**“Tailoring Your CV” – Learning Resource**

**Disclaimer:**

Example answers are given, but many questions may have multiple answers outside of what is given.

**Target Outcome:**

* Understand the main content to put in a CV
* Adapt a CV based on job description

**Duration:**

1 hour, but flexible to needs e.g. greater focus in certain areas.

**5-10 Minutes | Introduction – why tailor your CV?**

**Objective:** Get students to understand the *point* of tailoring

**Prompt discussion:**

* *“How long do you think a recruiter spends looking at your CV?”*  [**Answer**: seconds]
* *“What are the implications of this?”* [**Possible answers**: CV not being looked at completely thoroughly on first pass, shortcuts taken such as recruiters searching for keywords, finding relevant sections]
* *“Do you need to make a new CV from scratch every time?”* [**Answer**: no!]

**Explain:**

* Tailoring your CV makes it clear to the recruiter what your skills are and where you would be well applied to a role
* CV tailoring ensures that, even with a quick scan, your relevant skills/experience is known to the recruiter
* You *don't* need to rewrite the whole thing—just *focus on selection and wording*

**5-10 Minutes | An example CV structure + a tip**

**Objective:** Provide a structure that encompasses candidate information in a way that a recruiter could easily search for what is relevant to the role.

**Core CV sections:**

1. **Header** (Name, contact, links)
2. **Profile (optional)** – 2–3 lines summarising your strengths + what you’re looking for
3. **Education**
4. **Experience** (jobs, projects, volunteering) – reverse chronological
5. **Skills** (especially technical)
6. **Awards/Certifications** (if relevant)

**General Guidelines:**

* Use bullet points for experience
* Keep each bullet to 1–2 lines
* Always start with a **strong verb** [i.e. developed, improved, implemented]
* Quantify achievements where possible [i.e. reducing bug reports by 50%]

**CV Tailoring Tip:**

* Keep a *“master CV”* with everything you've done
* For each job, keep the master CV parts that are relevant to the job

**Activity:**

Attempt to list two or three experiences that you have, following the general guidelines given.

**Extension/Research (can be done at home if time limited):**

How is a CV usually scanned by eye? How might you adjust the structure of your statements, knowing this?   
  
**Answer**:

[this study](https://www.nngroup.com/articles/f-shaped-pattern-reading-web-content/) shows a few forms that content eye scanning can take. Structure adjustments could involve including most important information nearer to the top, starting sentences with the most important information, using bullet points, clear and succinct headings, etc.

**15-20 Minutes | Tailoring for clarity**

**Objective:** Show how changes in phrasing impact clarity and strength. Understand the benefit of using the STAR method

**Discussion:**   
  
*How does the improved example differ from the initial example?* [**Possible answers:** application of the STAR method, use of specific figures]

*Why bother?* [**Possible answers:** leaves less doubt to a recruiter about what you did and the impact of it, improves the accuracy of the mental profile they have of you]  
  
**STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result):**

* Situation – the relevant parts of the context that your actions apply to e.g. hackathon, tutoring role, student project
* Task (also known as target) – what needed to be done in the situation e.g. developing an AI-based productivity solution, improving students’ mathematical skills, managing course submissions
* Action – what one did to do this task e.g. using convolutional neural networks in PyTorch fine-tuned using Weights and Biases to predict user sentiment through images, created lessons and taught students online, developing a responsive full-stack website using Flask and PostgreSQL
* Result – what the outcome of your action was e.g. receiving feedback on the project to adapt it to an app, 10% improvement in maths exam marks, time spent on planning reduced by 50%

**Examples:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Initial Example** | **Improved Example** |
| Worked on an app | Built a task management web app in React for a university project, leading to a 20% reduction in team coordination time |
| Made a website at a hackathon | Collaborated with a 4-person team at a 24-hour hackathon to design a budgeting app, winning the 'Best UI Design' award. |
| Tutored kids | Taught weekly Python sessions to 8 students, raising average scores by 20% |
| Helped organise a student event | Coordinated logistics for a student conference with 200+ attendees, ensuring smooth delivery of 5 speaker sessions. |
| Did customer service | Resolved 10+ customer queries per shift as a retail assistant, maintaining a 95% satisfaction rating. |
| Managed social media | Created weekly content for a student society’s Instagram, increasing followers by 35% in one term. |

