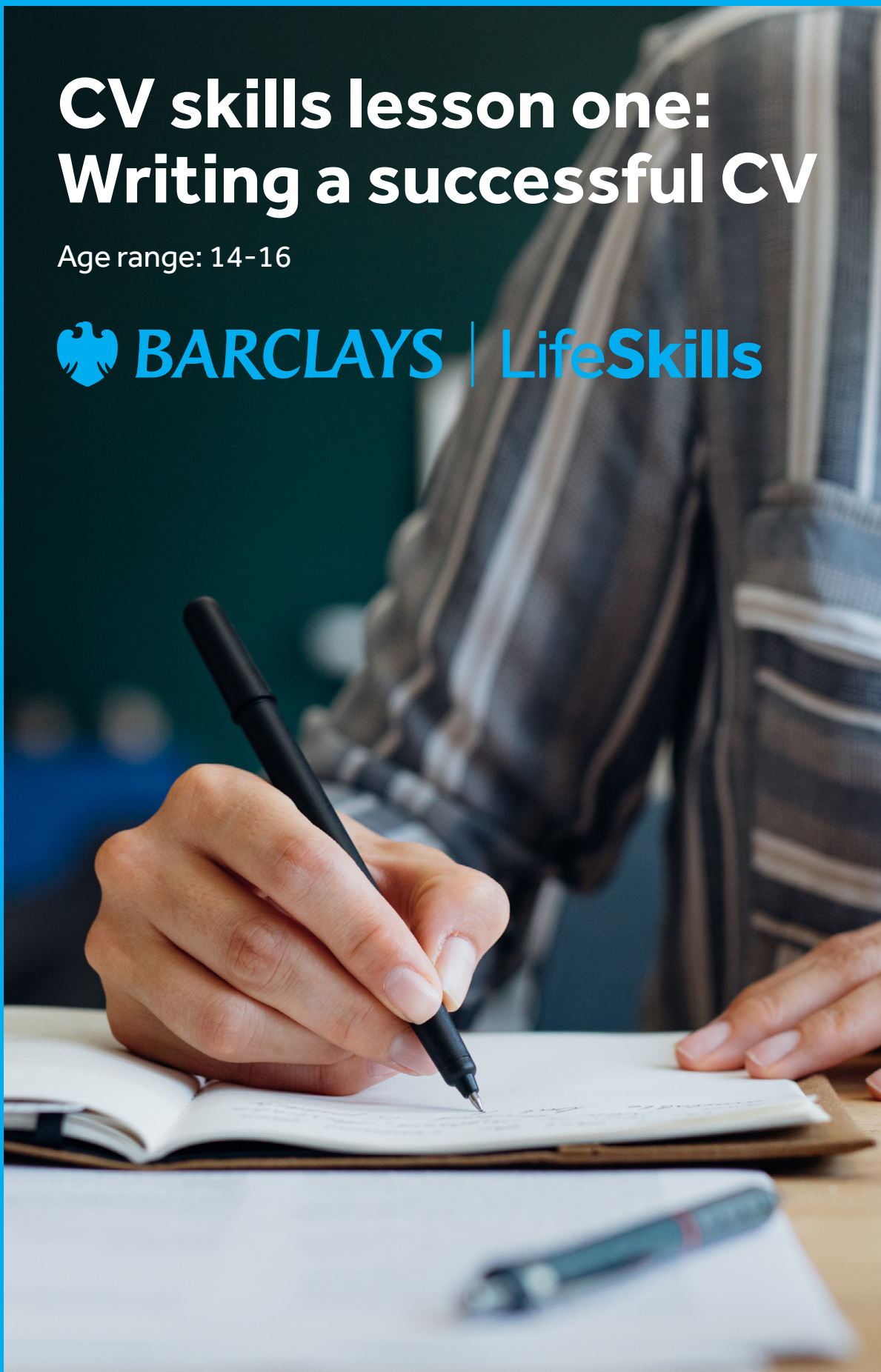




# CV skills lesson one: Writing a successful CV

Age range: 14-16

 **BARCLAYS** | LifeSkills



# Session overview

Time	Key learning outcomes	Resources
60-90 mins	<p>By the end of the activity students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain what a CV is used for and be familiar with two common formats.</li> <li>• Understand that a CV should highlight the skills, personal qualities, qualifications, interests and experience that a potential employer is looking for.</li> <li>• Create a draft CV.</li> <li>• Understand that societal trends, like automation, AI, and ambitions for net zero are helping to influence the future world of work and what this means for when applying for jobs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CV skills lesson one: Writing a successful CV student worksheet.</li> <li>• CV skills lesson one: Writing a successful CV presentation slides.</li> </ul>

This is lesson one of two focusing on CV skills for young people aged 14-16. Part two is 'CV skills lesson two: Fine-tuning your CV to stand out to employers'. Students may find it helpful to complete the 'Exploring personal strengths for employment' lesson before creating their CV, so they can identify the skills, interests and personality traits they want to include.

