



Creating an ATS-Friendly CV that Stands Out and lands you an interview

If you're applying for your first job, returning to work or changing jobs, your CV needs to do two things:

1. **Pass Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS)** – so it gets seen by recruiters & hiring managers.
2. **Showcase your unique strengths, transferable skills and achievements** – so it stands out when a real person reads it.

1. Keep the Layout Simple

- Stick to **Word or PDF** with a clean design — avoid tables, text boxes or graphics.
- Use clear headings: *Personal Profile, Key Skills, Work Experience, Education, Training, Hobbies & Interests.*
- Save the file as: **Firstname-Lastname-CV.pdf**.

2. Use Keywords from the Job Description

- Match your skills and experience to the exact words in the advert.
- If the role asks for “time management,” “customer service,” or “Microsoft Office” — include those terms naturally in your CV.
- Don't over-stuff — just mirror the important skills.

3. Show How You Solve Problems

At its very core, every business has a set of problems it needs to solve — whether it's keeping customers happy, improving systems, making sales, saving money or managing workloads. Companies hire people who can **fix those problems**.

- Use your CV to show how you've identified challenges and made things better. Where possible use facts and figures that demonstrate the measurable outcome.
- Example: “*Streamlined a booking process, reducing customer wait times by 15%.*”
- Even in a career break or voluntary role, you can highlight times you solved problems through organisation, planning or communication. Then share what the benefit was to your company or team.

4. Showcase Transferable Skills

- Career breaks, volunteering, community roles or parenting often build skills employers want:
 - Organisation
 - Communication
 - Problem-solving
 - Multi-tasking
- Frame these in a professional way, linking them to the role you want.

5. Write a Strong Personal Profile

- 3–4 sentences at the top of your CV.
 - Mention: your background, key strengths, and what you're looking for – mirroring the job role and industry you are applying to.
 - Keep it confident and forward-looking.
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6. Focus on Achievements

- For each role, use bullet points with the **Action + Result** formula.
 - Example: *“Organised and delivered weekly training sessions, improving team performance by 20%.”*
 - Where you don't have direct experience, highlight transferable skills (e.g. planning, managing budgets, supporting others).
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7. Additional Training

- List additional relevant training including the course provider, dates completed and any additional useful information about what you learned.
 - You may have attended virtual courses or done online training
 - These are good as it shows you are willing to continue learning and self-improvement.
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8. Hobbies & Interests

- This is an opportunity to showcase your personality and show people the sorts of activities that you are involved in outside of work.
 - Where possible select interests that are relevant or suitably linked to the job you are applying
 - And where possible, show growth and positive outcomes e.g. *Tennis – regular player for the club and winner of the ladies singles tennis summer tournament 2024.*
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9. Final Checks

- Keep to **2 pages max.**
 - Proofread carefully — errors will stop your CV at both ATS and recruiter level.
 - Tailor your CV for every role — one size does not fit all.
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Top Tip: Recruiters and many hiring managers spend less than 7 seconds scanning a CV. If they can't see your relevance on the first page, they will never read the second page. Show them: *skills they want + how you've solved problems in the past + evidence you can deliver results.*