

UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton

WRITING YOUR FUTURE

CVs AND COVERING LETTERS



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INTRODUCTION

Your CV and covering letter are two of the most important documents you will create when looking for a job. Whether it is a graduate role, a part-time job, or a summer internship, these documents are an extension of you and are the first impression you make on a prospective employer. Employers use CVs and covering letters to help them make a decision as to whether or not you would be suitable to join their business. It is therefore important for you to create a document that not only highlights your skills and experience, but is also appropriate for both the role and company you are applying to.

This guide brings together the information that you will need to plan and write an effective CV that is appropriate for your target audience, as well as a covering letter which will demonstrate your enthusiasm for the role and encourage the employer to invite you to an interview. There is no such thing as a “perfect” CV or covering letter; everyone you speak to will have a different opinion, so it is important that you use this advice to create documents you are happy with.

Please note: The information and advice in this guide is based on applying to the UK job market. If you need to write a CV or a covering letter to apply for a job in another country, please refer to our additional resources section on page 26.

STEP 1

Know your audience

Research the employer and analyse the job description (if there is one) to ensure you know what they are looking for

Page 4

STEP 2

Know yourself

Identify your skills and produce examples of how you can evidence them

Page 6

STEP 3

Choose a CV style and start writing

Learn how to format your CV, what to include and see some examples

Page 10

STEP 3

Write a convincing covering letter

Draw in the employer by demonstrating your most relevant experience and enthusiasm for the role

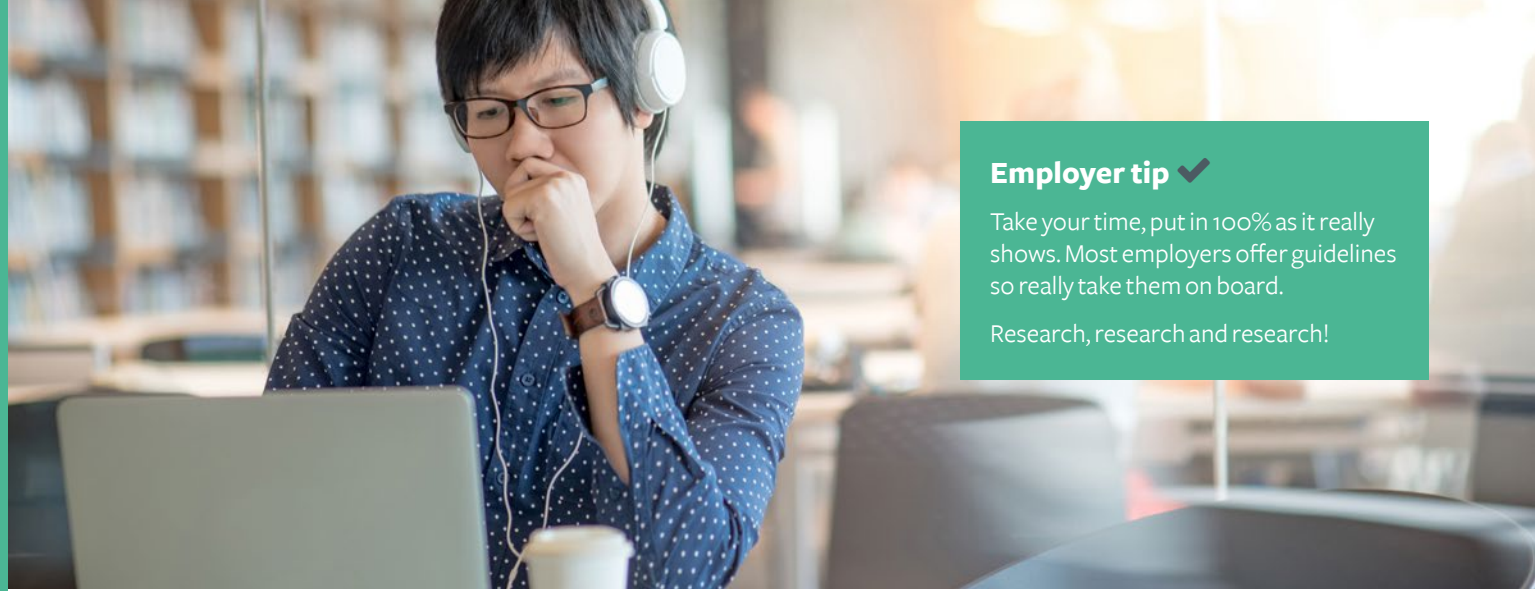
Page 21

STEP 4

Tailor and refine

Adapt your CV or covering letter for each job and focus on the most relevant information. Access our range of services for feedback, advice and further resources.

Page 26-27



Employer tip ✓

Take your time, put in 100% as it really shows. Most employers offer guidelines so really take them on board.

Research, research and research!

EMPLOYER & SECTOR RESEARCH

Before applying, make sure that you know about who you are applying to and the environment in which they are operating. You might know you want to work in marketing, but doing that within the charity sector may require different research than working in the marketing department of a city finance company.

Just sending out the same CV and covering letter for all your applications, especially if you are considering more than one option, is not a good start as employers prefer a carefully targeted CV which is tailored towards the job and skills required.

Think about the challenges which your chosen sector may be facing and how you can demonstrate that you have the skills to succeed – you might need commercial awareness in the public sector, resilience in the creative arts and tenacity in marketing.

Where to look:

- Corporate websites, especially the “about us” and recruitment pages plus their mission statement or corporate values statement
- Social media – LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook
- Trade and specialist publications
- General press – search for press releases or news stories
- Competitors’ websites

What to look for:

THE EMPLOYER	
Outline of main business	What products does it make? What services does it provide? What is the organisation’s mission statement?
Clients and customers	Who uses this organisation’s products/services? In which countries does this organisation operate? How are they communicating to their audience? What is their digital presence?
Main competitors	What other organisations operate in this area or offer similar products/services? How do these organisations compare?
In the news	Look at recent press releases and review a quality daily newspaper or its website – what are the important stories and headlines for this organisation?
UNDERSTANDING THE EMPLOYER’S CULTURE	
How do I think this employer likes to see itself?	What are its stated or implied core values?
What does the employer’s brand say to me?	How does the organisation brand itself? What do I think about this?
What do current graduates say?	Read profiles on the employer’s website, join LinkedIn groups, and attend campus fairs and employer talks.

