

Sample Business Letters (cont'd)

Resume or CV

A **resume** (AmE=American English) or **CV** (BrE= British English) is usually requested by a prospective employer as a record of your qualifications and professional experience.

CV stands for the Latin words "curriculum vitae", meaning "the course of one's life" or a brief account of one's education, qualifications and previous occupations.

You never get a second chance to make a first impression

When you apply for a job, most employers want to have 2 important documents from you: One of them is a CV or resume.

First impressions are important. Your CV is usually the first impression that an employer has of you. And because an employer may have hundreds of job applications to consider, you have about 15 seconds to make sure that first impression is a good one.

You need a good CV because your CV's job is to get you an interview!

Your CV or resume is your visiting card, your ambassador, your shop window. It represents you and it has a specific purpose: to get you an interview! To do this, it must:

- attract
- inform
- persuade
- sell.

A good CV is one of your most important tools in the search for employment.

What a CV or resume

is not	is
a book	short
an obstacle	seductive
a tombstone	an important document
boring or difficult to read	answers to the question 'Why'
your life story or autobiography	interesting and easy to read
a catalogue of your personal opinions	a list of benefits for the employer
not a list of problems with past employers	as much about the employer as about you

Following are tips from English Club, the world's premier free website for learners and teachers of English.

!!! Your CV must get you an interview.

It usually concentrates on:

- your personal details,
- your education and
- your work experience.

Your CV's job is very simple: to get you a job interview.

To do this, your CV must be:

- clear
- well-organized
- easy to read
- concise
- relevant to the job offered

Content

Your CV is the summary of your professional life. You should include everything that is relevant to your employment or career and nothing that is irrelevant.

Exactly what you include depends partly on your type of work.

There are usually **5** general headings of information to include:

Personal details

Name, address, email and telephone number (and sometimes nationality, age/date of birth and marital status)

Objective

A headline that summarizes the job opportunity you are seeking

Work experience

Your previous employment in reverse chronological order - with most detail for your present or most recent job

Education

Details of secondary and university education - including the establishments and qualifications (but excluding any that are irrelevant to your career)

Personal interests

Demonstrating that you are a balanced, responsible member of society with an interesting life outside work

Sometimes, you may need to give additional information for a particular job or because you have **special qualifications**.

Format

Word-processed or hand-written?

Your CV should be word-processed, for several reasons.

Firstly, in the English-speaking world a hand-written CV would be considered unprofessional.

Secondly, many recruitment agencies and some employers like to electronically scan CVs (they cannot do this with hand-written CVs).

Thirdly, as we shall see later, it will be much easier for you to update and modify your CV to target it to a specific employer.

How many pages?

Unless you are applying to be Secretary General of the United Nations, it is probably best to limit your CV to a maximum of 2 pages. Remember, your CV is a tool to get you an interview: it is not designed to get you the job. You can usually put everything you need to get an interview on 1 or 2 pages. If you put more than this, the employer has too much to read (and may throw your CV into

the nearest bin). In addition, if you put everything in the CV, you will have nothing new to say at the interview. Be kind to employers! Leave them some questions to ask you.

What size paper?

Do not be tempted to demonstrate your individuality by using a non-standard paper size: you will simply irritate the employer. There are basically 2 standard paper sizes, depending on the part of the world:

A4 (297 x 210 millimeters) - used largely in Europe, including the United Kingdom

US Letter Size (8 1/2 x 11 inches) - used largely in the United States

You must judge for yourself the most appropriate size for the company or companies to which you are applying.

What quality paper?

Remember that your CV may be read and handled by several people. It will also be an important document during the interview that you hope to have. Choose a good quality, fairly heavy paper so that it will remain in good condition at all times. Normal photocopying paper is 80g/m² in weight. This is a little too light and will soon look creased and dirty. 100g/m² or 115g/m² would be better.

What sort of typeface?

Choose an easy-to-read typeface. Typefaces are designed for specific purposes. The standard typefaces Times New Roman or Arial are perfect for your CV. Not too small, not too large! A size of 12 point would be appropriate.

