



---

# How to write a CV and Cover Letter

---

Includes detailed tips  
on personal  
statements

---

David Hilditch  
Director  
Matiogi Ltd

---

## How to Write a CV

For each good position there will probably be hundreds of CV applications. Often employers hire 3 or 4 recruitment agencies each of whom will supply 3 or 4 CVs to the company from about 20 - 40 job applications. On top of this the company has a recruitment section on their website where they probably received dozens of CVs. The process normally goes like this - filter the CVs down to an acceptable amount to present to a specialist, then get the specialist to select the ones they want to interview. The specialist will likely be very busy (otherwise why would they be hiring someone else?) so they will most likely use *gut-instinct* to select the people they wish to interview.

- Add a summary of who you are. Include the keywords they're hunting for and try and paint a picture of the career path you are on. Don't be afraid to include a statement about what/who you are aiming to be. Target this summary primarily at the specialist - think of who they would like to work with.
- Experience statements should describe things you have achieved, demonstrate skills/talents/characteristics you have and ideally be about how you made money, saved money or time, or made customers happy for your previous employers. Put anything wooly in here and your CV will likely be skipped.
- Tailor your CV for the position they are describing. The best place to do this is in your experience statement. e.g. if you have four or five particular technical skills in your area but their job advert is only looking for one or two then try and emphasise these skills by altering your experience statement to describe different situations you've experienced which show those skills in action.
- Make sure you've included all the keywords agents are likely to filter for. Try not to include more than they're looking for as this can look like spam. Agency CV filters are like search engines so it's often better if the keywords are contained inside regular text but you should add a list of your key strengths (which match the keywords in their job advert) in your summary.
- Include your education. This is more important when you are younger, but even more experienced individuals should include a short summary. If you don't include your education on your CV it leaves an unanswered question in the interviewers head which will likely make them filter-out your CV. This counts even if you have very little education.
- Include a short statement about stuff you like doing outside of work. When researching the company, if you found that they regularly do social activities that you enjoy then include them here.
- Include a summary of your key personality strengths. If you don't know what they are, take our free personality test. Feel free to keep your weaknesses out of your CV - they will instead be discussed at interview where you will get the chance to turn them into strengths.
- Don't lie about skills you have on your CV, especially not if they are key skills the company is looking for. You're just wasting everyone's time. Any decent interviewer will probe deeper into your skills so if it's a key one you will get found out. e.g if you only used a single Excel spreadsheet which someone else created and all you did was fill in the spreadsheet then when describing Excel Skills don't say you have excellent Excel skills - say you're *familiar* with it or better yet, leave it out of your CV altogether.

- Keep your CV focused. Aim for two pages and you should find that you only keep your best strengths and experiences on there which will make the interview far easier for you.

## **CV Top Tips**

- A CV is identical to an American Resume
- Your CV should be no longer than 2 pages - be concise
- Include a *summary* of your education if you graduated more than a few years ago
- Include a personal statement as an attention grabber
- The order should go: Name + Contact details, education, personal statement, experience in reverse chronological order followed finally by a sentence or two about your personal interests or hobbies if you like.
- For each role you've had, think of your proudest achievement in that role and try and *quantify* it - i.e. how much money did you save/make your company/department? How much time did you save them? (try and also translate this into money) How many customers did you make happier? (try and translate this into a monetary amount too)
- Try and show a consistent pattern throughout your experience statements to give the employer a clear picture of who you are and what you can bring
- Be more concise with experience statements which happened further in the past. Elaborate more on your recent experiences.
- Try and relate your experiences to the job you are applying for - often this can mean having 2 or 3 CVs prepared for different types of roles

## CV personal statement tips

Your CV personal statement is what will make the recruiter read the rest of your CV. In much the same way that the summary on a book cover makes us decide whether to take a chance and buy the book, your CV statement should make the recruiter want to read the rest of the CV.

Communication is defined as the activity of conveying meaningful information. The majority of our communication is non verbal i.e. body language and tone of voice, rather than what we say; as this is not available to us in a CV statement, it is even more important that your statement grabs the attention of the reader and that you concentrate on your choice of words and phrases.

