

THE LET'S ROLE JOB SEARCH SERIES

# BOOK 1



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**A RECRUITER'S GUIDE TO CRAFTING A CV THAT  
STAYS OUT OF THE RECYCLING BIN.**



THE LET'S ROLE JOB SEARCH SERIES – BOOK 1

# **BUILDING YOUR BULLETPROOF CV**

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# CHAPTER 1

## WHY, THOUGH?

You might be wondering how we can fill an entire book with CV advice. Perhaps this is because you're hoping we'll say something like, *When it comes down to it, all that really matters is you, so don't worry about formatting, length, or any of that pesky nonsense. Write from the heart.* Unfortunately, CVs are one of the few things in life that are better written from the brain.

To illustrate why, we've come up with a neat little analogy:

Imagine you've decided to go shopping. You are looking to buy a jumper. Now, you have an idea of what you'd like in terms of colour, shape, material etc., but you're aware that perfection is an illusion so you're flexible on the details.

You walk along the high street looking at the shops, searching for ones that you think would be likely to sell the jumper you want. So, you

walk past electronics shops, toy shops, restaurants and all the places that clearly do not sell jumpers.

You also walk past the places that might sell jumpers, but *definitely* not the kind you want. These shops are run-down with broken windows, misspelled signs and a musty smell that suggests they haven't been tidied since the late nineties. You kind of jog past these, slightly afraid.

There are clothes shops you stop and look at, considering that they *might* sell jumpers. You can't really tell, though, as there isn't anything in the shop window, and when you walk in, the place is so gigantic that you know that even if they *do* sell jumpers, it might take several months to locate them. You turn around and walk out.

That's when you see it – a shop whose sign says **JUMPERS JUMPERS JUMPERS** in giant, shiny letters. In the shop window, you see, believe it or not, jumpers! They're not just hanging there, either; they're modelled by mannequins of all shapes and sizes, *proving* that these jumpers are suitable for wear.

Even though you might not see the exact jumper you want in the window, you practically sprint into the shop, because you know that if that jumper is anywhere, it's going to be here. And if not, they're going to have the next best thing.

Now, what we've probably made painfully obvious is that in this scenario, you are a hiring manager or recruiter, the shops are CVs, and the ideal jumper is the ideal set of skills and experience that said hiring manager or recruiter will be looking for in a candidate.

See, those other shops may have actually had that perfect

jumper, but no one is going to bother walking into every single shop on the high street on the off-chance they happen to stock what they want. No, they'll just go into the shops that already suggest that they do.

This is where your CV comes in.

You need to *suggest* that you have what your ideal employer is looking for. This comes across not only in what skills and experience you have, but in how you present that information; you don't want someone seeing that you sell jumpers, but end up turning away because they'll have to wade through a bunch of other things to find them.

*FACT: ON AVERAGE, RECRUITERS WILL  
SPEND SIX SECONDS LOOKING AT A CV*

That's how long you have to convince them to keep reading.

*But how am I supposed to know what they're looking for?* Don't worry; that comes later. For now, we need to establish the basic *Dos and Don'ts* of Building Your Bulletproof CV.

# CHAPTER 2

## WHAT AND WHAT NOT TO DO

Before we go into detail with anything, we're going to start nice and simple with a bulleted list that clears up what you should and should not do whilst crafting that CV of yours.

### DO

- ✓ Keep it concise. No more than two sides
- ✓ Omit unnecessary/protected information such as gender, age, ethnicity, religion etc.
- ✓ Begin sentences with verbs, rather than having everything in the first person ('Managed a team' instead of 'I was in charge of a team')
- ✓ Outline your career history with the most recent experience listed first, making sure to explain any gaps

## BUILDING YOUR BULLETPROOF CV

- ✓ Bullet-point your achievements and responsibilities, giving more detail to more recent experience
- ✓ List your education and qualifications, again with the most recent listed first
- ✓ Include IT skills, spoken languages and relevant training
- ✓ Mention hobbies and interests, but keep them brief
- ✓ State that *Referees are available upon request*
- ✓ Check for errors yourself, as well as asking someone else to check for you

## DON'T

- ✗ Ramble on for 18 pages (front and back) – your CV should consist of your selling points and nothing else
- ✗ Include a photo of yourself (unless necessary) – the interview goes to the best-looking CV, not the best-looking person
- ✗ Use clichés – avoid them like the plague. Don't bother telling them that you're a team player with excellent communication skills. Instead, let them infer it from your achievements and experience
- ✗ Embellish the truth or, worse, flat-out lie. Things can easily be checked with referees and records, and one seemingly innocent untruth may unravel your whole application
- ✗ List every single process, package or project you've ever worked on, trained on, heard of, seen on a job specification or vaguely thought about



- ✖ Use graphics, tables or – God forbid – clipart. They look untidy at best and unsightly at worst, and even that's assuming the formatting holds together. Just don't
- ✖ Use lots of colours to make it look nice – more often than not, it's just jarring and confusing. If you must, use one other colour on the headings, but nothing too bright or pale, and always use black for body text
- ✖ Include inappropriate social media handles, especially if the content within may be held against you
- ✖ Use a strange font to try to stand out – if it takes any more effort than normal to read, recruiters won't bother to read it
- ✖ Shrink the font down to a subatomic size or widen the margins almost past the edge of the page in an effort to fit as much information in as possible
- ✖ Tack on pages from obscure testimonials, articles, newspaper clippings or brochures
- ✖ Submit your CV using the email you created at age 12 (so no [xxn00b.sl4yer.42069xx@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:xxn00b.sl4yer.42069xx@hotmail.co.uk) addresses please)

Now, this doesn't quite cover everything because, if it did, this book would be two pages long. What it does do, however, is give you a pretty good checklist to run through during the process so that you can ensure you're doing everything you should be and avoiding all those pitfalls that may hurt your chances.

