

## TIPS FOR A GOOD CV AND APPLICATIONS

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**Abstract:** *There is no recipe for the perfect CV, or letter of application. The format and the contents will depend, in most cases on the type of the job the candidate hopes to get and on his / her past experiences. If one wants his / her CV and letter of application to be considered, key words mainly **power verbs** should be used. They will give the impression that the applicant is an energetic, flexible, reliable person, in other words “the right person” for the job. We have identified a list of more than 100 such **power verbs** used in CVs and applications but, they only help and present the candidate at his /her best. Making use of these verbs does not automatically ensure success and getting the job, it only gets the candidate to the interview.*

**Key words:** *power, active, application, experience, consider, identify, candidate, succeed, achieve.*

It is rather rarely that someone finds a job after graduation. Job hunting can take several months, therefore it is important to stay motivated in one’s job, search and make the most of the opportunities. The immediate goal for someone who is looking for a job is usually to get a job interview with an employer; this could lead to getting hired. In order to obtain that job interview one must write / send an application (cover letter) and one’s CV (résumé) and send them to the company where one expects to be hired.

A CV is probably the most important tool during one’s job hunt, so getting it right is absolutely essential. It is also one of the few aspects of the job search that one is in control of one’s CV dictates whether or not one will be invited to interview so it must be able to sell both one’s skills and experience. But there is no recipe for the perfect CV or letter of application. The format and the contents will depend upon the job the candidate hopes to find and on his/her past experiences.

Also called a CV or vita, the curriculum vitae is, as its name suggests, an overview of one’s life accomplishments, most specifically those that are relevant to the academic realm. In the United States, the curriculum vitae is used almost exclusively when one is pursuing an academic job. The curriculum vitae is a living document, which will reflect the developments in a scholar’s/teacher’s career, and thus should be updated frequently.

Entry level resumes are usually limited to a page. CVs, however, often run to three or more pages. A more subtle, but equally important distinction is that whereas the goal of a resume is to construct a professional identity, the goal of a CV is to construct a scholarly identity. Thus, the candidate’s CV will need to reflect very specifically one’s abilities as a teacher, researcher, and publishing scholar within one’s discipline.

A CV should not only summarise your qualifications, skills and experience, but also reflect key aspects of your personality that will help you to stand out from all other applicants. Any specific achievements from your work or academic life should be highlighted as these too reflect your personality and can demonstrate to any future employer your potential to add value to the company.

Your curriculum vitae (sometimes called résumé) should set out all your personal details, together with your education, qualifications and working experience. A CV should include one’s name and contact information, an overview of one’s education, academic and related employment (especially teaching, editorial, or administrative experience), his/her research projects (including conference papers and publications). One should also include a reference list, either as part of the CV, or on a separate page. Also, if one has a personal file containing confidential references available, one should mention that on the CV as well.

If you think of a CV as an advertisement for yourself, you have to spend a great deal of time preparing it. Every word should be carefully chosen and crafted. Unlike a job interview – where it takes about four minutes to form a first impression – CV may be judged in a 10-second glance, so make your CV as strong as possible. Think about it, write it, rewrite it, and reshape it over a period of several days until you produce a document which markets you the way you want to be perceived. If you have spent years building a carrier, you are seriously short-changing yourself if you expect to distil all your professional experience within a couple of hours. Ideally, show your CV to friends in similar jobs or ask for advice from a professional.

A CV can either be targeted (directed to a specific employer) or untargeted. You may want to have several CVs on hand that highlight different aspects of your background for different employers. Whatever the case, the more you keep your audience in mind when you write your CV, the more successful you will be in winning interviews and getting jobs.

Nowadays many multinational companies are collecting CVs electronically – via e-mail, or the worldwide web. Follow company directions very carefully, as some organization will not accept CVs sent as an attachment to an e-mail message; however they will accept CVs sent as the e-mail message.

One of the most important things to remember when working on a curriculum vitae is that there is no standard format. There are different emphases in each discipline, and a good CV is one that emphasizes the points that are considered to be most important in ones discipline and conforms to standard conventions within one's discipline.

#### **Things to be avoided when writing one's CV**

Sometimes people make mistakes when writing a CV and here is a list of things that should be avoided:

*Too long and too "wordy"* – sum up all information, but make sure that it is both clear and concise;

*Disorganized layout* – make sure all information is presented logically in the CV;

*Spelling and grammatical errors* – it is a must to run a spell check through the finished CV;

*Including photographs* – this should be avoided, unless specifically requested;

*Use of first person* – in the CV may appear arrogant and is also too informal;

*Irrelevant information* – it is not advisable to include any details and waste the time of the reader;

*The use of jargon/slang – improper language* may be regarded as a sign of poor education;

*Outdated, general CVs- update your CV and tailor it according to the needs of the job you applied for.*

Application letters and cover letters

A letter of application for a job is essentially a sales letter in which the candidate is trying to sell himself/herself. Many people believe that application letters and cover letters are essentially the same. The letter of application is the letter in which the candidate markets one's skills, abilities, and knowledge, while a cover letter, on the other hand, is primarily a document of transmittal. It identifies an item being sent, the person to whom it is sent, and the reason why it is sent, and provides a permanent record of the transmittal for both the writer and the reader.

