

Material Imprimible

Curso de Redacción de CV y cartas de presentación y entrevistas laborales

Módulo 3

Contenidos:

- overcoming obstacles
- targeting CVs and cover letters
- CV sections to tailor
- tailoring cover letters
- assessing and customizing your skills
- revising
- editing
- proofreading
- grammar aspects to focus on
- polishing techniques

Overcoming obstacles: Unfavourable or disadvantageous situations

Recent graduate with little or no experience

I'd like you to think of those situations that may be unfavourable or disadvantageous to job seekers when they enter the labour market or when they want to change jobs. I

propose that we analyse together different ways of overcoming those obstacles.

There are certain situations that, in general, we consider disadvantageous such as being a recent graduate with limited or no formal working experience. However, before writing the CV or cover letter, you can concentrate on other aspects like:

- temporary and part-time jobs,
- internships,
- entrepreneurial and volunteer work.

The challenge is to figure out how the experience you have can be used in the job you are looking for. If you only have student jobs, make the most of them by dividing your jobs into functions. Don't say that you have done administrative work. Explain the specific tasks you have performed; for example, telephone reception, written communication, social media content creation, etc. Make sure to describe each of them concentrating on your accomplishments and their results. If after an in-depth analysis of your student jobs, there is nothing worth mentioning, then discuss your degree first along with the relevant knowledge you have acquired and the transferable skills that you developed at university and that will help you in the job. Include awards and honours, research projects and technical and soft skills that reveal abilities and accomplishments that support your application. You can add pertinent extra-curricular studies or activities to help reinforce your skills.

The body of the letter

Next, we'll see how an applicant who has these characteristics can overcome this disadvantage and turn it to his or her advantage. The second paragraph of the body of the letter can be the place to refer to relevant skills and accomplishments while the third

one can be used to explain why the candidate is a good fit. Let's see an example of the third paragraph in which a recruiter is looking for a candidate with leadership and management skills.

- "During my last semester at ABC University, I led a group of five students who gathered photographs of our local library and then displayed them to mark its thirtieth anniversary. I was in charge of organizing and running meetings with the library head, contacting photographers and editing the final slide show. During this project, I learned to collaborate with others and to work as a team in order to achieve a common goal."

As the example shows, this candidate shared a story that emphasizes his leadership and management skills when he had to lead and orchestrate a university project.

However, before writing the letter, make sure you go through the job advertisement and highlight keywords to incorporate them in your letter. Also surf the company site and blog and check out the company presence on social media to customize your letter and show the recruiter that you can help the company meet its challenges.

Middle-aged applicants

It's time for us to see another example in which the candidate is in a fix in relation to the labour market. Looking for a job in your fifties and beyond poses some challenges. While you have lots of industry experience, some employers may wonder whether you have up-to-date skills or whether you may be able to work for a boss who is younger than you. There are ways you can age-proof your application. Let's look at some of them:

- Focus on flexibility, adaptability and willingness to learn
- Include marketable skills such as leadership and interpersonal skills
- Stress your knowledge of current technology as this is a point that concerns hiring managers
- Describe how your qualifications, skills and experience can help a company reach its goals.

- Don't sum up your entire work history. Just focus on experience relevant to the advertised job.
- Don't include years of experience in your cover letter. Saying that you have 30 years of experience may go against your application.
- Don't use old-fashioned CV or cover letter formats and avoid outdated language.

Overqualified candidates

You may have different reasons for accepting a job you are overqualified for, for example, because of a shortage of jobs or a desire to change careers. When it comes to overqualified candidates or those with too much experience, what usually concerns hiring managers is whether candidates will quit their job when something better comes along. You should try to craft the cover letter and CV in such a way that counters the feeling that you would be miserable or bored in the position or that you will resign soon. What can you do then?

- Highlight similar jobs you have had stressing why you found those jobs fulfilling. This will show that you won't necessarily jump ship and move on to a more interesting job in the near future.
- Concentrate on your skills rather than your experience.
- Indicate that you will need less time to deliver. Therefore, the employer can expect results soon.
- Clearly explain why you want that job and not any other job.
- Mention that you are willing to share your expertise with less experienced colleagues. Your mentoring abilities can be a great asset especially at start-up firms.
- Downplay titles and degrees. Just list your lower degrees.
- Focus on the employer's needs and how you can address their needs.