DO NOT USE ALL CAPITALS LIKE THIS! CAPITALS ARE VERY DIFFICULT TO READ AND MAY BE CONSIDERED **IMPOLITE** IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD.

*Do not use a lot of italic like this. Italic can also be **difficult** and **irritating** to read.*

*Do not use a fancy typeface. It is **not appropriate** for a professional document.*

Example CV/resume

The example shown on this page is a simple demonstration of one basic type of CV.

Thomas Crown

Objective Seeking an International Sales Management position in Information Technology where my extensive sales experience will be used to the full

Experience 2003-present Intel Inc. London, UK
National Sales Manager

- Increased sales from £60 million to £100 million.
- Implemented Internet sales grossing £25 million.
- Doubled sales per representative from £5 to £10 million.

2001-2003 Teletrona Systems Edinburgh, UK
Northern Sales Manager

- Increased regional sales from £95m to £200m.
- Suggested new services adding £35m to revenue.
- Expanded sales team from 30 to 60 representatives.

1999-2000 ESS Holdings Cambridge, UK
Senior Sales Representative

- Increased sales by 300% annually.
- Closed deals with 100 major new accounts.
- Won over 25 competitor clients - adding £50 million to revenue.

1996-99 ESS Holdings Cambridge, UK
Sales Representative

- Increased sales by 300% annually.
- Awarded company's top sales award each year.
- Developed 'Winning Presentations' training course.

Education 1992-96 London University London, UK

- BA, Business Administration & Information Systems
- Captain of University Rugby Club

1988-92 St Andrew's School Plymouth, UK

- 4 GCE 'A' Levels
- President of school's Drama Society

Interests St Andrew's Board of Governors, rugby, drama, chess

17 King's Terrace, Richmond, Surrey, UK
Tel: +44 181 123 456 Email: tc@repu.co.uk

Headings to Use

In general, 5 or 6 headings (= *rubriques*) will be enough for most resumes or CVs. However, sometimes you will want to use more headings - when applying for a particular job for which additional information is appropriate.

Here is a CV layout with most of the possible headings that you can choose from.

[White] 'Standard' headings that you find on most CVs

[Grey] 'Extra' headings that you can add if necessary

Your name

Include a good **photo** if you want or if requested

First name Surname (for example: John Brown)

Address

17 Any Road, ANYTOWN, Anycountry

Telephone +44 171 123 4567

Fax +44 171 123 4567

Email myname@anydomain.net

Personal Information

Marital status:

Single

Married

Divorced

Separated

Widowed

Nationality: British

Date of birth: State your date of birth in the form 1 January 1988 or January 1st, 1988

Age: 28

Place of birth: Town, Country

Objective

State the position or opportunity that you are looking for.

(This must be short: one or two lines only.)

Summary of qualifications

Make a short list of the qualifications you have for this job. (This should be short. Your full qualifications will appear later under 'Education').

Professional experience

List your jobs in reverse chronological order (last is first).

Education

List your university/school in reverse chronological order (last is first).

Specialized skills

Any additional special abilities you have (for example, computer programming) that may be of interest to the employer.

Patents and publications

List any relevant inventions you have made or books, articles and papers you have published.

Additional professional activities List any relevant work activities not listed elsewhere.

Professional memberships List any relevant professional associations or clubs of which you are a member.

Extracurricular activities List any relevant activities that you have outside work.

Volunteer experience List any relevant activities (present or past) that you have done unpaid.

Awards received List any relevant awards or prizes.

Accreditations List any official recognition of you by a relevant organization.

Security clearance For certain jobs with government or companies contracted by government, it may be necessary to state your level of authorization to work on classified or confidential projects.

Civil service grades If relevant, list your grades or levels as a civil servant (that is, state employee).

Community activities List anything you do for your local community (for example church or school) if it is important or relevant for this job.

Languages If necessary, list the languages you can speak. You can use the following descriptions:

Mother tongue
Fluent
Excellent
Good
Some knowledge

Travel Details of travel and exposure to cultural experiences that may support your application.