A **letter of application** for a job is essentially a sales letter. In such a letter you are trying to sell yourself. It is also called a **cover letter** because it accompanies other materials (your CV, work history, etc.). A letter of application should create enough interest to make the possible employer want to look at your application and invite you for a job interview.

Therefore your letter of application must:

- arouse interest in your qualifications;
- carry conviction by your past record and recommendations;
- bring about the action you want the prospective employer to take – to get you an interview and eventually the job.

#### **Rules for letters of application:**

1. Even if perfect, cannot compensate for a poor CV;
2. Should reveal your personality, writing ability, and interest in the job;

3. Should be straight forward and brief;
4. Must be completely free of errors;
5. Should not contain too much information about your experience and qualifications (it has already been mentioned in the CV).

### Style of application

Unless an advertisement specifies that you must apply in your own handwriting, your application should be typed. A well-displayed, one page letter, easy to read letter will attract attention at once and create a favourable first impression.

### Points of guidance

- Remember the purpose of your application is not to get the job, but to get an interview;
- Ensure your application looks attractive and neatly presented; make it stand out from the rest;
- Be brief – give all relevant information in as few words as possible;
- Write sincerely in a friendly tone, but avoid being familiar;
- Do not make exaggerated claims or sound boastful – simply show a proper appreciation of your abilities;
- If your main interest is the salary, do not state the figure you expect. Instead mention what you are earning now and wait for negotiations;
- Do not enclose originals of documents and recommendations – send copies with your application and take your originals along to the interview.

When writing an application letter, one should remember there is competition. The audience/reader is a professional who screens and hires job applicants—someone who may look through dozens or even hundreds of other applications. The immediate objective of the application letter and accompanying resume is to attract this person's attention and **power verbs** can help in this respect; the ultimate goal is obtaining an interview.

Strong and powerful verbs are helpful in determining if an applicant is qualified or not. In other words, these action words signal one's potential employer if the candidate is to interview or not.

Many companies are using computers to scan CVs and resumes sent to their offices, so including **power verbs** would be advisable. These verbs will suggest that you are energetic, flexible, reliable, competent, trained person.

Mention should also be made concerning Austin's theory of **speech acts**, which he introduced in *How to Do Things with Words* (1962). The author speaks about *locutionary acts* (saying something with a certain meaning in traditional sense); *illocutionary acts* (the performance of an act in saying something); and *perlocutionary acts* (speech acts that have an effect on the feelings, thoughts or actions on either the speaker or the listener). Unlike locutionary acts, perlocutionary acts are external to the performance.

*Perlocutionary act* is a term used in speech act theory to designate an utterance that has an effect upon the actions, thoughts, or feelings of the listener, e.g. convincing, alarming, insulting, boring. Here are some examples of perlocutionary acts: Persuading; Convincing; Scaring; Insulting.

Starting from Dixon (1991), and considering the theory of speech acts, especially the perlocutionary effect of some verbs, we have attempted a classification of the **strong verbs** which may be used in CVs, resumes and letters of application, so as to make these documents as powerful as possible. In his book, *A New Approach to English Grammar on Semantic Principles (1991: 94 – 105)*, Dixon speaks about the following verb types:

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|---|---|
| <b>Primary A</b> verb types: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Motion and rest</li> <li>- Affect</li> <li>- Giving</li> <li>- Corporeal</li> <li>- Others</li> </ul> | <b>Primary B</b> verb types: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attention</li> <li>- Deciding</li> <li>- Thinking</li> <li>- Speaking</li> <li>- Liking</li> <li>- Annoying</li> <li>- Others.</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

### Power Verbs in CVs and application letters

After identifying more than 100 **power verbs** used in CVs, resumes and letters of application, we have also tried to group these verbs according to their meaning.