Your CV statement should be concise, easy to read and tailored to what the recruiter may be looking for. It should sell you.

After the title of the document, which should be CV or Curriculum Vitae for UK jobs and Resume for U.S jobs, the next thing the recruiter should read in the initial crucial seconds of looking at your CV should be your statement or personal profile.

This should consist of 5-7 high impact statements or "grabbers" that describe you – your capabilities, achievements, experience and personality. These statements should be positive and emphasise your strengths and should be geared towards the job for which you are applying. Other people applying for the same job will be doing this so be fair to yourself and also do it.

Punctuation can and should be used to make the statement easy and interesting to read e.g. determined and decisive; uses initiative to meet and resolve challenges. Here the semi-colon separates two related pieces of information while keeping them in the same sentence and included in a statement would convey good written language skills which may give your CV an edge.

Finally, it may be stating the obvious, but your statement or profile should be honest, consistent and able to be backed up. To have an edge over many CV's out there, tell the truth. An honest, solid applicant will always be preferred to a dishonest "star". Integrity remains a vital factor for all good quality employers.

## Personal statement tips for your CV/Resume

- Place the statement near the top of page 1 of your CV - it is an attention grabber
- Be concise - try and use 4 or 5 high impact statements inside a maximum of 3 to 4 sentences.
- Don't be afraid to market yourself - if you can claim you've been doing this job since you were a child then do it! e.g. "A salesman from the age of six, I have since made it my mission to learn every selling technique in existence."
- Be honest - you need to be able to back up your personal statement when you meet interviewers in real life!
- Don't go into too much detail - it's just an attention grabber - the shorter the better

- Don't waffle - you don't want 'blah blah blah' running through the readers head
- Emphasize your strengths

## **CV Personal Statement Examples**

We have collated a list of good cv personal statement examples for you to peruse. Remember to personalise your own personal statement but for access to our examples just search for 'personal statements' on our website. Here's a selection:

*"Award winning salesperson who has consistently achieved and beaten sales targets for over 15 years courtesy of a determined, tenacious and professional attitude. I have an articulate and intelligent approach which allows me to clearly understand client requirements and concisely convey the benefit and value of the product or service on offer. My ability to identify a customer's business need enables me to close deals quickly and achieve targeted results."*

*"Experienced in managing substantial £multi-million budgets and turnovers, establishing new and restructuring existing national businesses, establishing methods for calculating profitability of individual business units and sourcing materials, infrastructure and manpower to achieve establish brands and profitability. Skilled in the full life cycle of projects, setting and monitoring KPI's, designing and implementing policy and procedure and enabling continuous improvement."*

## What's a cover letter?

A cover letter's primary purpose is to grab the attention of whoever you've written to. If you're applying for a job, you want them to read your CV and your cover letter should encourage them to do so. Why are you so amazing? Why are you exceptional? Why should they read more? Why should they consider you?

You shouldn't think of a cover letter as being part of your CV - it is similar to the mission statement or personal statement in your CV in that its primary intention is to get people to spend a few minutes more on your CV/Resume or job application than anyone else's.

If you are still wondering "what is a covering letter?" then you should think of the blurb on the back of books - they don't give away the content, they *hint* at it and make big news of any great stuff other people have said, any awards they have had, any great reviews they have received etc. Your cover letter should be similar - it should highlight the biggest reasons you can think of for why people should consider your application/CV/resume.

## What really is a cover letter?

Cover letters exist in this day and age thanks to the inordinate amount of job applications companies receive for positions they advertise. It is becoming more and more impossible for employers to read every CV/Resume/job application and a cover letter is that little bit of extra effort you can give to increase the chances of your application actually being considered. Bear in mind that for any one position companies can often receive hundreds, if not thousands, of applications. A great cover letter will never guarantee a job but what it will do is significantly increase the chances that your application is actually considered.

Consider this carefully - you're trying to get your application to the short-list out of thousands of other applications so you need to get personal with the person who is filtering the applications. Convince them that you have lived your entire life to work in this position, or that you have some new profound experience which makes you ideal for this position, or rely on your knowledge and understanding of the company and role to convince them to put your application onto the shortlist.