Remember that you can refer to the guiding principles for establishing a safe learning environment in the Appendix section of the LifeSkills content guide. This includes suggestions for signposting students to further support. The content guide can be downloaded [here](#).



LifeSkills is pleased to have worked with The National Autistic Society to ensure the following lesson plan can be adapted to suit the needs of autistic students.

If teaching a lesson including autistic students, here are some key considerations when undertaking the following activities:

Remind autistic students of the importance of looking for a realistic job that matches their current skills. Often autistic people can struggle to remember the need for a step-by-step plan and can only see the end goal.

Use concrete language and consider how what you say may be interpreted literally, for example when discussing the 'whole person'.

Some activities may take autistic students longer to process what they need to do and complete than others so add some contingency time to your planning if you need it.

Some autistic students may also need additional guidance and support.

Accuracy and spelling: For autistic students with other co-existing neurodiversity's who may struggle with executive functioning/organisational skills – students could share their CV (or any written materials) with a friend/family member/support person to check for accuracy and spelling before submitting.

Try to avoid all students having to share their personal profile – some autistic students may not want to share theirs, but will still benefit greatly from listening to others. But do still check to include those who do want to take part, as autistic people are all different.

# Contents

Activities	Time	Page
Activity one: What is a CV?	30 mins	3
Activity two: Write a personal profile	30 mins	4
Activity three: CV completion and cover letters	30 mins	5
Summary	5 mins	7

This lesson incorporates the importance of demonstrating core transferable skills when applying for jobs. If your students aren't familiar with them or need a refresher you could show them this 2 minute animation providing an overview of what they are [Core transferable skills activity](#).

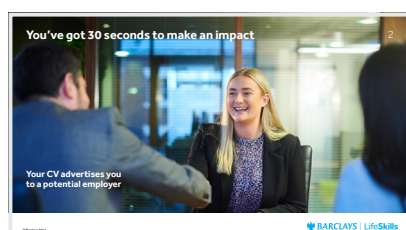
The lesson also covers the importance of candidates who can demonstrate a focus on sustainability to potential employers, which includes understanding that core transferable skills can be developed and applied within jobs to help lessen environmental impacts.

Before the session, invite students to bring in a job advertisement that interests them. It could be for a part-time or summer job, or a realistic first job; it could come from a local paper or an online job site (bring in spares for those who forget). Ask students to carefully read their advert and identify the skills and qualities the employer is looking for. CV templates to use in the lesson are located at the end of this lesson plan starting from page 8.

## Activity one

### What is a CV?

#### 1. Discuss what a CV is for

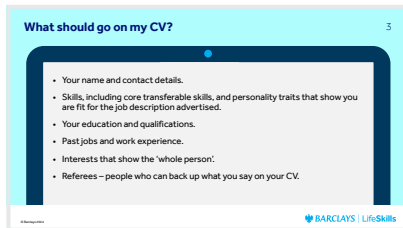


- Ask students to share ideas about what they think a CV is for.
- (CV stands for curriculum vitae, which is Latin for 'course of life').
- Show **slide 2**. Explain that a CV is like an advertisement, but it is selling a person rather than a product or a brand. TV adverts have just a few seconds to grab our attention and persuade us, and the same is true for CVs. Employers may take just 30 seconds to skim a CV and make a decision about whether they want to interview a person.
- Ask students how they think they can make a CV stand out like TV adverts can – but without using gimmicks.
- Explain to students that it could be something as simple as an inappropriate email address that could put an employer off from inviting you to interview. To illustrate this, show the first film on this page which demonstrates the importance of [using a professional email address](#).
- Use the [Play the Boss interactive tool](#) to help students understand what constitutes an appropriate CV. You can also access the game from the lesson plan page, a splash page with a start button will appear on the whiteboard when it is loaded.