# CHAPTER 3

## PREPARATION

All too often someone will sit down to write a CV by just popping their name at the top and bullet-pointing anything that comes to mind. The problem with not planning *how* you're going to write your CV is exactly the same as the one encountered having failed to plan a fictional story before you write it – you're going to end up with a piece of writing that repeats itself, misses out details and is rampant with inconsistencies. For this reason, planning and preparation are key.

The best way to write a CV is to write the story of your working life and then edit it down into a kind of CliffsNotes version – a synopsis or summary that gives recruiters and hiring managers all the important details without any unnecessary or irrelevant waffle. Think of it this way: imagine you had to catch a friend up on your favourite TV show in its sixth season. If season four was

all a dream sequence with no bearing on the plot, you would mention it in passing, but largely gloss over it. Similarly, you may have spent time in an industry that is no longer relevant to the role for which you're applying. By all means mention it in your CV to explain the gap, but don't spend too much time on it, since it doesn't affect your 'plot'.

Okay. With another heavy-handed analogy out of the way, let's move on.

## TEMPLATING

First, a note about templating. Don't worry, we're not about to tell you that templating is lazy and evil and that you should never do it. Templating is actually a pretty good place to start. In fact, at the end of this book, you'll find a couple of templates we've put together in case you're struggling with formatting.

However, you need to remember that if you hope to stand out to a recruiter or hiring manager, your CV also has to. This means that it needs to be unique. So, yes, go ahead and use a template as a jumping-off point, but down the line try to make it your own.

## WORKING HISTORY

The first thing you need to do is write down your entire working history. This includes paid work, unpaid work, internships, volunteering, contract work – all of it. Write down your responsibilities

and key achievements for each role. Remember, though, that your CV is not an autobiography, so this is not actually going directly into your CV. Create a separate file and write it there. This file is for you and you alone; it's your reference material from which you will pull any details you judge necessary or beneficial to include in your actual CV.

Why write it down, rather than just pulling pieces of it from your memory? Simply because the act of writing it down will help you to fill in any gaps or details you may not have realised were missing.

As this is just for you, you can format it however you'd like, but we'd recommend keeping it to a timeline style, rather than a huge chunk of prose. This way, when you come back to look for details, they'll be much easier to find.

## REVERSE ENGINEERING

This step works best if you have a very specific job in mind for which you're applying. See, what a lot of people will do is write their CV and then go looking for job posts. Makes sense, right?

In fact, if you look for that job post *first* and then write your CV *afterwards*, this will allow you to do some crafty reverse engineering. What does this mean? Essentially, instead of hoping your CV fits that ideal job description, you can cleverly write it so that it already does.

At first glance, this may seem to some a little bit deceptive or manipulative. In reality, it's no different than a brand marketing

the same product in different ways so that it appeals to specific demographics, rather than trying a single marketing campaign that attempts to cover as wide an audience as possible. In the same way that Nike will have a few different ads aimed at kids, teens and adults, you might have a few different CVs aimed at different roles. It's not about lying or embellishing (and again, *do not lie on your CV*), it's about emphasising different parts of the truth (skills, attributes, achievements, experience), depending on your audience.

For example, let's say that the only work experience you have is as a barista – which, depending on who's reading this, may well be the case – and you've decided you want to get what we in this late-stage-capitalist productivity-centred society call a 'proper job'. As to the specifics of this job, you don't really care; all you want is that sweet 9-6 fluorescent-lit office life.

You apply to two industries: marketing and accounting.

In your marketing CV, you emphasise your skills on the chalkboard – your beautiful hand-drawn typography and renderings of pop-culture icons often sell coffees all by themselves. You also reference your ability to follow the trends in the café, knowing when to stock more of certain products depending on how popular you know they'll be over the next week/month. You big-up your interpersonal skills, remembering all the regulars' names, supervising the new staff, getting discounts from distributors (notice that you're backing up every claim with evidence – good work). You talk about all of this because you know that's the stuff a Head of Marketing will be on the lookout for.

Then you write your accounting CV. All that marketing stuff? Out the window. Now you talk about *numbers*. You would count up all the receipts at the end of the day, laughing in the face of those who suggested you use a calculator. During Covid-19 social distancing measures, you were easily able to keep track of the number of customers in the café at any given time. You could even remember the phone numbers of all your colleagues off by heart in case you needed to call someone in for cover.

You get the picture.

The point is that whilst all the information in both the marketing and accounting CVs may have been true, neither was relevant to the other. If you placed all the information into one CV, a hiring manager for either industry would have to wade through lots of unnecessary detail to get through to the stuff that mattered to them.

Incidentally, this is why it's critical to know what you want to do. Now, this might be a scary question to some, but this doesn't have to mean 'What do you want to do *for the rest of your life?*' It doesn't even have to mean 'What do you want to do for the next five years?' It could be as simple as 'What could you see yourself as happy doing in a year's time?'

There does not have to be one answer to this question. In fact, if you believe there is only one answer to this question, you might have to do some re-evaluating. As long as you have a vague idea of what you're good at, what you enjoy, and what job can utilise these skills, you can begin to implement this technique.

Finally, to quote many a disgruntled spouse, *it's not just about what you say, it's how you say it*. By this, we don't mean that you should do what many do and labour over phrasing 'Screwed in a lightbulb' as 'Supervised a project involving the rotary installation of specialised electronic equipment, resulting in the illumination of the office environment, considerably improving working conditions'. While there is certainly room for charging your sentences with a little more electricity – something we will cover later – what we're referring to here is the use of a lot of specific terms in a company's job description to outline what they want. What you can do as you're building your CV is lift some of these terms and place them directly into the CV.

