



CV

Writing a great application

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Appendix:

List of active verbs

Example CVs

1. Basic information

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. The CV is usually the document that is read first for just a few minutes. It quickly becomes the basis for deciding whether to look at the rest of an application. The CV is the heart of every application: it comprises your history and your individual profile, and it conveys directly or indirectly an impression of your professional and intradisciplinary skills. Therefore, you should focus on showing your competencies, your experiences and the aspects, that make you an interesting candidate.

Step into the reader's shoes. Make it possible to....

- skim over the document and yet still see the relevant information.
- recognise what a good match you are for the job.
- retrace the steps of your professional background.
- find important information and facts about you.
- focus on the most important information.
- see that you take your application seriously.

Create a basic version and adapt it specifically to the position

Create a basic version of your CV and adapt it to the content of specific job adverts. It is worthwhile matching details in your CV to a specific task and requirement profile in order to emphasize those aspects that underscore your suitability for the position. Look at the matching between yourself and the position. Work out where your personal profile overlaps with the job profile, and define relevant details and examples for your application (see the manual job analysis and matching).

Think about AI, too

Nowadays, many employers use complex systems to manage applications. Especially large companies increasingly use Artificial Intelligence (AI) as part of highly digitalised processes. For instance, AI helps to scan documents and search for certain information. It is therefore important that your CV can be processed not only by people but also by technical systems. In these cases, a classic layout including careful formatting and relevant keywords can help you being selected.

It is a good invest of time

Take time for the layout, for creating the content and for formal proofreading. Look at your draft from the reader's perspective, and ask for feedback from persons who are close to you. You will find an example of a CV in the appendix.

2. Design, layout and formatting

Design your CV appealing

The appearance contributes to that first impression. Thus, think about the external form, too. The design and formatting should frame your individual profile positively and not be a challenge for the reader. Focus on creating an appealing but understated, harmonious and accurate overall picture. This not only ensures a good impression, but also helps readers to capture all information. An excessive design, messy formatting or design experiments can irritate readers, keeping them from reading your application or even raising doubt about your aptitude as a candidate.

Only use templates as inspiration

There are many templates available online, also from CV generators. Never just select a template and use it as entirely. It should only be an inspiration. Firstly, some templates are well known. Secondly, it is very difficult to press your own career journey into prefabricated or possibly rigid structures without omitting important information. Create your own document in which you design e.g. the header and footer in colour, and arrange the texts clearly with an invisible table.

Frame your qualifications, experience and skills

You can improve the overall design of your application by using design elements, e.g. coloured lines, areas or bars that also match your photo. The header and footer are ideal for this. It is important that you position and format these elements uniformly – within a page and the whole document. Do not select too many elements. This quickly looks overloaded and can distract from the content. However, a CV can appear too sober and bare, if there are no accents at all.

Select colours carefully

Choose colours carefully e.g. to highlight titles, headers and footers or to colour lines, bars etc. Used muted colours that are not too bright. These looks more professional. Apart from the black font of the main text, only use a maximum of two other colours that harmonise with each other and your photo.

Keep the structure and format uniform

Use a maximum of two fonts and few different font sizes for e.g. titles, main text or the contents of headers or footers. If you use an approx. 11 pt font for the main part, this will make it easy to read your application when it is printed. With bold letters, you can highlight central information. Study or apprenticeship qualifications, or job titles, which are often relevant keywords that show your aptitude, become immediately apparent. Make use of formatting options, but subtle and consistent.

Stay true to your principles

Keep the design of the CV as uniform as possible. Ensure that you...

- always provide information in the same sequence. (e.g. job title, company, town, sector)

- position texts on imaginary lines and keep distances uniform. (a table without a frame can help)
- apply the format consistently. (e.g. all place-related information in italics, all names of degree programmes in bold)
- use similar formulations for key points. (e.g. for details about your experience)

Do not use any pictures and icons

Some CV templates you will find online use pictures or graphics e.g. to state the level of software or language skills. This may appear innovative initially. However, these kinds of elements can often take up unnecessary space banishing important information into the background. In addition, they are often not meaningful enough and leave lots of room for interpretation (What does 4 out of 5 points in MS Excel mean?) or direct the focus possibly to that which is missing (Why only 4 out of 5 points?).