**Activity:**

Some of the STAR components are not mentioned explicitly in the examples. Can you describe these components in the examples? [e.g. Example (1)’s task, not mentioned explicitly, would be “improving team coordination within the university project” as a task] **Extra activity, if time permits. If not, a good task to do at home:**

Apply the 1-line STAR system to the initial list of two or three experiences. Name every component in your refined points [for instance, example (3)’s situation is a 24-hour hackathon, its task is designing a budgeting app, the action was collaborating with a 4-person team and the result was winning the best UI Design Award]

**15-20 Minutes | Tailoring for relevance: Case study**

**Objective:** Practice tailoring CV entries to a specific job.

**Case Study 1:**

**Junior Data Analyst Intern (Nonprofit Sector)**

* Looking for analytical mindset, Excel or Python skills, interest in social impact
* Responsibilities: Clean and analyse datasets, build basic visualisations, collaborate with teams

**Candidate's Experience List:**

1. Built a Flask web app for scheduling meetings
2. Volunteered at a food bank for 6 months
3. Analysed survey data using pandas in a research internship
4. Led debate society and organised a national competition
5. Created an Excel dashboard for personal finances
6. Took part in a hackathon and built a game

**Case Study 2 (harder):**

**Job Listing Summary:**

**Position**: *Data & Insights Intern – Climate Action NGO*

**About the Role:**  
We are a non-profit organisation committed to evidence-based solutions for climate change mitigation and social equity. The intern will support our Data & Insights team to gather, clean, and communicate insights from environmental datasets.

**Responsibilities include:**

* Collecting and preprocessing data from public and internal sources
* Designing clear and accessible visual summaries of findings
* Supporting data-driven decision-making across teams (campaigns, outreach, research)
* Participating in cross-functional meetings and reporting results to non-technical audiences

**Our Values:**

* Transparency, impact, collaboration, and commitment to environmental justice

**Required Skills:**

* Experience with data tools (Excel, Python, or R)
* Strong written communication skills
* Interest in climate issues or the non-profit sector
* Ability to work collaboratively across disciplines

**Candidate’s Experience List:**

1. Analysed survey data in R and created visual summaries using ggplot2
2. Wrote blog posts on climate misinformation and carbon offsetting
3. Built a Django web app for university societies to manage events
4. Presented a technical report on transport emissions to a mixed audience of peers and faculty
5. Volunteered with a recycling and sustainability student initiative
6. Led a group project to redesign bus routes using open-source transport data

**Student Task:**

For each case study,

**Step 1**: Choose the **3 most relevant experiences** based on the job listing. **Discuss** why these were chosen as the most relevant experiences.  
  
**Step 2**: Write one strong, CV-ready bullet point per selected experience; specific and in STAR form. Prompts are available at the bottom of the document which may facilitate bullet point creation, if necessary.  
  
**Step 3**: For each bullet, demonstrate relevance to at least one of:

* Required skills (e.g. technical tools, communication, collaboration)
* Values (e.g. transparency, climate interest, teamwork)

**Sample Answers (Case Study 1):**

* **Analysed survey data using pandas in a research internship** -  *→ “Cleaned and analysed survey data using Python (pandas), contributing to a 10-page research report” – relevant to Python skills and cleaning datasets*
* **Volunteered at food bank** *→ “Volunteered weekly at a food bank, collaborating with team to serve 150+ people” – relevant to social impact*
* **Excel dashboard** *→* *“Designed Excel dashboard to track personal expenses, using pivot tables and charts” – relevant to data visualisations and Excel skills*

