



SHORT CV GUIDE

QUICK APPLICATION HELP

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CV GUIDES HERE



Core principles

Your CV – in the UK rarely referred to, in full, as your *curriculum vitae* – is a factual summary of your achievements.

CVs must be:

Professional

Employers will use it to form an impression of you

Selective

Don't try to say everything

Prioritised

Employers want to find the most relevant information quickly – they won't search for it

Flexible

You will need to tailor it for each application you make

Evidenced

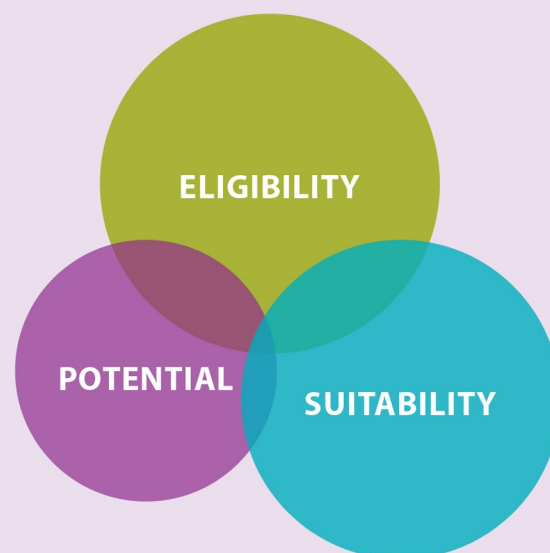
Employers won't just take your word for the positive things you say about yourself

Well-organised

Even somebody skimming your CV very rapidly should see your best evidence

Error-free

Employers won't excuse carelessness



This diagram was used, on page 6, as a model for how employers assess candidates. Applying the same logic to the CV tells us:

The CV is the main guarantor for your **eligibility** – i.e. it demonstrates that you have the required skills and experience.

How you tailor your CV goes some way toward signalling to the employer your **suitability**. The order of the sections, the language you use, the evidence you select – all show how well you understand the employer's priorities.

CVs describe the past and the present; they rarely look forward, so it's hard to show **potential**. That is more typically done in the supporting documents and/or application form.

Good layout and style

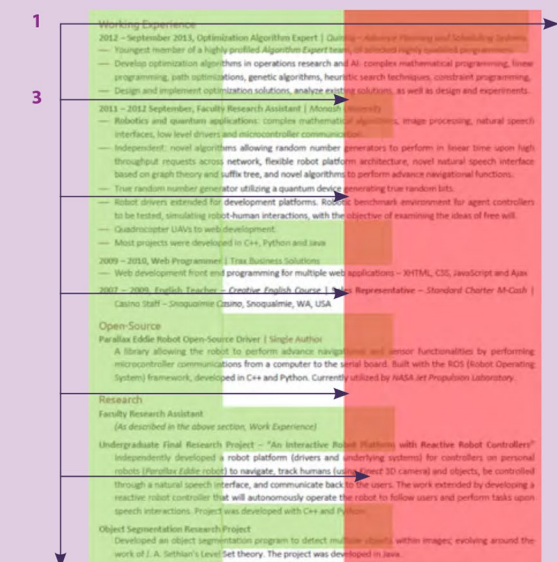
Aim for clarity, simplicity, and consistency. Organise and present your in such a way that, at first glance, a selector will readily see that you're a suitable candidate - without having to engage with all of the detail.

Where does the eye go?

Eye-tracking research shows that readers tend to skim a page in an 'F' pattern:

- they start at the top, in the upper left corner...
- then they continue down the left-hand side of the page...
- and they only occasionally read across towards the right side of the page, particularly when they encounter a subheading.

This means that you should place the most important information (keywords) as close to the left side of your page as possible, and avoid the 'dead zone' on the right side.



Not sure how to talk about...

Disability

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Some disabilities have no impact on careers at all meaning that no additional planning is needed. For others a greater degree of discussion or planning may be beneficial. Whatever your situation we can work with and advise you to help make the transition into the workplace as smooth as possible. Detailed advice can be found on our website: www.careers.cam.ac.uk/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-how-does-it-affect-career-opportunities/disability-support

Gaps & Breaks

The best approach is usually a simple statement with a positive slant where appropriate, for example:

- Glandular fever, now fully recovered
- Pause in studies for health reasons
- Career break (12 months) travelling in South East Asia
- Full-time carer for family member
- Parental leave (8 months)
- 3 months full-time job hunting

Lower than expected results

- If there were mitigating circumstances, you can briefly mention them.
- If you have better subsequent results you can just put those.
- You could specify papers or options where your results were better, alongside your overall grade.
- Put more emphasis on other achievements and work experience. 'Education' doesn't have to be the first section of the CV.
- You can exclude grades completely, but be aware that the reader will probably assume the worst- which might be less than you achieved.

