

# CV & cover letter

## A short guide to Your letter of application

### 1.1 What is a letter of application ?

#### **cover letter + CV (UK-US)/ Résumé (US)**

- What you have done or accomplished
- Will not get you a job, but an **interview**
- Attract, Inform, Persuade
- 30 seconds to convince

## 1.2 What is a CV / résumé ?

You may have 2 or 3 different CVs

A CV is NOT	A CV is
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– An autobiography</li><li>– Boring</li><li>– Difficult to read</li><li>– A list</li><li>– too long / too short</li><li>– passive</li><li>– invented</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– <b>UNIQUE</b></li><li>– short</li><li>– attractive</li><li>– an answer to 'why?'</li><li>– about you</li><li>– about the job</li><li>– active</li><li>– "subjective reality"</li></ul>

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## 2. Comparisons

- 2.1 Common points to all international CVs
- 2.2 Specificity of the English-speaking CV

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## 2.1 Common points

- Clear layout
- Nice fonts
- Reverse chronology
- Good key-words
- No spelling or grammar mistakes

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## 2.2 Specificity of the English-speaking CV

- Layout
- More details
- More action verbs
- References

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## 3 Content

of the English-speaking CV

- 3.1 Personal details (*état-civil*)
- 3.2 Professional objective
- 3.3 Education & diplomas
- 3.4 Work experience
- 3.5 Languages
- 3.6 Activities & interests
- References

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## 3.1 Personal Details

= Contact details

- First-Name NAME
- Address
- Phone number
- UK, etc. = Age (/Marital status)
- US = no mention of age/status
- Picture: UK: OK / US: no.

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## 3.2 Personal objective

- One sentence
- Strong & clear
- Summarises what you are seeking
- Corresponds to what the employer is seeking

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## 3.3.1 Education & diplomas

### School & departments

- **Polytech' Nantes** = Graduate School of Engineering of the University of Nantes.
- **Mat** = Materials science
- **TE** = Thermal and energy sciences
- **Info** = Computer science (**ID** = business intelligence **SILR** = software and networks)
- **ETN** = Electronics and digital technology
- **GE** = Electrical engineering
- **GC** = Civil engineering

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## 3.3.2 Education & diplomas

### Diplomas

- **DUT/BTS** = Two-year university diploma in technology in ...
- **CPGE** = Intensive two-year preparation course for the competitive engineering school entrance exam
- **L2/L3** = Two- / Three-year university diploma in...
- **PEIP** = Two-year university diploma & preparation course for the Polytech school network.
- **Baccalauréat** = secondary school diploma (specialisation in...)
- DO NOT HESITATE TO ADD EXPLANATIONS: subjects studied, skills acquired, responsibilities taken, etc.  
=> Use active verbs.

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## 3.3.3 Education & diplomas

- Do not hesitate to explain your diploma or training, with real sentences
- Do not hesitate to describe your subjects, what you have learnt, etc.
- The French system of “*Grandes Ecoles*” does not exist in other countries
- “**Avec mention**” = With honours / Cum laude
- “**Major de promo**” = Top of the class (US= Valedictorian)

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## 3.4 Work experience

- Reverse chronology
- Show as many skills as possible
- Everything is important: small jobs, summer jobs, unpaid jobs, etc. Every job gives you skills.
- 1st line: date, name of the company, activity, city & country, (+ website)
- 2nd line: job description, skills acquired (with real sentences and action verbs), results, ...
- Responsibilities in associations, volunteer work, etc. is extremely valuable

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## 3.5 Languages

- Do not forget your native language(s)
- If French is not your first language, state: "French: daily use"
- English: give your Toeic score only if > 800 (+date)
- Fluent: only if you can hold a serious and long conversation
- From "working knowledge" to "excellent command"
- Give justifications when possible (stays abroad, duration, etc.)

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## 3.6 Activities and Interests

or "Further information"

- *To give another point of view on your personality*
- *To open the job interview with a light subject*
- Community involvements & social skills
- Special skills
- Sports
- Travels
- Hobbies
- Try to describe the most important elements in a few words.
- **Be SPECIFIC, be UNIQUE**
- REFERENCES (In CV or cover letter)

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## 4.1 The Cover(ing) Letter

What is a cover letter ?

- Type-written
- Do NOT repeat the CV
- It gives your CV an identity and a personality
- DO NOT say you must find a placement abroad for your studies
- Target: a *specific* person, a *specific* job in a *specific* company, with *specific* skills.
- Purpose = obtain an interview
- Opening sentence/objective: grab the reader
- Describe what skills you have *gained*,
- Describe what made you *WHO* you are
- Every skill must be proven with examples

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## 4.2 The Cover(ing) Letter

### Layout: how you should present your letter

- Good quality, white A4, black ink, no photocopies
- Easy to read: One page, one font
- Size: 12 for the main text, 14 for headings
- Your address + date: in the top right corner
- Recipient's address: lower, on the left-hand side
- If you know the person: *Dear Mr./Ms./Mrs.*
- If you don't know the person: *Dear Sir/Madam*
- The rest: aligned on the left
- Body of the text: three/four paragraphs
- your signature above your type-written name.
- At the bottom: Enc. CV/Résumé
- USE A SPELL-CHECKER & PROOF-READ YOUR TEXT

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## 4.3.1 The Cover(ing) Letter

### Structure: what you should write

- *1<sup>st</sup> paragraph:*
  - Who you are
  - How you heard of the position/company
  - your interest in the position for a duration of ...
  - give basic information about your professional self
- *2<sup>nd</sup> (and 3<sup>rd</sup>) paragraph(s):*
  - Why you are interested in the employer and/or type of work the employer offers
  - Demonstrate you know about the employer and/or position
  - How will the company benefit from your presence?
  - Show ambition and vision

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## 4.3.2 The Cover(ing) Letter

### Structure: what you should write (Ctd)

- 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph:
  - Explain that you will follow up, and how.
  - Show that you are interested in an interview
  - Give your availability for the interview
  - State that the employer should not hesitate to ask for more information
  - Thank the employer for his/her consideration
  - "I look forward to hearing from you soon"
  - "Yours faithfully" if you don't know the person
  - "Yours sincerely" if you know the person

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## 5 Final thoughts

- **You never have a second chance to make a first impression.**
- Correction: see teachers
- But it is **YOUR** document, reflecting **YOUR** personality => we cannot write it for you
- Follow-up phone calls: see teachers if necessary
  
- PDF files: *PDFcreator* (free software)
- Online CVs: privacy?
- European CV: too rigid

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