

YOUR CV

TARGETING YOUR CV TO THE ROLE YOU ARE APPLYING FOR IS ESSENTIAL TO GET TO INTERVIEW.

It's essential that you adapt your CV. Each time you apply for a job you need to tweak it to fit that particular role.

1. Start with the person specification or job description, as this lists exactly what skills the employer is looking for. These are the criteria your CV will be assessed by.
2. Think of examples from your work, internships, volunteering, study, interests, travel or home life that prove you have these job requirements. Choose examples that show you using the skills in a way that is similar to how they would be used in the role.
3. Plan the sections you need in your CV, then decide on section titles and order.
4. Incorporate your skills into the most relevant section/s of your CV, remembering that unpaid activity (eg volunteering,

involvement in clubs and societies) can be as valuable as paid work. What matters to employers is the skills you've developed. Make sure you've provided evidence for every job requirement.

5. Triple check ALL spelling and grammar and ask someone else to proofread the final draft. Many employers will regard even one error as an indication of poor motivation for the job and reject you on that basis. **L**

AD: Summer Internship Programme

At Diamond Plus Bank, we are committed to helping our people reach their capabilities. Our summer internships offer students real responsibility. You will need to be able to learn quickly, as you will be fully contributing members of a team and develop your skills for the financial industry. You will work alongside, and learn from, leaders within finance and be mentored by your team leader.

Through working with other bright, motivated people from the firm and undertaking responsibility you will gain valuable insights and experience to help you in your future career.

There is further, useful information in our articles on demonstrating your skills PAGE 25 and on speculative applications PAGE 35

CV Sections

Personal details

- Name, address, telephone number, email address.
- You don't need to include your date of birth, marital status or sex.
- Use a professional sounding email, such as your full name, rather than a nickname. If necessary, set up a new account.

Education

- University education – include any relevant modules or a dissertation title.
- A levels.
- Number of GCSEs (or equivalent).

Work experience

- Include both paid and voluntary work and any part-time or on-campus work you've done.

- Feature skills that are most relevant to the job you are applying for. You can split this into two sections: 'Relevant work experience', outlining directly related experience, and 'Other experience', listing everything else. Change the titles of these headings to reflect what's most important for the role, for example 'Research experience' or 'Communications experience'.

Skills

- IT, languages (including the level of competency) and any technical skills – for example, lab techniques.

Positions of responsibility

- This is optional: include it if you have any relevant responsibilities.

Interests

- List the skills acquired from leisure activities, club/society memberships, travel.

- Giving details will impress more than a vague statement, for example, 'Compete in regular half marathons, raising £1000 for Cancer Research last year' says more about you than simply 'Running'.

References

- If you do give references, then a good policy is to include one employer and one academic referee for jobs and two academic referees for courses. You can simply state 'References available on request'.

Length

- Most employers will expect the standard UK CV length of two pages.
- Academic CVs are often longer as you are required to include conferences, publications, etc.
- CVs for banking jobs or management consultancy should be no more than one page.

THIS CV IS WRITTEN FOR THE SUMMER INTERNSHIP WITH DIAMOND BANK. NOTICE HOW IT GIVES EXAMPLES TO DEMONSTRATE ALL THE SKILLS ON THE INTERNSHIP ADVERT ON THE PREVIOUS PAGE.

Samantha Chester
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EDUCATION & COURSES

2015–2018 BSc Economics, Queen's College, University of London

Modules include: mathematical methods in economics and business and microeconomics.

- Commercial awareness developed through study of financial markets as part of microeconomics.
- Improved oral communication skills and confidence through presenting to peers and lecturers seven times, both as a group of four and individually.

2008–2015 Hart Secondary School, Poole
A levels: mathematics (A), business studies (B), biology (B); **AS Level:** psychology (B)

10 GCSEs including mathematics (A*) and English (A)

- **Jan 2012, 'Principles of Trading', Haymarket Bank, on-site.**
 Increased commercial awareness through one day introduction to trading.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Sept 2015–Present P/t Administration Assistant, Nexus Training, London

- Entrusted with additional responsibility of researching viability of online enrolment and resources needed, which resulted in senior management team agreeing to put job out to tender.
- Built successful relationships with ethnically diverse client group to ensure an efficient service was provided and queries were answered quickly.
- Worked largely unsupervised and often completed tasks ahead of schedule, demonstrating self-motivation.
- Organised all administration work for 50 training courses, such as booking participants onto courses and completing all the related paperwork.
- Regularly recorded and analysed feedback forms to produce reports and presented to senior management team.

