

## CV AND MOTIVATION LETTER

### Table of content

Introduction .....	2
Job hunting and Analysis.....	2
Targeted vs. Open Applications.....	3
Always Call Ahead.....	3
Your Curriculum Vitae.....	3
Differences scientific and non-scientific cv's.....	4
Content of the cv .....	5
Motivation letter.....	9
Structure and content of the letter.....	9
Be creative, stand out with a catchy opening line .....	9
Employer response and calling after rejection.....	10
Using AI in writing your cover letter and resume.....	11

## Introduction

Imagine you're a recruiter or manager, and you've just received thirty, sixty, or even a hundred CVs and cover letters for a single job opening. You need to quickly scan through them all to find the best candidates.

Now, put yourself in the shoes of one of those applicants. You need a CV that's eye-catching and clearly demonstrates how your skills, experience, and personality match the job requirements.

Although some job postings say a cover letter is optional, or that you can submit a video or answer questions online, a CV and cover letter are still the most common requirements. So, make sure yours stands out from the crowd.

The goal of this webinar and all the information you'll receive is to help you create a CV and cover letter that will make employers think, "We want to interview this person!"

In this document, you'll find tips on how to write your CV and cover letter for both academic and non-academic jobs. You'll also learn how to use AI to your advantage and why it's important to follow up after a rejection.

## Job hunting and Analysis

Regularly reviewing job postings is incredibly valuable, even if you're not actively looking for a new job. By studying job descriptions, you'll gain insights into the titles that align with the roles you find interesting. You'll also discover the specific requirements employers seek in candidates. For example, if you aspire to be a project manager but aren't sure if you have the necessary experience, you can examine project manager job postings to see the exact skills and qualifications that are in demand.

Job postings also provide insights into the types of companies where you can find your dream job and the demand for specific profiles. Often, you'll find contact information for individuals you can reach out to for more details. If you want to explore further, try connecting with someone in your network for a brief conversation.

Don't be discouraged if a job posting seems to have a long list of requirements at first glance. Focus primarily on the skills they're seeking and how your experience aligns with those skills. If you're unsure, give the company a call to learn more. This will help you better assess whether the job is a good fit for you.



Create a job search profile on LinkedIn and other relevant job boards. This way, you'll automatically receive new job postings in your inbox.

## Targeted vs. Open Applications

When you apply for a specific job opening, you're using a targeted approach. The job posting provides a clear roadmap for crafting your CV and cover letter.

With an open application, you're taking the initiative to apply without a specific vacancy in mind. This can be more challenging since you don't have a job description as a guide. To gather information, explore other job postings within the organization, check out LinkedIn profiles of employees in similar roles, and reach out to current employees for insights into the company, the role, and the department. It's also a good idea to try and connect with the department manager.

## Always Call Ahead

Often, a job posting will include the name of a department manager, HR advisor, or recruiter. Always give them a call beforehand to ask a few questions. This will not only provide you with additional information for your application but also helps create a positive impression. Mention this initial call in your cover letter to reinforce your interest. Make sure your questions are thoughtful and can't be easily answered by simply reading the job posting or company website.

## Your Curriculum Vitae

Your CV is essentially your professional calling card. It's often the first impression a potential employer has of you. A well-crafted CV provides a quick overview of your qualifications and experience, helping determine if your profile aligns with the job requirements.

Recruiters spend only 6-10 seconds reviewing a CV. That's why your CV needs to make a strong first impression.

We recommend starting with a basic CV that outlines all your experiences concisely. Tailor your CV for each application. Even though you may believe you're a perfect fit, sending out a generic CV for every job isn't effective. Sometimes you'll want to highlight your education, while other times you'll focus on the responsibilities of your previous role.

The approach to your CV can also vary depending on whether you're applying for a position within academia or outside of it. See the next paragraph with a table comparing cv's for academia and industry.

## Differences scientific and non-scientific cv's

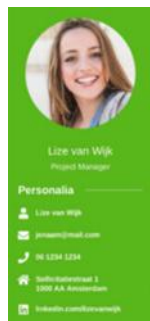
When deciding how to structure your CV, start with your goal. Who will be reading it, and for which position is it intended? If you have an academic background as a lecturer, researcher or PhD and you are applying for an academic position either within or outside the university, then use an academic CV. If you have an academic background but want to apply for a non-academic position, for example in the corporate sector or government, then use a non-academic CV. Below, you will find a table outlining the key differences between the two types of CVs.