Why don't we look at an example of a cover letter for an overqualified candidate? This applicant's current role is executive assistant but is willing to work as an administrative assistant.

"I was excited to read your advertisement for an administrative assistant position, on your website and I would like to apply for the job. I have always admired the educational games you produce and I would be glad if I could work for a company like ABC that has striven to provide high quality products for children for 30 years.

I have a long history of organizing and scheduling meetings, making travel arrangements and I am familiar with project management software. Moreover, my commitment to working as a team and my interpersonal skills will allow me to contribute to the design and development team in support of products I love.

My skills combined with my passion for your products make me an ideal candidate for the position. I have attached my CV and I am available to answer any questions you have. Thank you for your time."

Let's zero in on the different parts. The first paragraph says:

- "I was excited to read your advertisement for an administrative assistant position, on your website and I would like to apply for the job. I have always admired the educational games you produce and I would be glad if I could work for a company like ABC that has striven to provide high quality products for children for 30 years."

The interest expressed in the products and company seems genuine not only because of the use of the word "excited" but also because the applicant shares that they are keen on the products this company makes. Besides, stating that ABC has been in the market for 30 years reveals that the candidate knows about their prospective employer.

Let's direct our attention to the second paragraph.

- "I have a long history of organizing and scheduling meetings, making travel arrangements and I am familiar with project management software. Moreover, my commitment to working as a team and my interpersonal

skills will allow me to contribute to the design and development team in support of products I love.”

The candidate chooses to focus on his hard and soft skills instead of his experience as an executive assistant. Although this is a brief example, it exemplifies the approach to follow.

Too long in the same position

I'd like us to reflect on a new situation that also implies the need to overcome obstacles. If you have worked in the same position for years and you are worried that hiring managers will perceive you as unambitious or unwilling to learn or acquire new skills, you can apply the following strategies:

- In your CV divide your job in different levels and describe the corresponding tasks you carried out in those levels
- Expand on the skills you have developed along those years
- Diminish the perception that you are uninterested in learning by describing learning endeavours.
- Explain why you want to make a change after so long. You may justify your change like this: “Although I currently hold a position as product manager at ABC Company, at this point in my career, I am eager to apply my skills in a new field and I am looking for fresh challenges. My skills will transfer smoothly as I have team spirit and ability to influence cross-functional teams”.

Job-hopping

It's time for us to mull over this situation. If you have changed jobs quite frequently, hiring managers may consider you a job hopper who can't hold a job and be committed to a company. What strategies can you use to overcome this negative perception?

- Indicate that you changed jobs to develop your skills or broaden your experience, or anything positive, but not simply for a higher salary.

Beware of filling your cover letter with explanations of why you changed jobs. A short explanation will do.

- Explain what you want in your next role and why the advertised position satisfies your desires. An explanation like this will do: “Although I have changed jobs more than I would have liked in the past few years, I am seeking a position where I can...” and then give strong reasons for applying for that job.
- Change the angle and concentrate on the positive aspects of your changes. To illustrate, refer to your diversified background and adaptability to multiple work environments.
- Draw the attention to your skills and achievements rather than your work experience.
- Focus only on your experience that is relevant to the job you want to apply for. In your CV you can include a heading called "Relevant Work Experience" and the other jobs may fall into an "Additional Work Experience" heading.

Making a career change

If you are seeking a position in a different industry or field, your cover letter should be a platform to sell yourself as a candidate, emphasize your passion and explain the reasons behind the desired change. What about looking at some examples?

- “Over the last seven years, I have worked at various jobs in the administration sector, and it was not until I joined a call centre that I realized that I wanted to pursue a career in customer service.”
- “Although I have been in sales for thirteen years, I have realized that does not satisfy my creative side. Thus, I am eager to join ABC Ltd., a company whose values and innovative culture connect with my personal and professional ones.”

Please, take into account the following strategies:

- Make sure you highlight your transferable skills that are vital for any job. You may also have hard skills that you can transfer to a new industry or field. Relate them to a summary of how you would also add value in the new position.
- Tell the story behind your career change and how you discovered your passion. Express your enthusiasm for your new path and for the new company.
- Explain why you are looking for a career transition.
- Avoid bad-mouthing your previous employer or job and indicate the aspects you liked about your previous field and connect them to your future career.