When describing your language skills, use established terms such as “fluent in spoken and written”. These are often used in job descriptions and can be processed by AI systems. As far as IT skills are concerned, simply state the names of programs, systems and tools.

3. Title, photo and personal data

Mention the recipient and job in the CV

Although it is the CV, think about naming the company and the position that you are applying for. This shows that your application has been explicitly written for this position. In addition, this allows easy assignment of your CV, especially if you have submitted your application e.g. without a cover letter to a recruitment agency. It is enough, if this information is on the first page of your CV.

Only use suitable application photos

Even if it is no longer mandatory, many recipients still expect a photo. Like a professional layout, an up-to-date and professional application picture can help to impress the reader. If you have not had the opportunity to have a good photo taken, it may be better to send your application without one. For instance, a 10-year-old picture that is taken from an unflattering perspective and shows an inappropriate outfit may be detrimental to your application.

Application photo advice

- A picture from a professional costs approx. 40 € upwards. Look at the examples on their website.
- Business wardrobe – choose a serious outfit that is suitable for the sector
- Choose a colour or black and white photo as you like
- Opt for muted rather than bright colours for your outfit and the background
- Retouching photos with Photoshop: ensure that the picture remains life-like. Recipients should recognise you on the photo.
- Portrait or landscape format – think which can be integrated or positioned best in your CV
- Inside or outside – choose a simple background that does not distract from you

- Not too big, but not too small – use approx. 5 x 7 cm up to max. ¼ page as a picture sizes for a CV without a cover sheet.
- You should be clearly recognisable - make a portrait picture, not a full-body picture
- Look friendly – this is the first impression you make
- Obtain the image rights for self-presentation purposes from the photographer
- High picture quality = Large file – if necessary, compress the image in the document

State the most important facts right at the beginning

Your CV should include your personal data because it provides information about central facts: Who are you? Where do you live? What are your contact details? The reader should be able to find answers to these questions quickly and easily.

Start your CV with this information:

Information to integrate	Comments
First name and surname , plus maiden name if relevant	It must be possible to assign all certificates. It is enough just to use one of your first names; however, this should be the name that is in your ID.
Current status any academic titles any professional titles (for completed vocational training)	Show clearly that you have the qualifications requested. However, ensure that the information does not indicate that you have a qualification that you do not yet have! Chose the words carefully.
Date of birth and place of birth If necessary, state the country (if the place of birth is not in Germany)	Only omit this information, if this is explicitly stated. This may be the (rare) case for anonymous application procedures.
Postal address	Ensure that all post can reach you.
Telephone number	Provide a number under which recipients can reach you during the day. If it is possible, state a number do not share with others.
E-mail address	Choose a serious address without long strings of numbers.
Professional online profiles	Only provide this information, if your profiles are up-to-date and in line with your CV.
Family status , if necessary children	Optional information, see below
Mobility, willingness to travel/relocate	Optional information, if relevant for the job
Nationality	Optional information, see below
Residency status	This is only relevant, if you come from a non-EU country and do not have German citizenship, see below
Religious denomination	Only provide this information, if it is relevant for the job, e.g. church-based organisations or bodies

Provide information about your marital status, children and nationality with care

You do not need to provide this information, however many readers (still) search for it. For instance, traditional employers may be irritated, if your marital status is missing. It is your decision whether you want to provide information about children (including their ages). Consider carefully. Is it important for you to find a family-friendly employer and deal with your family situation openly? Or, do you worry that the information may have a negative effect, and you only want to address this at a job interview? Ultimately, it is up to you, and both approaches have pros and cons. If you do want to include your children in your CV, add information about secure childcare, e.g. 'childcare guaranteed'.

Likewise, in some cases, it may make sense to state your nationality. If any information in your CV (e.g. the name, place of birth, overseas periods) indicates that you may not have German citizenship, add this information. This is how to answer a question in advance, which could be important with respect to the legal aspects of your work. If you have a non-EU nationality and a work permit for Germany, also state this.

4. Scope, structure and content

What was your career like so far? What are you doing currently? When did you gain what kind of qualifications? What practical experience have you gathered? Here are some more basic tips about what needs to be included and how it should look like. In addition, you can find an example of a CV in the appendix.