	Non-scientific	Scientific/ Academic
<b>Targetgroup</b>	Recruiters or managers in industry, government, ngo's.	Scientists, researchers and academic recruitment committees within universities and research institutions.
<b>Focus</b>	On contribution to results, including the competencies utilized. Consider a competency-based cv.	On expertise, what makes you the expert? Highlight your areas of knowledge and your skills.
<b>Length</b>	To the point, max 2 A4	No maximum. Consider 2 pages supplemented with scientific appendices such as publications, presentations.
<b>Education</b>	Start with work experience, followed by education/ training.	Educational background almost always comes before work experience.
<b>Experience</b>	Focus on roles, organizations, tasks, results. Also, include figures/ budget/ quantities.	Focus on experience and positions related to the subjects you want to teach or research. Mention research methods, programming languages.
<b>Extra</b>	Leadership experience or other extracurricular positions	Publications, research, presentations, contributions to conferences/symposiums.
<b>Length experience</b>	Describe the last 10 years in detail. You can often shorten and summarize everything before that.	Experience and publications etc. go back as relevant. Both quality and quantity are important.
<b>Language</b>	Write in the language of the job posting. Use more general terms that are relevant to the position.	Usually in English. Includes many specific terms from the field.
<b>References</b>	'Available upon request'. If relevant, mention one or two names of previous employers.	Usually, an extensive list of references such as supervisors and possibly fellow researchers.

## Content of the cv

Below we will go through the most important parts of the resume.

### Personal data



Name – give your full first name. Other first names are not relevant.

Place of residence, Mobile phone, Email / LinkedIn URL / website

Optional:

Full home address, nationality, place and date of birth, marital status, photo.

Tip: place your job title directly below your name. Preferably use the same title from the vacancy or a job title that is close to it.

### Profile or Summary

When writing this section, remember to keep it concise (typically 3-5 sentences), highlighting your key professional attributes, skills and career objectives or motivation. This section would give the reader a quick, impactful snapshot of who you are professionally. You can compare it to the text section 'info' on LinkedIn.

### Education

Start with your most recently completed education and work backwards in time. Include:

- ✓ The years in which you followed the education;
- ✓ Whether you obtained a diploma or certificate;
- ✓ The name of the education, educational institution and the place name;
- ✓ Important components such as subjects/major, internship/thesis etc.

Special achievements such as 'cum laude', winning a thesis prize, obtaining a grant or an exchange program abroad are worth mentioning, as well as a study you are currently doing. If you have taken multiple relevant courses, create a separate heading Courses/Training for which the same guidelines apply as explained above. You can also summarize them or show the most important ones, as in this example:

---

#### **Various courses in the field of communication, personal and professional development, such as:**

Scrum (Agile) training, Project-based work with communication media  
Creative writing, Business English  
Communication styles, Advisory skills, Time management

---

Include a minor on your CV if it is relevant. A minor can show specific knowledge; please clearly state what you have done and learned.

Are you currently pursuing a degree or relevant course? Include it on your CV to show your commitment to continuous learning. If you started a program but didn't finish it and have begun a new one, it is perfectly fine to mention the unfinished program for a complete picture. Just be ready to explain in an interview why you discontinued it.

## Work experience

Start with the current/last position and work your way back in time. For each position, include:

- ✓ Years, position, employer name, employer location;
- ✓ Tasks, responsibilities, specific projects and results;
- ✓ Possibly a brief description of the organization.

NB: the correct name for the VU on your CV is written out in full; Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

### PhD Researcher

Utrecht University, Faculty of Social Sciences |  
2015 – 2021

- Acquiring external research funding to carry out a self-defined research proposal
- Design and conduct qualitative research: interviews conducted with six social generations, from 21 to 100 year olds
- Presenting findings (written and oral): peer-reviewed articles, a monograph that is available in bookshops, ten lectures, a media training and opinion piece for the newspaper Trouw
- Teaching and supervising MSc and BSc students

### International Project Coordinator

Center for health communication, Amsterdam |  
2012 – 2015

ACHC is an international network of policy makers, researchers, opinion leaders and educators in the field of health.

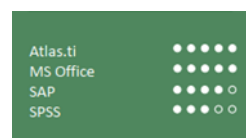
- Organizing, presenting and writing for (international) conferences in the field of youth and adolescence, movement, education and health care
- Responsible for communication with an international network of scientists and teachers, among others
- Guiding MSc and BSc students with theses

You can also reverse the order and start with 'Work experience', followed by 'Education'. People who have been working for a long time – longer than 5 years – often choose this because you have developed yourself to a higher level of work and thinking than your last education. People who are just starting out on the job market put 'Education' first.