Employment gaps

An employment gap is a period of time you are out of work and longer than a typical job search. The gap can be:

- voluntary for many reasons including time off to travel, to improve your skillset or to raise your children.
- Involuntary gaps happen when you didn't choose to take time off and, among other reasons, we can mention lay-offs, dismissals and health issues.

Voluntary employment gaps

Explaining employment gaps can be intimidating but there are some ways of getting around this situation:

- Be direct about the gap and briefly explain it in the second paragraph of the body of the cover letter once you have described how your previous achievements, qualifications and skills set you apart as a suitable candidate. Your purpose is to convince the recruiter that the gap has not

undermined your ability to do the job. In your CV list years rather than months.

- Clarify why you think this is the right position for you to return to work.
- Provide examples of how you've kept your skills up-dated during your career break. Include volunteer work, freelance project or any other events that have helped you sharpen your skills.

Now, what about looking at an example of a voluntary gap first?

- "After taking a career break to raise my children, I am eager to resume my career. I have kept abreast of industry trends and sharpened by technical skills by attending conferences and workshops organized by Graphic Artists Guild, as shown in my attached CV. Moreover, I have honed my organizational and interpersonal skills through my involvement in a non-profit organization called ABC."

In the cover letter you should reassure hiring managers that you are ready and able to return to the workforce. One of your advantages in comparison with other candidates is your immediate availability to start work. Instead of leaving up to the recruiter to guess the reason behind your employment gap, be open about it but succinct. Please, take into consideration the following advice:

- Clearly explain why now is the right time for you to start your career again.
- Stress the transferable skills that you have developed during your break. For example, if you took time out of your career to go travelling, probably you have enhanced your communication skills and learned about different cultures.
- Highlight related activities such as volunteer work, continuing education, freelance projects and professional memberships.

- Talk about your achievements and the work you did before the break and how they relate to your desired position.

Involuntary employment gaps

Now, let's move on to an example of an involuntary gap.

- "As you may have read, ABC Company dissolved its operations in the region and my position was eliminated. My sales volume consistently exceeded the company's goals and now I am looking forward to repeating my success record for a company like yours where my communication and persuasion skills can be applied."

Please, follow these recommendations to craft your CV and cover letter:

- If you were laid off, you can mention it in your cover letter. Remember that it is better to call out the gap, rather than wait for the recruiter to realize there's one and ask about it.
- If you were fired, you should neither include that information in your CV or cover letter nor hide the fact because if discovered, you will have jeopardised your chances of getting a job.
- Rather than focusing on why you were dismissed, concentrate on your aspirations for the future, what you have learned or accomplished while in transition and wait until the interview to explain what happened.

Connectors

Now, please devote your full attention to the following point as it can be extremely useful. "Because", "since", "as", "because of", "due to" and "owing to" are all used to explain the reason for something. Taking into account that it may be necessary to explain certain situations when job hunting, it is a must to know how to use those words properly from a grammar perspective.

- "Because", "since" and "as" are followed by a subject and then a verb. "As" and "since" are more formal than because. Let's see an example:

- “As the company is undergoing an organizational restructuring, my position will be eliminated at the end of this month.”
- “Because of”, “due to” and “owing to” are followed by a noun or noun phrase. The last two are more formal than "because of". Why don't we have a look at an example?
 - “Due to a merger, my position was eliminated.”

If a clause starts with any of these six connectors, a comma should be included to separate that clause from the rest of the sentence.

Targeted CVs

We all have an all-purpose or generic CV that saves us time as we don't need to write a different CV for each application. However, this format is on the way out and has been replaced by the targeted CV, a customized CV prepared for a specific application. It will definitely take more time to write a targeted CV but as every job is unique, your CV should focus on the requirements for each specific role. Most targeted CVs start with a generic CV as a foundation and then it is necessary to update and customize that core CV to match the desired position.

The following tips will help you avoid rewriting your entire CV every time you send an application and speed up the writing process

- Write a master CV
- Include your experience, qualifications and skills that could be used as your working model. If your master CV is properly written, it will take a few changes to draft a targeted CV.
- Add keywords: Keywords are vital in a targeted CV as they will help you beat applicant tracking systems and showcase you as a solid applicant.
- Customize your CV

Use the job ad to customize each section. Ask yourself the following questions:

- what is the employer looking for?
- what specific skills or experience does the employer require?

