



CV skills lesson two: Fine-tuning your CV to stand out to employers

Age range: 14-16

 **BARCLAYS** | LifeSkills



Session overview

Time	Key learning outcomes	Resources
45-60 mins	<p>By the end of the activity students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review a CV, including their own, and identify areas for improvement. Identify key words in a job advertisement. Identify and explain their transferable skills, along with personality traits and interests, and how these relate to a job advertisement. Demonstrate how they can amend parts of their CV to respond to different requirements. Incorporate feedback received to improve their CV. Compose a covering letter or email to accompany a CV. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CV skills lesson two: Fine-tuning your CV to stand out to employers student worksheet. CV skills lesson two: Fine-tuning your CV to stand out to employers presentation slides.

This is lesson two of two focusing on CV skills for young people aged 14-16. To complete all stages of this lesson, students must have completed 'CV skills lesson one: Writing a successful CV' and must have their draft CV with them to review.

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 at [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:

Use concrete language and consider how what you say may be interpreted literally.

Use easy to understand instructive language as much as possible. Instructive language differs from 'asking' language, as in the following statements "you need to change this section", rather than "can you change this section?" Autistic people may take all negative feedback as being a general statement, think 'yes I can change it' but still not do it, so ensure that it is specific and that suggestions for how to improve are also included.

Some activities may take autistic students longer than others and they may also need additional one-on-one guidance.

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Activity one

Applications that work

1. Recap what a CV is for



- Ask if anyone can tell you what a CV is for, and if anyone can explain what information about them their CV should detail and 'sell'.
- Show **slide 2**. Explain that this activity will first help students spot how they might improve their draft CV. This will ensure it does the best possible job of selling their skills. (If appropriate, explain that in the next activity, **CV surgery**, someone will help them with this one-to-one.) Then, students are going to explore how to respond to different job advertisements.

2. Compare two CVs to find problems

- Hand out copies of the **Sample CV worksheet**, the sample CV. Ask students to work in pairs and see how many errors or areas for improvement they can find.
- Ask students to share their ideas. Pick up on the inappropriate email address used in the sample CV, other errors are listed on the next page.
- Hand out the **Model CV worksheet**, the model CV, and help students compare and contrast this with the sample CV.
- If you didn't already cover this in **Lesson one: Writing a successful CV**, play the first video at [barclayslifeskills.com/profiletips](https://www.barclayslifeskills.com/profiletips), which shows students the importance making sure the contact details on a CV reflect a professional person.

Errors in the sample CV

- Lower case 'L' in 'london'.
- Inappropriate email address for an application.
- Italics used for personal statement.
- Missing BTEC and GCSE grades.
- No date for mentoring, and no examples of how Alex used his skills here or achieved anything of note.
- 'Achievemets' is spelled incorrectly (correct spelling 'achievements').
- No dates given for other accomplishments.
- No other skills are demonstrated, e.g. computing.
- Interests are inappropriate and have not been used to demonstrate skills or qualities (and should also be bullet points).
- No referees or note that they can be provided on request.

Activity one

Applications that work (cont'd)

3. Students review their own CVs (if these are not available, you can skip this step)



- Show **slide 3** and briefly review some CV dos and don'ts.
- Ask students to work in pairs and swap CVs. They then review their partner's CV to see if they can suggest ways to improve it, using the tips on the slide.
- Show **slide 4**. Give students a few minutes to check their CVs for these issues, then ask if anyone would like to share how they will improve their CV. If students need prompting here refer to the **Model CV worksheet**.

4. Discuss why we need to tailor a CV

- Ask students if they think every job requires the same skills.
- Discuss whether this means that a single CV can help them apply for jobs with different skill requirements – or should they tailor it for each job application? (You could build on the idea that a CV acts as an advert for a person's skills and discuss how ads can highlight different aspects of a product).

5. Identify the skills needed for different jobs

- Hand out the sample job adverts (**Sample job adverts worksheet**) and ask students to work alone or in pairs to highlight the important skills mentioned in each one.
- Core transferable skills like problem solving, adaptability and creativity can be applied in any industry, in almost any job role, and transferred between many jobs.
- Ask students to share their ideas, and briefly discuss each advert.
- Reinforce how reading adverts in this way is an important skill that helps students tailor their CV to meet the needs of the job.