June 2013–Aug 2015 P/t Sales Assistant, Curry's, Poole

- Took the initiative to seek out training on various internal computer systems and to keep up to date with the latest developments in audio-visual technology, through reading magazines, websites and participating in online forums.
- Utilised interpersonal skills when liaising with colleagues at other branches and head office and dealing with external suppliers.
- Improved communication skills and assertiveness through regularly chasing up late deliveries or payments and handled customer queries and complaints.
- Dealt with financial transactions and used organisational skills to track stock levels and order products.

POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

- **Economics Society Committee member:** Worked closely with a team of seven, through weekly meetings, to increase society membership by 17%; organised and ran social and finance careers events and liaised with the department. In a team of three, organised and ran three social events/trips off-campus, with turnout of 40–50 at each one.
- **Football coach for local youth team:** Organising training and weekly matches, teaching, motivating and encouraging a squad of 15 young people, as well as providing discipline where necessary.

OTHER SKILLS & ACHIEVEMENTS

- Achieved 2nd place out of 27 teams in the Queen's College Enterprise Challenge. This involved developing a business plan in three hours, requiring the ability to learn new concepts quickly, and pitching it to a panel of experts from industry.
- **IT:** Intermediate level Word, Excel, Access and Powerpoint.
- **Languages:** Conversational German.

REFERENCES

Available on request

- It's obvious this is a CV as it starts with their name as a title.
- Begin with the most recent events and include current education.

- Flags up a skill outlined in the job description.
- Uses numbers to provide specific information, increasing the impact of her writing.
- Summarises GCSEs.
- Includes any relevant careers-related courses.
- Lines between sections, capitalised titles and bullet points make it easy to read.

- Includes a couple of modules which give relevant knowledge for the job, along with further details on content.
- Draws out the transferable skills outlined in the job description: responsibility, interpersonal/relationship-building ability, self-motivation.
- Uses examples to back up the skills: avoid at all costs just listing your skills.
- Again, draws out transferable skills outlined in job description: ambition, interpersonal skills.
- Uses this section to again show skills outlined in job description: teamwork and interpersonal skills.

- Choice of title highlights ability to take responsibility.
- Includes extracurricular careers-related activities.
- It is fine to write 'Available upon request'.

A final checklist

- 1 Does it look professional and can the reader find the information they need easily? Make your section headings stand out, using bold and/or a larger font.
- 2 Present your information, such as date layout, in a consistent way.
- 3 Remember to use reverse chronological order in your education and experience sections.
- 4 Check for spelling and grammar errors. Don't rely on a computer spellchecker!
- 5 Beware of using too many visuals or too much colour, unless you are going for design-related roles. Remember, content is always key.
- 6 If you are sending out your CV speculatively, send it directly to the manager of the department you are interested in and not HR. If you know someone in the organisation find out if they will pass your CV to the relevant person.

The profile debate

You don't have to have a 'profile' or 'career objective' at the top of your CV. It's really a matter of personal preference. If you do decide to include one, make it specific and ensure any statements regarding your skills are complemented by concrete examples.

Skill	What does it mean?	Examples of evidence
Written and verbal communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating information and ideas clearly and accurately. Using appropriate language, style and writing methods when communicating with different people in a range of situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wrote article for SU magazine to raise awareness of the low contribution to the Global Fund to fight malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS. Illustrated argument with photos and statistics, and provided clear instructions on what students could do to lobby for change.
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assigning or taking on clear roles and responsibilities within the team. Supporting others and encouraging co-operation. Having an awareness of the needs of others and responding flexibly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group coursework: contributed to group presentation, taking on my own research and helping others with theirs. Arranged session to practise material and timings.
Commercial awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowing how to talk to clients, establish their needs and identify opportunities. Understanding how an organisation works, how it makes a profit and what internal/external elements influence its business. Taking time to understand what is going on in your chosen industry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asked manager at my part-time retail job if I could spend a day at the head office in order to better understand how shop targets are set. Learned about negotiations with suppliers, the price of raw materials and the impact these have on retail prices. <p>See 'Commercial awareness' PAGE 28</p>
Attention to detail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring work is thoroughly checked for errors and omissions without compromising timescales. Following instructions carefully and accurately. Picking up on details in your work, whether in interactions with clients or in work documents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed data-entry project as a summer job, working with large volumes of data from numerous sources. Developed system for checking for accuracy and allocated time to allow for proofreading.
Time management (organisation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritising a workload to meet multiple deadlines. Planning use of time to ensure tasks are delivered to a high standard and to deadline. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managed a final-year project, while having a part-time job and a volunteering project. Set monthly goals and weekly tasks, which were reviewed regularly to ensure they were on track.
Adaptability and flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responding positively to change. Adapting to new situations quickly. Taking on a diverse range of tasks equally effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Took on group leader role for an SU volunteering project at the last minute to replace a sick member of the team. Quickly learned finance and client-record systems to ensure smooth continuation of project.
Responsibility and reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being trusted to manage tasks or deliver results. Taking a key role in an organisation and executing it successfully. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a part-time sales assistant, took on responsibility to cash up at end of the day, following security procedures. Trained new members of staff.
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leading a team or project group. Delegating and motivating others effectively. Encouraging input from others. Putting the group's or organisation's needs ahead of your own. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Led and inspired a new tennis team to train on a weekend. Created the post of Vice-Captain to support scheduling of matches, after consulting the rest of the team about problems with this issue.
Decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to select the best course of action from multiple alternatives and justify decisions logically. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Made the decision to cancel one of two society fundraising events after reviewing options and explained to members.
Initiative/self-starter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working without supervision. Tackling new duties or projects without help. Originating new schemes and methods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a part-time tutor, developed a new online portal to share ideas and resources with other tutors, including a chat zone to ask for advice and find cover for shifts.
Innovation and creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coming up with new and original ideas. Considering issues and dilemmas from a new perspective. Making an artistic contribution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a student mentor, suggested and developed new marketing campaign to encourage first-year students to sign up to the mentoring scheme.



