job. What are their qualifications? What career path did they follow to get to that role? What LinkedIn groups are they members of?
- Researching companies using online and hard copy company/trade directories

This approach is likely to be more effective when applying to smaller companies rather than for companies that recruit high numbers of people as part of a graduate scheme.

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## How do I make a speculative approach?

Send an email along with your CV. However, because you’re not applying for an advertised job you won’t be able to tailor it specifically.

Look up job descriptions for similar roles or use careers sites to view job profiles, such as Prospects or targetjobs.

When making a speculative approach, ask for an opportunity to discuss possibilities rather than say you are looking for a specific job.

## Tips for making a speculative approach

For each company that you plan to approach, undertake some research and clarify:

- What interests you about that company
- How your skills match what they do/how they could use your skills
- Whether you could travel there/ move there if an opportunity become available
- The name of someone you could send your email/letter/CV to

Remember to keep your message concise and brief – you want to make it easy and quick to read.

Use LinkedIn to open up conversations - you can find out about jobs, who to contact, and any insider information.



Jake Williams  
12 Hyacinth Avenue  
Worcester  
WR16 2FH

Mr J Johnson  
People Forum  
Grundig Place  
London  
SE5 2TF

2<sup>nd</sup> May 2023

Dear Mr Johnson

I was interested to read that your marketing company will shortly be opening a new branch in Birmingham city centre.

I have researched your recent marketing campaigns, and am particularly impressed by the way in which you combine lateral thinking and creativity with an in-depth understanding of your target group's interests. Your 'Pocket Guru' campaign was particularly memorable and I would love to contribute, in some way, to your future work.

My BSc (Hons) Psychology course is reaching completion, and I am keen to use my insights and recent experiences of marketing – gained through work experience within marketing, sales and student organisations – to contribute to the launch and growth of your new Midlands-based venture.

I have attached my up-to-date CV and would welcome the opportunity to discuss any possible roles that may be available within People Forum. I am available to meet with you after 25<sup>th</sup> June, either in London or in Birmingham, and would be happy to speak with you by telephone or online if that would be more convenient for you.

Many thanks for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Jake Williams

# Application forms

At some point in your career, you are likely to be asked to complete a paper-based or online application form when applying for a job. On the following pages we give you some advice on completing application forms.

## Tips for completing an application form:

- ✓ Check the person specification to ensure you meet the essential criteria.
- ✓ Check the closing date & allow plenty of time to complete your application.
- ✓ Read the instructions carefully – the employer will be assessing your ability to follow instructions.
- ✓ Application forms often include a 'Personal Statement' or 'Supporting Information' section. Many decide who to interview based on the evidence you provide in this section, showing how you meet the person specification.
- ✓ Carefully check your form for spelling or grammatical mistakes.
- ✓ Book a careers appointment for feedback on how well you have matched yourself to the role.
- ✓ Check your referees are happy to provide a reference about you before naming them. Send them the person specification of the role so they know how to describe you when contacted.
- ✓ Keep a copy of your completed form to remind you of what you have said if you are called for interview.

## And here are some things to avoid:

- ✗ Don't lie! You will be found out.
- ✗ Don't make any mistakes or make poor use of grammar, spelling or punctuation.
- ✗ Don't just copy and paste information from your CV or from another application form – if you are completing a supporting statement you will need to write in a different style to that used on your CV. You will be responding to a different person specification for each application.
- ✗ Don't leave blank spaces or put 'see my CV'. Always respond in some way, even if it's with a dash or by writing 'not applicable' or 'N/A'. Even if you don't completely meet the person specification, try to include some closely related examples.
- ✗ Don't provide information that could be regarded as negative – for example, if asked why you are leaving your current role/why you left a previous role, never criticise the past employer.

## Competency-based questions

Some application forms will include 'competency-based' questions – they focus upon the behaviours, skills and knowledge for the job you've applied for - which require you to provide examples to demonstrate how you meet these competencies.

There are many different competencies you could be asked about - some frequently used ones include teamwork, problem solving, decision making and communication. The person specification will list them for the role.

A good way to structure your response to competency-based questions, both on an application form and at interview, is to use the STAR model.

<b>S</b> SITUATION	Provide a brief background of the situation/context you found yourself in when you used this skill.
<b>T</b> TASK	What were you required to achieve within this situation e.g. project requirements.
<b>A</b> ACTION	Describe the main actions or behaviours you demonstrated within the task and how you utilised the skill you are being asked about. This should be the majority of your answer.
<b>R</b> RESULT	What was the outcome as a result of your behaviour? Be as specific as possible i.e. grade obtained as a result, amount of money raised for a charity, etc.

Have a look at this example to see how to put the STAR framework into practice:

### SITUATION

"As a member of the University's Community Volunteering Society,"

### TASK

"I was part of a small team organising a Christmas event for residents of a local care home. The event involved eight students performing for the residents."

### ACTION

"I volunteered to be team leader. In this role, I identified what each team member's skills and interests were, allocated tasks, created an action plan, and maintained the team's focus and enthusiasm. I also developed links with the Drama Society by giving a presentation about our planned event and encouraging them to volunteer to take part."

### RESULT

"It was so well received that we have been invited back next Christmas and two other care homes have asked us to run similar events."

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### Top tips for competency-based questions:

Check the organisation's values (e.g. courage; integrity; pride; social responsibility; excellence). Our values drive our behaviours and by answering competency-based questions you can show your values and how they influence your behaviour. The employer will be looking for this in your answers.

Unless you're told otherwise, you can provide examples from your work, study, volunteering or personal life.

Ensure your examples are relevant to the questions asked and provide evidence of the behaviours/skills/knowledge looked for.

Don't make things up. If you're shortlisted, the interviewer may ask you to give further information on examples you provide.

# Prove your employability

The following are some of the skills frequently asked for by employers:  
Before writing your CV think about what skills you can show through your work experience, education, and activities & interests. Give examples below:

Skills	Work experience (paid and unpaid)	Education	Activities & interests
Verbal and written communication			
Working in a team Networking Negotiation			

Skills	Work experience (paid and unpaid)	Education	Activities & interests
Creativity and innovation  Adaptability  Problem solving			
Leadership  Drive and initiative  Motivating others			
Sector awareness  Project management			

# The main points

1

Put your most relevant skills and experiences in the most prominent position. Play around with the ordering of the sections so the most important information is on the first page. Consider separating your employment history into 'Relevant experience' and 'Other work experience'.

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2

Allocate space according to the importance of the information. Don't use ten lines on your GCSEs, and just one for your degree! Consider which of your experiences, education, or skills are more relevant for the role and give more space to them.

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3

Make your personal profile really say something. Summarise your current situation, what you can offer and career plans without over generalising. This is the first section an employer will see so should be really strong.

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4

Use your experiences to highlight action and impact rather than duties. Draw out skills involved and positive results rather than just a list of what you had to do. Emphasise those skills which will be important in the work you are applying for.

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5

Keep it clear with a logical structure and consistent formatting. Ensure your headings and indentations are consistent, always check spelling and grammar, and ask someone else to proofread the final version.



If you have a question that isn't covered by this booklet or would like to talk through your ideas with a member of the Careers & Employability team, send us a query or book a careers appointment on **myCareer**.



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