In this day and age... do I even need a CV?

The answer is: yes, sometimes. Many online forms invite you to attach a CV as well as answer their questions. And even for those forms that don't, a bucket CV will be an invaluable source of material.

Did you know? Our YouTube channel contains videos on both CVs and non-traditional work history, like our video 'Talking about non traditional work history in applications - Mature Students Careers Q&A'.

Ben Swift

07888 999 000 | BSwift@gmail.com | Cambridge/Doncaster

Education

University of Cambridge, BA English; 2:2 expected2021-24

Skills gained:

- Communication researching and delivering logically structured essays which convey a range of viewpoints and persuasively answer a question. Positive feedback from assessor, “comprehensive and well-articulated argument [...] a novel insight into a well-worn debate”
- Collaboration during group presentation on post-colonial readings of the body in Shakespeare, organised regular meetings to discuss presentation and created shared document and padlet to share ideas. Supported peers during informal reading sessions, encouraging less confident group members by reminding them of past success and giving helpful feedback
- Time management balancing heavy reading list of texts and critical theory, researching and delivering three 2000 word essays in high-pressure 8 week term

Millfield School, Doncaster

A Level: English Literature (A), History (A), Sociology (A), General Studies (B)

Active member of film club, organising lunchtime screenings of films, negotiated with staff to agree access to technology and room and liaised over suitable curriculum-related media

GCSEs: 5 level 9, 4 level 8, 2 level 7

Work Experience

Everdeen & Pallas Law Firm, Doncaster2018

Two weeks work experience giving insight into the work of a busy high street law firm.

- Conscientiously completed administrative tasks including booking rooms to facilitate meetings
- Pro-actively asked questions to better understand the nature of typical legal work

Extra-Curricular & Certifications

Lululemon, Omnichannel Marketing virtual experience program on the ForgeJuly 2023

Developed understanding of marketing in commercial setting

Skills & Interests

- Confident user of Excel, Word & PowerPoint
- Regular filmgoer; particular interest in silent film of early 20th century

As this candidate has less work experience, he uses degree to show relevant skills.

Use of numbers and percentages helps show impact, even though work experience may be in different area.

Contact details are condensed to save space in this one -page CV.

Reasons for breaks in study simply and clearly explained here and below.

Clear headings used to guide the reader.

Formatting including font, bold text and bullet points is consistent throughout the document.

Virtual internship demonstrates interest in marketing. Under separate heading to experience as per The Forge policy

Shalini Gibbs

ShaliniGibbs26@yahoo.co.uk07111 222 000LinkedIn: @shalini_gibbs

Education

University of Cambridge2019-24 BA Hons, Natural Sciences (Physics) 2:1

Break from studies 2020-2021 for family caring responsibilities

South Sussex Sixth Form College2016-2018 A-Levels: Mathematics (A*), Physics (A*), Chemistry (A*) AS Levels: Further Mathematics (A), History (A)

Fanshawe School2012-2016 GCSE 12 subjects (all Grade A/A*) including Mathematics and English

Work Experience & Leaderships Roles

Recurring summer position 2021 & 2022

Waitress, Foxglove Café

High levels of customer service: Took time to chat with regulars, whilst dealing quickly and efficiently with those who were in a hurry. Serving an average 40-60 customers daily.

Managing time-pressured environment: Fulfilled advanced-order celebration hampers, improved efficiency by 30% collating the same element for multiple hampers, rather than filling each separately.

Used initiative: Trained new team member in using and balancing the till during unexpected staff absence.

Team player: Stepped in to support other staff during busy periods, taking on light kitchen preparation to allow chef to complete other tasks.

2019-2022

Unit Helper (voluntary position) Rainbows

Commitment and Dedication: Inspiring 4-7 year olds in play and craft activities, my reliability in honouring this obligation enabled club to keep running when understaffed.

Motivating others: Celebrated children’s achievements with specific, detailed praise, encouraging those who had not completed badges by identifying steps they could take next.