For example, a company might say they're looking for someone who's 'team-oriented'. In your CV, you might have said you're 'a people person'. Those two terms basically mean the same thing, right? So why not use the one they've specified?

You can do this not just with traits, but with skills and even achievements (though it might be hard to make a Drama degree sound like a PhD in Chemical Engineering – no disrespect to Drama, of course; after all, that's what Huw did). We'll emphasise once more that *you must not lie or embellish*, but something that Huw learned during his Drama degree was that the beauty of language is that you can say the same thing in many different ways. Use this to your advantage.

# CHAPTER 4

## WHAT DO I WRITE IN MY CV?

And there it is: the most common question asked around the topic of CVs. It's understandable, of course, seeing as you never cover this topic in school aside from maybe a cursory glance.

Everyone has a general idea that CVs should list education and experience, but after that people begin to get a little hazy. Should you include your hobbies? Referees? How far back do you need to go? Should you include that paper round? The primary school you went to?

This haziness comes down to the fact that there are no set rules regarding CVs – you can slap anything you want on that piece of paper and call it your curriculum vitae; no one is going to come and arrest you. Hell, if you wanted to, you could send that hiring manager the entire screenplay for Star Wars Episode III – Revenge of the Sith and receive no ill consequences other than



perhaps a somewhat confused response containing a distinct lack of a job offer.

Of course, as with any sandbox, this presents you with a lot of freedom, but little guidance. You can, however, use this to your advantage; whilst others are justifying the 'D' they got in GCSE Geography, you can focus purely on the things that are going to help you get that job, ignoring anything that is irrelevant or unhelpful. We've told you not to lie or embellish, but as long as you don't leave any glaring gaps that will come up in interview, you can *omit* anything you want. So, if you don't think that your AS level in Dance is going to help you get that job in data analytics, go ahead and leave it out (again, no disrespect to Dance; we both wish we could manage more than an awkward robot).

So, in terms of details, it's completely up to you. When it comes to structure, let us help you out. What we'll state now is that you do not have to put these sections in the order in which we present them. If you're a recent graduate with no professional experience, we'd suggest putting your education before whatever retail or hospitality experience you have. If you've got a year or so in a professional environment under your belt, then put that first. It's all about what is going to put you in the best light.

## EDUCATION

The general rule we give for Education/Academics is to give your last two qualifications: if you were educated in the UK, that

could be GCSEs\* and A levels, A levels and undergrad, undergrad and master's, etc. Of course, as with any rule, there are exceptions. Namely, in this case, if you've completed a course in the past that, if left out, would create a questionable gap in your CV. Remember, gaps in your CV will always be noticed and will always come up in interview.

## WORKING HISTORY

When it comes to how far back to go with your work history, again it's about gaps. If you did retail and bar work while you were at university, you could decide to leave this out without it creating any gaps. However, if you left uni and *then* did those jobs, their omission would raise questions. Similarly, if you had a side gig along with your 9-5, you don't necessarily have to declare that. But, if you took a few months off from that 9-5 to pursue that side gig, those months would need to be explained.

Put simply, as soon as you leave education, each period of time needs to be explained, with perhaps a couple of months 'wiggle room for finding a job.

*But I spent three months sweating around South East Asia in an attempt to find myself!*

That's great! But make sure you mention it.

\*If you are including your GCSEs, you don't need to list every subject, just list your grades (e.g. 2 A\*s, 3 As, 3 Bs, 1 C) and then mention what you got for Maths, English and anything directly relevant to the role.

As for what to write for each job, there's a simple formula to help you stand out as organised and detailed without being too waffly:

1. Company Title
2. Dates (month and year – don't worry about the day)
3. Short Company Description (A recruiter will google the companies you worked for, so save them the effort and do it for them.)
4. Job Title (This doesn't have to be your official title – if you can write something that is close to the job you're applying for while still being accurate, go for it.)
5. Three Responsibilities, beginning with verbs ('Making coffee' rather than 'I was responsible for making coffee')
6. Two 'Proven' Skills (Give a skill you used in the role and an example of how and when you used it.)
7. One Key Achievement (We'll talk more about these soon, but this will be the most important and relevant thing you achieved at that company. Relevant is the operative word – if you saved a person's life at work but are applying for a financial role, they might rather hear about the time you cut 20% from the electricity bill by replacing all the light bulbs with 'rustic' gas lamps.)

Across all of these, use brand names, facts and figures when you can, as they will add validity to your statements.

A note about your responsibilities – you should only state responsibilities that:

- ✓ are relevant
- ✓ aren't already obvious

If you've done bar work, we already *know* that you served drinks, liaised with customers, cleaned up, handled money, etc. If, however, on top of that you sometimes managed the busy pub all by yourself, that might be worth mentioning if multitasking, working under pressure and independence are key to the role you're applying for.

Do this for whichever jobs you deem relevant or important, but don't worry about doing it for every single one if you don't have the space for it.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS & CORE SKILLS

Ask any CV coach and they will tell you that the most important thing about a CV is your skills. They're not wrong, but simply chucking them into a bullet-pointed list is not only boring, it's dubious. When you say you're an IT wizard, how are we supposed to know if that means you eat Raspberry Pi for breakfast\*, or just that you can google your way through an Excel doc?

That's where key achievements come in. This is your way to provide *evidence* for your claims.

Here's how it works: Take a look at the document where you've written your full working history. From that, write down a list of anything that could be classified as an achievement:

\*If you don't get that joke, look it up, because it's *excellent*.