Think about people and technology

Create a classic tabular CV (German: tabellarischer Lebenslauf) in an upright format which can be read from top to bottom and from left to right. This allows people as well as technical systems can scan your CV easily and quickly. Think about using an invisible table, which often makes formatting much easier.

Put all this onto 2 pages

A one-page CV initially appears focused on the most important information; however, if looked at more closely, it might get obvious that decisive information is missing. Two pages (without a cover letter) is usually enough – in particular for people that are just starting their career. Keep to the following rule: as much as necessary, as little as possible. If, in your case, two pages are too much or too little space, think carefully about which information needs to be provided and what else might be relevant or interesting.

Structure your CV carefully

Do not just list positions and information. Use sensible categories to sort them. But remember, each profile is unique. This means: categories that may make one CV easier to read, can make another CV confusing. First, record the stages of your career and put them in the right order, e.g. on a timeline. Then think about what can be grouped into categories with which headings. Make sure that the terms represent what can be found underneath.

Example categories

Study programme | Studies and semester abroad | Apprenticeship (vocational training) and school | Studies, apprenticeship and school | Education | University & School | (Professional or academic) history | Studies and integrated internship | Practical experience | Work experience | Professional activities | Part-time work | Additional qualifications | Additional skills | Know-how and skills | Further skills | Further information | ...

Think backwards and in months

List the stages of your career within a category in chronological reverse order. Always start with the latest or most recent stages and end with the stage that lies the furthest in the past. If stages overlap, sort them according to the starting date. This also applies to the sequence of categories: state the most recent stages on the first page. Use a uniform month/year structure for periods.

Integrate relevant and current details

The pure positions on your CV, i.e. those things you have done since leaving school, are the basic framework of your CV. Use details about e.g. your study programme, vocational training or practical experience to show and personalise your profile. This will not only highlight that you are a good match for the position, it also sets you apart from other applicants. When selecting the details, always check the necessity and relevance with respect to the specific position and leave out any details that are neither important nor relevant for the position. What also helps: the longer the stages lie in the past, the less interesting the details are.

Your studies – show what you have learned

Regardless of whether you are still studying or not, whether you have dropped out or completed your studies, in most cases your studies are a central stage in your professional life due to the knowledge, skills and not least the qualification you have acquired. To show the value of the studies it need more than simply stating the times, the degree programme and the university's name. Show what you have learned and seize the opportunity to demonstrate your aptitude for a position by using technical terms and keywords. Even though you provide some of this information in the appendix, do not rely on the fact that readers review all the appendices.

Include e.g. your study focus, and (selected) modules and projects that are relevant for the position, as well as the title of your thesis. If you have good grades, mention this, too. It is worth considering which knowledge and experience you have gathered during the matching process, and integrating these details into your CV, even if you have not finished a study programme. Chapter 6 and the tutorial "Tips on how to handle 'non-linear CVs'" contain more tips and information.

Practical experience – provides details

Practical experience is valuable content in your CV – even if this is not specifically relevant to the application position. It shows that, in addition to theoretical knowledge, you have practical competencies, and in particular, that you know what it is like to work, to master practical challenges or to work in a team.

If you provide more information and add details, your experiences get more concrete and your profile more individual. First, the employer, the role and the area or business unit in which you worked should be clear. If the employer is not well known but part of a branch you want to enter, add the industry or describe the employer in few words. Finally, use three or four bullet points to describe the tasks you carried out; use keywords, if possible.

Vocational, professional or practical training – it can also include relevant information

In addition to your degree title or name and apprenticeship company or school, other details could be beneficial for you: do you have a distinction for being the e.g. 'best of your year'? This shows commitment and ambition. Mention any professional overlaps with the job you are applying for, e.g. points of focus or selected areas, contents or final papers.

School time – focus on the necessary

Your time at school should be part of your CV; however, in most cases, it is enough just to state your highest degree. If you achieved this somewhat later, e.g. only after a vocational training, you can also state which school-leaving qualification you attained before the training. There is no need to list your time at primary school, major subjects or school internships in your CV because in most cases they are neither relevant nor recent. The longer your school education lies in the past, and the less relevant the subjects or internships are for the job you are applying for, the less interesting this information is.