What to do with the information:

TARGETjobs suggests summarising this information into your own words rather than copying phrases from the company website word for word. This will allow you to bring your own understanding and show how you have processed the information.

It is also a good idea to create a document or spreadsheet to keep track of the information you research, especially if you are applying for a range of roles.

Find out more:
www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/researching-jobs
www.targetjobs.co.uk

JOB ADVERT ANALYSIS

Sometimes it can feel as though recruiters want everything! Their adverts describe someone who can work independently, but who is also a team player. It’s essential that you understand what they are looking for so that you can provide examples from your experience which are relevant to the post.

Have a look at the example below to help you recognise key criteria that the employer is looking for and think about how you could demonstrate these. The example on page 14-15 shows what a CV tailored to this particular role could look like. The covering letter on page 23 is also an application for this role.

One of the main reasons employers recruit graduates is for the fresh ideas they can bring to the organisation. Words such as “adventurous” should prompt you to consider any times you have thought outside the box or proposed an innovative solution to a problem.

This type of phrase is often found on a job description. The employer can teach you knowledge but they want to know that you have the necessary skills and personality to succeed. Ensure you tailor examples from university, work and extracurricular activities to show the skills they require.

Consider whether you have previously carried out any of these responsibilities and include examples. If not, think about the skills required and demonstrate these, such as organisation and good communication skills.

Recruitment Consultant

As a global organisation with offices in London, Paris, Brussels and Hong Kong, we are seeking adventurous graduates to join our business as a Recruitment Consultant.

The successful candidates will initially be based in London, with the opportunity to work in one of our global offices within 12-24 months and will be responsible for both temporary and permanent recruitment activity.

No previous recruitment experience is necessary, however, the successful candidate must be able to demonstrate their ability to meet the demands of an ever-growing, fast-paced business and have the desire to take on additional responsibility within a short period of time.

Role responsibilities include:

- Researching and identifying prospective new businesses
- Making business development calls and networking with companies
- Managing existing accounts to ensure customer satisfaction and maximum potential is achieved
- Sourcing and interviewing candidates for roles
- Conducting business meetings
- Organising and marketing open days to help promote the business and opportunities for companies and candidates
- Running weekly payroll for temporary staff

Successful candidates can come from any degree discipline. They must be able to work as part of a team, but also be self-motivated, be able to work independently and use their initiative.

Provide examples of when you have helped a team to achieve a goal. Remember that leading a team will demonstrate different skills from being part of a team.

Ensure your CV mirrors the organisation. If they are global, consider references to languages, working abroad or cultural awareness.

Here the employer is talking about potential opportunities within the business. Demonstrate your flexibility, ability to adapt to new situations and desire to progress.

The employer wants to see that you can work under pressure. Provide examples of performing well in difficult circumstances, such as meeting tight deadlines.

SKILLS AUDIT

A skills audit is a simple and methodical tool to help you make personal connections with job descriptions, write your CV and provide convincing answers in applications and interviews. An audit can also identify skills gaps.

- Make a list of all your current and past activities – degree, jobs, placements or internships, volunteering, sports clubs, interests
- Break each activity down into separate tasks, for example, your degree could include lectures, group projects, dissertation, lab work
- Analyse each task and identify the skills involved, what you learnt and what you achieved

MIND MAP

In the centre identify the activity. In the first level out write down your key tasks. In the next level out identify the skills you developed.



BUILD YOUR POINT

Using your skills audit you can construct your point or sentence by combining the skill and the task, for example, “Utilised excellent customer service skills by resolving complaints in a professional manner”.

 Find out more:
www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/your-skills



SKILLS TABLE

If you prefer, you can use a table to perform a skills audit. List the activity in the first column, then break this down into each task performed in the next column. For each task you can then identify the skills developed.

ACTIVITY e.g. course, job, voluntary work, society involvement	EVIDENCE Description of what you did	SKILL What did you learn?
BA English	Effectively explaining, supporting and defending my own ideas and opinions in English seminars	Communication skills, verbal and written Quick thinking
	Report writing for group and individual assignments	Self-reflection/assessment Team work Negotiating
	Conducting research within libraries and journals as part of different modules. Presenting these findings accurately and appropriately.	Analytical skills Presenting ideas
	Individual project on scriptwriting	Industry skills Individual research and project management
Four week marketing internship with a third sector organisation	Recommended a new marketing campaign	Problem solving Project management
	Created an online campaign	Digital literacy
	Developed and launched blog	Planning and organisation Creativity
Squash club	Regular attendance since year 1	Commitment Time management
	Social secretary year 2 – organising social events	Organisation skills
		Communication
	Treasurer year 3 – managing funds, researching sponsorship opportunities	Numeracy Attention to detail Commercial awareness

DEMONSTRATING THE SKILLS EMPLOYERS VALUE

There are numerous top 10s of employability skills and personal attributes – this one is taken from www.targetjobs.co.uk