- What qualifications/awards have you attained?
- What important projects have you completed using your skills?
- What problems have you solved or avoided entirely?
- What challenges have you overcome?
- What experience/knowledge have you accumulated?

The next step is to look at the job description given by that ideal company and do some of the reverse engineering we talked about earlier. What skills and traits are they looking for? Write these down in a list, too.

For each skill or trait that the company lists, search through your key achievements to find something that demonstrates it. If you can't find anything, have a think about what you could put in its place – this is good preparation for interviews, where you will be asked to show you have these skills. Remember only to put in the achievements that are relevant to the role, rather than risk coming across as if you're bragging.

Then, put down a couple of core skills. These should be skills that your key achievements prove, and should match the main skills specified in the job description. As for your other skills that may be relevant but less pertinent, such as languages or IT skills, they will come later.

This section should come right at the top, just after your personal statement.

## PERSONAL STATEMENT

Ah yes, the dreaded personal statement, the point at which we all realise just how boring and unemployable we are. We've all been there, staring at a blinking cursor wondering why it's so difficult to sum up our entire personality in a couple of sentences.

Here's the thing about the recruiter or hiring manager that has just opened your CV: they don't care about your personality. Not yet, anyway. At the point where they reach your personal statement, all you are to them is a name at the top of a piece of paper. If they go on to read that you are a *fun, friendly person who works hard and is always on time*, they are still not going to care.

Remember the fact from earlier: you have six seconds on average to prove to the person reading your CV that it is worth their time to keep reading. So how do you do that? Easy: show them you have what they want.

First comes your career objective. You need to state early in the sentence that the job they are recruiting for is the job that you want; this way, they know that you're forward-thinking and passionate, and that you haven't just blindly cast your net in hopes of a response.

Even better, put your career objective as a job that you could progress to from that position. For example, you might be applying for a role as a Sales Executive, but write in your personal statement that you're an 'Aspiring Sales Manager'. One piece of advice here, however, is not to go further than one step below whom-

ever is doing the hiring;\* you don't want it to look like you're out to steal their job!

Better still would be to have a look at the job description to see if they mention anything about career progression, and use this in your application.

Next, summarise your best and most relevant key achievements, whether that's your degree, some other qualification, your professional experience – anything that demonstrates you have what's required. Integrate this with something about your core skills to paint a picture of your suitability for the role.

Finally, state your motivations. That could be building your experience, seeking a change of pace, making a career shift – you need to let them know *why* you're applying for this job (unfortunately, 'I need cash' won't look great, however true it is).

This is an introduction, so don't waste time elaborating on things you're going to repeat later. Keep it two to three sentences long. If you're still unsure of what to put in it, there are some templates at the end of this book that might help you out.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This will go after your work history and education, and is where you'll put all those other skills that you left out earlier:

✓ Completed training courses (including online, such as

\*You should always know who's going to be reading your CV. It only takes a quick look on LinkedIn to find a company's staff page, and from there the HR department.

Skillshare/Udemy)

- ✓ Languages (write as 'Spanish (intermediate)', 'German (fluent)', 'French (basic)', 'English (native)', etc.) Please don't just write that you're fluent in English if it's the only language you speak.
- ✓ IT Skills. Most will assume you're competent with Microsoft Word and PowerPoint, but if you're skilled at Excel it's worth mentioning alongside other programmes that may be relevant to the role such as Adobe software, CRMs, etc. Add the software and your competency, similar to the languages.

## HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

You have to be a little careful here. See, there are many of us for whom when someone asks us our hobbies, we open the door to that part of our brain to find it pretty bare. Instead, we borrow things from the adjacent 'What I Do in My Spare Time' room and hope no one will notice the difference. So, we say our hobbies include *cinema*, *literature* and *photography* when really it's just *browsing netflix*, *scrolling through Reddit* and *posting selfies on Instagram*, all wearing fancy hats.

The problem with this is that recruiters and hiring managers can spot these hats from a mile away. So, if you only list these, not only have you presented yourself as boring and lazy, you've also failed to deceive them.

Okay, that might sound a little harsh. You have to understand, however, that everything on your CV *has* to aid you in getting that job. Telling people your favourite sitcom is *Community* does noth-



ing but show that you have good taste which, while nice, does not make you more employable.

Hobbies and interests are your opportunity to show that even in your off-time, you are the ideal candidate for the job. Let's say you're applying for a job as a graphic designer, and you happen to moderate a forum where people post their ideas for flags of countries in fantasy books. Or maybe you're looking to be a marketer for an airline, and you run your own travel blog dedicated to the wallpapers of the hotel rooms you stay in. It's about coming off as interesting, active, and passionate.

That said, it doesn't necessarily have to be related to the job, as long as it fulfils the 'interesting' and 'active' aspects. Playing a sport, for example, shows that you're competitive and mindful about physical fitness, which many companies find desirable (bonus points if it's a team sport).

And, no, Fifa doesn't count.

As a final point, if you actually *are* interested in cinema/literature/photography to the point of it being a hobby, that is absolutely fine. Just make sure that you provide evidence, like stating your favourite film festival, your opinion for most underrated author, your favourite photographic trend, etc.

*But I don't have any real hobbies, I don't play sports and I'm not really interested in anything worth writing about.*

This is a very common predicament. Our response is to say with as much love as we can manage:

Get a life.

Not to turn this book into a self-help motivational snoozefest,

but having *actual* hobbies and things that you just do for the joy of it is not just good for your CV, it's good for *you*. Whether it's creative or constructive, or just something to gather knowledge about, finding something that is *yours* that you can do simply to relax and have fun will help in many ways, such as reducing stress, and increasing fulfilment, and may be a way to find like-minded individuals. Using it to help get a job is just a nice bonus.