6. Demonstrate the skills needed by tailoring a CV



- Show **slide 5**. Ask students to choose the advert that most interests them and compare the skills it mentions with the skills they highlight most in their CV.
- Invite students to share some of the similarities and differences they spot.
- Ask students to identify one or more skills that they feel their CV would need to demonstrate better if they were to apply for this job.
- Give students time to think of some evidence for this skill and draft a new statement to include on their CV. Emphasise the importance of including the key words from the job advert on their CV, to demonstrate to the employer that they have read it properly and have the necessary skills and experience. Ask students to share their ideas.

Activity one

Applications that work (cont'd)

Extension

- If students haven't already used the [Wheel of strengths](#) interactive tool in CV Lesson one, it will help them identify the skills, interests and personality traits they could add to their CV, as well as what kind of jobs they might lead to.
- Students could re-draft their whole CV if you have time, or as a teacher-led follow-up activity. Why not get students to log on to LifeSkills and use the [CV builder](#) to do this. This interactive tool will guide them through building a CV step by step, with top tips to help spark ideas.
- Discuss how some employers provide an application form to complete instead of requesting a CV. Explain how this serves the same purpose as a CV; to sell students' skills and explain that students still need to analyse the advert to spot which skills or experience the employer most seeks.

Activity summary

- Highlight the importance of getting a CV right. It's the first impression potential employers have of someone. If it has errors, the likelihood is that they will not continue reading it. It's always good to ask someone to check a CV before sending it to employers.
- Also emphasise the need to strike a balance between showcasing their core transferable skills that apply to different jobs, as well as tailoring a CV for each job application, ensuring they also demonstrate the skills that employer is particularly looking for.
- If appropriate, remind students to have their annotated CVs ready for the [CV surgery](#) in activity two, where they can review it one-to-one with a teacher.
- Show **slide 5** as a summary of what you have covered in this activity, printing copies for students as a takeaway if necessary.

Activity two

CV surgery

If applicable, share your own experiences of reviewing CVs and covering letters if you have acted as a recruiter, and give students a few minutes to ask questions. If you haven't had experience reviewing CVs simply share your thoughts on what might let a CV and covering letter down. E.g. poor spelling and grammar, experience which is unrelated to the job specification, or perhaps the most common mistake of all – forgetting to include contact details.

1. Introduce the CV surgery

- This activity will require a number of 'reviewers'. These reviewers could be nominated members of staff, or you may want to invite volunteers to support with the delivery of the surgery – sources could include local employers, existing school business connections or an organisation that offers volunteer support in your area. Alternatively, CVs could be collected in and reviewed by educators or volunteers to provide feedback.
 - Explain to the students that they are each going to have a one-to-one CV review. This will help students to identify where their CV works well and where they could improve it, so it better sells their skills and experience.
 - If students haven't already completed the covering letter activity in **Lesson one: Writing a successful CV**, explain that, while waiting for their CV review, they are going to practise writing a covering letter.
 - If you haven't already looked this tool, use [How to write a cracking cover letter](#) to inspire students with a variety of hints and tips. Alternatively, a sample covering letter can be found on the **Sample covering letter worksheet**.
 - Explain that when students enter an interview, they need to introduce themselves and make a good first impression. Point out that the covering letter does this for a CV: it should make a great first impression that encourages the employer to read on.
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2. Students review their CVs

- Ask students to spend a few minutes reading through their CVs so they are ready to talk about them. Students should be ready to explain any specific career ambitions they may have, perhaps based off the job roles suggested to them by the 'Wheel of strengths' tool.
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3. Get the one-to-one reviews started

- Divide students into groups and explain that each group will take turns to have their CV reviewed with one reviewer.
 - Each student's CV review should last about 10 minutes in total.
 - Reviewers can use the questions and prompts on page 12 to guide them. For more guidance and insight, they can also download the [CV tips](#) interactive page, which is filled with prompts for completing each section of a CV.
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4. Help students work on covering letters

- Circulate and help students who aren't currently having their CV reviewed to compose their covering letter using the **Write a covering letter worksheet** and the sheet of job adverts from 'Activity One: Applications that work' (**Sample job adverts worksheet**).
- Ask students to identify the job that most interests them (they may have done this already in 'Applications that work', where they explored tailoring their CV) and identify the skills the employer is looking for. Students should then follow the steps to write a strong covering letter, using the sample letter to help them.
- Give out the **Sample covering letter worksheet**, to show students a sample covering letter.