This means you have to get personal - you must figure out who are the people who are going to receive your cover letter - make a phone call if you have to prior to sending your cover letter. If it's an agent you're dealing with, your cover letter should be tailored towards how much success you've had at winning interviews you're put into - agents make money if you get placed so the more you can convince them that you WILL get placed, the likelier you are to be on their shortlist.

If, on the other hand, your cover letter is being sent to the actual company you will hopefully be employed by then what's in your cover letter should change significantly - you should now tailor it to the employer and explain how much you admire their company, who you know from their company,

what respect you have for their company and how your experience/qualifications/talents/whatever are aligned with what you believe the company is trying to achieve with this role.

You don't want to put too much sales nonsense in your cover letter - remember, it's real human beings reading it - but you still shouldn't hold back from being extravagant - if you can claim you've been expert in this role since you were a child then do it! It may make them laugh, but it will still make them more likely to read and consider your application and read your CV/Resume.

Hopefully this helps answer the question of what really is a cover letter - I know there are plenty of people out there who feel resentful towards this kind of stuff even existing but if you understand the numbers of people applying for roles then it should be easy to see why they exist and how you can capitalise by making a cover letter which makes your CV actually be read. Whether you actually then get hired is up to the content of your CV/Resume of course...

It's a good question - think of a cover letter as being similar to the blurb on a book cover. The book may be amazing, you may have been personally recommended the book by friends in which case the blurb (cover letter) is not really required, but if you have just picked this book up off the shelf then the blurb is the only way you have of knowing if you should read further.

A full CV will take a recruiter about 5 - 10 minutes to assess and decide whether or not they wish to interview the candidate. A cover letter will take about 1 minute to read and will help the recruiter decide if they should even bother to read the CV.

In an ideal world, everyone would be assessed fairly, but in reality, recruiters are incredibly short on time and have hundreds of applicants to each post. They tend to form their own methods of quickly filtering CVs so that they only have to actually read about 10 of the 100s of CVs - these methods are wide and varied but in almost all regards, if you have taken the extra time to write a specific cover letter tailored to the company then your chances of making this shortlist are higher.

It's not so much that the recruiter requires the cover letter, it's more that as a candidate YOU should write one since it increases your chances of making it onto the shortlist of CVs which are actually read in the first place. After that, it's up to your CV to actually secure you an interview.

## How to start a cover letter

The start of your cover letter is very likely the first thing that your prospective employer will see, so make it good! The cover letter is most definitely not the same as your CV - think of it this way - having a better CV increases your chances of getting an interview *when the CV is actually read*. The cover letter *increases the chances of your CV being read* as well as *the amount of time they will spend reading your CV*. So start it well.

You should start with Dear Mr Smith. This means you have to find out who is hiring or who is short-listing the CVs. Make a phone call if you have to - how much do you really want the job? Call them up and ask them for the name of the person who is reviewing the CVs - they will always give you an answer.

The people who are reviewing the CVs will be busy - why can I guarantee that? Why else are they hiring new people? There's too much work to go around and I can tell you from personal experience that it can be very painful reviewing 100s of CVs so your first statement at the start of your cover letter should really make you stand out.

Say something like - "I've been a whizz-kid programmer from the age of six", or "I have beaten almost all targets I have ever set", or "I have been honing my sales skills since the age of seven". Sound cheesy? The important part here is to GRAB ATTENTION. Pick your biggest strength from your CV or personality which matches what they are looking for and figure out a way to write it that makes it stand out from the crowd.

Do some research on the position and the company. You need to try and discover what is the number 1 thing they are looking for in their new hire. If it's sales skills they're after, your first statement should convince them you've sold exceptionally well in the past. If it's managerial experience they're after, tell them how much managerial experience you have in the first sentence. If they're looking for someone dependable, reliable and able to work to routine then put this in your first sentence.