Communication: Led approx. 7 sessions on basic first aid: engaging excited and potentially distracted young children, keeping their attention by communicating with enthusiasm and breaking tasks into simple steps.

2018-2019

Shop Assistant (voluntary position) St Luke Hospital charity shop

Community-minded: During gap year for intense medical treatment, I volunteered for a local charity shop.

Skills & Awards

Computing: Microsoft Office (Skilled), Python (Working knowledge), C++ and Matlab (Basic)

Other: Silver Duke of Edinburgh (2017), founding member South Sussex College ‘Girls in STEM’ club (2016-18)

Gives indication of level of experience/competence with different software- not just a list of programmes

Rebecca Palizdar

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Phone 00 44 7700 123456

Intending solicitor

Note the relevant vocabulary in this CV “drafting, working mechanisms, archiving procedure, files, attention to detail, compiled report”. These are very appropriate for a would-be solicitor.

Avoid Cambridge jargon like Tripos, Part 1A, etc. Use words everyone will understand

Education

- 2016 – 2019 University of Cambridge, Murray Edwards College
- BA Hons, Law
- Currently First Year: Criminal Law, Constitutional Law, Law of Torts, Civil Law.
- 2009 – 2016 South Wilts Grammar School for Girls
- 2016 A-Levels: French (A*), History (A), Latin (A), General Studies (A*).
- Achieved 100 UMS scores in half of modules. Averaged 97 UMS.
- 2015 AS-Level: Government & Politics (A - top grade with 100 UMS in both modules)
- 2014 GCSE: 10 subjects at A* including Maths, IT for Business.

Work Experience

- Sep 2016 Legal Intern, Pennine Kennedy Solicitors (2 weeks)
- Evaluated inefficiencies in archiving procedure. Proactive; persuaded management to digitise files by using clear worked examples of projected system. Resulted in offer for paid vacation job.
- July 2015 Legal Intern, Land Law LLP (2 weeks)
- Sought responsibility and was rapidly entrusted to draft legal documents, liaise with clients in a fast-paced commercial setting. Praised for acute attention to detail.
- Oct 2014 Study-visit, United Nations Office at Geneva (10 days)
- Practical exposure to working mechanisms of UN and intergovernmental agencies including IOM, UNHCR, UNDP.
 - Engaged enthusiastically at Q&A sessions, focus groups, with professionals to maximise understanding and personal growth.
 - Assisted on official document translation, Persian to English.
- July 2014 Mini-pupillage, 9 St John Street Chambers (1 week)
- Shadowed and took notes for serious crime barrister in all work; client interviews, case preparation, court including European sex-trafficking trial.
 - Gained substantive appreciation of how law affects society at grass-roots level.
- July 2014 Administrative Intern, Lincoln House Chambers (1 week)
- Compiled comprehensive HR report analysing online presences of all employees using data-mining research techniques. Organised recommendations by priority to instigate constructive improvement strategy. Wrote tailored briefings. Described as “outstanding” in all areas.

Key Competencies

- Languages English (native), Persian (bilingual), French (professional proficiency, full marks in A-level oral).
- Computer Skills Complete computer proficiency in MS Office. Basic HTML code. Launched and maintained social media for MUN conference to publicise and increase client interaction; conference received most registrations in its history.

Skills and Activities

Leadership, Teamwork, Professional Accountability

- Nov 2016 – Present President, Cambridge University Marshall Society 2017 Garden Party Committee
- Balancing serious time-commitment with academic excellence via goal-based deadlines and responsibility delegation. Genuinely valuing diverse input via whole-team focus forums. Sharing resources in cohesive online database to easily identify modes of improvement for the future.
 - Accountable for budget of £22,000. Negotiating diligently with service providers to ensure cost-effectiveness.
- Oct 2016 – Present First Year Representative, Cambridge University Law Society
- Distinctly client-orientated; liaise professionally with commercial partners to maintain sponsorship and recruitment interest in society members. Engaging tenaciously with experienced colleagues to learn best practices.
- Sep 2015 – July 2016 Secretary-General, South Wilts Grammar 8th Model United Nations Conference
- Drafted and delivered speech to 450 delegates promoting youth engagement with global affairs, UN goals. Wrote and peer-reviewed briefing papers on key issues, including unfamiliar ones, in clear, appropriate language for audience.
 - Remained constantly accessible as main point of contact for all involved.
 - Intuitive in digitising all previous resources to streamline planning, ensure whole committee involvement.