When it comes to mentioning your PhD research, find out about the customs of the country where you are applying. In the Netherlands and Germany, PhD research is considered work experience, but in England and the US, for example, it is considered education.

## Additional information on your CV

**Social roles** - if you have extensive community involvement, you can list these roles separately under the heading 'Additional activities'. Follow the same guidelines as for work experience: include years, name and location of the institution/organization, your role and responsibilities.



**Skills such as language proficiency, IT knowledge** - if you have a lot to mention, you can list these separately under the heading 'Skills'. Consider using a graphic representation for added impact.

**Publications** - if you have publications relevant to the field and position you're applying for, include them. If you have numerous publications, list them separately under the heading 'Publications'. Are they not relevant for your next role? Then opt for 'Publications available upon request'.

**Interests** – Include this section if it adds valuable insight about you. For example, if you're an avid reader of professional literature, if your sporting activities demonstrate your perseverance or teamwork, if you make music in your free time and you are applying for a job in the music industry.

**References** - On a standard CV you can simply state 'references available upon request'. However, for an academic CV it is more common to list your referees by name. If you think including specific references might boost your chances of getting an interview, feel free to mention them directly on your CV. Remember, always ensure you have permission from your referees before including their names and contact information.

## Appearance of the CV

Make sure that the CV looks neat with clearly recognizable, separate headings (sections) (larger or different fonts, bold, etc.). Use sufficient empty spaces for clarity and of course do not make any grammatical or spelling errors.

There's several common CV styles, each suited to different purposes and audiences. We mention a few options. Of course you can make a combination / hybrid CV, where you combine elements of a chronological and functional CV. You can add some infographics to highlight your skills, for example.

### Chronological ('standard'):

- **Structure:** Lists work experience and education in reverse chronological order (most recent first).
- **Best for:** Those with a strong, consistent work history in a specific field.
- **Strengths:** Highlights career progression and stability.
- **Drawbacks:** Gaps in employment or frequent job changes can be more noticeable. Less focus on skills.

### Functional or Skills-based:

- **Structure:** Focuses on skills and competencies rather than work history.
- **Best for:** Career changers, those with gaps in employment, or those with diverse experiences not directly related to the job.
- **Strengths:** Highlights transferable skills and competencies.
- **Drawbacks:** Can lack specific details about job roles and achievements.

### Creative or Infographic:

- **Structure:** Focuses on visual elements, such as graphics, charts, colors, and icons, often used by designers, marketers, or creative professionals.
- **Best for:** Creative roles where showcasing design skills or creativity is important. E.g. Marketing, design, data visualization.
- **Strengths:** Visually appealing and memorable, showcasing creativity and design ability, innovative, making complex data easily digestible.
- **Drawbacks:** May not be suitable for more traditional industries or automated applicant tracking systems (ATS). And can be seen as too informal for some industries.

### Academic:

- **Structure:** Focuses on academic achievements, including research, publications, teaching experience, and conferences.
- **Best for:** Academics, researchers, or those applying for academic positions or research grants.
- **Strengths:** Comprehensive and detailed, showing depth of knowledge and contributions to the field.
- **Drawbacks:** Can be lengthy and overwhelming if not well-organized.

### Thematic CV:

- **Structure:** Organizes experience and skills around specific themes or areas of expertise rather than in a strict chronological order.

- **Best for:** Those with varied experiences that fit into distinct themes (e.g., leadership, project management, research).
- **Strengths:** Allows for flexibility in presenting diverse experiences.
- **Drawbacks:** Can be less straightforward for readers unfamiliar with the format.

## Other tips

- Lead with your strongest selling points either your education or work experience, depending on which is more impressive.
- Emphasize concrete achievements, not just capabilities. For example, 'Reduced absenteeism from 9% to 5%' instead of 'Reduced absenteeism'. If you were a manager, specify how many. For teaching roles, include details like number of lessons, student attendance, class types , (lectures, seminars, group sizes) and evaluation scores.
- For education and work experience, years are sufficient. Exact dates (day/month) aren't necessary.
- Minimize abbreviations and only use jargon if you are certain the reader will understand.
- Use a standard font to ensure readability across all screens and printouts. Remove tabs, spaces and other formatting codes that might disrupt the layout. Always send your CV in PDF format.
- Finally: be confident, but honest. Be prepared to substantiate everything you've written during the interview.



## Motivation letter

### Purpose of the targeted motivation letter

The motivation letter connects what the company is looking for and what you have to offer. It is the link to your CV. Your letter is mainly about showing your motivation.

In addition to preconditions such as correct addressing, correct use of language and the absence of spelling errors, the content and structure are especially important.