# Activity one

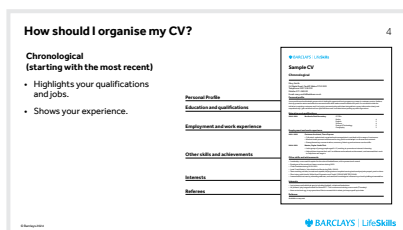
## What is a CV? (cont'd)

### 2. What goes in a CV?



- Gather and list ideas for what information a CV should contain.
- Discuss each one and identify why each piece of information might be relevant and important to an employer.
- Which are the most important? Highlight and emphasise the importance of skills. Employers can think of these as equally important as qualifications, since skills are the tools they will use to do a good job for the employer.
- Ask the class if they know what core transferable skills are, such as problem solving and creativity. Explain that these skills are important because we use them in everyday life, at school and in the world of work, and they can be used in any industry and almost any job so they are always in demand by employers.
- Highlight that, as the world looks to reduce the impact of climate change by taking steps towards net zero, employers are increasingly looking for candidates who can demonstrate a focus on sustainability. This means being aware that jobs are likely to be adapting and more roles may offer opportunities to help lessen environmental impacts.
- Now ask your class to consider technical skills and what is meant by those. These refer to specialised knowledge and expertise to perform specific tasks, for example coding and social media. Or taking the area of net zero transition, these are skills which could relate to specialised jobs, such as a wind turbine technician or heat pump installer.
- Show **slide 3** as a summary of what should go on a CV.

### 3. How should we organise the information in a CV



- Show and discuss **slide 4**
- Use copies of the sample chronological CV on the **Sample CV – Chronological worksheet** cut into strips to help students think about how to organise the information. Hand out the strips and ask students in pairs to put them in the best order. Gather students' ideas then use the template CV to show the correct order.
- Do the same with the functional/skills-based CV on the **Sample CV – Functional/skills based worksheet**, and **slide 5**.
- Ask students what they think each type of CV highlights and to suggest some good and bad points of using each type.
- Explore how each sample CV presents the same information in different ways. For example, ask students to underline on the chronological CV where the information about Mary's skills appear. Now ask them to find the same information in the skills-based CV.



# Activity two

## Write a personal profile

### 1. Highlight your best skills and qualities

- Ask students to draft a personal profile, often also called a personal statement, that highlights their best skills and personal qualities. Encourage students to think about whether they have skills that might transfer to the world of work.

**Are they good at staying positive when under pressure at school?**

**Do they excel at leadership, or thrive when working in a team?**

**Do they enjoy presenting to a group, or being creative?**

- Use the example from the sample CVs to give students an idea of what could go into the statement. If students have completed the [Exploring personal strengths for employment](#) lesson already, encourage them to use those skills, interests and personality traits as inspiration for their profile.

### 2. Review

- Ask them to read their profile back to themselves, thinking about what an employer might think of it.

**Will it grab someone's attention and give them the right impression?**

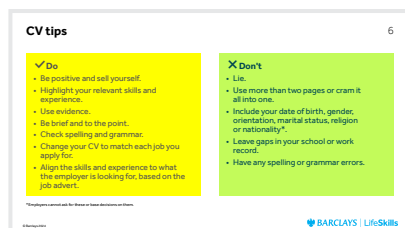
**Do they demonstrate the core transferable skills that employers are looking for?**

**What skills, interests and personality traits have they included?**

# Activity three

## CV completion and cover letters

### 1. Choose the format

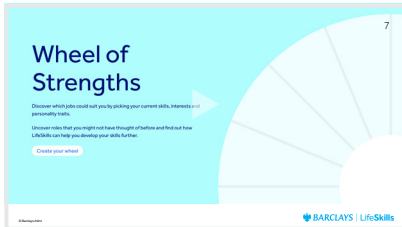


- Show **slide 6**. Guide and support students as they complete the rest of a sample CV using the format of their choice (chronological is easier, starting with the most recent elements).
- Help them use active words, like 'produced', 'helped', and 'achieved'.

# Activity three

## CV completion and cover letters (cont'd)

### 2. Consider skills and positive qualities



- List a good range of skills and positive qualities, drawing on previous activities such as the [Exploring personal strengths for employment](#) lesson and show the [Wheel of strengths](#) on **slide 7**. You can open the skills screen of this tool as a reference if helpful, or if students haven't already done so, they can spin the wheel to help them complete this section of their CV or use **slide 7** as a prompt on core transferable skills.
- Encourage them to pay attention to accuracy and spelling.
- Challenge students to highlight and emphasise the skills they identified in their job adverts at the beginning of the lesson in their draft CV, this could include an example of being involved in extra-curricular activities outside of school such as social action or local community projects.
- **National Autistic Society guidance:** For autistic students and other neurodiverse students who may struggle with executive functioning/organisational skills, recommend that they share their CV with a friend or support person to check for accuracy and spelling before submitting.