In case your school time is not that long ago, your CV does not yet contain many stages, and you are e.g. applying for your internship, times you spent abroad could be as interesting as subjects that match your studies.

Other stages and times – anything else with impact on your profile

Stages, such as overseas stays, a voluntary year or a gap year may not be very interesting at first. However, it may contain some interesting details about your profile. For example, you can state the countries, employers or tasks and show that you have relevant cross-cultural experience, and have developed soft skills and knowledge.

Also demonstrate your personality in your CV

Besides what obviously belongs in a CV, there may be content with which you can score points and show who you are. E.g. Voluntary service, extracurricular activities or success in high-level sport as well as hobbies or how you spend your free time show facets of your personality. In particular, recreational pursuits are interesting where you can prove or train relevant technical, soft or interdisciplinary skills. Have you received an award for your thesis? Did you succeed in a university contest? Are you a member of a professional association even as a student? Mention it. However, do not name any memberships in unions, political parties or religious communities.

DIGRESSION: CV with cover sheet

As a student or graduate, you normally do not need a cover sheet. Depending on the design, it may appear as too much or superfluous. In particular, if the reader needs to review many applications, a

cover sheet can quickly be seen as an additional page without interesting content. If, however, you do opt for a cover sheet, it should always give valuable information. Especially in case you apply without a cover letter, a cover sheet can e.g. have an executive summary, which also refers to your personal strengths or goals. Select an accurate design that matches your CV.

Possible contents of a cover sheet

- Addressee (e.g. 'Application for company | Job description | Possible job code')
- Photo, size max. ¼ page
- Your first name and surname
- Academic level or current status (e.g. 'Mechanical engineering student in the 6th semester')
- Personal data and full contact data (see section 2)
- Profile summary
- No page number, the page numbers start with page 2

Be succinct

To add more value, you can outline your own profile in approx. 4 bullet points or 3 short sentences. You can summarise or highlight e.g. your qualifications, experience, strengths or goals. Choosing aspects orient yourself on your aptitude and the relevance of the position that you are applying for. It often helps to ask yourself the following questions: “Why would they invite me for an interview? What makes me an interesting candidate?” Consider what you would answer regarding the following aspects:

- Professional qualification(s)
- Practical experience
- Personality & soft skills
- Goals & motivation

5. Language, choice of words and keywords

Bullet points and keywords are enough for the CV. Flow text is unusual in CVs, quickly appears massive and hinders rapid absorption of information. Despite this, choose your every word carefully. Use e.g. substantive verbs to formulate tasks, results or responsibilities of a work experience. In the appendix, you find a list of example verbs.

In particular, regarding practical experience, simply listing topics is much less interesting than connecting tasks and topic (“developing a concept for >> topic<<”). If possible, find formulations that follow a uniform pattern.

Select clear, plain language without filler words and adjectives that usually just take up space unnecessarily. Check which keywords from the job description you can integrate. This does not necessarily need to be specialist terms. Tasks, methods or software can show the matching, too.

6. Dealing with 'delicate' positions and gaps

You may feel that changing subject or jobs, dropping out or gaps, e.g. due to illness or personal problems, may be 'sensitive'. At the same time, everything in your application should be true and clear. These kinds of stages, decisions or times should be clearly visible and not hidden. But: you do not need to expound on this nor go into detail, and remember, each CV is individual and 'non-linear CVs' are not a KO criterion for many recruiters.

A certain level of transparency often pays off more than trying to conceal anything. There are different ways of showing difficult periods without unnecessarily emphasizing them, so that readers do not get a feeling that you try to hide something. Any situation can be presented appropriately. If you are unsure, use the counselling services offered by the Career Service.

Helpful tips

- Include all times (> 3 months), positions and stages of your career.
- Present facts correctly. Use comprehensible words.
- Stick to the motto 'only as much as necessary', there is no need to provide background information.
- Use positive and active sentences.
- Focus your current commitment and performance ability.
- Highlight the value of 'sensitive' positions for your aptitude and your motivation. If possible, add details that underscore this.

If you changed direction

State that you changed your study programme, college or job, or that you dropped out of a study programme or a vocational training. Show that it was a deliberate decision and focus on your motivation for a new goal. “*Prematurely leaving of a study programme in favour of a commercial training,*” sounds more active and motivated than “*not completed due to a lack of practical experience*”.