- how can I meet the employer's needs?

Now, go back to your CV and tailor it to the position

The question then is how can we make sure that our CV really targets a specific job? Let's see how we can customize it.

- Identify what is really important to the employer
- In the job description you should look for the responsibilities that are mentioned first as they are the most important ones and the ones you should address first. Check what qualifications and requirements are asked for. Remember your CV should mirror the job opening closely.
- Match your CV to the job description. If a theme like organization or teamwork is repeated in the ad, cater for it at once. In a CV, the employment history is one of the first sections hiring managers turn their attention to, so it's one of the most important parts to tailor.
- Include compelling evidence. Evidence should come in the form of facts, figures and examples.
- Review and edit. Focus on relevant details and remove any unnecessary information. If you are in two minds about removing certain information, ask yourself if the recruiter will be confused by that information or if it will help provide a clearer picture of the kind of candidate you are.

Although your entire CV should be customized, you should turn the spotlight on the following sections of your CV and make sure they are adapted to meet the exact requirements for your desired position.

- In your personal statement or summary you should highlight your unique selling points and state your accomplishments and how these will help you succeed in the job you are applying for. How can you do that? By re-reading the job ad and making sure your statement answers the following questions: who is the employer looking for and what does the employer

want that person to bring to the table? If the job has specific title, refer to it. For example: “Motivated sales executive who consistently meets KPIs”.

- Just as you need to tailor your resume for every organisation and job you apply for, your career objective should differ for every application. Read the job description again, keeping your eyes open for key phrases and words to include in your CV.
- Your educational background showcases your theoretical framework. Always be specific. If the company is looking for a marketing graduate, your marketing degree should prevail over other higher but non-related degrees.
- Regarding work experience and skills, we’ll discuss them at length later.

Tailoring your work experience

There are different ways to tailor the work experience section, which should include responsibilities and achievements. For each position list around three to five bullet points outlining our responsibilities. The challenge is to highlight the ones that are most similar to the job you want. To make your drafting more effective start the description with an action verb and include a quantified point.

Let’s switch to an example for a retail cashier.

- First, the wrong way to describe responsibilities: “Helped customers at the checkout”. As you can see, this description is neither specific nor impactful.
- Now, an improved version of the same responsibility: “Assisted customers at the checkout line while managing the cash register and POS software”. If the recruiter is looking for someone with interpersonal skills, instead of indicating that you have them, give evidence of them by writing that you coached staff to improve call handling.

What if you have never been in the position you are looking for? Then, emphasize relevant job duties you have had in past unrelated jobs. To illustrate, let’s say that you

want to apply for a position as an operations manager but you have never had a managerial position before. Then, consider the managerial responsibilities you have had in your present position as team leader. If your current position involves running meetings and overseeing 10 operators' work, write those duties first because they indicate that you have what it takes to be a manager and they should be included in your CV.

Imagine that a company is searching for a tourist guide that will have the following responsibilities:

- plan tours
- welcome and accompany tourists
- offer sightseeing advice
- give presentations
- liaise with hotels and guests

In the example we can see in the image, the candidate, who worked for Tours Ltd. as a tourist guide, listed the following responsibilities in his CV:

- developed tour programming to enhance tourists' experience
- greeted and led groups of 30+ people around the city
- provided significant information of local destinations and attractions to tourists
- prepared and gave presentations to both international and local tourists

Networked with representatives of hotels, airlines, and tourist attractions to reach better deals for customers. It's noticeable that this candidate not only tailored his experience to the responsibilities enumerated in the job advert in mind but also elaborated on them, thus, increasing his chances of landing his dream job. When customizing our CV, we shouldn't write every task we have performed but those that are relevant to the position we are after.

In regard to achievements, we should list specific ones that will bring value to the company. If possible, use numbers to prove how skilled you are and ask yourself: "what does this accomplishment say about me and how does it align to what the company is

looking for?”. Especially if you are changing careers, make sure your achievements are related to the new field or area you are targeting. When possible, each achievement should include:

- timeframe, for example, “Collected £20,000 in unpaid debt in four months”. Think about the timeframe you work on different tasks.
- scale, for example, “Executed an implementation project with a \$4m budget”. Make sure you concentrate on how many people you oversaw or worked with, what budget you handled or how many accounts you managed, just to illustrate.
- results, for example, “Used Google Analytics and implemented new scripts that raised performance by 40%”. The results of your actions are of utmost importance.