Verb types frequently met in CVs and applications:

- ✓ **The achieving type** (to succeed in doing or gaining something, usually with effort) – *attain, get, realize, accomplish, reach, complete, perform, acquire*;  
e.g. “I had 20 minutes to *complete* the form.”
- ✓ **The action type** (to do or perform something) – *act, activate, follow, move, perform, start, initiate, stimulate, set out, trigger, make active*;  
e.g. “The candidate *performed* the difficult task.”
- ✓ **The adapting type** (to become, or make somebody or something become, used to a new environment or different conditions) – *adjust, accommodate, conform, change, reconcile, modify, amend, fit*;  
e.g. “I *modified* this letter to make it more interesting.”
- ✓ **The anticipating type** (to look forward to something) – *expect, foresee, forestall, await, predict, think likely*;  
e.g. “I am still *awaiting* for an answer.”
- ✓ **The attention type** (to be mentally focused, to pay interest, to notice) – *notice, discover, consider, focus, mind, concentrate*;  
e.g. “The candidate *focused* on his skills.”
- ✓ **The challenging type** (to test somebody's abilities) – *confront, provoke, stimulate, question, face, oppose, dare*;  
e.g. “I was *confronted* with a very difficult situation.”
- ✓ **The competition type** (to try to win or do better than others) – *race, win, fight, struggle, participate, contest*;  
e.g. “I will *fight* to win this contest.”
- ✓ **The deciding type** (to bring to a decision, persuade or convince) – *allocate, alter, analyze, approve, arrange, assign, validate, confirm, choose, settle on, determine*;  
e.g. “The Board *approved* my request.”
- ✓ **The enhancing type** (to improve or add to the strength, worth, or other quality of something) – *augment, improve, develop, increase, boost, add to, upgrade*;  
e.g. “My achievements *increased* my self-esteem.”
- ✓ **The exceeding type** (to surpass, be superior to, excel) – *surpass, overdue, beat, transcend, excel, outdo*;  
e.g. “He *excels* all other economists of his days.”
- ✓ **The giving type** (to present voluntarily or to transfer possession to another in exchange for something) – *offer, present, furnish, grant, confer, assign, donate, give, sell, deliver, present, transfer, give away*;  
e.g. “I was conferred an honorary Doctor of Economics degree.”

The reflecting type (to reproduce, to show) – *consider, realize, show, mirror, imitate, replicate, echo, return, reveal, indicate, display, exhibit*;

e.g. “I indicated my disapproval but did not go into details.”

- ✓ **The speaking type** (to communicate thoughts, opinions, or feelings by uttering with the voice) – *address, affirm, indicate, state, show, reflect, communicate;*  
e.g. “I *stated* my position on the case.”
- ✓ **The stimulating type** (to encourage something e.g. an activity so that it will begin, increase, or develop) – *inspire, encourage, motivate, incite, animate, provoke, promote, speed, increase, accelerate;*  
e.g. “I *was promoted* after years of hard work.”
- ✓ **The verifying type** (to check by examination, investigation, or comparison) – *evaluate, confirm, prove, validate, attest to, assess, check, verify, corroborate;*  
e.g. “I *have to check* the results before printing them.”

This is only an attempt to classify and group the **power verbs** used in CVs and applications according to their meaning; it can be improved or developed as it is not an exhaustive list. The list of verbs we have considered as being **power verbs** for CVs, resumes, and applications is the following:

<b>A</b>			
abbreviated	delivered	invented	reinforced
absolved	demonstrated	inventoried	reiterated
absorbed	derived	invested	related
accelerated	described	investigated	released
accentuated	designated	invigorated	relied
accommodated	designed	invited	relieved
accomplished	detailed	involved	remained
accounted	detected	issued	rendered
accumulated	for determined		reorganized
achieved	developed	<b>J</b>	repaired
acquired	devised	joined	replaced
acted	diagnosed	judged	replied
adapted	differentiated	justified	reported
adopted	diffused		represented
added	directed	<b>L</b>	requested
addressed	discovered	launched	researched
adjusted	discussed	learned	resolved
administered	dispatched	lectured	responded
advanced	dispensed	led	restructured
advertised	displayed	licensed	retained
advised	disposed	lifted	retrieved
advocated	disproved	limited	returned
affirmed	disseminated	linked	reversed
alleviated	dissolved	liquidated	reviewed
allocated	distinguished	listened	revised
allotted	distributed	litigated	revitalized
amended	diversified	loaded	revolutionized
analyzed	diverted	located	rewarded
answered	divided		risked
anticipated	documented	<b>M</b>	
applied	drafted	made	<b>S</b>
appointed	dramatized	maintained	safeguarded
	drew	managed	saved
		up	

