

CV Checklist

Use the following checklist as guideline to review your CV.

1. Spelling and Grammar

- Have you spell-checked your CV and are you confident there are no mistakes?
- Have you checked the grammar and punctuation carefully and are you confident there are no mistakes? A spell checker won't pick up the difference between form and from!
- Is capitalisation used correctly? (BSc and not Bsc; capitals used for names of roads - 10 Acacia Avenue, etc.)
- Has your CV a lively writing style? Positive, active language; easy to pick out facts; authentic and truthful; information presented in a well-thought-out manner, avoiding clichés, etc.

2. Layout

- Is your CV no more than two pages of A4? This is the standard length for a graduate CV in the Netherlands. There is variation in the expected format in different countries, so find out what is expected. PhD CVs for academia can be much longer (typically 4-6 pages). Is the most important information on the first page of the CV?
- Is there a clear structure with appropriate headings and logical development?
- Are the page margins at least 1 cm all round (Hiring Managers like to write comments on the CV when interviewing)?
- Hold your CV at arm's length: does it have a pleasing and professional appearance?
- Is your CV easy and clear to read - not too cramped? There should be no dense paragraphs more than 7 lines long. If there are any, they should be separated into smaller paragraphs or you should use bullets or bold out key words.
- Does your CV have too much white space? Although design is important, it could also suggest you don't have enough content to say about yourself.
- Is everything neatly aligned and is your lay-out consistent?
- Have you included page number and name in the footer on each page (avoids confusion if the pages get separated when printed)?

3. Style

- Are you using bullets for lists? Ideally these bullets should be proper bullets e.g. circles or squares rather than just dashes - or asterisks * ?
- Are you using more than two different fonts? More than two looks messy.
- Sans fonts look clearer on the screen, so a good choice is Lucida Sans 10 points or Arial 10 points for your body text. Are you using larger fonts for subheadings such as education, work and interests? 14 points Lucida Sans or Arial 14 is a good size for these. A dark (so it photocopies easily) colour, such as burgundy, or navy blue adds visual interest and makes your CV stand out.
- Is the bold or italic functionality used appropriately to draw eye to key points?
- Have you consciously thought about whether to include a photo or not? There is a school of thought which believes a photo distracts the hiring manager - their aim is to review your skills and experience so theoretically it doesn't matter what you look like. Many include a photo on their LinkedIn profile and omit it from their CV. The decision is a personal branding choice. If you use it, ensure the photo is a clear headshot. Check if the inclusion of a photo is a requirement of the application process.

4. Structure

The following key sections are commonly included in CVs:

4.1 Personal details

- Have you put your name at the top in a large font size (say 18 points) so the Hiring Manager can easily find your CV and know who it is from? You don't need to put Curriculum Vitae at the top by the way!
- Have you included your personal email address and not your university email address as you are aiming to develop a long-term relationship? Is this email address professional (not goldilocks@numail.com)?
- Have you included your date of birth and nationality in this section? This is a typical approach in The Netherlands however please check the legal requirements of the country you are applying to. The USA and UK for example, omit this information for legal reasons.
- Have you included marital status? It is not needed.



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4.2 Personal profile

Writing a Career Objective is a smart way to capture the attention of the hiring manager, if written correctly....

- Have you mentioned your degree and relevant work experience you have (if you have any)?
- Have you described your key strengths relevant for the role?
- Have you described the role/industry you are seeking as your next career move?
- Is your paragraph no more than 3 or 4 sentences?

4.3 Education and qualifications

In this section, combine 'education' (where you studied) and 'qualifications' (the degree you obtained), rather than separating them out. Normally education is before work experience on a student CV.

- Have you listed your academic qualifications in reverse chronological order, that is, starting with the current or most recent qualification and then working chronologically backwards?
- Have you included the start and end date of each qualification?
- Have you listed your pre-university education?
- Have you included your academic distinctions? If they're good, include.
- Have you listed the title(s) of your dissertation(s)?

4.4 Work Experience

- Have you included dates (also in reverse chronological order), job title, organisation, place or country (avoid stating full address).
- Have you described your tasks and achievements indicating the skills you have developed. Have you made use of action verbs and used the past tense of these for work carried out in the past?
- Have you included any unpaid work, as this still provides evidence of your skills.

4.5 Awards

- Have you included this as a separate heading if you have achieved a number of scholarships, school prizes or any other awards?

4.6 Extracurricular activities

- Have you included information about voluntary roles of responsibility either whilst at university or privately? Be specific - quantify what you do or indicate positive outcomes, rather than just providing a list.

4.7 Skills

- Are you mentioning languages (good conversational French, basic Spanish), computing (e.g. "good working knowledge of MS Access and Excel, plus basic web page design skills" and driving ("full current clean driving licence") if you have these?

4.8 Interests

- Have you included a broad variety of interests? e.g. team sports, independent or challenging holidays/foreign travel? Having all your interests in one category (e.g. all you do is sport) suggest you may not be a rounded individual who can relate to a wide range of people.
- Do you have social and active interests rather than just solitary and passive interests? Evidence of being able to get on well with other people? If not, you may come across as an introverted loner!
- Is there organising or leadership experience/evidence of taking responsibility and the initiative? These competencies are important for management and professional roles.
- Are there any interests relevant to the job? E.g. current affairs if you wish to be a journalist or sport if you want to join Nike.

5. Referees

- Have you included referee details? You don't need to include referees unless you have been asked for these. Normally two referees are sufficient: one academic (perhaps your tutor or a project supervisor) and one from an employer (perhaps your last part-time or summer job).

Finally, **MOST important**: is all information on your CV **RELEVANT** for the employer?