### Structure and content of the letter

The focus of your letter is on your motivation. Besides the introduction (why are you writing) and the conclusion (looking forward to a personal meeting), there are three key components that should always be included in the letter:

1. Why do you want to work for **this organization**
2. Why do you want to work in **this specific position**
3. Why should they choose **you**?

Too often, motivation letters focus primarily on part 3, becoming a mere list of 'look at all I can do'. Now take a critical look at your own letter, how well balances are these three components? Are you addressing the organizational goals and are you putting yourself in the vacancy holder's shoes? Try to understand: what does the organization need, who and what are they looking for?

Do's	Dont's
Limit yourself to 1 page and write short, positively formulated sentences.	Too much text, a page that is too crowded.
Make sure you have a neat layout and a letter that is linguistically correct.	Language and spelling errors. Tip: always have your letter and CV checked.
Use a fresh writing style, where you preferably align your language with the wording in the advertisement. An informal advertisement does not require a formal answer.	Repeat your resume in your letter. Your resume and letter should complement each other. You can refer to your CV in your letter.
Everything you include in the letter must be relevant.	Start every sentence with 'I'. Instead: vary your sentence structure. Sometimes, focus on the organization (goals) instead of yourself.

### Be creative, stand out with a catchy opening line

'I hereby apply for the vacancy ... that I saw on ...' This standard sentence is still used very often. It does not attract attention. Start your sentence more catchy, with something you have read in the

news about the organization or their product, the relationship you have with what they do or where you met them. Below you can read examples of opening sentences that are just slightly different.

---

Accelerated growth. That is your strategic objective for the next five years. That requires an HR manager who has experience in working in a fast-paced, results-oriented business environment. That is why I am happy to apply for the position!

---

In recent weeks, it has been in the news: citizens want to feel safe in their living environment. I am eager to address this issue! That's why I am excited to apply for the position of Policy Officer Safety and Risk Management at your municipality.

---

You are looking for a driven researcher with a lot of experience in data analysis and writing reports. Here I am!

---

Have you ever considered a communications teacher for your account manager vacancy?

---

## Active language use

Keep your sentences short and use active verbs. This will make your letter easier to read. Avoid words that express doubt, such as if, actually, maybe, perhaps, possibly.

---

<b>Don't</b>	In the coming years I would like to focus on creating...
--------------	--

<b>Instead</b>	In the coming years, I am committed to... / In the coming years, I will gladly create....
----------------	---

---

---

<b>Don't</b>	I hope to be invited for a job interview to explain my motivation.
--------------	--

<b>Instead</b>	I look forward to discussing my candidacy with you in more detail.
----------------	--

---

---

<b>Don't</b>	I have contributed to, been involved in, been present at, helped with, thought about...
--------------	---

<b>Instead</b>	I have created, increased, achieved, solved, organized, implemented, specialized, performed, accomplished, developed, delivered, led, successfully completed...
----------------	---

---

## Employer response and calling after rejection

Many organizations confirm receipt of your application. If you haven't heard back after a week, don't hesitate to give them a call. That way, you can find out more about the application process and your chances.

Even if you get rejected, it's a good idea to call them. Ask why you weren't selected. What qualities did other candidates have that you might be missing? See this as a chance to learn and improve your next application. Ask for tips on how to make your CV and letter even better.

## Using AI in writing your motivation letter and CV

You can use an AI tool to improve your CV or cover letter. Be creative in thinking about how AI can help you.



Sometimes a job description will say 'We do not process documents generated by AI'. So use it mainly as an extra check or to get ideas, but above all write in your own words.

Below are some prompts you can use to start improving your CV and cover letter.



Please ensure to remove any personal details before uploading your CV or letter.

### Writing a profile text for the CV

Act as a professional career coach. I am applying for the position of <..>. Write a powerful professional summary for my CV for this position <.> Emphasize my added value, most important skills and career goals. Use positive, active words. I would like to receive three different examples. I am attaching my CV and the job description.

### Align work experience on the CV with the job description

Act as a professional career coach. I am applying for the position of <..>. Rewrite my most recent work experience so that it matches the job description. Focus on transferable skills and relevant achievements. Use as many words and terms as possible that are used in the business world in the <..> sector. I am attaching my resume and the job description.

### Catchy opening and closing sentence for letter

Write five catchy opening sentences for my cover letter. I am applying for the position <..> at company <..>. My most important qualities are [name 3]. I am attaching my resume and the job description.

Write five different strong closing sentences and use the 3R's (Reiterate, Request, Remind) technique. Add a call-to-action for the next step in the application process.