Activity two

CV surgery (cont'd)

5. Share thoughts on the CVs

- When all students have had their reviews, ask each reviewer to briefly share some thoughts about what they saw.
- Stick to general observations unless there are one or two stand-out examples you'd like to mention, but be sensitive as not all students will have a strong CV to show.

6. Look at the covering letters

- Briefly review covering letters and ask if anyone would like to share an example of the letter they have written. Remind students that even more so than their CV, the covering letter needs to be tailored to each job for which they apply: employers are likely to ignore a 'general' letter. It must be short, to the point and show why they are right for the job.

7. CV review questions and prompts

- Thank each student for bringing their CV and explain that you're here to help them improve it.
- Ask if they have a specific career or career area in mind and if they have done any research to find out the sort of skills and experience needed in that area of work.
- If not, and they haven't already used the [Wheel of strengths](#), encourage them to try this tool independently to find job suggestions that suit their skills.
- Read through the CV with the student. Point out what they have done well and provide some constructive ideas on what they could improve and how they might do this.
- Ideas might include:
 - Sorting out spelling, punctuation or grammar.
 - Formatting (e.g. bullet points, incorrect use of italics or fancy fonts).
 - Adding missing information (e.g. dates, grades, address).
 - Amending unsuitable information (e.g. a silly email address).
 - Thinking about any 'missing' skills and helping them recall activities and experiences that demonstrate these e.g. Duke of Edinburgh Award, being part of a theatre production, achievement awards through school or outside groups.
 - Suggesting activities or experiences for the student to pursue, this could be voluntary work to gain experience on their CV to help them stand out from the crowd.

Activity summary

- Congratulate students on their efforts, especially if they have not done this before.
- Sum up with some basic tips on making a good impression through a strong covering letter and CV.
- Remind students that recruiters don't expect them to be a perfect match for the job, but they do expect them to be interested in the position and show that they have the most important skills or qualities needed for the job.
- Wish students luck in their job searches.

Sample CV

How many errors or areas for improvement can you spot?

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

Personal profile

I am a very positive, proactive and enthusiastic person who works well both on my own and as part of a team. I am confident and motivated to aim high, I have a strong desire to develop a career in customer service.

Education and qualifications

2016-2021	Northvale Park Secondary	GCSEs:	
		Maths	C
		English	D
		Science	C
		Design & Technology	D
		Geography	B

Employment and work experience

- 2021-2022** **Customer Assistant, Tesco Express**
- Collected, replenished, organised and managed stock, and dealt with a range of customers.
 - Worked under pressure and learned to stay positive and adapt in a diverse environment.
 - Strengthened my communication, numeracy, listening and customer service skills.
- Mentor, Poplar Youth Club**
- Helped them improve their self-confidence and academic achievement, and assessed their work to help them set targets.

Other skills and achievements

- Leadership: a successful captain for the school football team, with a proven track record.
- Employee of the month.
- Class President.
- Level 3 certificate in 'Introduction to Mentoring Skills'.
- Bilingual in Spanish.
- 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'.

Interests

- Socialising.
- Sports.
- Videogames.

Referees

Model CV

Here is a 'model' CV that shows Alex's skills to the full.

Alex Brown
72 Red Lane, Limehouse, London E14 XXX
Telephone: 0207 536 253
Mobile: 077-283522
Email: alex.brown@address.co.uk

Personal profile

I am a very positive, proactive and enthusiastic person who works well both on my own and as part of a team. I am confident and motivated to aim high, I have a strong desire to develop a career in customer service.

Education and qualifications

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

Employment and work experience

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 2021-2022 | Customer Assistant, Tesco Express |
|------------------|--|
- Collected, replenished, organised and managed stock, and dealt with a range of customers.
 - Worked under pressure and learned to stay positive and adapt in a diverse environment.
 - Strengthened my communication, numeracy, listening and customer service skills.
- | | |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2019-2021 | Mentor, Poplar Youth Club |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
- Led a group of young people aged 9–13, working to promote an interest in learning.
 - Helped them improve their self-confidence and academic achievement, and assessed their work to help them set targets.