Right, enough of that.

## REFERENCES

This is going to be a short paragraph for a short section of your CV. Do not give your full references right away. By all means have them at the ready (and do ask a person's permission, they'll be less likely to give a good reference if they're surprised by the request), but all you need to put on your CV is 'References available upon request.' As for how many, three is a good number, but two will be fine if you can't manage a third.

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

All you need here are your email address and phone number at the top of the page, with perhaps a *general* location (i.e. 'London', 'NYC', etc.). You can, if you'd like, include a link to your LinkedIn page as well (check out Book 2 for LinkedIn advice). You don't need your age, gender, ethnicity, disability information, or

anything like that – although it is illegal to discriminate based on these characteristics, unfortunately it does still happen, more often in subtle ways,\* so best not to give them the chance.

And that's it! Once you've got all of that information down, it's time to optimise your language so that it really jumps off the page.

\* A BBC article from January 2019 reported that in the UK, applicants with names related to ethnic minority backgrounds had to send, on average, 60% more CVs before being called to interview, with those of Middle Eastern or north African heritage having to send upwards of 90% more applications than their White British counterparts with identical CVs.

# CHAPTER 5

## LANGUAGE OPTIMISATION

We mentioned earlier that it isn't just what you say, but how you say it that matters. This is true in a number of ways. Firstly, as we said before, there's using language that matches what the company uses in its job advert. This increases SEO (Search Engine Optimisation), making your CV easier to find for recruiters, as they will be searching specifically for the terms in that job advert. In addition to this, there are more ways you can improve your language to make your CV really *pop*.

### PASSIVE VOICE

Use of the passive voice is a trap that many applicants will fall into when writing about their achievements and responsibilities. If you don't know what the passive voice is, then we'll demonstrate

with two ways of saying the same thing:

1. My brother and I were involved in an altercation during which his leg was fractured.
2. I attacked my brother and shattered his femur.

Hopefully, the difference between these two statements is obvious. In case it isn't, we'll explain. In the first example, the action within the statement appears just to happen by itself while my brother and I are present. In the second, it is clear that I am the one who took action and broke my brother's leg. The language is also softened in the first example ('altercation' instead of 'attacked', 'fractured' instead of 'shattered').

You will see the passive voice used very often in news articles in an attempt to present an unbiased or uncharged account of an event, rather than place blame on any particular person or group. This is a problem, as it relieves that person or group of any accountability or responsibility, as well as downplaying the severity of events.

*Okay, but why does this matter to my CV?*

It matters because you *want* to give yourself responsibility and accountability for your actions, rather than suggesting they just happened *to* you. You also want to make them sound exciting and important, not dull and blunted.

Many applicants get so caught up in writing their CVs in a "formal" way, that they deliberately downplay their language because they believe it looks more 'professional'. One example might be to say 'I was responsible for the sale of products, and for offering upgrades where possible' rather than 'I sold products according to

customers' needs, and often persuaded them to purchase larger packages'. Both sentences say the same thing. The difference is whether the action was *caused* by you, or simply occurred *around* you. It's a subtle change, but it makes a *big* difference.

## ACTION VERBS

What's the difference between 'assisted' and 'influenced'? 'Made' and 'created'? 'Spoke with' and 'entertained'? 'Wrote' and 'authored'?

We could go on. Whilst there might be small differences in the meanings of these words, the main gap is in how *interesting* they are. Just as with the example before, *regaling* an audience about how you *shattered* someone's leg is going to spark a lot more excitement than *talking* about *fracturing* it.

Once you have your CV written, be sure to go through and sprinkle in some relevant action verbs (but be careful not to go overboard).

There's a great guide to this on Glassdoor's website:

[www.glassdoor.com/blog/resume-action-verbs/](http://www.glassdoor.com/blog/resume-action-verbs/)

Another piece of advice is to start your sentences with the verb, rather than have everything start with 'I'. They know who you're writing about.

With your language all polished, it's time for finishing touches!

# CHAPTER 6

## WRAPPING IT UP

Now, we'll just give you a few quick tips to tie up your CV with a nice little bow.

- Run your CV through [Grammarly](#) or a similar service to check the language. [Hemingway](#) is another useful tool.
- If required, don't include portfolios in the CV itself – it might be rejected by an ATS (Applicant Tracking System) if the file size is too large. Add links to them instead.
- You may also add links to any articles that relate to your achievements.
- Check that all links to portfolios/LinkedIn profiles/articles actually work.
- Save your CV under the file name '[First Name] | [Last Name] CV'. This way, when you attach it to emails, it's clear what it is and who it's from (and, no, saying 'curriculum vitae' instead of

'CV' won't make you look clever).

- Save it as a .doc or .docx file. If you save it as an image file such as a JPEG or PNG, it might get rejected by an ATS. PDFs will probably be fine if they don't have any strange formatting, but for safety it's best to go with your bog standard Word file.
- Before you save it, though, make sure to link your video CV.

*Wait, my what?*



# CHAPTER 7

## AN INTRODUCTION TO VIDEO CVS

*So you want me to read this thing out on video now?*

No, no one wants to watch that. A Video CV is not meant to replace your written CV, just to supplement it. They've become much more commonplace over the last few years as a way to add a bit more personality to the application process while giving an overview of your skills, experience and ambitions. They can either be uploaded to a hosting site and linked to, or alternatively sent directly to the company as a video file.

Before we get into the process of creating a Video CV, however, we'll run through some pro's and con's of having one, because while, for some, they might be the factor that wins over a hiring manager, for others, it could cause their application to get tossed in the recycling bin.

