Employability Level 2 – Preparing a CV

1 of 14 – Welcome

Welcome to this session on writing a CV.

In this session we will be covering:

* What a CV is
* When a CV should be used
* Cover letters
* What information should be included in a CV
* Tailoring your CV
* Presentation

2 of 14 – What is a CV?

CV stands for Curriculum Vitae. It is a summary or outline of an individual’s working and educational history and is used when applying for jobs.

A CV is sometimes referred to as a résumé.

3 of 14 – When should a CV be used?

Some job vacancies will not allow you to apply using a CV and will require you to complete an application form instead.

However, a CV can be used when:

* An employer asks for applications by CV
* When contacting an employer who has not advertised any vacancies, but you are hoping might have one

4 of 14 – Cover letter

Whether you are sending your CV on paper or electronically it is good practice to include a cover letter.

The employer will read your covering letter before your CV, so it is a great opportunity to make a positive impression.

A good covering letter:

* Draws attention to your achievements and strengths
* Is personalised for the employer and vacancy
* Uses clear, business-like language
* Is brief (no longer than one page)
* Has no spelling, punctuation or grammar mistakes

Watch the following video for some advice on how to write a great covering letter:

[5 Steps to an Incredible Cover Letter](https://www.youtube.com/embed/mxOli8laZos?autoplay=1&rel=0&start=0&modestbranding=1&showinfo=0&theme=light&fs=0&probably_logged_in=0)

5 of 14 – Cover letter – continued

Here are some guidelines for how to structure your covering letter:

**Address your letter to a specific person**

Address your letter to the recruiter or the person named in the advert. Make sure you spell their name correctly and address them with their preferred title (e.g. Mr, Mrs, Ms, Dr).

**Explain why you are writing**

Be clear about what vacancy you are applying for, if you’re responding to an advertisement. Include the full title of the job, the reference number (if included in the advertisement), and where you saw it advertised.

If you’re applying ‘on spec’, be clear about what type of job you're looking for.

**Demonstrate enthusiasm and motivation**

In your opening paragraph try to demonstrate how keen you are to get this job and work for this employer.

You could do this by:

* Explaining why you believe you are the right person for the company
* Explaining what makes you highly motivated to work for this particular employer
* Demonstrating that you are familiar with their products and services
* Explaining that you’re enthusiastic about working for them because you share their work values, culture and style

**Emphasise your skills and achievements**

Find out what the main skills that the employer needs are and emphasise these in your letter.Provide them with evidence that you have got the personal qualities, experience, qualifications and skills they are looking for.

Your covering letter is an opportunity to provide extra information to what is included in your CV, such as examples of achievements that demonstrate your skills and qualities.

**Describe what you can do for the employer**

Present your skills in a way that shows how giving you the job will benefit their company.

It can help if you try to look at your covering letter from the reader’s point of view. Imagine you’re the employer and ask yourself:

* What do I want from the applicants?
* What would make a candidate stand out?
* What would be my ideal candidate?
* Why would I hire the person who sent this covering letter?

**Promote your transferable skills**

Transferable skills are general skills you can use in many different types of jobs. Think about a job you’ve done before and the job you are applying for and try to identify the skills you need for both.

Examples of these skills include working to deadlines and working well with a wide range of people.

**Point the employer toward your CV**

Invite the employer to get more information about you from the enclosed CV.

**Suggest a response**

If you’re replying to an advertised vacancy, say you’re looking forward to hearing from them. State how you would prefer to be contacted, by phone, email or post.

Make sure your contact details are on your covering letter and CV.

6 of 14 – Question 1

Categorise the pieces of advice below into the following types, either **do** or **don’t** when writing a good cover letter.

Use clear, business-like language

Adapt your letter to the employer and vacancy you are applying for

Emphasise your strengths

Have spelling, grammar or punctuation mistakes

Explain how you can add value to the business

Write a long letter of more than one page

Use slang or informal language

Address the letter with ‘to whom it may concern’

The correct answers are:

Emphasise your strengths, adapt your letter to the employer and vacancy you are applying for, use clear, business-like language and explain how you can add value to the business are things you should **do**.

