

Undergraduate CV Writing Guide

Practical guidance for building, tailoring and formatting a strong early-career CV

Main principle

A strong undergraduate CV does not depend on a long employment history. Connect education, projects, work, volunteering, leadership and activities to the skills the employer or admissions office needs to evaluate.

1. Build your master CV

- Read the guide before editing the template.
- Create a master CV containing all relevant experience.
- Copy the master CV and tailor the copy for each application.
- Ask one trusted person to proofread it, then save and submit it as a PDF unless another format is requested.

2. Choose evidence that shows what you can do

Experience source	Evidence it can provide	Examples
Education	Knowledge, analysis and disciplined work	Modules, research, dissertation, lab or studio work
Projects	Problem solving, tools, teamwork and outputs	Course, group, personal, competition or client project
Paid work	Reliability, service, communication and results	Retail, hospitality, tutoring, office or family business
Activities	Leadership, commitment, teamwork and organisation	Society, sport, arts, student representation or events
Volunteering	Initiative, responsibility and community contribution	Charity, mentoring, fundraising or local service

3. Tailor the CV

- Highlight the skills, qualifications and evidence requested in the vacancy or programme description.
- Move the most relevant sections and strongest examples nearer the top.
- Repeat important, accurate keywords naturally, especially names of tools, methods, subject areas and qualifications.

- Remove details that take space but do not strengthen your case.

4. Section-by-section guidance

Contact details

Include your name, general location, phone, professional email and relevant LinkedIn or portfolio link. Avoid unnecessary personal information unless local practice or the application specifically requires it.

Profile

Use three or four lines tailored to the opportunity. Identify your degree and stage, relevant experience or strengths, and the contribution or direction you seek.

Education

List current or most recent education first. Include expected graduation, strong results where useful, relevant modules, major projects, awards and dissertation topics.

Experience

Use reverse chronological order. Include internships, placements, part-time work, casual work, tutoring, family business contributions and significant responsibilities.

Projects

State the problem or brief, your individual contribution, the tools or methods used, and the output or outcome.

Leadership, activities and volunteering

Show commitment, initiative, collaboration, organisation, service and impact. Describe what you contributed.

Skills

Name specific tools and methods and indicate an honest level where helpful. Evidence important skills in experience bullets.

Interests

Use specific interests that add evidence or create a credible conversation point. Optional when space is limited.

References

Follow the application instructions. Otherwise, “Available on request” is sufficient or the section can be omitted.

5. ATS-friendly formatting

- Use standard headings such as Education, Experience, Projects and Skills.
- Use a simple, single-column layout when possible.
- Choose a common font such as Arial, Calibri, Aptos or Times New Roman.
- Keep body text approximately 10.5–12 points; 12-point is recommended.
- Avoid text boxes, icons, skill-rating bars, charts, graphics and complicated tables in the submitted CV.
- Keep essential information in the main document, not only in headers or footers.

- Use ordinary bullet points and clear job titles, organization names, dates and locations.
- Include relevant keywords from the job description naturally and truthfully.
- Use .docx when requested; otherwise, a text-based PDF is usually suitable.
- Use a professional filename such as Firstname_Lastname_CV.pdf.

Recommended length

Aim for one page when relevant experience is limited; two pages are acceptable when the content is strong and the market or application allows it.