appraised	drove	mandated	scanned
approached		maneuvered	scheduled
appropriated	<b>E</b>	manipulated	screened
approved	earned	manufactured	sculptured
arranged	eased	mapped	searched
articulated	economized	marked	secured
ascertained	edited	marketed	seized
assembled	educated	mastered	selected
assessed	elaborated	maximized	sent
assigned	elected	measured	separated
assimilated	elevated	mediated	sequenced
assisted	eliminated	memorized	served
assured	embraced	mentored	serviced
attained	emphasized	merged	set
attended	empowered	merited	settled
audited	enabled	met	shaped
augmented	encouraged	minimized	shared
authored	enforced	mobilized	sharpened
authorized	engaged	modeled	shipped
avoided	engineered	moderated	shortened
awarded	enhanced	modified	showed
	enlisted	molded	signed
<b>B</b>	enriched	monitored	simplified
balanced	enrolled	monopolized	simulated
began	ensured	motivated	sketched
benchmarked	entered	moved	smoothed
benefited	entertained	multiplied	solicited
bid	equipped		sold
billed	established	<b>N</b>	solved
blended	estimated	named	sorted
blocked	evaluated	narrated	sourced
boosted	examined	navigated	sparked
bought	exceeded	negotiated	specialized
branded	executed	netted	specified
bridged	exercised	neutralized	speculated
broadened	exhibited	nominated	spent
brought	expanded	normalized	spoke
budgeted	experienced	notified	sponsored
built	experimented	nurtured	standardized
	explained	<b>O</b>	started
<b>C</b>	explored	observed	steered
calculated	expressed	obtained	stimulated
calibrated	extended	offered	stretched
capitalized	extracted	officiated	structured
cared		offset	studied
carried	for	opened	submitted
carved	<b>F</b>	operated	succeeded
categorized	fabricated	operated	suggested
catalogued	facilitated	optimized	summarized
	factored		

up

caught	familiarized	orchestrated	supervised
cautioned	fashioned	ordered	supplied
certified	filed	organized	supported
chaired	filled	oriented	surpassed
challenged	finalized	originated	symbolized
changed	financed	outlined	synthesized
charged	finished	overcame	systemized
charted	fixed	oversaw	
checked	focused	owned	<b>T</b>
chose	followed		tackled
cited	forecasted	<b>P</b>	talked
clarified	formalized	packaged	targeted
classified	formed	packed	tasted
cleaned	formulated	participated	taught
cleared	fortified	partnered	teamed
closed	forwarded	passed	tempered
coached	fought	penetrated	terminated
collaborated	found	perceived	tested
collected	founded	perfected	testified
combined	framed	performed	tied
commanded	fulfilled	persuaded	took
commended	functioned	as photographed	totaled
commenced	funded	pinpointed	traced
commissioned	furnished	pioneered	tracked
communicated	furthered	placed	trained
compared		planned	transcribed
compiled	<b>G</b>	played	transformed
completed	gained	praised	translated
complied	gathered	predicted	transmitted
composed	gauged	prepared	traveled
compounded	gave	prescribed	treated
computed	generated	presented	tripled
conceived	governed	preserved	turned
concentrated	graduated	prevailed	tutored
conceptualized	grasped	prevented	typed
condensed	greeted	printed	
conducted	grew	prioritized	<b>U</b>
conferred	grouped	processed	uncovered
configured	guaranteed	procured	underlined
confirmed	guided	produced	underscored
confronted		programmed	unified
connected	<b>H</b>	progressed	united
conserved	halted	projected	updated
considered	handled	promoted	upgraded
consolidated	headed	proposed	upheld
constructed	heightened	protected	urged
consulted	held	proved	used
contacted	helped	provided	utilized
continued	hired	publicized	

contracted contributed controlled converted conveyed convinced cooperated coordinated copied corrected corresponded counseled created cultivated customized cut	hosted  <b>I</b> identified illustrated implemented imported improved improvised incited included incorporated increased indicated individualized induced influenced informed initiated innovated inspected inspired installed instituted instructed insured integrated intensified interacted interpreted interviewed	purchased pursued  <b>Q</b> qualified quantified queried questioned quoted  <b>R</b> raised rallied ranked rated reached read realigned realized rearranged reasoned rebuilt received recognized recommended reconciled reconstructed recorded recovered recruited rectified redesigned redirected reduced referred registered regulated	<b>Y</b> validated valued verbalized verified viewed visualized voiced volunteered  <b>W</b> weighed widened withstood won worked wove wrote  <b>Y</b> yielded
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### Conclusions

This list of power verbs, or action verbs will help the candidate sell himself/herself better. Communication is powerful if the words s/he uses to communicate are powerful. These power verbs or action verbs stand out as they convey activity.

In business, communication counts. Clear and well structured documents can achieve better results, with greater understanding, speed and accuracy. The words the applicant uses and the way they are presented send important signals about him/her. So, it is essential to make sure the words are properly used, but it does not automatically ensure success. A good CV and a good letter of application only help the candidate to obtain an interview, not the job. A successful interview is the key to success.



**Brief biography:**

Iulia PARA is a PhD Lecturer at the West University of Timisoara, Romania, at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Department of Marketing and International Relations. She has graduated from a Master in British and American Studies, and Doctoral Studies in Applied Linguistics – Anglicisms in the Romanian Business Vocabulary. She teaches courses of Intercultural Studies, Business English, and Business Correspondence.

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