How to assess your skills

In order to customize our CV and cover letter, we must be able to assess our skills. How do we do an objective self-assessment of our skills? We can take the following steps:

- Step 1: Unpack the skills package: In order to demonstrate that you have a certain skill you need to know what that skills involves. Write down the hard and soft skills necessary to your job effectively and categorize them. Then, under each category list the behaviours that someone must observe to demonstrate those skills. For example, a good team player embraces collaboration, is flexible and reliable, respects and supports others and is committed to their team. An excellent team player would observe all these behaviours and more while a bad one would hardly have any of those behaviours. Now, rank your skills starting with the strongest ones.
- Step 2: Relate skills to your job responsibilities. Each job responsibility requires several skills to be complied with. For example, a supervisor oversees the work performed by others and that requires organizational

skills but also communication skills to interact with his subordinates. Now it is time to think about your responsibilities and the skills you need to perform them successfully.

- Step 3: List your achievements. Make a list of your work and personal achievements and discover which skills you used to attain them and how you used those skills.
- Step 4: Go over your latest performance appraisals. How have managers evaluated your performance? Pay attention to both strengths and weaknesses. Have you done anything to improve your gaps?
- Step 5: Request feedback. Have a chat with your former bosses, colleagues and business contacts and request feedback of your skills. Find out what they think you do well and if there are any areas you need to develop. In both cases, ask for specific examples. Although the feedback you will receive will come from different perspectives, you will be able to identify some common skills.
- Step 6: Check out job postings. Now that you have a list of your skills and achievements, look for job postings and identify the skills companies in your industry are looking for. Don't read less than ten job advertisements. Which of those skills overlap with yours? This will let you know which skills you should stress in your CV and cover letter and if there are any gaps you need to fill in.

At the end of this analysis, you will have a clearer picture of what you have to offer potential employers.

How to customize your skills

When tailoring your CV, for each skill the employer is looking for, think of a situation that demonstrates your ability. What about looking at some practical examples?

- If the company is seeking a good communicator, think of a time when you had to use your oral or written communication skills to reach an objective.

For example: "Conveyed information to clients in a clear way resulting in a five-star service rating".

- If the company is looking for an innovative employee, recall a situation in which you came up with a fresh idea. For example: "Suggested a new store layout that increased visibility of products and, thus, raised sales performance".
- If the company wants a person with problem solving skills, remember problems you encountered and what effective solutions you arrived at. For example: "Designed a classroom management plan to address student demotivation decreasing dropout rates".
- If the company needs an adaptable person, try to remember a time when you stayed calm despite roadblocks or when you were able to adapt to changing circumstances. For example: "Balanced transition from software A to software B while keeping workload in check"

Customizing cover letters

So far, we have covered different aspects that involve customizing a CV. Now it's time for us to focus on customizing cover letters. Job advertisements may have more or fewer sections, which, in turn, may take different names, but what it's expected to find is a list of the responsibilities involved in the role and desired qualifications. First, we'll have a look at a typical job ad for a corporate trainer starting with the responsibilities of the role:

- identify company's training needs
- design and conduct training programs
- prepare training materials
- monitor employees' performance and response to training

This section describes what you would do. When writing the cover letter, you should look for matches in your experience.

Let's move on to the requirements for the position:

- outstanding communication, presentation and interpersonal skills
- proven experience as corporate trainer
- solid knowledge of effective corporate training methods and tools
- excellent time management and organizational abilities

This section can also be called "qualifications" or "experience" and it indicates the accomplishments and skills a candidate should have. Mind you, in the cover letter you need to explain how you fulfil these requirements. Some ads also include an "About us" section that provides information about the company and a "Benefits" section that may shed some light on the company culture and values.

Now, I'd like to dissect the following generic cover letter, which means, one that has not been tailored to an ad. Let's see what it is about.

- "I am writing in response to your advertisement for a corporate training position. I have four years of experience as trainer and I would like to help you reach your goals.

I have worked for four years as a trainer at ABC Company, where I designed training manuals and evaluated the performance of trainees. Also, I have solid interpersonal skills.

I am sure I can do the same for your company and be a great asset for your organization."

Now, let's break it down.