SKILL	WHAT EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR	HOW YOU CAN DEMONSTRATE IT
 Commercial awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Know how a business or industry works- Show that you have an understanding of what the organisation wants to achieve- Understand how the organisation competes in its marketplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Attending employer events/fairs and asking questions- Reading sector specific articles/journals- Attending an insight day- Completing an internship
 Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Be confident in yourself- Have confidence in your colleagues and the company you work for	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Joining a mentoring scheme- Making speculative approaches for work experience and advice- Joining a drama society
 Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Verbal and written communication- Listening skills- Be clear, concise and focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Essays, dissertation, project reports, presentations- Articles for student newspaper or blog- Work experience such as market research, telesales, bar work- Course or hall rep
 Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Show you can prioritise your work efficiently and productively- Show employers how you go about meeting deadlines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Managing and prioritising your personal workload- Revision timetable- Arranging travel itinerary- Secretary/treasurer of a student society
 Working under pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Keep calm in a crisis and do not become too overwhelmed or stressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Coping well in a sudden crisis- Managing multiple assignment deadlines within a short space of time- Handling exam pressure- Performing in front of a large audience
 Perseverance and motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Show employers that you're the kind of person who will find a way through, even when the going gets tough	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Successfully changing courses- Combining study with family commitments- Volunteering to take on extra shifts- Completing a sports challenge
 Negotiation and persuasion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Put forward your opinion- Understand where the other person is coming from	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Suggesting changes to your course as a student rep- Joining a debating society- Overcoming difficulties with a landlord
 Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Show you have potential to motivate teams and other colleagues- Prove you are able to assign and delegate tasks well	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Starting your own business e.g. through Fish on Toast- Taking the lead in a group project- Committee member of a student society
 Problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Display your ability to take a logical and analytical approach to solving problems and resolving issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Creative solutions to coursework problems- Leisure activities such as chess, logic games- Overcoming obstacles to achieve an ambition
 Team work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Prove you are a team player- Show you are able to manage and delegate to others- Build positive working relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Opting for group project work- Duke of Edinburgh award- Team sports/outdoor pursuits- Part-time work alongside team members

SKILLS DICTIONARY

Have you ever found yourself stuck for the right word? Or repeating the same one in every paragraph? Here is a handy list of words which can help to make your CV more interesting and dynamic.

SET UP:	TALKED TO:	SORTED OUT:	IMPROVED:	DELIVERED:
Composed	Addressed	Analysed	Broadened	Despatched
Conceived	Advised	Arranged	Combined	Distributed
Created	Controlled	Assessed	Consolidated	Expanded
Designed	Coordinated	Budgeted	Converted	Generated
Developed	Counselled	Classified	Decreased	Launched
Devised	Demonstrated	Collated	Developed	Presented
Established	Directed	Composed	Devised	Processed
Founded	Encouraged	Conceived	Doubled	Produced
Generated	Guided	Conducted	Edited	Promoted
Implemented	Instructed	Controlled	Eliminated	Provided
Initiated	Interviewed	Coordinated	Expanded	Served
Instituted	Liaised	Decreased	Increased	Transferred
Introduced	Marketed	Defined	Innovated	
Invented	Mediated	Distributed	Minimised	IN CHARGE OF:
Launched	Motivated	Edited	Modernised	Administered
Opened	Negotiated	Eliminated	Recommended	Approved
Originated	Ordered	Established	Redesigned	Conducted
Pioneered	Performed	Evaluated	Reduced	Controlled
Planned	Presented	Identified	Refined	Coordinated
Prepared	Promoted	Improved	Reorganised	Directed
Produced	Proposed	Investigated	Resolved	Headed
Promoted	Provided	Itemised	Restructured	Managed
Started	Recommended	Modernised	Revised	Represented
	Recruited	Operated	Saved	Supervised
	Represented	Organised	Served	
	Resolved	Planned	Solved	SHOWED HOW:
Analysed	Sold	Prepared	Streamlined	Advised
Assessed	Taught	Produced	Strengthened	Coached
Classified	Trained	Redesigned	Transformed	Conducted
Collated	Translated	Reduced	Uncovered	Demonstrated
Defined		Refined	Unified	Directed
Designed		Reorganised	Widened	Guided
Devised		Researched		Illustrated
Established		Resolved		Instructed
Evaluated		Reviewed		Managed
Identified		Revised		Organised
Interpreted		Scheduled		Performed
Interviewed		Simplified		Presented
Investigated		Solved		Taught
Researched		Streamlined		Trained
Tested		Transformed		
Traced		Uncovered		
Verified		Verified		
		Vetted		

CV BASICS

A recruiter is likely to spend between 30 seconds and a minute scanning your CV, so first impressions count. A CV should be focused, with the most important information clearly identifiable on the first page and not hidden within long sections of text.

Aim for clear and uncomplicated formatting. You don't have to use *italic*, **bold** and underline all at the same time. CAPITALS can seem like SHOUTING. Make your headings stand out so that it is clear what information is in that section. Use the same formatting throughout – make sure your margins align, bullet points are uniform and font is consistent.

These are the most commonly found sections on a CV:

- Contact Details
- Personal Profile/Career Objective
- Education
- Work History/Work Experience
- Additional/Technical Skills
- Awards and Achievements
- Interests and Positions of Responsibility
- References

You can be creative with your sections to ensure that the information is ordered by relevance. For example, if you have relevant work experience that was before some part-time work, you will want to put this higher up on the page. You can split your work experience into “Relevant Work Experience” and “Part-time Work”. There is an example of this in practice on the CV on page 12-13 of this guide.

Choose sections which best reflect your experiences and what you are trying to emphasise in this CV. You might use different headings for different CVs, or just reorder the sections to highlight different information. Remember to consider what the employer is most likely to be interested in and tell them it first.

Types of CV:

On the following pages you will find different layouts for CVs – the most commonly used is the Reverse Chronological CV, but others are also popular including Skills Based CVs and One Page CVs. There are other more specific types of CVs for different industries such as:

Academic – No page limit to allow space for additional sections such as research activities, conferences, publications, and teaching experience.

Technical – Most commonly used for IT jobs and includes a “Technical Skills” section with your level of competence for each skill.

Creative – Formatted in an innovative way to demonstrate your creative expertise.

For subject-specific advice, see our additional resources on page 26.

Top tips:

- Keep your CV to one or two pages. Industry-specific CVs may have slightly different guidelines
- Avoid using the first person in your CV (“me”, “my”, “I”). For example, “I spent 3 months volunteering” -> “Volunteered for 3 months”
- In the UK, personal information such as date of birth, nationality and gender do not need to be included on a CV. The same applies to a photo
- Always be truthful on your CV. Don't be tempted to embellish your experience
- Keep your CV personal to you and written in your own words, even if you are using a template

Employer tip ✓

Use bullet points, not large paragraphs.