## PROS

- ✓ **Stand Out** – While rising in popularity, video CVs are still by no means common. Using one at all will differentiate you from most.
- ✓ **Be Unique** – Video CVs are a great opportunity to be creative, much more so than a standard paper CV. Fun editing techniques, sound design, graphics, cinematography... you could really go wild if you'd like. Especially good for artistic roles.
- ✓ **Be You** – It's difficult (though not impossible) to convey your personality on a paper CV. On video, it's much easier.
- ✓ **Showcase Skills** – If you're applying for a job in which communication skills, public speaking, confidence, or even video editing skills will be appreciated, this is your chance to prove that you've got that stuff in spades.
- ✓ **Give Evidence** – It doesn't have to be just your face the entire time. As you talk, you could show B-roll images or video from your achievements/portfolio, proving the claims you make about yourself and your work.

## CONS

- ✗ **Bias** – Unfortunately, some of those protected characteristics we talked about earlier, such as race, gender, age and ability, may become obvious on video, potentially opening you

up to unfair treatment.

- ✖ Not for Everyone – A video CV might make you stand out for the wrong reasons; if you're awkward on camera, uncomfortable presenting, or if your communication skills are lacking, then it may work against you.
- ✖ Short Form – Video CVs are (ideally) quite short, which may mean you don't have time to talk about all the things that make you an ideal candidate, leading to you selling yourself short.
- ✖ Time-Consuming – With the setting-up, the scripting, the filming itself and the editing, video CVs take a while to create. Some recruiters believe this time would be better spent perfecting your paper CV.
- ✖ Potential Perturbation – Some employers might find a video CV irritating (remember, some of them will spend barely 10 seconds looking at your paper CV, let alone watch a video for 2 minutes). It's a case-by-case basis that depends on the industry, the company and possibly even the hiring manager themselves. Use your own judgement to decide what you think would be appreciated.

Ultimately, this will be different for everyone, but our experience tells us, on the whole, video CVs are a great way to stand out and demonstrate your worth.

# CHAPTER 8

## SETTING UP YOUR VIDEO CV

If you've decided that the pro's of a video CV outweigh the con's (which, in most cases, we believe they do), then it'd be worth knowing how to prepare your personal film set to get the best results.

### CAMERA

You don't need to go out and buy an expensive DSLR, or anything like that. As long as you have a phone that was made in the last five years, that should be of high enough quality to do the job properly. Film in landscape, not portrait.

## BACKGROUND

You don't want anything too distracting going on behind you, so we'd recommend avoiding rooms where people will be walking through the background. It's also wise not to film in front of posters of movies/TV shows/celebrities as it can come across as unprofessional. A plain wall, a bookcase or some tasteful art is ideal, especially if it's something relevant to the role.

## LIGHTING

Exactly how much effort you want to put into this is up to you, but a good rule of thumb is to avoid direct sunlight as it's quite harsh. Instead, draw the curtain or blind and then turn on a lamp aimed towards (but not directly at) your face. Don't worry too much about this, though; you just need your face to be clearly and consistently visible and the room not to be plunged into darkness.

## ANGLE

We've all accidentally opened up our front camera to be treated to a less than flattering worm's-eye view of our unsmiling mug. From this experience alone, we know that the angle at which you take photos – and, by extension, videos – matters. Get your camera as close to eye level as you can. If that means having to sit

down, that's absolutely fine.

## DISTRACTIONS

If you live with any other people, make sure they're aware of what you're doing – you don't want to be in the middle of a take when Mum asks you to bring down your dirty pants to be washed.

Similarly, as much as we all love pets, shut yours out of the room if there's a chance they'll wander into shot.

It's also worth switching your phone onto do not disturb mode, especially if you're using it to film. You don't want a stray notification to ruin a take.

## SOUND

Get as close to silence as possible. Try to film away from road-adjacent rooms if car noise is going to be an issue, and ensure there's no music or TV playing in the house loud enough to come through on video.

## DRESS CODE

This depends on the kind of companies you're applying for. You might need to dress right up to the nines, or you might be fine with a simple smart blouse or button-up shirt. A good way of

telling what you should wear is to look at the companies' 'Team' or 'About Us' pages and see what people are wearing in their staff photos. While there's a chance that they dressed smarter than usual for picture day, it's very unlikely that they dressed down.

Whatever you do, don't wear hoodies, graphic T-shirts, pyjamas or, for whatever reason, nothing at all.

# CHAPTER 9

## WHAT TO SAY IN YOUR VIDEO CV

Video CVs are tricky things to make. You want to say enough so you can sell yourself, but not so much that you end up boring the viewer and wasting everyone's time. We recommend that they be between 45 seconds and two minutes, preferably leaning towards one minute.

In terms of what you need to say, you don't have to try to regurgitate all the details you've already listed in your paper CV. This video is more of an overview, an introduction that will help build familiarity. If a hiring manager can already feel familiar with you when they bring you in for interview, you've made a step towards being trusted by them. If they feel they can trust you, they're more likely to hire you.

So, as an overview or introduction, you should mention:



- Your name
- Your career objective
- Your most relevant experience
- One key achievement
- The core skills used to achieve it

## THE CHEEKY CHEAT SCRIPT

If you're still scratching your head over what exactly to say, don't worry. We've got you covered.

What follows is a pretty standard script that you can steal, fill in the blanks and film. You don't have to follow it word for word (in fact, depending on how popular this book gets, it may be wise not to), but it's a good scaffold on which to base your video CV.

Hi, I'm [Name].

My career objective is to excel in a [Ideal Company Culture] environment that will allow me to utilise my experience in [Skill 1] and [Skill 2].

