

## 2 TEMPLATES

### 2.1 What is a template? Should I use one?

A template is a document that shows a layout and sample content. The template puts the information required (i.e. points 1–9 in 1.3) into a specific order.

For good clear templates see See 15.9 and 15.10. Downloadable templates can be found at [e4ac.com](http://e4ac.com) under 'CVs'.

Given that your aim is to facilitate the work of the recruiter who reads your CV, it makes sense to use a template, or at least a format, that a recruiter will be familiar with. If necessary you can modify the format of your CV (see 2.14) to make your CV stand out from the hundreds of others that the recruiter will be reading.

Perhaps the three most standard templates are the various models provided by Microsoft Word, Europass (see 2.10) and LinkedIn (see Chapter 14). In fact, the popularity and importance of LinkedIn mean that CVs are very likely to look more and more like a LinkedIn profile, in terms of both layout and content.

You have to balance your aim of making your CV stand out from the rest, with the recruiter's need to find information about you as quickly and as easily as possible.

In some cases your potential employer will provide you with their own template to fill in. If this is the case, follow their instructions carefully. Do not try to adapt their template to fit your wishes. Alternatively, you may be requested to use a particular standard template.

### 2.2 What are the advantages of using a recognized standard template?

If you use a good template, it will make it easy for:

- you to compile your CV: the instructions to the template will tell you what information to include, where to put it, and in what order to put it
- recruiters to find the information they want and to make quick comparisons between you and other candidates

The best advice that you can get for writing a CV for a specific company or institute, is to find someone who already works there and look at their CV or alternatively ask them to look at yours.

### **2.3 Isn't the information contained in my CV more important than the layout?**

No, not initially.

A reader's eye is drawn towards white space and initial capital letters. This means that we focus more on the beginnings and ends of sentences, than we do on the middle of sentences. It also means that CVs that have big blocks of dense text tend to be read with less interest than those where the content has been divided up into short blocks of text.

Recruiters' eyes tend to focus on the left hand side of the page. This is probably due to the fact that in standard well laid out CVs, the dates and key words (i.e. job positions, names of companies and universities) tend to be found on the left.

So, your CV may be quickly discarded if:

- key achievements are hidden within a big blocks of texts
- you deviate from the standard presentation, i.e. if your dates and key words do not appear on the left

The way your CV is laid out is thus crucial if you want a recruiter to look at it for more than a couple of seconds.

## 2.4 I want to be different. Should I create my own layout and style?

Probably not.

To understand why, try this experiment. Find five or six examples of CVs from friends, family or on the Internet. Do not include any CVs that follow a standard template (e.g. the Europass).

Look at each CV for a maximum of six seconds. Which ones do you like and not like? Why? What impression of the candidate do you get? Think about:

- how pleasing the CV looks
- what order the information is presented
- how easy it would be for recruiters to find the key information they are interested in

Then, imagine you are the HR person, and that these CVs are just five of the 250 that you have received for the same job. What would be your main problem with deciding which candidates to reject and which to interview?

You will probably notice:

- the incredible variety of presentation, layout and formatting styles
- that even the name of the candidate does not appear in the same place in each CV
- that the order of information is not the same (some begin with work experience, others with academic experience, and others with a personal objective)
- the massive difference in the way the candidates present their personal details and the abbreviations they use, not all of which will be familiar to all recruiters
- the different headings for the same kind of activity (e.g. work experience, professional experience, employment history)

What is also interesting is that presumably the people who wrote these CVs were satisfied with what they had produced.

So what is the net result for the recruiter who is faced with a massive variety of formats? Answer: confusion.

The recruiter has to work extra hard to find the information that he / she wants and to be able to compare the same information across several CVs.

If you were the recruiter, would you not prefer to receive the same information in the same way from all the candidates? Then you could

## **2.4 I want to be different. Should I create my own layout and style? (cont.)**

focus primarily on comparing the experiences of the candidates rather than wasting time having to actually identify this experience and being distracted by different layouts.

So if you decide to be creative and to produce your own original CV template, you need to be aware that it may be detrimental to the chances of your CV being read and thus of you ever being invited to an interview. This is true in the majority of areas of both industry and research, possible exceptions may be in media and advertising, where having a creative CV may indicate a creative mind.

## **2.5 Should I use color?**

Typically people use color:

- to highlight headings (e.g. a shade of blue) or particular achievements
- in their photograph

But it may be better to use shades of grey. If the recruiter prints the CV in black and white much of the color impact will be lost.

Your photo (see Chapter 5) will probably also look more professional if it is in black and white. If the HR person wants to see you in color then he / she can go to your LinkedIn page (or Facebook!).

## **2.6 What about the logos of the institutes and companies I have worked for?**

You may think that your CV will look more visually appealing if you insert logos. It may look visually appealing to you, but it will simply be distracting for your reader. Keep the format as simple as possible, without logos.

## **2.7 What are the best fonts to use? And what size?**

Among the clearest fonts to read are Arial, Calibri and Verdana.

You might also consider using the same font as is used by the company or institute where you are sending your CV—it gives the impression that you already work there!

Use between 10 pt and 11 pt. Anything smaller is difficult to read and will look as if you have tried to include too much text, rather than finding ways to be more concise.