PERSONAL PROFILES

What is a personal profile?

This is a focused, short statement, found at the beginning of a CV. The purpose is to capture the reader's interest by providing a brief overview of your skills and experiences in relation to the role you are applying for. Personal profiles can be particularly useful when pursuing a career not directly aligned to your degree.

What should I include?

- **Sentence one:** What you are currently doing, for example, the degree you are studying
- **Sentence two:** Highlight your most relevant skills and experiences. Remember to provide evidence to back up your statement
- **Sentence three:** Focus on why you are sending the CV or highlight the type of employment that you are seeking

Example 1:

High achieving final year Business Management student with a strong academic record. Customer focused with excellent attention to detail and problem solving skills gained through summer placements with HSBC and Barclays. Seeking a graduate career in retail banking.

Example 2:

Second year BSc Sociology student with extensive voluntary experience. Excellent communication and interpersonal skills developed through volunteering with local charity Solent Mind alongside study. Seeking a summer internship in the charity sector.



Top tips

- Always tailor your personal profile to the position you're applying for
- Keep it short and punchy, yet focused and informative
- Write in a confident, positive manner, using “action” words and demonstrating your enthusiasm
- Avoid using clichés such as “Highly motivated team player”. Employers have read these hundreds of times before so try to include something meaningful and unique to you!
- Remember, personal profiles are optional so if you're struggling to write one, leave it out and focus on writing a well-constructed CV. It's better to have no personal profile than a badly written one!

Employer tip ✓

Here you can let your personality come through and demonstrate your passion. This part should always be tailored.

Reverse chronological is the most commonly used type of CV where you detail your education and experience in date order, starting with the most recent first. These are clearly structured and are good for showing a consistent work history. You can demonstrate transferable and specific skills learnt within each role alongside the evidence of the tasks performed.

The example CV below is targeted towards a job in IT.

James Collingridge

2 Every Lane Avenue, Nottingham, NG89 2BB
Jmvc007@soton.ac.uk 07777111222

EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

2016-2020 University of Southampton, MEng Computer Science

Modules include: Advanced programming, advanced computer architecture, advanced computer networks, wireless networks, advanced learned and e-business strategy
Dissertation: 'Development of a web based CRM system using J2EE, XML and Microsoft SQL Server for major retail client'

- Developed the ability to analyse and solve complex computational and application problems
- Communicated effectively with a wide range of computer users including other scientists, designers and business personnel
- Group projects required ability to deliver reports within a short timescale
- Successfully presented results of group projects to peers and academic staff
- Experienced user of advanced programming techniques including Java, C++ and Graphical User Interfaces. Familiar with scripted languages including JavaScript, Perl and Python
- High level of practical computing skills including all Microsoft programmes and Access
- Successfully designed, implemented and managed project and delivered report to client ahead of schedule

IT EXPERIENCE

Summer 2019 Nottingham Innovation Centre, Summer Intern

- Part of a small team responsible for designing and implementing a CRM system for Nottingham Football Club
- Undertook detailed analysis of client's requirements
- Designed a number of prototypes for client's consideration
- Successfully implemented and evaluated the system

Summer 2018 Find That Dog a Home (charitable organisation), Web Developer

- Part of a small team that designed, developed and implemented a new website www.findthatdogahome.co.uk
- Involved in designing back-office systems integration and database design to support the website
- Successfully liaised with non-technical members of staff and board members to ensure their views and ideas were represented
- Responsible for securing sponsorship and advertising from a range of organisations and businesses amounting to £3,500

2015-2016 Find That Dog a Home (charitable organisation), Web Developer

- Successfully diagnosed and solved internal and external client IT issues through web-based technologies, phone, email and face-to-face interactions
- Organised meetings and conference calls with clients to update on current issues
- Provided regular written reports to colleagues and managers
- Implemented a new web-based client satisfaction survey

No need to put 'CV' at the top; your name should stand out. Consider centring your name to add balance. Make sure your CV is clearly laid out and visually appealing

Include modules that provide an indication of the content of your course which is relevant to the job role

Put your most recent qualifications first and keep the information relevant to the job you are applying for. Highlight the skills you have gained which match the skills required for the role

Divide your work experience into sections using headings to highlight your most relevant experience to an employer

Write about your duties, responsibilities and achievements and highlight the skills you have developed which are key to the role you are applying for

ADDITIONAL WORK EXPERIENCE

2016-2018 IKEA, Southampton, Part-time sales person

- Reliably handled large sums of money
- Maintained high levels of customer service, including resolving complaints in a professional and tactful manner
- Successfully adapted to different roles at short notice
- Worked in front and back-office functions

ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

2008-2015 Nottingham High School, Nottingham

2015 A levels: Computer Science (A) Maths (A) Physics (B)
2014 AS level: Further Maths (A)
2013 GCSEs: 10 at grade A*-B including English, Maths and Science

INTERESTS AND POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

2018-2019 Staff-Student Liaison Committee, Representative

- Effective communication and presentation of students' views and issues to senior academics and management team
- Successfully negotiated improvements to the undergraduate IT facilities including extension of access hours
- Contributed positively to meetings with architects designing new building

2017-2018 University of Southampton Hockey Team Captain

- Organised fixtures, practices and social activities for the team
- Secured annual sponsorship contract worth £1,500 with local drinks company

2015 Ten-week journey in South America including Chile, Ecuador and Peru

- Budgeted and planned the trip
- Stayed in local homes, gained greater knowledge of the area
- Successfully communicated with local people despite language difference

REFERENCES

Available upon request.

Include part-time jobs, voluntary experience and work shadowing. With less relevant employment, focus on the skills you developed rather than describing your role

Divide your sections to allow space for the most relevant information on the first page. In this instance an 'Additional Qualifications' section was created in order to have IT experience on the first page

This is an alternative example of a reverse chronological CV showing a different layout, targeted to the job advert seen on page 5.