### Summary of how to start a cover letter

- Find the persons name who will be filtering CVs
- Research the position and include a relevant statement about how you fill this requirement as your opening sentence
- Be bold



## How to end a cover letter

Your cover letters entire purpose is to GRAB ATTENTION and make them read your CV/Resume. Remember this throughout your entire cover letter. You should have written a great introduction which grabs the readers attention by highlighting what makes you unique as an applicant and ideally you should have shown them how you are a natural at what you do.

If you're unsure what a cover letter is, you should start with our other articles:

- [What is a cover letter?](#) (also why it's needed and guide to content)
- [How to start a cover letter](#)
- [Free cover letter templates](#)

There are 3 main parts to your cover letter - the attention grabbing [cover letter start](#), the meat in the middle of your cover letter and then the closing sentence or two. The closing sentences of your cover letter should still be aimed at getting the reader to put your CV on the first shortlist. Here's what you need to do:

- Point out a particular part of your experience on your CV which you feel makes you perfectly suited to the role
- Restate how you are now perfectly aligned in your career for this role

### Example of how to end a cover letter

*For the role of \_\_\_\_\_ (insert target role) you'll be particularly interested in my experience at \_\_\_\_\_ (insert prior company name) where I excelled at \_\_\_\_\_ (choose a skill they are looking for). It is this experience, in particular, that I feel now makes me perfectly suited for this role. You'll find my CV/Resume (choose CV if you're in UK else Resume) enclosed.*

The purpose here is not to go into too much detail about stuff already in your CV but give them something in your CV that they should go and look at straight away. You should be trying to create *intrigue* in order to convince them to look at your CV and read it carefully.

### Final ending of your cover letter

Finally, you should end your cover letter with a formal phrase - this phrase will depend on two things: 1) the location of the job and 2) Did you use the persons name at the beginning or did you write Sir/Madam?

- Used their name? End with:

Yours sincerely, (for a U.S. audience you may optionally reverse the order here to 'Sincerely yours')

(insert your full name)

(sign it)

- US audience and used Sir/Madam?:

Yours truly,

(insert your full name)

(sign it)

- Worldwide audience and used Sir/Madam?:

Yours faithfully,

(insert your full name)

(sign it)

## CV Cover Letter Template

The CV/Resume cover letter template below can be used when you are applying for any job to which you are submitting your CV or Resume. You should try to personalise the cover letter as much as possible - include some highly interesting details about yourself and remember the number 1 priority of a cover letter is:

- Get the reader to read your CV

That's it. You might argue that you also need to come across as professional etc etc but really it all boils down to convincing the reader to go get your CV and read it. The important skills to use here to increase the likelihood of that happening are:

- Use intrigue - don't give everything away - hint at something interesting in your CV
- Be professional - wrong grammar or spelling is a massive turn off - they will not read your CV if there are grammatical errors in your cover letter.
- Be personal - find the hiring person's name if you can and address the letter to them - a phone call can help. This may be scary, but do you want the job or not?
- Be impressive - don't be dull. Pick one thing about you that is incredibly impressive and sell it in the cover letter

## CV/Resume Cover Letter Template

Dear Mr/Ms \_\_\_\_\_ (insert person's last name here),

I started learning \_\_\_\_\_ (insert your top skill) at the young age of \_\_\_\_\_ (insert the youngest age you could conceivably say you started learning this skill). Since then I have dedicated my career to becoming the best at \_\_\_\_\_ (insert your top skill) so that I could become a leader in my field.

My CV/Resume (use CV for UK, else use Resume) is enclosed and I think you will find my experience at \_\_\_\_\_ (insert your best previous company) of particular interest in considering my application for \_\_\_\_\_ (insert the role you are applying for).

Yours sincerely/faithfully (sincerely if you know their name, faithfully if not)

(leave a gap to sign the letter)

\_\_\_\_\_ (insert your name)

### **Summary notes for the CV cover letter template**

You don't have to sign the letter if you're sending it electronically - also you should say 'attached' rather than 'enclosed'. The important points to remember are to be personal, be impressive, be succinct and do what you can to intrigue them enough to open your CV.

After that, it's up to your CV or Resume whether or not you get an interview but at least you've won the first battle of actually getting them to read it! This can radically improve the number of interviews you receive.