



Tormead
Careers

A Guide to Writing CVs and Cover Letters

We prepare our girls for life beyond school

A Guide to Writing CVs and Cover Letters

Before you start

- Research the employer and business sector via their website and research news articles about them online. What does it say about their values? Are they looking for specific skills or competencies? What are the headlines in their sector this week?
- Target your skills and experience around what you have found out about the company. What do you want the employer to know about you?
- Write down some key experiences where you can demonstrate the skills required and think about how you might show evidence of your suitability.

Standard contents

All CVs need to contain some standard information, which normally includes:

- Personal details – name, address, telephone number and e-mail address
- Education and qualifications
- Employment history
- Interests, activities and achievements
- References

Presentation

- One to two sides of A4 or the equivalent in electronic format.
- Be clear and concise.
- Be consistent with font type and size. Line up text.
- Use bullet points to break up text.
- Use headings or format text in bold to draw attention to important points.
- Accurate spelling and grammar.

Things to remember: Target your skills and experience around what you have found out about the employer. What do you want the employer to know about you?

The cover letter

Your CV should always be accompanied by a cover letter which can be written in the body of an email. Use your cover letter to tailor your experience to the position or organisation. Never underestimate its importance and pay attention to style, layout, grammar and spelling. If possible, send it to a named person.

A cover letter should:

- Highlight points in your CV that give evidence of your suitability for the position.
- Demonstrate your interest in and knowledge of the company.
- Be no longer than one side of A4 or electronic equivalent.

Things to remember: Your CV should always be accompanied by a cover letter. You should use your cover letter to tailor your experience to the position or organisation to which you are applying.

The language of CVs

Essays or reports for your teachers are entirely different in style to the short, brief statements on a CV. Most CVs can be improved by adjusting the language and grammar you use. CV and application form writing is an art but one you can learn with a bit of perseverance and a good dictionary and Thesaurus! Here are some golden rules.

Make verbs work for you

Use active verbs, which are more impactful and concise. Use active verbs linked to skills the employer is looking for. See the list of “Action Words” and try to use as many on your CV as are relevant.

Do not be modest about your work experience. It is easy to undervalue your vacation/casual jobs. You may not have held impressive positions but what interests an employer is what you gained from the experience in terms of skills and personal development. Also, do not forget to include voluntary experience.

Examples:

OK: I was responsible for organising a programme of speakers.

Better: Organised a programme of five speakers.

OK: Resolution of customer queries to tight deadlines was required.

Better: Resolved a large number of customer queries within tight deadlines without compromising quality of service.

OK: Simplification of the logging procedure resulted in speedier progress chasing of faults.

Better: Simplified the logging procedure which resulted in speedier progress chasing and fixing faults.

Avoid hesitant verbs like endeavoured, tried, hoped and attempted. “I feel that I am” is often used, which should be avoided as it is not impactful or convincing enough.

OK: I worked as a counter assistant in a building society.

Better:

- Gained valuable experience working to targets within a fast-moving financial sector.
- Worked quickly and accurately on a number of complex computer programmes.
- Dealt effectively and professionally with the public in a busy branch.

OK: This job involved dealing with the public and using the till.

Better:

- Worked as part of a team of six in this busy village convenience store.
- Developed my communication skills through interacting with customers and meeting their needs.
- Used tact and diplomacy to deal with customer complaints, ensuring a high level of service.

Action verbs for CVs

- Accelerated/ Appraised/ Achieved/ Arranged/ Administered/ Assessed/ Advised/ Assisted/ Allocated/ Attained/ Analysed
- Broadened/ Budgeted
- Checked/ Conducted/ Co-ordinated/ Coached/ Considerable/ Created/ Communicated/ Consistently/ Competent/ Consolidated/ Completed/ Controlled/ Comprehensive/ Converted
- Delegated/ Directed/ Delivered/ Demonstrated/ Designed/ Developed/ Devised
- Ensured/ Established/ Evaluated/ Expanded
- Facilitated
- Generated
- Helped
- Identified/ Innovated/ Implemented/ Instructed/ Improved/ Interviewed/ Increased/ Introduced/ Influenced/ Investigated/ Initiated
- Launched/ Led/ Liaised
- Maintained/ Managed/ Marketed/ Minimised/ Motivated
- Negotiated/ Networked
- Operated/ Organised
- Participated/ Prepared/ Prompted/ Performed/ Presented/ Proposed/ Persuaded/ Processed/ Proved/ Pertinent/ Produced/ Provided/ Pinpointed/ Programmed/ Planned/ Promoted
- Recommended/ Resolved/ Recruited/ Resourceful/ Reduced/ Responded/ Reorganised/ Responsible/ Represented/ Reviewed/ Researched/ Revised
- Selected/ Simplified/ Spearheaded/ Strengthened/ Supervised
- Taught/ Tested/ Trained/ Transformed/ Translated
- Undertook
- Volunteered
- Won

Finally

- Check and double check spelling and grammar.
- Make sure it is clear and easy to read. Most employers will spend less than 30 seconds scanning your CV.