## 2.8 What about spacing between lines, paragraphs and sections? And bullets?

The reader's eye is attracted by white space. Use more white space between sections than between paragraphs within a section. Only use bullets if strictly necessary. Restrict the use of all caps (i.e. words written only in capital letters).

Compare these two versions—which is easier to read? The font in both cases is Calibri, 10 point.

VERSION 1: NOT SPACED, MIX OF ALL CAPS AND LOWER CASE, BULLETS

### LANGUAGES

- Chinese mother tongue
- English: fluent (spoken and written)

### AWARDS AND HONORS

- Young Scientist award, *POLYCHAR 19—World Forum on Advanced Materials*, Nepal, 2019.
- Best Poster Award, *Fluoropolymer 2018*, Mèze, France.
- Excellent Graduate of Shanghai, ECUST, China, 2017.

### References

- Prof. Giulia Gestri (in whose lab I did more than 4 years of research work), Department of Chemistry and Industrial Chemistry, University of Pisa. [gestri@dccci.unipi.it](mailto:gestri@dccci.unipi.it)

## 2.8 What about spacing between lines, paragraphs and sections? And bullets? (cont.)

VERSION 2: SPACED (6 PT BETWEEN SECTIONS, 2 PT WITHIN SECTIONS), NO CAPS, NO BULLETS

### **Languages**

Chinese: mother tongue; English: fluent (spoken and written)

### **Awards and Honors**

Young Scientist award, POLYCHAR 19 – World Forum on Advanced Materials, Nepal, 2019.

Best Poster Award, Fluoropolymer 2018, Mèze, France.

Excellent Graduate of Shanghai, ECUST, China, 2017.

### **References**

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Version 2 occupies marginally more space, but is cleaner and much easier to read. It is worth showing your CV in different formats to as many people as possible, then see if you can reach some consensus as to which is easiest to read.

## 2.9 What is the Europass?

In Europe, one of the most commonly used templates is the Europass Curriculum Vitae, which you can download from the Europass site.

<http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/documents/curriculum-vitae/templates-instructions>

If you opt for the Europass, make sure you use the most recent version as the template is being constantly streamlined.

Having a professional template helps to ensure that you provide all the information that is typically required by HR and recruiters. However, note the following possible problems with the Europass template:

- there is no Executive Summary. See 6.5 to learn why an Executive Summary is a key element to your CV
- there is a separate section for Communication Skills. See 9.7 for why it is probably best not to have such a section
- there is no section for Personal Interests. See Chapter 10 to understand why HR people might want to see what extra curricula activities you are involved in
- there is no References section. See Chapter 11 to learn why references are important.

Note: since the publication of this book the Europass template may have changed, and thus the above points may no longer be valid.

Standard templates usually have instructions on how to compile them, and such instructions generally offer very useful advice. Here is an extract from the Europass notes relating to Work Experience:

- if you are applying for your first job, do not forget to mention work placements during training which provide evidence of initial contact with the world of work;
- if your work experience is still limited (because you have just left school or university), describe your education and training first (to invert the order of the two headings, use the ‘copy / paste’ command in your word processing software); highlight work placements during training (see online examples);
- for the sake of brevity, focus on the work experience that gives added weight to your application. Do not overlook experience which may be an asset even though it is not directly related to the profile of the job for which you are applying (e.g., time spent abroad, work bringing you into contact with the public, etc.);



## **2.9 What is the Europass? (cont.)**

The printed version of a Europass CV looks very professional, and this is clearly an advantage over a homemade template. It is also an officially recognized CV, which may help to give you extra credibility.

A standard template will probably also be familiar to the recruiter who reads it. This will enable them to find the information they need quickly as they know exactly where to look for it. It will also enable them to make quick comparisons between your CV and those of other candidates that also wrote their CV using the same template.

For more templates, go to my website [e4ac.com](http://e4ac.com) and look under the menu for 'CVs'.

2.10 With my chosen template my CV has become three pages long, what can I do?

The example below highlights that some templates can waste a lot of space.

Education and training

Dates	2028–2031
Title of qualification awarded	PhD
Principal subjects / occupational skills covered	Thesis Title: ‘Young People in the Construction of the Virtual University’, empirical research that directly contributes to debates on e-learning.
Name and type of organisation providing education and training	Brunel University, London, UK Funded by an Economic and Social Research Council Award
Level in national or international classification	ISCED 6
Dates	2024–2027
Title of qualification awarded	Bachelor of Science in Sociology and Psychology
Principal subjects / occupational skills covered	- Sociology of Risk, Sociology of Scientific Knowledge / Information Society; E-learning and Psychology; Research Methods.
Name and type of organisation providing education and training	Brunel University, London, UK.
Level in national or international classification	ISCED 5

In the example above the last two items in the left hand column each cover two lines, whereas the corresponding right hand column only takes up one line. There is also a lot of repetition in the left hand column. This is wasted space, particularly if you have a lot to write. If you have need to put three or four (or more) activities under *Education and training*, your CV is likely to go over the recommended two-page limit.

CVs, Resumes, and LinkedIn

A Guide to Professional English

Wallwork, A.

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