Interests and activities List things that you like or like doing (For example governor of local school, going to opera, drama or tennis).

Hobbies List your favorite leisure-time activities (for example, stamp-collecting). You should include this only if you think it will be interesting for the employer. You may prefer to include this under 'Interests and activities'.

Additional information Add any additional information that is necessary and relevant for a particular job.

References If required, give the names and addresses of (two) people who can give you a reference. Alternatively, you can state 'Available on request.'

Do's and Don'ts

Do this...

- Do be positive.
- Do look forward to the future.
- Do emphasize the benefit you will bring to an employer.
- Do use active verbs.
- Do keep to the point. Be relevant.
- Do create an organized layout.
- Do be neat.
- Do use good quality paper.
- Do use a word-processor (computer).
- Do use wide margins.
- Do use plenty of white space.
- Do use a good quality photo (if you use a photo).
- Do check your work for spelling errors.
- Do check your work for grammatical errors.
- Do ask a friend to look at your CV and letter.
- Do sign your letter with a fountain pen.

Don't do this...

- Don't look backward to the past.
- Don't write CV or Resume at the top.
- Don't write Mr., Mrs. or Miss in front of your name.
- Don't give personal details (place of birth, age etc.) unless necessary.
- Don't give full addresses of past employers.
- Don't give minor or unimportant school qualifications.
- Don't give lots of irrelevant or unimportant hobbies.
- Don't write names in capital letters.
- Don't use lots of different typefaces (fonts) and sizes.
- Don't use lots of capital letters, italics or fancy typefaces.
- Don't use colored paper.
- Don't make your covering letter more than 1 page.
- Don't make your CV/resume more than 2 pages.

Vocabulary

!!! **Active verbs act.**

The Value of Simplicity and Clarity

If you want people to read your CV, your language must be simple and clear:

Use **short words** and **short sentences**.

Do not use **technical vocabulary**, unless you are sure that the reader will understand it.

Talk about concrete **facts** ('I increased sales by 50 %'), not abstract **ideas** ('I was responsible for a considerable improvement in our market position').

Use verbs in the **active** voice ('I organized this exhibition'), not **passive** voice ('This exhibition was organized by me'). Generally, the active voice is more powerful, and easier to understand.

The Power of Action Verbs

Certain words are used frequently by recruiters in their job descriptions.

You can study recruiters' advertisements and job descriptions and **try to use these words** in your CV and covering letter.

The most **powerful words** are **verbs**. And the most powerful verbs are **action verbs**. (Action verbs describe dynamic activity, not state).

Verbs of action to sell, to manage

Verbs of state to be, to exist

So you should use plenty of action verbs matched to your skills, and use them in the active form, not the passive form.

Which of these two sentences do you think is the more powerful?

Active form I increased sales by 100%.

Passive form Sales were increased by 100%.

Power Words to Use

Here is a list of typical action verbs categorized by skill:

Communication skills:

Address arbitrate correspond draft edit lecture mediate motivate negotiate persuade
present publicize reconcile speak write

Management skills:

Assign attain chair coordinate delegate direct execute organize oversee plan
recommend review strengthen supervise train

Research skills:

Collect critique define detect diagnose evaluate examine explore extract identify
inspect interpret investigate summarize survey

Technical skills:

Assemble build calculate devise engineer fabricate maintain operate overhaul
program remodel repair solve upgrade

Creative skills:

Conceptualize create design fashion form illustrate institute integrate invent
originate perform revitalize shape

Financial skills:

Administer allocate analyze appraise audit balance budget calculate control
compute develop forecast project

Sales skills:

Sell convert close deal persuade highlight satisfy win over sign

Teaching skills:

Advise clarify coach elicit enable encourage explain facilitate guide inform
instruct persuade stimulate train

British and American English

There are sometimes differences between British and American English and conventions.

Here is a guide to some of the most important differences for your CV/resume and covering letter.

But remember, this is a guide only - there are no strict rules.

For example, some British people like to use 'American' words, and some American people like to use 'British' words.