CHARLES LOCKMAN

Email: eh14@your_email.com
Mobile: 07989 989765

PROFILE

Multilingual final year Psychology student with significant sales and HR experience. Proven ability to exceed targets and build strong professional relationships gained through client facing sales role. Seeking a graduate job in recruitment.

RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE

Summer 2019 - HR Assistant, Surrey County Council

- Supported the recruitment process including creating job descriptions, shortlisting applications and assisting with interviews
- Dealt with queries and grievances from members of staff in a professional manner, exercising confidentiality and utilising problem solving skills where necessary
- Communicated effectively across various departments and at different levels within the organisation ensuring efficient collaborative working
- Worked flexibly during exceptionally busy periods to complete tasks on schedule
- Developed a strong working knowledge of Microsoft Office, including constructing and manipulating Access databases

2015-2017 - Retail Assistant (Sales Floor), Primark, Guildford

- Gained an understanding of what constitutes good customer service and took part in formal training activities focusing on customer needs
- Accurately conveyed information to customers and ensured stock was organised in a timely fashion
- Demonstrated creativity and marketing ability through the organisation of displays
- Used initiative and learned to solve problems independently in the absence of a supervisor
- Proved ability to manage time effectively by combining a part-time job with study and extracurricular activities

EDUCATION

2017-2020 - University of Southampton
BSc (Hons) Psychology

- Increased understanding of human behaviour and motivations
- Enhanced communication skills and team working ability through group projects and presentations
- Developed strong analytical skills and demonstrated a high level of accuracy in assessed assignments and written reports

Relevant modules include:
Psychology of Advertising; Intergroup Relations and Interpersonal Influence; Social Psychology

2010-2017 - Brookdown School, Surrey

- A-levels in Maths (A) Psychology (A) and German (B)
- GCSEs 10 A*-C grades

Make sure that you use a work appropriate email address and include an easily reachable telephone number, providing just one of each. Including your address is optional

Write about your responsibilities, duties and achievements and highlight the skills you have developed which are key to the role you are applying for

This role is not directly related to the degree studied; however this section is still targeted and draws on relevant skills and tasks. Summarise earlier qualifications

VOLUNTEERING

2017-2019 - Student Mentor, Aimhigher, Southampton

- Volunteered under the Aimhigher initiative to help to raise the aspirations of secondary school pupils in the Southampton area, encouraging them to achieve the best possible results and consider applying to university
- Built rapport with other Student Mentors and pupils in order to be an effective influencer
- Communicated new information to young people in a clear and accessible way, demonstrating strong presentation skills and an ability to adapt to my audience
- Demonstrated commitment to the role through first two years of university

INTERESTS

Business	Took part in the Student Global Business Challenge earlier this year, submitting a theoretical business plan for a fictional underachieving business. Achieved “highly commended”
Sport	Excellent team and leadership skills developed through playing hockey competitively since early teens. In recent seasons have been team captain and social secretary
Travel	Learning about new countries and cultures through travel and maintaining language skills in French and German

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

IT	Confident user of Microsoft Office, including Access and PowerPoint. Able to learn new skills quickly
Language	Fluent in written and spoken French, intermediate spoken and written German

REFERENCES

Available on request

This section has been included to highlight voluntary experience. It gives an opportunity to demonstrate additional relevant skills

Choose examples which may be of interest to the employer or which focus on skills not mentioned before. If you don't feel you have any interests that add value to your CV then leave this section out

Skills based CVs can be particularly useful if you do not have very much work experience, you have lots of experience (too much to talk about sufficiently in detail), or are changing your career path and wish to focus on the transferable skills gained rather than specific job roles. Use the main skills in the job description as headings and use a range of experiences from education, work experience, interests and extracurricular activities.

Alison Davies

18 Swift Hollow Lane, Southampton, Hampshire, SO19 9GH
02380 123456 / 077937 123456
Alison.davies@coldpost.com

Ambitious and self-motivated History student with strong interpersonal skills gained through student ambassador role. Proven customer service skills demonstrated through achievement of Part-Time Customer Service Assistant of the Year award at Sainsbury's. Ability to devise and implement marketing campaign developed during internship. Seeking graduate position within marketing.

RELEVANT SKILLS

Marketing

- Conducted market research when developing new marketing plan, gained confidence in communicating with the public face-to-face and conducting telephone surveys
- Analysed research to identify trends and presented information to senior management team
- Devised and implemented blog in response to market research
- Increased traffic to website by 300% in 2 months

Communication & Team working

- Utilised excellent communication skills when acting as a student ambassador for the University. This involved confidently presenting to large numbers of students and their parents, and responding to questions in an articulate and informed manner
- Demonstrated team working skills when playing Netball; worked together in order to achieve an end result, and gained a top three place in the Inter-University League
- Worked effectively as a team member in order to process students' enrolment information. Completed individual tasks quickly and accurately in order to hand over to the next stage of the process in a timely fashion

Leadership & Initiative

- Planning and coordination role taken in university group assignments, consistently achieving grades above 70%
- Made key decisions on viability of Netball activities based on financial information and other market factors
- Introduced new monetary recording systems within the Netball Society utilising Excel to its full potential and using Microsoft Project to forecast spending peaks throughout the year

Commitment & Interpersonal Skills

- Successfully managed Netball Society commitments alongside study and part-time work
- Ability to build rapport with customers and clients in a short time, evidenced by previous roles in customer-oriented work environments upon which future business and daily custom is so crucially based

IT Skills

- Confident user of various Microsoft Office applications including Excel and Project
- Key Skills Certificate: Information Technology Level 3 - word processing, created a spreadsheet, created a database and entered data from a spreadsheet

This personal profile is a good example of how to introduce yourself concisely while emphasising your career goals. For further advice on how to do this see page 11

Choose the skills headings according to the skills that the employer is looking for. Under each heading add the evidence of when you have demonstrated these skills

Evidence of your skills could come from placements, part-time jobs, internships, study, volunteering, society participation and extracurricular activities