- "I am writing in response to your advertisement for a corporate training position. I have four years of experience as trainer and I would like to help you reach your goals." The opening paragraph fails to get the recruiter hooked because it is not catchy. What goals will the applicant help the employer reach? It's wise to familiarize yourself with your target company in order to pinpoint what specific kind of help you can provide.

Let's go to the second paragraph:

- "I have worked for four years as a trainer at ABC Company, where I designed training manuals and evaluated the performance of trainees.

Also, I have solid interpersonal skills.” When depicting facets of your experience, you should start with the points listed in the job ad. Offer statistics and evidence to illustrate the impact your work and soft skills have had on your employers' organizations. This applicant does none of this.

Now let's turn our attention to the last paragraph.

- “I am sure I can do the same for your company and be a great asset for your organization.” What is “the same”? This candidate also fails to explain why he would enjoy working for that firm.

Their needs and my contributions

How can we make sure we address everything the company indicates in the job ad?

Before writing a draft, make a table with two columns, where the first one will enumerate what the company is looking for and the second will show what I can offer.

To exemplify, I'll pick two responsibilities and one requirement from the corporate trainer job ad.

- The company is seeking someone who can identify company training needs, so the candidate exemplifies his ability by saying: “In my present position, I have collaborated with managers and subject matter experts to identify training needs and areas of opportunity for continuous improvement.”
- The company wants a person who is able to design and conduct training programs and the candidate showcases metrics and results by writing: “I have designed and conducted virtual and field training to over 100 internal and external partners, which resulted in a 50% drop in backlog of queries.”
- The company needs a trainer with outstanding communication, presentation and interpersonal skills. Rather than listing those skills, the candidate offers proof of them by writing: “My ability to communicate

and collaborate with other areas to ensure policies and procedures are followed correlates with my presentation skills proven by 100 hours of effectively delivering training courses.”

When you review the job ad, take into account that the most important items are usually listed at the top and that if some requirements are repeated using different words, they are a must.

Polishing CVs and cover letters

We may think that once our first draft is over, the work is complete, but don't make a toast yet. We still need to take some measures to ensure that our writing is clear and error-free. the next steps of the writing process involve:

- revising,
- editing and
- proofreading.

Although the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, each step serves a different purpose.

- Revising consists of looking at the “big picture”, that is, the document and its content as a whole and evaluating arguments, support, focus and organization. It's about re-approaching your work and deciding whether there is still room for improvement. This step may involve moving or removing paragraphs, removing weak arguments, adding supporting evidence, re-writing sentences and adding and taking words away.
- At the end of the day, it is about asking whether you have properly catered for the company's needs and requirements and whether you have clearly justified your claim that you are the best match for the position.
- Editing is about improving style, transitions, consistency and paragraph unity. It involves checking whether you have used transitional words, whether long-winded sentences can be made shorter and more concise, if

the sentences connect one another and flow and if a word or phrase has been used too many times.

- Proofreading, which is the last stage, involves concentrating on surface errors such as grammar, spelling, punctuation and format.

Revising

Next, we'll turn the spotlight on the revision process. I'd like to share with you some of the questions we ask may ourselves when we revise our CV or cover letter.

- Is the CV or cover letter tailored to the company and position?
- Have I chosen strong arguments and relevant evidence to support my application?
- Have I shown knowledge of and interest in the company's business, products, services, goals, mission and values?
- Does each paragraph have a clear purpose and relate to the previous and next paragraph?
- Have I used forceful words and keywords? If you are sending a spontaneous application, there will be no ad to refer to for keywords, so you will have to look for job descriptions of the position you are interested in.
- Are there any unnecessary details?
- Have I used the appropriate tone and language throughout the text?
- To recap, in this stage you concentrate on re-evaluating and rethinking arguments, supporting evidence and organization. You may need to rewrite the opening paragraph and the closing one to reflect the changes you have made.

Editing

Let's look at things from a different angle. When you edit, you look more closely at how your ideas are expressed to ensure that you have achieved the tone and flow you want.

What aspects should you pay attention to when editing?

- Effective word choice. Make sure you replace unnecessary, vague or weak words.
- Sentences of varying length and structure are included to create the right tone.
- Transitions are used to help the reader understand the logic of your text and to add connection and flow.
- Clarity. Ask yourself: is the purpose of each sentence clear? have I chosen the right words to express my ideas?
- Style. Ask yourself: have I used the right style? Rehearsing the company will indicate the style and tone you should use. You should also check if the style is consistent throughout the text.
- Ease of reading. The purpose here is to ensure that the recruiter will be able to understand your writing effortlessly.