Think about the advantages the stage and the change have. If you e.g. gained any relevant know-how or suitable skills during this time, add this information. Examples are any exams you passed, or modules, laboratory internships and projects you completed – even if you dropped out of study programme. Do not forget to state any side jobs during this time with which you developed any relevant soft skills. Take this chance and show what you were able to learn in a possibly difficult time and how this is a benefit.

If there is a gap

Gaps should not be hidden, they simply need to be explained. Transition phases of up to 3 months are normal and do not need to be commented explicitly. In contrast, note any longer periods during which you were not working, training or studying. Choose your words carefully: “Unemployed” sounds much less active and deliberate than “Application phase with the goal of ...” or “Professional orientation”.

Think about how you made use of these times and what the added value of these phases is for the position you are applying for: For instance, did you spend time abroad and are now applying to an international company? In this case, add the countries you have visited and the language skills you gained. Did you have further training on your own initiative during the application phase? State, e.g. online courses that you attended or topics that sum up the knowledge you acquired. Did you work as a freelancer? State this and mention the tasks, customers or industries.

However, do not exaggerate to pimp your CV. You should be able to provide more information in a job interview.

If you studied much longer than usual

You only need to provide an explanation, if you took much longer than normal to complete a degree programme. Think about what reasons you can and want to give or what is the benefit of the extended study period has for you as well as an employer.

Examples:

- A part-time or side job next to your studies, e.g. to finance your life or to gain practical experience
- Voluntary internships for orientation and/or for gaining practical experience
- Parental leave or leave for caring for a family member
- Voluntary, non-creditable time spent abroad
- Caution: You do not need to mention any health problems or illnesses!

If you are unsure, use the counselling services offered by the Career Service. There is an appropriate presentation for every situation. Discussing different variants can help you to deal with questions.

7. Place, date (and signature)

Put this at the end of your CV: Place, date, and first name and surname. You can add a scanned signature. Some companies will explicitly ask you to do this. Check to see if this is the case. If you cannot find anything, think carefully about whether you really want to add your scanned signature in times of cyber criminality. If someone want you to sign your application documents, you can offer to bring a signed printed copy to the job interview.

Active verbs

accompany	enforce	program
achieve	evaluate	prolong
advise	execute	prove
analyse	expand	question
apply	help, support	realise
assist	implement	record
begin	improve	reduce
bill	increase	replace
cause	inform	report
check	initiate	research
communicate	instruct	sell
compile	invest	shorten
conceptualise	involve	strengthen
conclude	manage	structure
control	monitor	study
convince	motivate	supply
coordinate	negotiate	support
create	observe	train
design	optimise	update
develop	organise	use
document	plan	write
draft	prepare	...
edit	process	

CURRICULUM VITAE

Example Company SE | Example job title

FIRST NAME & SURNAME

e.g. M.Sc. Civil engineer-to-be
e.g. B Sc. Civil engineering

PHOTO

PERSONAL DATA

Post address ... | ...
Contact details Mobile number | e-mail address
Date and place of birth dd.mm.yyyy in place (Country)
Nationality ... | work permit available
Legal status e.g. married
Networking profile [LinkedIn](#)

STUDIES

Since mm/yyyy >>Name of the study programme (e. g. M. Sc.) | University XY
Degree expected mm/yyyy | Average grade: X, Y
Focus / special subjects: Topics / titles
Modules: e.g. title 1, title 2, title 3
Scholarship: Fond XYZ | since mm/yyyy

mm/yyyy - mm/yyyy **Bachelor of >>name of degree<<** | University XY
Final grade: X, Y
Focus / special subjects: Topics / titles
Bachelor thesis: „Title“

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

Since mm/yyyy e.g. **Master thesis** | **business unit** | company, place (country)
e.g. Branch / industry

- Details, like e.g. professional topics
- Details, like e.g. tasks, methods, software
- Details, like e.g. responsibilities

mm/yyyy - mm/yyyy e.g. **Student worker** | **department** | organisation, place (country)
e.g. purpose of the organisation

- Details, like e.g. tasks, methods, software

FIRST NAME SURNAME

Mobile number | e-mail address

CURRICULUM VITAE

Example Company SE | Example job title

mm/yyyy - mm/yyyy

e.g. **Intern** | **area**

Employer Inc., place (country) | e.g. XY manufacturer

- Details, like e.g. professional topics
- Details, like e.g. tasks, methods, software
- Details, like e.g. responsibilities