This is a good example of demonstrating the skill through the activity you completed

EDUCATION & QUALIFICATIONS

2017-2020 Degree	University of Southampton BA (Hons) History
2015-2017 A-Levels:	St Margaret's Sixth Form, Southampton Maths (A), History (A), French (B), Economics & Business Studies (B)

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

April 2015 - Present	Customer Services Assistant, Sainsbury's, Southampton
July 2019 - September 2019	Marketing Intern, The Rainbow Project, Southampton
September 2018 - July 2019	Student Ambassador, University of Southampton
Summer 2017 & 2018	Catering Assistant, The Olive Tree, Southampton

ADDITIONAL INTERESTS / ACHIEVEMENTS

October 2018 - July 2019	Southampton University Netball Club Treasurer
October 2017 - present	Southampton University Netball Club Active Member

Keen runner and have completed the Great South Run on two occasions raising in excess of £300 for local charities

REFERENCES

Prof J Jones (course tutor)
University of Southampton
University Road
Southampton
SO17 1BJ
jjones@uni.ac.uk

Miss K Lane
The Rainbow Project
George Williams House
Cranbury Place
Southampton
SO14 0LG
klane@rainbow.com

Put your most recent qualifications first, listing the key information only - dates, institution, degree studied. Details of tasks and skills should go under the headings on the first page

On a skills based CV your work history should be a list showing your most recent activities first

Choose a title for these sections which best matches the content. You can also include evidence from these under your "Relevant Skills" headings on the first page; this allows you to show a more balanced picture of yourself

The example CV below is based on applying for a position in Finance.

sr12@soton.ac.uk 07777111222 LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/xxxxx

2017	Founding partner and Vice-President of the Students' Business Union
2016	Travelling – Travelled independently to Asia and Australia, developing independence and cultural awareness

Include any key positions of responsibility or particularly relevant information

- ☐ Is the additional information relevant to the job you are applying for? This may include prizes, driving licence, IT skills.
- ☐ If you have space, have you offered references, or written that they are available on request?
- ☐ Have you identified who your references will be, and asked for their permission in advance?

REFERENCES

It is usual to give the contact details of two people who are willing to write a reference for you. References from family members are not acceptable, even if they have employed you. You can either include contact details on your CV, or use “references are available on request”. For the privacy of your referees, it is best not to include their details if you are posting your CV online, including on LinkedIn.

Academic referees

If you are still studying or have recently graduated, it is usual to give a university referee who would normally be your personal tutor. If you have carried out a substantial amount of project work that is directly relevant to your application, you may decide to ask your supervisor to act as your referee. You may give two university referees, for example, your personal tutor and a project supervisor, but it is usually better to give one academic and one work or personal referee if possible.

Work referees

If you have had any type of industrial placement or substantial work experience, it is usually helpful to have an employer as a referee.

Check with the company who the most appropriate person would be and contact them in advance to ask them if they are happy to be your referee.

You may feel that your part-time work or voluntary work is not relevant. In fact, prospective employers are interested in any employment you have had, and the opinion of the person who employed you.

Always ask first

It is really important that you check with your referee that they are happy for you to use them. If it has been a while since you spoke to them, try to make contact before sending out their details so that you can confirm they are still happy to act as your referee and you can update them on your current situation.

COVERING LETTER BASICS

Sometimes an employer will request a CV and covering letter to be sent as part of an application. If you are contacting the employer by email you could either use the main email as your covering letter, or attach it as a pdf.

A covering letter gives you the opportunity to show enthusiasm for the role, demonstrate how you match the skills necessary to fulfil the role, and explain in a positive way any unclear areas on your CV/application form, for example gaps in employment. This could also be an opportunity to disclose a disability or learning difficulty if you wish to. Please see page 25 for further guidance on how to do this.

While your CV is a more factual document, the covering letter is the place where you can really show your reason for wanting the job. Try to be as specific as you can with your reasons. You can achieve this through:

Researching the employer


The information on page 4 will show you how to do this. Using a specific fact, value or news story that attracted you to the company will show you have a real desire to work there.

Researching the role

Give particular details of what interests you about the role. Is it challenging? Part of your career plan? Demonstrating an understanding of what the job entails will help the recruiter to see your ability to do the job.

When writing your covering letter, consider the below points to follow the correct format:

- Your letter should be no more than one page long, with appropriate white space
- Use a font which is easy to read
- Include your address on the top right hand side of the page
- Date the letter
- Use “Yours sincerely” when you use a contact’s name, and “Yours faithfully” otherwise
- Use a UK spellcheck. Ask someone else to proofread for spelling and grammatical errors
- Avoid informal, conversational language
- The employer’s address goes under your address on the left hand side
- Address the letter to a specific person if possible
- If you do not have the name of a contact, use “Dear Sir/Madam”

 **Find out more:**
www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/covering-letters

SPECULATIVE CVS & COVERING LETTERS

Job opportunities are not always advertised. These are referred to as “hidden opportunities” and can be accessed through making a speculative application.

This is a perfectly valid approach that is often successful in sectors that are generally difficult to get into and also for smaller companies who may have less regular vacancies and a smaller budget for advertising.

When sending your CV and covering letter to the company it is important to explain why you are writing and what you are looking for. You should also find out the name of the person you are writing to if possible.

Top tips for speculative covering letters

Prospects.ac.uk: “In the opening paragraph explain what sort of role you are looking for”

Targetjobs: “Emphasise what you can do for the employer rather than what you want from them”

“Contact the employer a week or so after submitting your application...bring it to the recruiter’s attention”

“Be polite in all your dealings with an employer”

Putting it into practice

“I am writing to enquire about the possibility of any work experience opportunities that may be available at... during the summer vacation”

“As you can see from my enclosed CV I have experience of working with... through my internship at... I believe I would be of great value to your company’s work in...”

“Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss any opportunities with you...”

Below is a suggested layout for a covering letter, although you could move paragraphs up or down depending on the application. Think about how the letter flows and adapt the paragraphs accordingly. You might want the paragraph “Why you?” higher up to catch the employer’s attention, which could be particularly useful on a speculative application.