To enhance reading and to connect the data we offer to support our claims we need some kind of glue. This glue is provided by transition words. They are used to connect one idea with the next one and to show the relationship between the main idea and the supporting evidence. They can be used within paragraphs or between paragraphs so that ideas flow smoothly. Let's see a few examples:

- When adding ideas or information you can write: besides, furthermore, moreover, in addition, additionally, as well as, both-and, not only-but also. For example: As a certified lifeguard, I have the formal training required for the position. Additionally, I have strong interpersonal skills.
- To explain consequences or results, you can use: accordingly, hence, thus, therefore, consequently, for this reason, as a result. For example:

“Although my performance has been praised by my current employer, I do not see career prospects in the near future. Hence, I am contacting you about future openings in the accounting area at ABC.”

- To show sequence, you can use: immediately, thereafter, then, later, previously, next, back then, first (second, etc.). For example: “Previously, as a member of the sales team at ABC, I wrote personalized email to customers in order to draw them back to our website.
- For contrast, you can make use of: although, despite, in spite of, however, nevertheless. For example: Despite having a successful career in sales, I have realized that the aspects of my work that I find most fulfilling are related to marketing.

Proofreading

There is one more step to take to ensure that our writing is free from mistakes that would undermine our application. This is when proofreading comes into play. What is proofreading for? For the identification and correction of spelling, grammar, and punctuation mistakes and format issues.

- In relation to spelling, always perform a spell check but don't rely only on it as programs don't recognize contextual spelling errors. Also, spellings should be consistent throughout the documents. As an illustration, Americans write the word “analyze” but “z” while users of British English write the same word with “s”. Make sure you don't mix American and British spellings
- In reference to grammar, pay close attention to tenses. Besides, capitalize proper nouns, days of the week, months and the personal pronoun “I”.
- With regard to punctuation, be consistent in your use of punctuation marks and avoid using exclamation marks.

- Regarding format, make sure you go over the formatting rules we have covered in the previous modules. Just as a reminder, cover letters follow the format of formal business letters.

Grammar

Rules to consider

When it comes to grammar, we should take the following rules into consideration:

- Abbreviations are informal and shouldn't be used. The exception is industry jargon.
- Run-on sentences are two or more independent clauses that are incorrectly written as one sentence. For example: "I graduated in 2020, I applied for a position at ABC." There should be two sentences. To avoid run-on sentences, check if there is more than one thought communicated by two or more independent clauses.
- A sentence fragment is a group of words that doesn't form a complete sentence because an essential element is missing. For example: "The company, which sells high quality products". We don't know what happens to that company. How can we fix them? By adding the element it lacks.
- The numbers one to ten should be written in word format and higher numbers, as figures. However, in a CV figures can be clearer than words for all numbers.
- Homophones are words that have the same pronunciation but different spellings and meanings. Examples include: their, they're, and there; stationary and stationery. Be wary of these words as we can easily type them in the wrong way.

Tenses

An incorrect use of tenses may look sloppy in a cover letter so we'd better revise the basic ones. That's why, I recommend that pay close attention to what comes next.

- We use the present simple tense to indicate what company we currently work for and to describe our responsibilities. For example: "I work in the accounting department and I document financial transactions". Keep in mind that this tense is used for habits, routines, and actions and situations that are generally true. In your CV, use this tense to list your responsibilities for your current job.
- Present continuous can be used to mention present temporary situations, as in, "I am pursuing a degree in biology". Also, it's appropriate for the description of future arrangements such as "I am moving to Argentina in December".
- "Going to" can be used to talk about plans and intentions, that is, things we have decided to do in the future. For instance, "I am going to relocate to Paris in three months".

Let's keep diving into verb tenses.

- We use the past simple for actions and states in a completed period of time. For example, "I worked for ABC between 2010 and 2013." In your CV, use this tense to describe past accomplishments, such as "developed programs that resulted in a 20% drop in traffic in the city centre in 2010".
- If we want to indicate actions in a time period that is still continuing, present perfect is the right choice. For example, "I have run three projects in my present position". This person is still working in that position and as there is no time reference that shows when those actions took place, present perfect is the right option. Present perfect is also used to talk about a situation that started in the past and continues up to now. We use "since" to show when the particular day, time or past event happened. For example: "I have worked as a business intelligence analyst since 2000." We

use "for" with a period of time, like for a month, for three weeks. For example: "I have managed the litigation department for two years".