Migration, Global Affairs Orientated

Model United Nations

- 2013 – Present
- Longstanding commitment. Engaging practically with real world issues via research and competitive debate from perspective of UN member states.
 - Thinking laterally by drafting and negotiating for policy-based resolutions in legal language. Recognised at individual and team level via numerous awards.

President, South Wilts Grammar School for Girls, History Society

- Sep 2015 – July 2016
- Presented on Iranian Revolution, “brain-drain” and the Persian diaspora.
 - Diversified Eurocentric agenda to accommodate cross-cultural member experiences. Prioritised student-led forums to emphasise societal goals as shared interests.

Research, Analysis and Communication

- July 2015 – Jan 2016
- Independently composed, interrogated hypothesis on “Just War Theory and International Humanitarian Law” out of intellectual curiosity, before any legal education. Focused on the “Responsibility to Protect”.
- Debated findings confidently with relevant academics.
- Sep 2015 – March 2016
- Achieved full marks in A-level History dissertation “War and the Black Civil Rights Movement, USA, 1860-1970”. Original inquiry into why war catalysed integration.

Creativity and Intuition

Volunteer Teacher of Latin, Classics for All

- Sep 2015 – April 2016
- Youngest teacher on scheme. With partner, designed unique course tailored to primary-school-aged children. Invented diverse communication strategies to boost enthusiasm and performance. Success of programme led to increased school registration and charity funding. Awarded “Whitehead Prize”.

Interests

- Strong aptitude for language learning. Seek to learn Arabic via the Cambridge Language Centre.
- “FLY Girls of Cambridge”; collaboration forum for women of colour. Engaging incisively with racial, cultural and gender perspectives to cultivate cohesion and empowerment.

Positions of increasing responsibility shown to build the transferable skills of advocacy, representation of a group, negotiating and persuading – all key for a solicitor

Titles of essays and relevant pieces of work included. Eye-catching and reader engaged to know more.

Nadia Parker

Jesus College, CB5 8BL | Email: Nadia.Parker95@gmail.com | Tel: 07521234234

EDUCATION

- 2018 – 2021: University of Cambridge, UK
BA (Hons) Psychological and Behavioural Sciences, first class honours
- 2016 – 2018: Hills School, Bristol, UK
A Levels: Psychology (A*), Mathematics (A*), Biology (A*), History (A)
GCSEs: 10 GCSEs grades A*-B including English and Maths

Education is concise to allow focus on relevant experience.

EXPERIENCE AND KEY SKILLS

Policy & Politics Jul - Sept 2019: Intern, Office of John Matthews MP, Bristol
8 week internship in the MP's office for the Kingswood and Bradley Stoke Constituency

- Conducted research into access to GP services. Analysed over 2,000 survey responses using Excel using these to inform focus group design. Facilitated four focus groups with constituents.
- Produced a concise report outlining the findings, outlined recommendations to improve GP access in the area. Resulted in a bid from the MP to secure funding for a new health centre.
- Accurately recorded issues raised by constituents at weekly casework surgeries, obtaining key details relating to the case and written permission for MP representation.
- Drafted correspondence to key agencies including social services and the Department for Work and Pensions to progress cases, updating the casework database to monitor progress.
- Drafted two press releases for publication in local newspapers and reporting on local TV and radio stations.

Outcomes are explicit.

Communication skills Jan 2019 – Present: Writer, Varsity Student Newspaper

- Pitch articles to section editors, articulating a clear rationale for the story in line with the briefs presented. 6 articles and reports published in first year.
- Conduct interviews in response to stories, eliciting views and opinions from key stakeholders, including university staff and student groups.

Oct 2019 – Present: Listening Volunteer, Cambridge Nightline

- Listening to the concerns of callers, using active listening skills to empathise with and tactfully calm individuals experiencing difficult circumstances.

Research and analytical skills Jan 2019 – Present: Member, Polygeia, Cambridge
Global health policy society and think tank

- Conducted research into key global health policy issues, analysing data, reviewing academic literature and investigating existing reports from charities, NGOs and government to inform a response.
- Published a report on Mental Health in Refugees in the UK, collaborating with society members to develop policy recommendations.
- Presented research and recommendations to an audience of 100 at the 2019 Polygeia conference

Active language used consistently. (p16-19 of longer CV guide)

Organisation and time management Jan – June 2019: Entertainments Officer, Selwyn College May Ball Committee

- Successfully prioritised tasks to balance degree work achieving a first-class result, alongside extra-curricular activities and securing bookings for musical entertainment, including two nationally recognised acts.