Your Address

Employer’s Address

Date

Dear Named Person

APPLICATION FOR THE POSITION OF (reference number, if applicable)

Paragraph 1: The opening
Introduce yourself briefly; refer to where you saw the advert or why you are writing if it is a speculative letter.

Paragraph 2: Why them?
Give the reasons you are applying to **that** company/organisation. This is your chance to target your application and demonstrate that you have done your background research. Avoid vague generalisations about their “excellent reputation” or “first class training programme”.

Paragraph 3: Why this job/career? (this could be included in the opening paragraph)
Give reasons for your interest in the job or career sector for which you are applying and/or organisation. Indicate any particular areas of the sector in which you have an interest (if applicable).

Paragraph 4: Why you?
It is vital to show what you can do for them. Give reasons why they should consider **you**. Talk about the experience, skills and knowledge that you have which is relevant to this particular job. Develop themes touched on in your CV which you want the employer to note – but ensure you do not just repeat what is already in your CV.

Paragraph 5: Any other relevant points (if applicable)
You can use this to explain any anomalies in your experience such as a gap or where you may not match the selection criteria. Try to present these in a positive way and consider explaining how you have overcome any difficulties in a positive way.

Final Paragraph: The ending
Short conclusion, perhaps summarising your suitability for the job and/or looking positively towards the opportunity to discuss your application at interview.

Yours sincerely

Your Name

Below is an example of a covering letter, written for the job advert on page 5. The paragraphs are set out in the same way as the template on page 22.

Ms A Jones
James Day Recruitment
London
WC1A 9ZZ

12th October 2019

Dear Ms Jones,

Application for Graduate Recruitment Consultant position.

I am writing to apply for the Graduate Recruitment Consultant position at James Day Recruitment Agency, as advertised on the University of Southampton Careers and Employability website. I will graduate this summer with a degree in Psychology and am predicted a high 2:1. I was inspired to apply for this role after speaking to one of your consultants whom I met at the University of Southampton Careers Fair.

It is my ambition to work for James Day Recruitment because you are not only a world leader in your field, but you also value each individual relationship with your clients and your focus is on achieving the best outcome for them. This attitude aligns with my own desire to work hard for the benefit of others, as demonstrated through my voluntary work as a Student Mentor. The global nature of your company also appeals to me, as I would be able to continue to utilise my French language skills to liaise with colleagues in your Paris and Brussels offices.

I am particularly keen to have the opportunity within this role to take on additional responsibility from an early stage in my career. I enjoy taking on new challenges and have taken on the role of team captain in my university hockey team in recent seasons. I would also relish the opportunity to utilise my interpersonal skills in a fast-paced business setting dealing with your high-profile clients and sourcing outstanding candidates.

As you can see from my CV, I have a range of skills and experiences that will enable me to succeed in this position. My experience of working within an HR environment has developed my ability to communicate and build relationships quickly with both internal staff and external candidates, a skill that would be highly valuable in this role. I have also communicated with different types of audiences, from secondary school pupils to heads of department, and have developed my team working abilities through group projects. I am able to work effectively under pressure, as demonstrated in my degree programme when I was faced with multiple assignment deadlines within a week and I completed each one on time and to a high standard. During my part-time customer sales role at Primark, I used my initiative to solve problems independently and worked flexibly to meet customer needs effectively.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my application. I hope that I have demonstrated that I have the enthusiasm and commitment, as well as the necessary skills and experience, to succeed and be a future asset to your company. I am available for interview at your convenience and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Lockman

14 Oldfield Avenue
Guildford
GU2 7ZZ
eh14@your_email.com
07989 989765

Covering letters should be written as formal letters, so should include addresses and the date. Alternatively, if you are sending your covering letter as the body of an email, addresses do not need to be included.

Address the letter to a specific person if possible. A name can often be found on the job advert, or you could call the company to find out who to address it to. If you are unable to use a name, use “Dear Sir/Madam”.

Focus on the most relevant skills mentioned in the job advert. Give examples to back up the skills you are trying to demonstrate. This section should complement what is on your CV, not repeat it.

Use “Yours sincerely” when you use a contact’s name, and “Yours faithfully” otherwise.

COVERING LETTER CHECKLIST

The first step is to make sure you know yourself, the company and the role well. Check that the answers to all of the questions below is “Yes”. If you have not completed a step, make sure you do this before continuing to write your covering letter.

Preparation

- ☐ Have you looked at the job description and identified the skills, attributes and experiences they are looking for?
- ☐ Have you made notes on why you are interested in this field, your career goals and why the employer is the right one for you?
- ☐ Have you looked at the employer’s website, including their mission statement, values and recruitment literature?

Format

- ☐ Is your letter no more than one page long, with appropriate white space?
- ☐ Is the font size reasonable and easy to read?
- ☐ Have you used a UK spellcheck? Has someone else then proofread it for spelling and grammatical errors?
- ☐ Is your address on the top right hand side of the page and the employer’s address lower down the page on the left hand side?
- ☐ Have you dated the letter?
- ☐ Have you addressed the letter to a specific person if possible?
- ☐ Have you titled your letter in bold, highlighting your reason for writing?

Introduction

- ☐ Have you briefly introduced yourself including your degree subject and university?
- ☐ Have you explained why you are writing this letter and that you have enclosed your CV / application form? Have you clarified where you saw the job advert?

Why them?

- ☐ Does it outline why you are applying to that specific company/organisation?
- ☐ Have you avoided generalisations that could apply to any corporation?

Why this role?

- ☐ Have you shown enthusiasm and interest in the role?
- ☐ Have you demonstrated knowledge and understanding about what the role involves?

Why you?

- ☐ Have you talked about the experience, skills and knowledge you have that are relevant to this particular job?
- ☐ Have you developed themes or highlighted experience mentioned in your CV?