Ideally, my perfect role would be a [Ideal Future Promotion] in a [Ideal Company Persona] within the next [Realistic but Ambitious Timeframe].

During my time at [Most Relevant/Recent Experience], I was able to surpass expectations. My key achievement was [Key Achievement], which was attributed to my skills in [Skill 3] and [Skill 4].

I would love to meet you to tell you more about why I'd be perfect for this role.

I can't wait to meet you.

Once the script is filmed, pop the footage into Movie Maker or

iMovie, depending on whether you're a PC or Mac user. You don't have to be an Oscar-worthy editor; all you need to do is snip out any ums and ahs or awkward pauses so that you come across as best as possible.

In addition to this, you can include any examples of your work if you're an artist, or any images of you 'in action' in your past role if relevant. It's a visual medium, so take advantage of that!

Once edited, export it as an .mp4 file, as it's the easiest video file to open. Like your paper CV, save it as '[First Name] | [Last Name] Video CV'.

With that done, congratulations! You've completed both your paper CV and your video CV and are ready to send them off.

# CHAPTER 10

## CONCLUSION



If you're reading this, then either you've read all the CV advice we have to give, or you're one of those odd people who likes to read the end of a book before the beginning.

If you're of the former group, we hope you've learned a thing or two about how to craft your Bulletproof CV. One last thing we'd recommend is to flick back to Chapter 2 and run through that Do's and Don'ts list one more time as a final flight check.

After that, well done! You've perfected what is arguably your most important job-seeking asset, and made your job search much, much easier.

As for the rest of the job search, be sure to check out our other e-books, where we'll be giving advice about LinkedIn, how to engage with your future employer, how to succeed in interviews

and what to do once you've actually got the job!

We'll leave you with a couple of templates you might want to use, depending on whether or not you already have some professional experience. We'll also pop in a couple of templates of personal statements for varying stages in your professional life.

Thanks for reading, and we'll see you in Book 2: [Becoming a LinkedIn All-Star!](#)

**FIRST NAME SURNAME**

*Career Objective + Summary of your main achievement and core skills + core skill combined so that you are selling yourself right away. Briefly mention the types of roles you have worked in and how you will utilise them to excel in the next role. This should be no longer than three lines*

**ACHIEVEMENTS + CORE SKILLS**

- Relevant Achievement 1
- Relevant Achievement 2
- Core Skill 1
- Relevant Achievement 3
- Relevant Achievement 4
- Core Skill 2

**WORK HISTORY****COMPANY NAME**

Date - Date

*Overview on the company, what they do and who they are associated with. Use brand names/ clients and partners if able. Add their mission. Any revenue/ size of business are details are good to have.*

**Job Title**

- **Responsibility 1** – list a responsibility that you had in the business. Use brand names/ clients and partners if able. Add any details that will help the hiring manager visualise this.
- **Responsibility 2** – list a responsibility that you had in the business. Use brand names/ clients and partners if able. Add any details that will help the hiring manager visualise this.
- **Responsibility 3** – list a responsibility that you had in the business. Use brand names/ clients and partners if able. Add any details that will help the hiring manager visualise this.
- **Skill 1 proved** – highlight relevant skill, where you were able to use it and the successful outcome of using it. Use brand names/ clients and partners if able. Add any details that will help the hiring manager visualise this.
- **Skill 2 proved** – highlight relevant skill, where you were able to use it and the successful outcome of using it. Use brand names/ clients and partners if able. Add any details that will help the hiring manager visualise this.
- **Key Achievement**

**COMPANY NAME**

Date - Date

*Overview on the company, what they do and who they are associated with. Use brand names/ clients and partners if able. Add their mission. Any revenue/ size of business are details are good to have.*

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- **Skill 2 proved** – highlight relevant skill, where you were able to use it and the successful outcome of using it. Use brand names/ clients and partners if able. Add any details that will help the hiring manager visualise this.
- **Key Achievement**

EMAIL@SERVER.COM

LinkedIn Link

+44 7552 XXX XXX

## FIRST NAME SURNAME

### COMPANY NAME

Date - Date

*Overview on the company, what they do and who they are associated with. Use brand names/ clients and partners if able. Add their mission. Any revenue/ size of business are details are good to have.*

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- **Key Achievement**

### RELEVANT INFORMATION AND SKILLS

Languages: Language (level), Language (level)

IT Skills: specialist software, relevant software, relevant software,

### EDUCATION

College/ University of Highest level of Education, Place

Grade

Course

Relevant Information i.e Thesis Title/ Relevant Modules

College/ University of second highest level of Education, Place

Grades

Course

Additional Information / Relevant Modules

### VOLUNTARY WORK

Organization Name – Role: Description of role, organization place, and how it demonstrates relevant skills on your resume, including examples of quantities, impact, and brand name partners/funders. (Year)

### HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

**Hobby 1** – a simple line on the hobby and why it is important to you. This is to make the interviewer feel that they are familiar with you

**Hobby 2** - a simple line on the hobby and why it is important to you. This is to make the interviewer feel that they are familiar with you

**FIRST NAME SURNAME**

*Career Objective + Summary of your main achievement and core skills + core skill combined so that you are selling yourself right away. Briefly mention your university experience and previous roles and how you will utilise them to excel in the next role. This should be no longer than three lines*

**ACHIEVEMENTS + CORE SKILLS**

- Relevant Achievement 1
- Relevant Achievement 2
- Core Skill 1
- Relevant Achievement 3
- Relevant Achievement 4
- Core Skill 2