REFERENCES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

FAQs

Q: Should I include a photograph on my CV?

A: Not in the UK. We don't recommend you include a photograph unless specifically asked to (and be cautious of any organisation who want to know what you look like, if there's no good reason for this).

Top Tip: If you are keen to share your LinkedIn or a portfolio of work (photos, designs, writing etc) then why not include a QR code? Just ensure the site is professional, current and relevant to the role.

Q: Should I include activities from school?

A: As you progress through your education, achievements earlier in life will become less important in your CV. If you are a first year applying for an internship in Michaelmas, your achievements in school are going to have significance and should be highlighted. However, when you get to final year and beyond they're unlikely to be as relevant.

Q: I am applying to different roles, do I need a different CV each time?

A: Quality and not quantity are key to success and it is worth tailoring your CV to each role. Cross reference the key skills and person spec so they can shortlist you easily. If you are applying for roles in the same sector, you may find over time that you build a bank of CVs that are suited to recurring roles. Your cover letter should always be tailored.

Top Tip: Keep a 'bucket CV' of all your accomplishments, experiences, publications and education (this could be 3+ pages long) and then pick & choose suitable content for your tailored 1-2 page application.

Q: How can I make my CV stand out?

A: The key to standing out is to be focused on the role, have **impeccable spelling, grammar and layout** and project **an energy through the language** used in your CV – such as **leading with outcomes and impact statements** - to highlight your strengths and skills. Where you are lacking experience, be clinical about how the experience you **do** have has prepared you for the role.

Top Tip: If you're looking at a creative role, you can often be creative and showcase some of your work & personality through your CV. For ideas, see Prospects Creative CV page or image search 'Creative CVs.'

Q: I have a lot of different experience, should I write it in one long list or separate it into headings?

A: Separate out your experiences into headings. List the most relevant experiences first, under a heading 'Relevant Experience' or similar. You can include paid, unpaid and extra-curricular. Follow this with any other experiences that you have had that highlight your skills and workplace experience. If you have lots of extra-curricular experience, choose those that had the most responsibility, commitment and any significant outcomes. Volunteering, sports and society positions always have value – but you must sell them to the employer, so think: time spent, achievements, budgets and people/projects that you managed to help you stand out.

Did you know? As a Cambridge student you have access to CareerSet, quick CV checking software which utilises AI, at careerset.com/cambridge.

Question	Yes	Actions and Resources
Have you put your CV through CareerSet for an instant score and suggestions for improvements?		CareerSet is an automated CV and Cover Letter feedback tool. Find it at careerset.com/cambridge . You can also upload a job description and check your CV matches the key terms.
For more in-depth support, have you used the longer CV and Cover Letter book provided by the Cambridge Careers Service?		The CV and Application guides for undergraduates and masters, and PhDs and post docs are available here: www.careers.cam.ac.uk/applying-for-jobs/cvs-and-cover-letters
Have you checked the spelling, punctuation and grammar, including correct use of capital letters?		A friend or family member may be willing to proof-read your CV and could notice mistakes you've missed and spell checkers overlook.
Is your CV easy to scan through with a logical layout e.g. use of subheadings and bullet-points to guide the reader?		Enlist a friend or family member to read your CV in 30 seconds – does the key information you want to get across stand out to them.
Is the font, formatting and spacing consistent throughout?		Applying outside of the UK? Use GoinGlobal to find CV information and formats for different countries.
Have you used a variety of language that is positive, active & has impact?		Find examples of active verbs & writing with impact in the longer CV guides (QR code on the cover page).

SHORT CV GUIDE FINAL CHECKLIST

Question	Yes	Actions and Resources
Is the information in each section in reverse chronological order, i.e. most recent first?		
Is your CV tailored to the work you want to do/a specific role (knowledge, skills and experience)?		Cross reference the person spec if applying for a specific role. Mirror the language used where appropriate.
Have you given specific examples to demonstrate your skills and achievements?		A good structure is "Accomplished [X] as measured by [Y], by doing [Z]." See examples at the end of this guide or the end of the longer CV guides for inspiration.
Is your CV no more than 2 pages in length?		In most cases, your CV should be no more than 2 sides of A4. Some sectors prefer 1. Academic CVs are usually longer. Research different sectors and ask representatives at events if you're unsure.