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 2020.
- 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 2016):

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 job adverts

Job advertisements usually describe the skill set which the employer is looking for in a potential employee:

- Read each job advert.
- Highlight the skills and qualities each advert needs.
- Think about how you could demonstrate some of these skills in your own CV.

Office manager needed for busy doctor's surgery

Our busy surgery needs a new office manager to deal with patient queries and appointments, and other administration tasks contributing to the organisation and running of the surgery.

A good telephone manner, patient and respectful personality and the ability to stay positive under pressure are vital.

IT skills are preferable but not essential as training can be provided for the right person, but thorough attention to detail is a must.

Web designer

You have a great eye for design, good knowledge of coding for the web, and you're up-to-date on all things digital.

Adaptable, observant and ready to roll up your sleeves, you can manage your own projects and build stunning websites on time and to meet our clients' needs.

We're a tight knit team and seek a bright personality with initiative, attention to detail and a solution focussed approach to problem solving.

The successful candidate will also need up-to-date experience of HTML/CSS, Javascript and Adobe Creative Suite.

Trainee teaching assistant required

We are looking to recruit a trainee teaching assistant to provide learning support for students aged 11–14.

The successful candidate will be able to demonstrate a strong ability to understand the needs of others and show patience, adaptability and enthusiasm.

They will need to have good numeracy, organisation and communication skills and work well within a team, as well as being responsible and able to manage their own time and priorities.

Farm manager

The farm manager will be responsible for selling of the farms products, as well as coordinating the daily activity of the farm. You will be highly organised and a proactive person with an interest in business and animals. It's a broad role that's all about communication, organisation and building relationships as well as suggesting solutions.

We're looking for people with patience, numeracy skills and relevant qualifications and/or demonstrable experience working on farms.

Trades worker (Carpenter) needed for large scale projects

We provide carpenters to many varied and distinguished large scale projects throughout the city. We provide

an exceptionally high standard of work with excellent attention to detail and run all of our contracts with a high level of professionalism.

We're looking for carpenters who have the relevant qualifications, have good communication skills, are well presented, punctual and take pride in their work.

Fitness instructor at busy gym

Our company is hiring an instructor who will be responsible for delivering both group fitness classes and one-on-one consultations and sessions.

You will be an enthusiastic person with great communication skills and a keen interest in sport and keeping fit yourself.

You will need to engage with customers to understand their needs and also coach and lead a team.

Write a covering letter

A covering letter makes the first impression when you apply for a job. It should explain why you're the right person for the role and highlight your skills.

- Choose one of the six jobs that most interests you.
- Think about what skills and qualities the advertisement mentions.
- Follow the steps below to write a short covering letter that shows you're the right person for the job.

Start with a greeting

**Explain which job
you are applying for**

**Make links between
your skills and the
needs of the job,
highlighting your
most relevant skills
or experiences**

**Briefly sum up why
you make a good
candidate for the job**

**Show you're
interested**

**Finish with a polite
ending**

Use the same format if you're sending an email.

Sample covering letter

Junior Teaching Assistant

We are looking to recruit a trainee teaching assistant to provide learning support for students aged 11–14.

The successful candidate will be able to demonstrate a strong ability to understand the needs of others and show patience and consideration.

They will need to have good numeracy and communication skills and work well within a team, as well as being able to manage their own time and priorities.

Start with a greeting

Dear Miss Smith,

Explain which job you are applying for

I am writing in response to your advertisement for a Junior Teaching Assistant.

Make links between your skills and the needs of the job, highlighting your most relevant skills or experiences

As you will see from my CV, I have achieved good grades in my GCSEs especially in English and maths. I also speak another language and may be able to help those pupils who speak English as a second language. I have recently further practised being proactive as well as my communication and leadership skills while volunteering for a local youth group, running and organising activities for young people.

Briefly sum up why you make a good candidate for the job

I am interested in this job as I really enjoy working with young people. I am proactive, adaptable and empathetic to their particular needs. I am also considering a career in teaching and would like to gain some relevant experience. I have a good balance of organisation and communication skills that I believe will help me work well in this position, along with an ability to stay positive and thrive under pressure.

Show you're interested

I will call you on Friday 19th to make sure you have received my application. I would welcome the opportunity to explain more about my skills and experiences at interview.

Finish with a polite ending

Your sincerely,
Josephine Bloggs