**EDUCATION**

College/ University of Highest level of Education, Place

Date – Date

**Grade**

Course

Relevant Information i.e Thesis Title/ Relevant Modules

College/ University of second highest level of Education, Place

Date – Date

**Grades**

Course

Additional Information / Relevant Modules

**EXTRA CURRICULUM AND ACHIEVEMENT'S WHILST STUDYING**

- Include societies/ sports teams and any positions of responsibilities whilst studying
- Include societies/ sports teams and any positions of responsibilities whilst studying

**WORK HISTORY****COMPANY NAME**

Date - Date

*Overview on the company, what they do and who they are associated with. Use brand names/ clients and partners if able. Add their mission. Any revenue/ size of business are details are good to have.*

**Job Title**

- **Responsibly 1** – list a responsibility that you had in the business. Use brand names/ clients and partners if able. Add any details that will help the hiring manager visualise this.
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- **Key Achievement**

EMAIL@SERVER.COM

LinkedIn Link

+44 7552 XXX XXX

## FIRST NAME SURNAME

### COMPANY NAME

Date - Date

*Overview on the company, what they do and who they are associated with. Use brand names/ clients and partners if able. Add their mission. Any revenue/ size of business are details are good to have.*

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- **Skill 2 proved** - highlight relevant skill, where you were able to use it and the successful outcome of using it. Use brand names/ clients and partners if able. Add any details that will help the hiring manager visualise this.
- **Key Achievement**

### ADDITIONAL WORK EXPERIENCE

- **Role 1 – Date – Date** – Add a list of responsibility that you had in the business. Add any details that will enhance your cv/ suitability to the role. Don't go into too much detail
- **Role 2 – Date – Date** – Add a list of responsibility that you had in the business. Add any details that will enhance your cv/ suitability to the role. Don't go into too much detail
- **Roles 3 – Date – Date** – Add a list of responsibility that you had in the business. Add any details that will enhance your cv/ suitability to the role. Don't go into too much detail

### RELEVANT INFORMATION AND SKILLS

Languages: Language (level), Language (level)

IT Skills: specialist software, relevant software, relevant software,

### VOLUNTARY WORK

Organization Name – Role: Description of role, organization place, and how it demonstrates relevant skills on your resume, including examples of quantities, impact, and brand name partners/funders.  
(Year)

### HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

**Hobby 1** – a simple line on the hobby and why it is important to you. This is to make the interviewer feel that they are familiar with you

**Hobby 2** - a simple line on the hobby and why it is important to you. This is to make the interviewer feel that they are familiar with you



# PERSONAL STATEMENT TEMPLATES

## SCHOOL LEAVER

Future [Desired Role] who is highly motivated and hard working. Recently completed [GCSEs/A Levels], excelling in [Best Two Subjects]. Seeking [Role Level & Role Applied For] to strengthen upon core [Interest, e.g. Business, Communications] interest and start a career as a [Role].

## GRADUATE

Upcoming [Desired Role] who excelled in [Previous Experience] and achieved [Main Achievement] down to excellent [Core Skill 1] and meticulous [Core Skill 2]. Proudly gained a [Degree Class] in [Degree Subject] from the prestigious [University]. Excited to use [Experience/Degree] to become a vital and valuable asset to your business.

## UNEMPLOYED/REDUNDANCY

Successful [Desired Role] with over [X] years' experience in [Previous Role]. Proven track record of success, including [Key Achievements 1 + 2]. Looking to re-establish myself as a valuable

asset in [Desired Role] and continue with my high-performance mentality.

## CAREER BREAK

Future [Career Objective] who is highly motivated and experienced in [Previous Role]. Overachieved in last role with [Key Achievement 1] and wanting to transfer that knowledge to [Company] after a short gap to [Career Break Reason]. Looking for career-driven role to showcase my [Core Skills 1 + 2].

## CAREER CHANGE

Excited to become [Career Objective]. With key achievements of [Key Achievements 1 + 2] as a [Previous Role] demonstrating excellence in [Core Skills 1 + 2]. Now looking to build on [Core Skills 3 + 4] and become [Desired Role]. With a wealth of transferable knowledge and a newfound passion for [New Industry], I will be an asset to your team.

# WHO ARE WE?

## MATT SEDGWICK

Matt is a talent acquisition specialist with over 10 years of experience in recruitment. Over this time, he has successfully owned and run two businesses, spending his working days making calls to clients and candidates and finding the right people for the right roles. In his spare time, he enjoys completing construction projects and playing with Pablo the pug.

## HUW LANDAUER

Huw began working with Matt as a marketer just under a year after graduating from his Drama degree at Queen Mary University of London. Huw likes to branch out into the arts, writing plays and short stories, making music and running a webcomic (find it at @lowercasecomics). At work, he designs graphics, produces videos and edits these books.





# WHAT TRICKY BEASTS CV'S CAN BE

DO I HAVE TO INCLUDE MY 'D' IN GOSE GEOGRAPHY?  
IS IT WORTH MENTIONING THAT PAPER ROUND I HAD  
WHEN I WAS 13? WHAT **FONT** DO I USE?

AFTER LOOKING AT - QUITE LITERALLY - TENS OF  
THOUSANDS OF CV'S OVER THE LAST 10 YEARS, WE  
RECKON WE'VE GOT A PRETTY GOOD GRIP ON  
WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T.

JOIN US AS WE RUN THROUGH ALL THE BEST  
TECHNIQUES WE'VE LEARNED IN THE PAST DECADE  
TO BUILD AN ABSOLUTELY **BULLETPROOF** CV AND  
SNAG THAT DREAM JOB.



**MATT  
SEDGWICK**



**HUW  
LANDAUER**

Find out more at [www.keyfocus.careers](http://www.keyfocus.careers)  
or contact us at [hello@keyfocusconsulting.com](mailto:hello@keyfocusconsulting.com)