British

CV/curriculum vitae

Covering letter

Standard paper size: A4 (210 x 297 millimeters)

Mrs
Miss

Dear Sirs

Yours faithfully

Yours sincerely

Managing Director (MD)

Date format: DD/MM/YY
Example: 30/12/99
30 December 1999

Labour

American

Resumé
Resume

Cover letter
Covering letter

Standard paper size: Letter (8 1/2 x 11 inches)

Ms.

Gentlemen

Yours truly

Sincerely
Sincerely yours
Yours truly

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) [=PDG]
General Manager

date format: MM/DD/YY
example: 12/30/99
December 30th, 1999

Labor

Internet

!!! **Function not fashion.**

CVs/Resumes for the 21st Century

In the past it was usual to produce your CV/resume and covering letter on paper and submit them by post (snail mail) or fax. Today, it is increasingly usual for companies to ask you to send your CV by **email** or for candidates to place their CV on a **webpage**. These are two excellent ways of distributing your CV, but there are several important points that you should not overlook.

Email

When you send your CV by email, you can send it either as inline text (that is, written in the body of the email) or as a file attached to the email (or as a combination of these).

In all cases, please make sure that the **subject line** is clear, and relevant.

Your prospective employer may receive hundreds of CVs by email and many will have subject headings like:

CV
Job Application
John Brown
JB
Your Vacancy

You can imagine how frustrating it is to sort emails with meaningless subject lines like these (or, worse still, no subject line at all, as sometimes happens). If your name is "John Brown", a good subject line would be:

Resume: John Brown
CV & Covering Letter: John Brown
Job Application: John Brown
Application for Post of Sales Manager: John Brown

Inline text

It is best to use "plain text".

Yes, you **can** write your email in "HTML" or "Rich Text", but will your prospective employer be able to read it? Will it arrive correctly formatted? Will colors, typefaces, tabs and spacing, and any special characters like fancy accents be correctly presented?

Perhaps yes.

Perhaps no.

Unless you are certain that what you write will be seen as you intended, you cannot take the chance with such an important document.

Plain text, on the other hand, can be read by virtually all email programs world-wide and you can be confident that what you send is what arrives at the other end. However, even with plain text it is advisable to:

1. **Keep the line-length short.**

Use hard carriage returns (the "Enter" key) every 65 characters maximum.

2. **Avoid fancy spacing and tabulation.**

A CV/resume that is beautifully formatted in MS Word or some other word-processing program cannot be reproduced with the same layout in plain text. You should not even attempt it. Instead, you will need a different, simpler approach, similar to the one below.

Formatted document:

2015-	Sales Manager	<u>United Technologies Universal Ltd</u>	London, UK
2000-2005	Sales Representative	<u>Wonder Techniques Inc.</u>	New York, USA

Plain text email:

2015 to date
Sales Manager
United Technologies Ltd (London, UK)

2000-2005
Sales Representative
Wonder Techniques Inc. (New York, USA)

Attachments

You should be very careful about sending your CV as an attachment. Many people are very cautious about opening attachments, largely because they can contain viruses, and your email with an uninvited CV attachment may well be deleted before it ever sees the light of day. If you are sure that your prospective employer will accept attachments, then this can be a good way to submit your CV and covering letter.

Be careful too that your documents are properly laid out with a file format that can be read by your prospective employer. An MS Word document (.doc) is almost certain to be readable by anyone, on PC or Mac. Better still; convert it to the universal Rich Text Format (.rtf). If you send your CV produced on some obscure word processing program, and do not convert it to RTF, then do not be surprised if you never hear from your prospective employer again.

Another word of caution: like the subject line for your email, be sure to give your attached files meaningful names. Do not simply attach a file called "CV.doc" or "coveringletter.doc". Once it has been saved to your prospective employer's hard disk, the name will be meaningless, unless they have taken the trouble to change it. But you should not give them this trouble. Instead, call your attachments something like:

- Resume_John-Brown.doc
- CV-and-Covering-Letter_John-Brown.doc
- job-application_john-brown.rtf or pdf
- JohnBrown_Application-for-Post-of-Sales Manager.rtf or pdf

Webpage

It can be a very good idea to place your CV on the Web. This makes access to your CV easy and rapid world-wide. If you wish to retain confidentiality, you can always password protect it.

