

Preparing a CV and cover letter

When applying for a job, you'll be asked to submit a CV and a cover letter. These may look different from what you are used to.



Employer comment

“Take the opportunities to demonstrate your enthusiasm for your craft. Software developers can get involved in open source development, or volunteer to help with IT for community organisations. Someone who has done these kinds of activities will stand out compared to others who have not.”

Mark Easton, Managing Director, Nodero,
Palmerston North

Your CV

New Zealand employers like CVs to be short. Your CV should be two pages or shorter, and should include the most relevant education, skills and experience for the role you are applying for.

How do you decide what is most relevant?

Start by looking at what is mentioned in the job description. Job descriptions often outline essential and desirable skills and key competencies. Your CV should give evidence that you have as many of these as possible. The employer wants you to demonstrate how your skills and experience meet their needs.

Every time you apply for a job, edit your CV. Make sure that it shows the information about you that is most relevant to the job that you are applying for, and that this is easy for a reader to find.

A CV should include:

Your name and contact details – address, phone number and email address

- ▼ **Work experience** – Include the job title, company name and location, dates worked, and a summary of your work – include tasks or skills related to the job you are applying for. Where possible, write about your responsibilities and achievements in your roles. If you have a lot of previous work, include just the most recent and most relevant. List your most recent experience first. If you don't have previous work experience, you can include volunteer work here, or leave this section out and explain in your cover letter.
- ▼ **Education** – Include all recent education and relevant qualifications, including anything you are currently studying. Write the qualification, school name and location, and dates you studied. If you are still studying, write start date – current (e.g. February 2020 – current). Put this information in date order, starting with your most recent education. Don't include grades or specific papers on your CV, but you can put this in your cover letter. You don't usually need to include high school.
- ▼ **Referees** – It is usual to have two or three referees the employer can contact to ask about your work. Ask your referees for permission before including their contact details. It is okay to write Referees available upon request.

You may also like to add:

- ▼ **Personal statement** – You may like to include a Personal Statement or Objective – this is a sentence or two to explain who you are and the kind of work you are looking for. It goes under your contact details.
- ▼ **Skills** – Write about how you have demonstrated the skills listed in the job description. If you have gained these skills through work experience, include them with each role to keep your CV short.
- ▼ **Achievements** – Include any achievements that are relevant to the role but do not fit in the work or education sections – for example a community award.
- ▼ **Interests** – Only include interests that show skills the employer is looking for, such as teamwork.

You may need to make several different versions of your CV tailored to the specific roles you apply for. Always make sure your CV is accurate and does not have any mistakes.

‘New Zealand’ CVs do not usually include

- ▼ a photograph of you (put that on your LinkedIn profile)
- ▼ too much information
- ▼ your date of birth
- ▼ your passport number
- ▼ your marital status
- ▼ a declaration of truth and accuracy – New Zealand employers will check facts for themselves

There are some great tools online to help you write your CV and tailor it for different roles.

Careers NZ has lots of great advice on preparing a CV for work in New Zealand, and templates you can use.

- ▼ www.careers.govt.nz/job-hunting/new-to-new-zealand/tips-for-creating-a-nz-style-cv/
- ▼ www.careers.govt.nz/tools/cv-builder/

There are also companies that can help you to write your CV, for example:

- ▼ www.purposecareers.co.nz/

Examples

Careers NZ have examples of CVs that you can use for different situations. There are also examples of cover letters that you could base yours on.

- ▼ www.careers.govt.nz/job-hunting/cvs-and-cover-letters/templates/



International student experience

When Cindy applied for jobs, she would adjust her cover letter and CV to focus on what the employer wanted – “that’s something I learned – every job application I need to change the cover letter and the CV.”

Cindy also worked hard on her CV. She found a format that got it down to one page as she decided that employers who have many applications to look through might not want to have to read many long CVs.

Cindy Nuong Nguyen, Massey Graduate

Your cover letter

For each role, you will need to write a new cover letter. The purpose of a cover letter is to link your skills and experience to the job description and show your interest in the company and enthusiasm for the role. You do not need to repeat your whole CV in the cover letter.

International student experience

Simon thinks he sent out over 300 applications and CVs. He wishes he had known back then that New Zealand companies expect a personalised cover letter, rather than the one size fits all letter he was using.

A cover letter starts with your name and contact details, then the date. If you can, find out who will be reading your CV and address the letter to them.

In the letter, begin by saying which job you are applying for, and where you saw it advertised. Then say why you are interested in the role and what you will contribute to the company. Talk about your skills and experience and how they will help you to do a great job.

Finish up by saying how you look forward to a reply and thank them for considering your application. Sign off with Yours Sincerely and your name.

A cover letter is less formal than a CV and should be interesting to read. Try to sound both friendly and professional. It is really important that you check your cover letter for spelling mistakes. This letter is representing you and your work!

Careers NZ have some good advice on writing a cover letter, including templates to help you get started:

- ▼ www.careers.govt.nz/job-hunting/cvs-and-cover-letters/how-to-write-a-cover-letter/

“Research the company where you are looking to work. Sharmik’s application stood out because he had gone on the Armatec website and found the correct person to address his cover letter to. His CV and cover letter were carefully spell checked too. He was applying for a job that needed accuracy and attention to detail so it was important that he showed this by making sure his cover letter and CV were perfect.”



Dominic Goldsbrough. Armatec Environmental, New Plymouth.

Other people who can help you

Your training provider

Many providers have support people or advisors who can help you as you write your CV and cover letters. Check to find out.

Work Connect

Work Connect is a support programme for migrants and International student graduates that can help you to write your CV and cover letters, prepare for interviews and find work in New Zealand. You may be able to connect to a course online, or request that they run a course in your area.

▼ www.careers.govt.nz/work-connect/

Check before you send

It is a good idea to get an English speaker to check your CV and cover letter before you send it to an employer. This can help you be sure that you have the wording right. It can also help you to be sure the style of your CV and cover letter is OK.

Another option is to use English language review tools such as 'Grammarly'.

Finally, check the formatting of your CV and cover letter to make sure you have used consistent fonts, font sizes and headings, and the text isn't crowded on the page. Use a font that is easy to read – e.g. Arial or Calibri. Make sure your cover letter and CV look tidy, professional and inviting to read.

Sometimes you will be asked to fill out a form, or provide samples of your work as part of the job application process. Be sure to include everything that you are asked to include!