### 3. Look at cover letters

- If you have time, discuss covering letters. Ask students whether they know what a cover letter is.
- When you have established that it is the letter that you send alongside your CV, ask how important it is. Students often underestimate how vital this letter is to a job application: it is their opportunity to explain why they want a job and the benefits that they can bring to a company, whereas the CV provides information about their skills and achievements to date.
- Explain that although many job applications are made online, they still need a covering email, which serves the same purpose. Applications that are made using an application form won't need a covering letter

### 4. Prepare some notes and share ideas

- Using the job advertisements students have brought in and/or the adverts you collected before the lesson, and their draft CVs, ask students to write some notes for a covering letter for a job. Give students a few minutes to do this, then discuss their thoughts.
- Collect ideas on the board for what should appear in the covering letter, such as highlighting key points from the CV, explaining why they want the job and acknowledging where they saw the job advertised.
- You can also use the [How to write a cracking cover letter](#) interactive tool to inspire students with a variety of hints and tips.

## Extension

- Ask students to think about alternative ways of presenting CVs, which may be relevant to some industry sectors. This might be in video format if applying for certain types of media roles or a portfolio of work if applying for a design/artwork role.
- Why not get students to log on to LifeSkills and use the [CV builder](#) to inspire them to write their CV. This interactive tool also demonstrates the positive and negative impact of social media on their employability. By collecting information about the students' most popular posts and likes from their Facebook and Twitter profiles, it shows students what employers might see about them online.
- If students are still unsure about where their skills can take them, get them to try the [Wheel of strengths](#), or spin it again if they've used it already. This will provide them with a selection of jobs that suit their skills, interests and personality traits. They can then choose one of the suggested roles to write a tailored application for and to practise using the knowledge they have gained in this lesson.

## Summary

- Invite students to share personal profiles, asking the other students to identify all the skills, qualities and other attributes in each statement.
- Avoid making all students share their personal profile – some autistic students may not want to share theirs but check first as no one autistic person is the same.
- Remind students that a good CV (and covering letter if approximate) is tailored to each individual job so it highlights what the job requires.
- Emphasise the need for neatness, accuracy, honesty and good spelling. Discuss ideas for achieving this, such as keeping one all-purpose version of the CV saved on a computer and using it as a template to create job-specific versions.



# Sample CV

## Chronological

---

Mary Smith  
24 Maple Road, Cardiff, Wales CF10 XXX  
Telephone: 0207 536 253  
Mobile: 077-283522  
Email: mary.smith@address.co.uk

### Personal profile

*I am a positive and enthusiastic person who is looking for opportunities to progress my career in customer service. I believe that my proactive nature and effective communication skills make me well suited to this path. I'm not afraid to take the initiative in assisting customers and I truly enjoy communicating with them being able to convey information clearly and empathetically. I gain satisfaction from a job well done and I'm excited about putting my skills to good use.*

### Education and qualifications

2016-2021	Northvale Park Secondary	GCSEs:	
		Maths	4
		English	5
		Science	4
		Design & Technology	5
		Geography	3

### Employment and work experience

2021-2022	<b>Customer Assistant, Tesco Express</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Collected, replenished, organised and managed stock, and dealt with a range of customers.</li><li>Worked under pressure and learned to stay positive and adapt in a diverse environment.</li><li>Strengthened my communication, numeracy, listening and customer service skills.</li></ul>
2019-2021	<b>Mentor, Poplar Youth Club</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Led a group of young people aged 9–13, working to promote an interest in learning.</li><li>Helped them improve their self-confidence and academic achievement, and assessed their work to help them set targets.</li></ul>

### Other skills and achievements

- Leadership: a successful captain for the school football team, with a proven track record.
- Employee of the month on three occasions during 2022.
- Class President during 2020–2021.
- Level 3 certificate in 'Introduction to Mentoring Skills' (2019).
- Team working: reliable, honest and capable, helping teams complete learning tasks and projects properly and on time.
- Short story published in 'Write Now! Expressions of Youth' (YOUNG WRITERS 2018).
- Learned about net zero by attending webinars, and used that knowledge to influence my school by talking at assemblies.

### Interests

- I enjoy team and individual sports including football, cricket and badminton.
- At present I play league football for Newark FC. This involves me training once a week (Thursday).
- Keen on technology, in my spare time I like to research this industry to keep myself up to date.

### Referees

Available on request.