PROJECTS

mm/yyyy

e.g. **Title** | FH Münster | Institute of XY

Details, like e.g. Tasks, activities, methods, tools, results

mm/yyyy - mm/yyyy

e.g. **Topic** | FH Münster | Module XY

Details, like e.g. Tasks, activities, methods, tools, results

mm/yyyy

e.g. **Title** | FH Münster | cooperating company

Details, like e.g. Tasks, activities, methods, tools, results

LANGUAGE COURSE & SCHOOL

mm/yyyy - mm/yyyy

Language course German (DSH) | Institution XY, place (country)

mm/yyyy - mm/yyyy

Name of the school degree | name of the school, place (country)

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

Extracurricular education

e.g. degree title (provider / Institution)

e.g. course topic (provider / Institution)

Software

e.g. MS Word, MS Excel, MS PowerPoint, MS Project, Adobe Connect

Methods

e.g. agile project management

Lab instruments

...

Languages

e.g. Language 1: level

e.g. Language 2: level

e.g. Language 3: level

Driver's license

class: e.g. B

FURTHER INFORMATION

Voluntary work

e.g. team leader | sports club, place | since yyyy

e.g. team member | social project xy | institution, place (country)

Award

e.g. place X | Science Contest XY

Membership

e.g. Organisation, like e.g. Professional association

Interests & Hobbies

e.g. cooking Asian food, Travel literature, programming, mountain biking

First name surname

Place, dd. month year

FIRST NAME SURNAME

Mobile number | e-mail address

CURRICULUM VITAE

Example Company SE | Example job title

FIRST NAME & SURNAME

B Sc. >>name of degree<<

PHOTO

PERSONAL DATA

Post address ... | ...
Contact details Mobile number | e-mail address
Date and place of birth dd.mm.yyyy in place (Country)
Nationality ...
Networking profile [LinkedIn](#)

EDUCATION HISTORY

mm/yyyy - mm/yyyy **Bachelor of >>name of degree<<** | University XY
Degree expected mm/yyyy | Average grade: X, Y
Projects:
▪ Title 1
▪ Title 2
▪ Title 3
Bachelor thesis in cooperation with company SE:
„Title”

mm/yyyy - mm/yyyy Language course German (DSH) | Institution XY, place (country)

mm/yyyy - mm/yyyy Name of the school degree | name of the school, place (country)

INTERNSHIPS

Since mm/yyyy e.g. **Intern | business unit** | company, place (country)
e.g. Branch / industry
▪ Details, like e.g. professional topics
▪ Details, like e.g. tasks, methods, software
▪ Details, like e.g. responsibilities

mm/yyyy - mm/yyyy e.g. **Intern | area**
Employer Inc., place (country) | e.g. XY manufacturer
▪ Details, like e.g. professional topics
▪ Details, like e.g. tasks, methods, software
▪ Details, like e.g. responsibilities

FIRST NAME SURNAME

Mobile number | e-mail address

CURRICULUM VITAE

Example Company SE | Example job title

SIDE JOBS

mm/yyyy - mm/yyyy

e.g. Student worker | XX h per week
company, place (country) | Branch / industry

- e.g. Tasks, responsibilities

mm/yyyy - mm/yyyy

e.g. Student worker | XX h per week
company, place (country) | Branch / industry

- e.g. Tasks, responsibilities

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

Extracurricular education

e.g. Virtual teamwork (PLUSPUNKT, FH Münster)

e.g. MS Excel for engineers (LinkedIn Learning)

Conferences

e.g. Attendance at a branch congress

Software

e.g. MS Word, MS Excel, MS PowerPoint, MS Project, Adobe Connect

Programming

e.g. Java, C++, Python

Languages

e.g. Language 1: level

e.g. Language 2: level

ENGAGEMENT

Voluntary work

e.g. individual tutoring | social project xy | place (country)

e.g. Mentor for international students | department XY | FH Münster

Award

e.g. place X | Techathon, FH Münster

First name surname

Place, dd. month year

FIRST NAME SURNAME

Mobile number | e-mail address