Have spelling, grammar or punctuation mistakes, address the letter with ‘to whom it may concern’, use slang or informal language and write a long letter of more than one page are things you **don’t** want todo.

7 of 14 – What information should be included in a CV?

Everyone’s CV will be different and there is no ‘right’ way to write a CV. Also, the contents of your CV will vary according to the job you are applying for.

Nevertheless, most CVs include the following information.

**Contact details**

This should include your:

* Name
* Address
* Telephone number
* E-mail

**Personal profile**

This short paragraph should summarise your:

* Skills and qualities
* Work background and achievements
* Career aims

**Employment history**

You should provide details of your previous jobs and work experience (including voluntary work), starting with your most recent position.

Include details of:

* The employer
* The dates you worked for the employer
* Your job title
* Your main duties

Avoid any unexplained gaps in your employment history. If you have had time out travelling, job seeking, volunteering or caring for a relative, include this along with details of what you’ve learned and skills you’ve gained.

**Education and training**

List your qualifications and training, starting with the most recent.

Include details of:

* The name of the educational establishment
* The dates you achieved the qualification
* Your grades

**Interests and achievements**

Include any hobbies or interests that you have.

**Additional information**

You can include any special skills that you have, that you haven’t mentioned elsewhere in the CV such as if you have a driving license, or if you speak any foreign languages.

**References**

Give details of your referees (usually two) who are willing to give a reference for you, including their relationship to you. One of these should be your most recent employer.

If you have not had a job before, you can use your academic tutor.

You must always get permission from your referees before adding them to your CV. If you prefer not to name your referees on your CV, you can simply state ‘references available upon request’ in this section.

8 of 14 – Question 2

In which section of your CV should you give a short summary of your skills, qualities, work experience and career aims?

1. Personal profile
2. Employment history
3. Education and training
4. Additional information

The correct answer is A, personal profile.

9 of 14 – Tailoring your CV

Although it can be tempting to create one generic CV and send it to all employers, you are much more likely to be successful if you tailor your CV to the vacancy.

To do this, you need to be able to analyse a job advert and understand:

* The purpose of the job
* The main tasks involved in the job
* How the job role fits into the wider organisation
* What skills, knowledge and experience the employer is looking for

10 of 14 – Presentation

A CV is a way to make a first impression on an employer without meeting them in person. How you present your CV can make a positive or negative impression.

To prepare a well-presented CV, you should:

* Use good quality paper
* Print in blue or black ink
* Make sure your cover letter matches the CV in terms of paper, ink and font
* Use a font size of at least 11pts
* Use an easy to read font (such as Arial or Times New Roman)
* Proof read for spelling, punctuation and grammar mistakes
* Keep your paper clean and crease-free (if you are posting a paper CV, put it in an A4 envelope rather than fold it)

11 of 14 – Question 3

Decide if these statements are true or false.

A covering letter is important because it is the first thing an employer will read.

True

False

The correct answer is: True

An employer will not notice gaps in your employment.

True

False

The correct answer is: False

You shouldn’t worry too much about how your CV is presented as the content is more important.

True

False

The correct answer is: False

You should tailor your covering letter and CV to the employer and vacancy you are applying for.

True

False

The correct answer is: True

12 of 14 – Task

Download the **Preparing a CV Activity PDF** and answer the questions.

* Explain what the purpose of a CV is
* Explain what the purpose of a covering letter is
* What information should you include in your CV?

Remember to save your work.

13 of 14 – End

Well done. You have completed this session on writing a CV.

In this session we have covered:

* What a CV is
* When a CV should be used
* Cover letters
* What information should be included in a CV
* Tailoring your CV
* Presentation

If you are unsure or have any questions about any of these topics, make a note and speak to your tutor for more help.