EFFECTIVE COVER LETTERS

CONVINCE AN EMPLOYER THAT YOU ARE RIGHT FOR THE JOB AND THE ORGANISATION.

A cover letter is your opportunity to explain to an employer why you are applying to them, and how your skills, knowledge and experiences make you a good fit for the role and organisation.

You should communicate effectively to the reader:

- Why you want to work in their organisation.
- Why you want to work in that particular role.
- Why your strengths, skills and experience make you the right candidate.

Ideally your cover letter and your CV will be read together but you can never be sure, so try to make sure they can each stand alone. That means your cover letter should refer to key facts from the CV but should amplify rather than duplicate. Your CV should present more detailed evidence to back up the points you make in the cover letter. Keep your cover letter to one side of A4.

Structure and content

There is no ‘magic formula’ for cover letters, but the following can provide a helpful structure. Think of sections rather than paragraphs, since some aspects may require two paragraphs. These sections may appear in different orders for different applications.

Greeting

Always try to find a name, rather than a job title, as it demonstrates that you researched the organisation. ‘Dear Ms Smith’ is much better than ‘Dear Sir/Madam’ (avoid ‘To whom it may concern’). Remember the signing off rule of ‘yours sincerely’ if it is addressed to a named person and ‘yours faithfully’ if not.

Introduction

Include who you are, your degree subject, university and situation – recently graduated, about to graduate, penultimate year. Explain why you are writing (to apply for X position/looking for work experience) and where you saw the position advertised. Or, if it’s a speculative application, where you heard about the organisation.

Why them?

Use this section to tell the employer why you want this particular job, and why them rather than someone else.

By showing that you really know about the role and the company you can demonstrate your commitment and enthusiasm. Vague statements and blatant flattery don’t work; instead be specific and illustrate your opinions with some original points. Try this test: if you could remove the organisation’s name and replace it with that of a competitor, and it still makes sense, it’s not specific enough. Researching the organisation through their website, Twitter profile or LinkedIn page can help you.

Why you?

Make it easy for the employer to see why your skills, experience and personal attributes are right for the position by clearly linking them to the requirements of the job. Don’t try to cover all of your experience; just illustrate your selling points with three or four good, specific examples, backed up by evidence.

If you are applying for a job that has been advertised, and you have a person specification for the role, then the covering letter should address that in detail. Make sure you show the employer that you meet their stated requirements.

The ending

State your availability for interview and thank them for the time they have taken in reading your application. End on an optimistic and polite note. **L**

Top tips

- **Presentation** – if an application requires a cover letter it should be laid out formally as a letter. Keep it clear, well presented and visually attractive. Don’t cram too much on the page. Often you will be sending a cover email rather than uploading or attaching a formal letter, in which case dispense with elements such as addresses at the top.
- **Use positive language** – power words can illustrate your experiences in a really effective way. For example, ‘initiated’, ‘instrumental in...’, ‘succeeded in...’.
- **Be succinct** – remember this is an example of your written communication, so write in a clear, succinct and professional manner.

Shows motivation and commitment to the business area.

States clearly and concisely why she is writing and where she heard of the vacancy.

If possible, always send to a named person.

Dear Mr Jones,

I am a second year economics student at Queen's College, University of London, and would like to apply for the Summer Internship Programme with Diamond Plus Bank (DBP), as advertised on your website.