Unfortunately, many people suddenly become artistic as soon as they add pages to the Web. They believe that they can somehow enhance their CV by adding color, or unusual typefaces, or fancy backgrounds. They pay for their artistry in illegibility. If there is one, immutable law of the Universe, it is that contrast between text and background increases legibility (readability). In general, black text on a plain white background is the easiest text to read. (That is why books, newspapers and magazines the world over are printed in black text on white paper, except for some very special effect.) Remember, too, that a prospective employer may wish to print out your CV, and will almost certainly prefer to have a result that looks more like a conventional CV.

2000-	Sales Manager	<u>United Technologies Universal Ltd</u>	London, UK
1995-2000	Sales Representative	<u>United Technologies Universal Ltd</u>	New York, USA

10 Essential Tips

Here are some essential tips that summarize much of what we have already discussed, and add some new ideas. Read them carefully and act on them. They will guarantee that job interview.

Tip 1: Use design that attracts attention

Employers don't have time to read through each of your job descriptions to know if you have the skills they need. The design of your CV must do it for them. Your CV should be well-organized and emphasize the most important points about your experience, skills and education. This information is the first impression that an employer has of you.

Tip 2: Match your headings to the job

Use a job title and skill headings that match the job you want. An employer who sees unrelated job titles or skills will immediately think that you are not right for the job in question.

Tip 3: Write convincing content

Good design will get an employer's attention. But after that, you must concentrate on the content of your CV, the actual descriptions of your skills and abilities, to ensure an interview and good job offer.

Tip 4: Use 'power words'

You need to control the image that an employer has of you. To do this, use power words that match the position you want. If, for example, you are applying for a financial post, you should use as many financial skills power words as possible

Tip 5: Use 0123456789

People react to numbers! Numbers are alive and powerful. They create vivid images in our minds. General statements are easy to ignore. Be specific and use numbers when describing your duties and achievements. Don't talk about 'managing a major turnover'. Talk about 'managing a \$27,000,000 turnover'.

Tip 6: Put important information first

List important information at the beginning of your job description. Put statements in your CV in order of importance, impressiveness and relevance to the job you want. A powerful statement with numbers and power words influences every statement that follows.

Tip 7: Find key words from the job description

Let an employer do your work for you! Employers spend much time and money writing job advertisements and descriptions that contain key words for the position offered. Read these descriptions carefully to find the key words. Then use the same key words in your CV and cover letter.

Tip 8: Sell benefits, not skills

Holiday companies do not sell holidays. They sell relaxation, adventure, sun, sea and sand (the benefits of a holiday)! You should not sell your skills (many other people have the same skills). You should sell the benefits of your skills. When you write your skills and past duties, be careful to explain their benefits to the employer.

Tip 9: Create the right image for the salary

Use language that creates the right image for the level of job and salary you want. Position yourself at the appropriate level. The language you use will immediately influence an employer's perception of you.

Tip 10: Target the job

You will have more success if you adjust your CV and cover letter for the specific skills an employer is seeking. This means that you would write one CV for one particular job and a different, modified, CV for another job. You “repackage” yourself. In that way, an employer will see immediately that you correspond to the job description. It is not dishonest to “repackage” yourself. You are simply presenting yourself and your skills in the best light for a particular employer. This will help you to get more interviews. It will also allow you to apply for a wider range of jobs.

Tip Bonus: Solve your employer's (hidden) needs

Employers want people who can solve problems, not create them! Your CV and cover letter should show how you can solve the employer's problems and needs. And in addition to the skills or needs shown in a job advertisement, an employer may have other needs. You should identify these additional needs and show how you can satisfy them too. But concentrate first on the needs listed in the job description. Your additional solutions should come later, and low-key, after you already have the employer's attention

Practice

Try to write your own CV to apply for a programmer position.