The ending

- ☐ Have you summarised your suitability for the job?
- ☐ Have you looked positively towards the opportunity to discuss your application at interview?
- ☐ Have you used “Yours sincerely” if you have addressed it to a named person, or “Yours faithfully” if it is not? Have you signed your letter?



DISCLOSING INFORMATION ABOUT A DISABILITY

You don’t have to disclose information about a disability, specific learning difficulty or long-term health condition on your CV or covering letter; it is completely your choice. If you choose not to disclose you can do so later in the application process if you wish, although there is no legal requirement for you to do so.

Many employers have excellent equal opportunities policies and recruitment practices and encourage applicants to disclose their disability as early as possible in order for them to make the reasonable adjustments needed to ensure the recruitment process is fair.

Look for the **Disability Confident** symbol to identify employers who are committed to promoting opportunities for people with disabilities.



You can make a positive statement about your disability by:

- Focusing on your strengths, experience and skills. Think about sessions that you may have attended to help with your academic studies – these skills can be transferred to the workplace e.g. writing minutes, giving presentations
- Promoting and demonstrating your resourcefulness and coping strategies
- Not assuming that an employer will view your disability in a negative way
- Emphasising the different perspective that you can offer the organisation

If you do choose to disclose, you can illustrate what you have learnt from your disability. Acknowledging any difficulties that you have had and stressing the ways that you have overcome them demonstrates your maturity and determination to succeed. Here are some examples:

- “Because of my hearing loss I have developed excellent levels of concentration. This is demonstrated in my ability to analyse spreadsheets and make performance-related forecasts”
- “Due to my disability I am very independent, a good organiser and I always put my all into the task that I am given. I am a quick thinker and a strong team player. During my time at university I have had an assistant to take my notes and do other tasks e.g. helping in the library. I manage their time and coordinate their salary payments”
- “Because I am dyslexic I have developed a range of strategies in the collection and processing of information and in structuring my work. In addition I make full use of a variety of computer software to assist my written work”

The following websites will give you further information on disclosing your disability and your rights:

www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/disability-and-dyslexia

www.acas.org.uk/

www.employ-ability.org.uk/

www.mind.org.uk/

You can also book to attend our Disability, Disclosure and Employability workshops. They run regularly throughout the year and are available to book on MyCareer: mycareer.soton.ac.uk

CHECKING & PROOFREADING

Once you have finished your draft CV and covering letter it is important to proofread it for errors. Employers point out spelling errors and poor grammar as one of the common mistakes to avoid on applications. Errors of this kind make a poor first impression and lead to applications being rejected.

Make sure that you leave your mark in the right way by fully checking, proofreading and redrafting your CV and covering letter.

Top tips from the University of Southampton Library:

- Don't leave it to the last minute! When you rush it is far easier to make mistakes and not leave yourself enough time to check them.
- Temporarily change the font/size/colour of the text to help you identify grammatical errors
- Try reading your CV or covering letter out loud to help you to hear any problems with your spelling, punctuation or grammar
- Use a ruler or blank sheet of paper to cover the lines above and below where you are reading
- Ask someone else to read over the document for you. As they are not so involved, they may see things you have missed
- Read your CV or covering letter backwards when making a final spellcheck. This will mean you look more closely at the words on the page

For further help with proofreading visit the writing skills section of the University of Southampton Library's Academic Skills website library.soton.ac.uk/sash/academic-writing



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

There are many websites and resources available that can provide useful information to aid your career planning. Come and visit the Careers Centre and we can help you find the information that you are looking for.

INFORMATION ABOUT WORKING ABROAD

GoinGlobal – Access this through MyCareer

www.southampton.ac.uk/working-abroad

www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/working-abroad

www.targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/working-abroad

ACADEMIC JOB HUNTING AND APPLICATION ADVICE

www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/pg

www.vitae.ac.uk/researcher-careers

www.jobs.ac.uk

SUBJECT-SPECIFIC APPLICATION ADVICE

Example CVs and covering letters from a range of sectors:

www.targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/job-hunting-tools-downloads

Creative CVs:

The Creative CV Guide by Jan Cole – copies can be found in our Highfield and Winchester School of Art Careers Libraries.

CAREERS LIBRARY

There are over 300 books available in our Careers Centre in Building 37. These cover a wide range of topics including application and interview advice, career planning tips, working abroad, starting your own business, and sector specific information.

Resources are also available across our other campuses including Winchester School of Art, the National Oceanographic Library, and the Health Services Library at Southampton General Hospital. In addition, we have over 200 e-books which can be accessed via our website.

www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/ebooks

CONTACT US

Careers and Employability Service

Building 37, Highfield Campus

023 8059 3501

careers@southampton.ac.uk

www.southampton.ac.uk/careers

facebook.com/UoS Careers and Employability

twitter.com/UoS_Careers

CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY SERVICE

We offer a wide range of support to help you produce your CVs and covering letters, as well as increase your employability. Take a look at some of our services below and check out our website for more information and advice.

MYCAREER

MyCareer is your online careers platform allowing all University of Southampton students and graduates to easily access a range of our services.

<http://mycareer.soton.ac.uk>

DROP-IN SERVICE

Our Drop-in Service provides an opportunity for you to have a conversation with one of our advisers about anything careers related. Appointments aren't necessary, check out our website for more details and timings.

www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/drop-in

WORK EXPERIENCE

Our work experience programmes range from short-term internships with UoS Internships to year-long opportunities with Year in Employment Placements. Discover further opportunities through the Volunteering Bank and Student Innovation Projects on our website.

www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/work-experience

CAREERS FAIRS

Our events team organise a number of careers fairs during the year. See our website for details, including information on how to book an appointment at the extremely popular CV clinics.

www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/fairs

EVENTS

We organise a full programme of events throughout the year including workshops and presentations on CVs, applications, and covering letters, many of which are hosted by graduate employers.

www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/events

CAREER MENTORING

You can gain invaluable knowledge and experience from a professional mentor especially chosen for you to support your career planning. Take a look at our website to find out more about our Career Mentoring Programme.

www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/mentoring

Find out more:
www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/



Find out more:

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