Punctuation

The purpose of punctuation is to give order to our words, so that the text we produce can be easily read. Let's look at the most common punctuation marks we will use when writing our CV or cover letter.

- Some writers recommend using bullets for listing achievements and responsibilities in a CV arguing that they make reading more comfortable. To illustrate, Responsibilities:
 - schedule appointments
 - check visitors in
- Full stops or periods, in American English, indicate the end of a sentence. In your CV, you can use them at the end of sentences in your Profile or in the Objective section. As an illustration, "Multi-lingual receptionist with extensive experience in switchboard service. Experienced in receiving guests on arrival in a professional and friendly manner".
- Commas separate items on a list or clauses in a sentence. It is advisable to use serial commas, in other words, a comma before the final "and" in a series to avoid confusion. For example: "I have worked in logistics, production, and sales and marketing". As "sales and marketing" may be grouped together, the last comma in the example is necessary to separate that pair from "logistics" and "production". Besides, commas separate hundreds from thousands, as in 10,000.

Let's keep our focus on punctuation marks.

- Colons are used to introduce an explanation or list, for example, "Computer skills: Microsoft Office Suite, Photoshop, Illustrator".

- Semicolons are used to separate two sentences that are closely related and to separate long items on a list. For example: "I developed educational content including assignments, tests and class notes; delivered personalized classes; and implemented educational events."
- Hyphens are used in compound words. Just as a reminder, compound words are made up of two or more words which are joined together to create a new word. For example: "results-oriented". Mind you, compound words can also be written as a single word, like "firefighter", or as two separate words such as "high school". To know whether a word is hyphenated or not, consult a dictionary.
- Brackets or parentheses can be used to explain an acronym or abbreviation or provide a translation. For example: Information technology (IT), University of Buenos Aires (Universidad de Buenos Aires)
- Quotation marks, also called speech marks, may be used for titles of books, reports, etc., for instance, "I have written a book named *"The Layman's Guide to Social Marketing"*". However, they are usually italicized.

We won't cover apostrophes in this section since we have covered them in a previous module.

Polishing the text

What strategies can we apply to make the whole revision process effective?

- Get distance from the CV and cover letter. If possible, don't edit or proofread them immediately after you finish writing them. Your brain is programmed to fill in the blanks and your eyes are set to see what you wanted to express, which may not be the same as what you actually wrote.

- Print out a copy of the CV and the cover letter. Just changing the medium will help you identify mistakes you have overlooked. Once you have a printed document, circle errors and use coloured ink, not black.
- In connection with the previous point, it is advisable to change the font. That will help you spot any mistakes you've made as your eyes will have to get used to a new font and, thus, you'll be more focused.
- Read the documents slowly and out loud. It's easier to recognize mistakes when we hear the words.
- Break the documents down. Divide the CV into sections (personal information, work experience and so on) and the cover letter into paragraphs. Then print each section and paragraph on a separate sheet of paper and go through them one at a time. This will enhance your concentration and prevent you from skipping a section.

Let's learn more techniques to minimize the chances of failing to notice any mistakes. They may be time-consuming but you'll rest easy knowing you've left no stone unturned.

- Proofread only one type of mistake at a time. If you look out for many kinds of mistakes at the same time, proofreading will be jeopardized. Therefore, make one pass for spelling, another one for grammar and so on.
- Prioritize the mistake search by looking for the most important errors first.
- Focus on common mistakes. Discovering repeated patterns of mistakes can speed up the process and identify mistakes easier.
- Highlight every punctuation mark on the printout when looking for punctuation errors. That will make you pay closer attention to their purpose in each sentence.

- Read the documents backwards. This technique will make your brain perceive the documents with fresh eyes and it will prevent you from automatically filling in a word that is missing.
- Ask a friend or colleague with a good level of English to read the documents. You may send them a list of questions and aspects to look out for. For example:
 - Are the CV and cover letter easy to read and targeted?
 - Is the font legible?
 - Is the style consistent, eye-catching but professional?