# Sample CV

## Functional/skills-based

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Mary Smith  
24 Maple Road, Cardiff, Wales CF10 XXX  
Telephone: 0207 536 253  
Mobile: 077-283522  
Email: mary.smith@address.co.uk

### Personal profile

---

*I am a positive and enthusiastic person who is looking for opportunities to progress my career in customer service. I believe that my proactive nature and effective communication skills make me well suited to this path. I'm not afraid to take the initiative in assisting customers and I truly enjoy communicating with them being able to convey information clearly and empathetically. I gain satisfaction from a job well done and I'm excited about putting my skills to good use.*

### Skills and personal qualities

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<b>Customer care</b>	Served and helped customers of diverse ages and backgrounds. Level 3 certificate in 'Introduction to Mentoring Skills' (2019).
<b>Communication</b>	Learned about net zero by attending webinars, and used that knowledge to influence my school by talking at assemblies. Short story published in 'Write Now! Expressions of Youth' (YOUNG WRITERS 2018).
<b>Numeracy</b>	Handled cash and credit transactions. Helped young people with numeracy tasks.
<b>Proactivity</b>	Employee of the month on three occasions in 2022. Received certificate for work experience (Trident), in recognition of my high standard of work (2018)
<b>Organisation</b>	Collected, replenished, organised and managed stock. Stayed positive while working under pressure in a busy retail environment. Helped teams complete learning tasks and projects properly and on time at school and college.
<b>Leadership</b>	Successful captain for the school football team. Class President at school (2019-2020).

### Education and qualifications

---

<b>2016-2021</b>	<b>Northvale Park Secondary</b>	GCSEs:	
		Maths	4
		English	5
		Science	4
		Design & Technology	5
		Geography	3

### Employment and work experience

---

<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>Customer Assistant, Tesco Express</b>
<b>2019-2021</b>	<b>Mentor, Poplar Youth Club</b>

### Interests

---

- I enjoy team and individual sports including football, cricket and badminton.
- At present I play league football for Newark FC. This involves me training once a week (Thursday).
- Keen on technology, in my spare time I proactively research this industry to keep myself up to date.

### Referees

---

Available on request.

# CV Template

## Chronological

A chronological CV makes your education and work experience stand out first.

---

Name [Write your full name.]

Address [Write your full address including postcode.]

Phone [Include both a home phone number and mobile number if you can.]

Email [Check you spell this correctly.]

### Personal profile

---

[A few sentences about your skills, achievements, personality traits, interests and career goal. Link these to the job you're applying for. The advertisement may list what the employer is looking for.]

### Education and qualifications

---

[In reverse order (most recent first) list each school or college you have attended, the dates you were there, the courses or qualifications you took and your grades, and any other awards or achievements.]

### Employment and work experience

---

[If you are already in a job put this section first, above 'education and qualifications'. In reverse order, list each employer and their location, your job title, what you achieved and what your main responsibilities were. Don't go into too much detail.

If you don't yet have a job, find other things you have done that provide work experience such as voluntary work, planning an event at school, running a snack shop at a youth club, Young Enterprise projects, etc.]

### Other skills and achievements

---

[List any other skills or achievements here. Make them relevant to the job you're applying for. Don't repeat things you put in your personal profile.]

### Interests

---

[List any interests, clubs or leisure activities that might be relevant to the job you're applying for, or ones that showcase your skills and personal qualities.]

### Referees

---

[Either write 'Available on request', or include the names, addresses and contact details here of two people who can back up what you have said. Make sure you get their permission to be listed as referees first.]

# CV Template

## Functional/skills-based

A chronological CV makes your education and work experience stand out first.

---

Name [Write your full name.]

Address [Write your full address including postcode.]

Phone [Include both a home phone number and mobile number if you can.]

Email [Check you spell this correctly.]

### Personal profile

---

[A few sentences about your skills, achievements, personality traits, interests and career goal. Link these to the job you're applying for. The advertisement may list what the employer is looking for.]

### Skills and personal qualities

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[Describe the skills you most want the employer to notice. Give evidence for each one, e.g. your experience, how you used each skill, and what you achieved.]

### Education and qualifications

---

[In reverse order (that means most recent first), list each school or college, the dates you were there, the courses or qualifications you took and your grades, and any other awards or achievements.]

### Employment and work experience

---

[If you are already in a job put this section first, above 'education and qualifications'. In reverse order, list each employer and their location, your job title, what you achieved and what your main responsibilities were. Don't go into too much detail.

If you don't yet have a job, find other things you have done that provide work experience such as voluntary work, planning an event at school, running a snack shop at a youth club, Young Enterprise projects, etc.]

### Other skills and achievements

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[List any other skills or achievements here. Make them relevant to the job you're applying for. Don't repeat things you put in your personal profile.]

### Referees

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[Either write 'Available on request', or include the names, addresses and contact details here of two people who can back up what you have said. Make sure you get their permission to be listed as referees first.]