**Sample Answers (Case Study 2):**

1. **Analysed survey data in R and created visual summaries using ggplot2**  
   → *“Cleaned and analysed survey data in R and designed visual summaries in ggplot2, supporting a research project on air quality awareness.” – relevant to requiring R as a data tool, relevant to clear and accessible visual summaries, relevant to environmental purpose*
2. **Wrote blog posts on climate misinformation and carbon offsetting**  
   → *“Authored two blog posts on climate misinformation and offsetting, simplifying complex topics for public audiences and shared by a student environmental group.” – relevant to interest in climate issues, relevant to written communication skills*
3. **Redesigned bus routes using open-source transport data**  
   → *“Led a group project to optimise local bus routes using open-source data and Python, proposing changes to improve accessibility and reduce emissions.” – relevant to environmental purpose, relevant to experience with data tools, relevant to working collaboratively*

**5 – 10 Minutes | Wrap-up + Questions**

**Summary:**

* You can tailor your CV *fast* by:
  + Choosing relevant experiences
  + Rewording bullets with the job in mind, using the STAR structure
  + Maintaining an easily readable structure

**Optional Homework (or extra activity if time):**

* Pick a real job listing you’re interested in. Choose 3 relevant things you’ve done. Write 1 bullet each, using the approach seen today
* Further: create a master CV and bring it to the next lesson/send online

**Prompts:**

1. Built a [tool/app/website] as part of a [university project/hackathon/society role] to [solve a specific problem], resulting in [quantified outcome or feedback].  
   *Example: Built a* ***budgeting app*** *as part of a hackathon to* ***improve student finance literacy****, resulting in* ***winning the 'Most Practical App' award.***
2. Developed a [feature/module] during a [group assignment/internship] to [enhance performance or user experience], improving/reducing/increasing [specific metric or outcome].  
   *Example: Developed a* ***login system*** *during* ***a team project*** *to* ***enable secure access****, reducing* ***bugs by 30%.***
3. Analysed [type of data] as part of a [research internship/thesis] to [answer a specific question or discover trends], leading to [real-world impact or decision].  
   *Example: Analysed* ***2,000+ survey responses*** *as part of a* ***policy project*** *to* ***assess youth wellbeing,*** *leading to* ***a published report.***
4. Conducted [type of research or experiment] for a [dissertation/lab placement] to [test or evaluate something], which led to [a discovery, insight, or improvement].  
   *Example: Conducted* ***simulations*** *for a* ***robotics thesis*** *to* ***test autonomous pathfinding****, which led to a* ***15% efficiency improvement****.*
5. Wrote a [report/article/poster] based on a [study/project], aimed at [communicating findings to a target audience], resulting in [presentation, publication, or positive feedback].  
   *Example: Wrote a* ***poster on AI bias*** *based on* ***a term-long project****, aimed at* ***investigating current diagnostic strategies****, resulting in* ***a presentation at a university seminar.***
6. Led a team of [X people] during a [project/event] to [achieve a goal], receiving/resulting in [quantified success, outcome, or recognition].  
   *Example: Led a team of* ***5 people*** *during a* ***careers event*** *to* ***inform 100+ students****, receiving* ***90% positive feedback.***
7. Organised a [campaign/session/event] as part of [club/society/volunteering] to [address a challenge or goal], increasing [engagement, reach, or efficiency].  
   *Example: Organised a* ***coding bootcamp*** *as part of* ***a student society*** *to* ***help beginners****, increasing* ***participation by 40%.***
8. Solved [specific problem] in a [coursework/internship/project] by [specific method or tool], yielding [measurable improvement].  
   *Example: Solved* ***deployment issues*** *during a* ***team project*** *by* ***configuring CI/CD****, yielding* ***50% lower release time.***
9. Improved [system/process/tool] during a [placement/personal project] to [goal], leading to [performance gain or saved resources].  
   *Example: Improved* ***a machine learning model*** *during a summer project to increase accuracy,* ***increasing accuracy by 12%.***
10. Supported [group/community] during a [volunteering role] to [address a need or improve conditions], contributing to/helping to [positive outcome or impact].  
    *Example: Supported* ***50+ guests*** *during* ***weekly shifts at a food bank*** *to* ***reduce wait times****, helping to streamline service.*