Example CV

Lila Jones, 12 The Place, The City, TH3 1TY

07989 989989

Lila.jones@thecity.co.uk

EDUCATION

2017-present **Tormead School, Guildford**

A Levels Geography, Biology English

GCSEs English (8), Maths (8), Chemistry (7), Biology (7), Physics (6),
Geography (7), History (7), Home Economics (7)

WORK EXPERIENCE

2019-present **Corner Shop, Bramley**

- Worked as part of a team of six in this busy village store.
- Developed communication skills through interacting with customers.
- Used tact and diplomacy to deal with customer complaints.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

2021-present **Team Captain, Tormead Netball A Team**

- Lead a team of seven in local, regional, and national competitions.
- Motivate and encourage to perform at our best.
- Currently regional champions.

2019-present **Tormead Amateur Dramatics**

- Regularly attend weekly rehearsals with thirty members.
- Developed confidence and presenting skills.
- Perform as a main character in termly productions.
- Coach younger members to improve their confidence and performance skills.

POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

2021-present **Charity Prefect**

- Collaborate with team members to organise and run charity events.
- Raised £260 for a homeless shelter in two hours.

REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Example CV

Vanessa Smith

v.smith@internetprovider.com

07777 123456

EDUCATION

2022 – 2024

A Levels, Tormead School, Guildford

English, Maths, Chemistry

2020 – 2022

GCSEs, Tormead School, Guildford

8 GCSEs including English (9), Maths (8) and Chemistry (8)

OR

English 9, Maths 8, Biology 8, Chemistry 8, Physics 7, French 7,
German 7, Art 6

WORK EXPERIENCE

July 2021 to present, Cashier, Corner Shop, Village Centre

- Using communication skills to serve customers in a polite and timely manner in a busy village corner shop.
- Using initiative to offer alternatives if items out of stock.
- Utilising finance and attention to detail skills to cash up at end of shift.

Sept 2021 – present, Coach, Village Cricket Club

- Coaching and encouraging players aged 6 to 18 to improve cricket skills.
- Being flexible and using initiative to change methods of communication and explanations when required, if coachee does not understand.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

2018 – present, team member, Village Cricket Club

- Committed team member of Village Cricket Club, attending training twice per week and matches once per week.
- Developing collaborative team working skills to encourage, support and perform at the highest level competitively.
- County Cricket Champions three years in a row – 2019, 2020 and 2021.

INTERESTS

Paddle boarding – participate in weekly paddle boarding along River Wey

Reading – reviewing daily newspapers to keep up to date with current affairs

Art – completing pet portraits for friends as a creative outlet

Example Cover Letter

[Your name]
[Your address]

[Their name or HR department]
Their address]

[Date]

Dear Sir/Madam [or preferably name]

I am a student at Tormead School, Guildford, studying [list subjects].

I am writing to apply for / enquire about potential work experience at your company, in the [name department if you can]. [Mention any contacts and / or how you came to know about the company]

I would like to obtain work experience in [name sector/job] because I am extremely interested in it as a future career. [Name of company] particularly interests me because [list convincing reasons why you want to get work experience here – the specific work they do or clients they work with – do your research].

I am a [mention key skills and relevant traits that sell you as a potential candidate for work experience such as being highly motivated or high achieving or involved in lots of extracurricular activities]. As an enthusiastic individual with a genuine desire to learn from and contribute to your organisation, I feel I would be an asset.

[Mention any qualifications and experience that would be of direct relevance such as proficiency with Excel – always make it personal to them].

I will be available for work experience during [mention timing – ideally what are you looking for and what flexibility do you have such as holidays, once per week or weekends].

I hope that you will consider my application favourably, and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely [if you have used a name] or Yours faithfully [if you have used Sir / Madam]



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CRANLEY ROAD, GUILDFORD, GU1 2JP