Studying A level economics sparked my interest in working in finance and my university studies and extra-curricular activities have confirmed my career choice. In November 2016 I attended a 'Working in Banking' careers panel which gave me a useful overview of roles and opportunities. After attending a lecture series 'Focus on: BRIC Economies' I became particularly interested in the challenges and opportunities the BRIC economies present, which is one of my reasons for applying to DPB, as I see you have a strong presence in Brazil. I am seeking an internship to develop my understanding of the industry further and to gain first-hand experience.

Demonstrate examples that meet the requirements set in the advertisement.

Uses numbers and concrete results to demonstrate impact.

In my role as committee member of the Economics Society, I worked closely in a team of seven to grow membership numbers by 17%. We met regularly to plan promotional campaigns and relied on one another to carry out the different elements of implementing the campaign. I am highly self-motivated, as demonstrated in my part-time role at Curry's, where I took the initiative to explore training options to further my team's knowledge about internal systems. My work at Nexus Training has enabled me to refine my communication style, where I have adapted my methods in order to successfully build relationships with an ethnically diverse client group.

Highlights commitment, and interest, by referring to conversation with an employee.

One of the attractions of DBP is the emphasis placed on individuals reaching their capabilities, through learning and taking responsibility. This was highlighted for me at the Queen's College Careers panel where I met a DPB Graduate Trainee. She gave examples of new projects she has delivered, which have had a real impact in the bank. This appeals to me, as someone who enjoys taking responsibility for achieving results, demonstrated in my role as football coach, where I was responsible for motivating and organising a squad of 15 to get to the finals of the Small League Championships. In addition, DPB has proven that a long-term investment strategy alongside sensitivity to local conditions can pay dividends, as seen by the raft of awards won in Russia over the last few years. I am very keen to work for a bank which has such a considered approach to investment.

Shows interest in the employer and demonstrates the research she's done.

I enclose a copy of my CV and hope I may be considered for the Summer Internship programme. I am available for interview at any time and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Ends succinctly without padding.

Samantha Chester

COMMON APPLICATION ERRORS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

AN APPLICATION FORM IS AN EMPLOYER'S FIRST IMPRESSION OF YOU SO IT IS IMPORTANT TO STEER CLEAR OF MAKING ANY EASILY AVOIDABLE SLIPS.

Too generic

- ✘ Generalised statements that are not backed up by evidence: 'I am a highly motivated team player who puts her best efforts into every task.'
- ✘ Generic statements about the company that could apply equally to another company: 'You are a reputable company with an exciting client portfolio and provide excellent training prospects.'
- ✔ Reading and analysing what the recruiter is looking for.
- ✔ Structuring your application and/or CV/cover letter around the skills, qualities and experience which match their requirements. Please see advice on CV and cover letters on pages 30 and 32.
- ✔ For competency questions on application forms use an approach such as STARR to structure your answer. Please see how to use STARR on page 26, and learn more about competencies on page 25.
- ✔ In a cover letter including specific points about the employer and why that attracts you to them and to this job.
- ✔ Always backing up the points you make in the application/CV/cover letter with specific examples as evidence: 'I demonstrated high levels of motivation by exceeding sales targets three months in a row in my part-time role at Simply Coffee.'

Spelling, grammar or typing errors – accuracy is crucial

- ✘ Copying and pasting sections carelessly
- ✘ Amending sentences without re-reading to make sure there are no extra words left from the last version (or words missing)
- ✔ Proofreading thoroughly, and not relying on spell-check.
- ✔ Asking someone else to proofread, as it is very easy to miss mistakes when you know what you intended to write.

Not following instructions

- ✘ Missing out an element of an application. For example, sometimes you are given the option of adding a cover letter. If you are offered that opportunity to sell yourself, take it. The recruiter is likely to be far less interested in an applicant who has not taken the trouble to do so.
- ✘ Exceeding word limits. With online applications the maximum number of characters may be set automatically, so if you try to exceed the maximum the last part of your answer will be lost. It is up to you to make sure you stay within the maximum. You do not need to use all the words allowed, but a response that is too short suggests you could do more to sell your skills and experience.

Writing in a manner that is too formal or too casual

- ✘ Using lots of long words to sound impressive
- ✘ Using clichés: 'I would relish the opportunity to hone my skills', 'I am passionate about...'
- ✘ Using contractions: 'I'm', 'didn't' etc
- ✘ Using colloquial language: 'My performance was on the money.' This sounds arrogant too.
- ✔ Write in a clear, concise and business-like style
- ✔ Use active words: 'analysed', 'coordinated', 'demonstrated'
- ✔ Finally, be sure to save a copy of your application so that when your excellent application gets you through to an interview you are able to look back over it as part of your interview preparation.

