



GUIDE TO:

CREATIVE CVs



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Introduction

Your CV is a marketing tool - promoting your skills, attributes, achievements, knowledge and experience. It is often the key to unlocking opportunities and experiences, and requires your time and energy to make it as strong as it can be. This guide is aimed at those who wish to develop a 'creative CV'. If you are looking to develop a 'traditional CV' please refer to our '*Guide to CVs*'.

Comparing A 'Creative' CV With A 'Traditional' CV

All CVs have the same broad function as a marketing tool. Their purpose is to market you for an opportunity. You could be using a CV to promote yourself as a freelancer, to promote your skills in order to win funding for a creative project, to secure an internship or work placement, to enter a creative competition, or to apply for a graduate opportunity working for an employer.

What distinguishes a 'creative' CV is **how** you market yourself. Whilst the written content in how you communicate your skills and experience may not differ greatly between a creative CV and a traditional CV, the way in which you *present and format* that information is what often sets a creative CV apart.

So, What's A 'Creative CV'?

There is no universal blueprint for what a creative CV should look like or include. The benefit of a creative CV means that you have a degree of freedom in how you market yourself. Typically, creative CVs might be one page in length, but a CV may also be considered creative if it comprises *any* of the following;

- Makes effective use of colour
- Incorporates images of work
- Uses an alternative layout (i.e. content isn't restricted to being read top-to-bottom or left-to-right)
- Uses infographic elements, such as logos and symbols (see web links to examples at the end of this guide)

A CV might also be considered creative if it is;

- Presented in 3D format
- Uses 2D materials (e.g. other than paper)
- Created in video format (see example; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-0Gpl5ulOw>)
- Makes use of interactive elements (see example; <http://www.rleonardi.com/interactive-resume/>)

Please note: A creative CV is not the same as an artist CV. If you are a visual artist looking to develop an artist CV, please refer to the ArtQuest website:

<https://www.artquest.org.uk/how-to-articles/artist-cv/> for details on when to use an artist CV and what to include. ArtQuest also has further advice on developing your artist statement: <https://www.artquest.org.uk/how-to-articles/artist-statement/>.

If you are required to submit a creative CV as part of a module or assessment on your course, your lecturers may also give you specific guidelines or 'industry specific' traditions to follow.

When To Use A Creative CV?

There are no rules about when you should use a creative CV instead of a traditional CV. Deciding what style of CV to use can be a judgement call, however, a creative CV might be more commonly used for applying for opportunities in the creative industries. Common industry sectors which may value a creative CV might include:

- Media
- Film
- Photography
- Graphics, illustration and animation
- Industrial and product design
- Textile design
- IT including creative computing and web design
- Digital advertising

To decide when to use a creative CV, consider the following:

Is the opportunity you are applying for a creative one?

If the opportunity isn't particularly creative, it is important to question the value of creating a creative CV. It may be a little unusual to use a creative CV to apply for a non-creative job. If the opportunity is creative, study the job description to understand what skills and

experience the organisation is looking for. Think about how you might be able to reflect these in a creative CV.

What type of organisation are you applying for?

As well as considering what *type of opportunity* you are applying for, you need to consider what *type of organisation* you are applying to. For example, you could be applying for a creative opportunity (e.g. a graphic designer) but at a non-creative company (e.g. the Ministry of Defence). In this situation, it is *possible* that *not all those* reviewing your CV will themselves be creatives, and, as an organisation they may be more familiar with 'traditional' CV structures. Alternatively, if you are applying for a creative opportunity (e.g. an animator) within a creative organisation (e.g. Aardman Animations) then a creative CV might be more appropriate. Take time to research the organisation. What can you find out about their clients, projects, values and achievements? How do they present themselves through their website and social media platforms?

What size of organisation are you applying for?

You may be applying for a creative role within a creative company, but if applying to a large company you may find that they might prefer a more traditional approach. Take time to review the company's website to assess how 'traditional or corporate' their focus appears to be. Alternatively, if it's a small creative company that might typically get far fewer applicants for opportunities and have a dynamic and more informal approach to marketing themselves, then a creative CV might be more welcomed.

Are there industry specific CV traditions you should be aware of? How can you ensure you reflect appropriate industry language in your creative CV?

Research the industry using relevant career sector information (see: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors>); talk to academic staff with experience in the industry and/or with industry professionals to get their opinion and advice. To start developing your professional contacts see our '**Guide to Networking**'.

Your creative CV will be effective if it:

- Has visual impact to capture attention
- Reflects your personality and strengths
- Is tailored to the industry and organisation you are targeting
- Demonstrates you have the specific skills required for the job / work experience

Remember: There is no one style of CV that will be relevant for all opportunities. If you are going to be strategic in your thinking, then it is good practice to think about the purpose for which you wish to use a CV, before deciding on the CV style that is most relevant. You may also need more than one version of your CV.

What To Include?

Before you even begin to be creative, the first thing you need to decide is what content (i.e. information) you are going to include in your CV. Remember that *creativity should not be a substitute for content*. You could have an impressive visual looking CV, but if it says very little, how will the organisation know that you have the skills and experience they are looking for?

You might like to start by producing a basic 'traditional' CV (please refer to our '**Guide to CVs**'). There are no set rules about what to include and how to organise the different sections within your CV, although as a general rule you are advised to lead with the most relevant information first.

Here is an example list of the information you might include in a creative CV;

- **Name and contact details** (*required*) – Make sure your name (and contact details) clearly stand out. Also include links to relevant blogs, online portfolios or websites. You do not need to include your date of birth or the words 'Curriculum Vitae'.
- **Personal Profile** (*optional*) – where included, a profile should be a short paragraph that highlights important information you would want the employer to know, such as your relevant skills, knowledge, experiences and your career goal.
- **Education** (*required*) – academic qualifications.
- **Industry Projects or Live Briefs** (*optional*) – this could include relevant industry projects you've undertaken as part of your degree or externally, that have a clear industry focus.
- **Courses / Workshops / Training** (*optional*) – non-academic learning opportunities (for example, you might have undertaken a short course in InDesign).
- **Relevant Work Experience** (*required*) – this could include freelance work or commissions, as well as roles where you were employed or interned with a company.
- **Volunteering** (*optional*)
- **Skills** (*optional*) – for creative CVs this might include both transferable skills as well as technical/specialist skills (for example, as a costume designer for TV or theatre, a transferable skill might be your ability to work under pressure and to tight deadlines, whereas your technical/specialist skill might be your sewing and embroidery skills).
- **Performances** (*optional, if relevant to the sector*)
- **Exhibitions** (*optional*) – exhibition name, date, venue, plus a brief description of your work.

- **Competitions & Awards** (*optional*) – only include those that are relevant and for which you gained some recognition (e.g. highly commended, finalist or winner).
- **Professional Membership** (*optional*) – if you are a member of a professional organisation you may wish to include this as it would demonstrate commitment to the industry you are interested in.
- **Interests** (*optional*) – only include if relevant *or* if you can link the transferable skills you have gained to those required of the opportunity you are applying for.
- **References** (*optional*) – you do not need to include your full referees details (but do get their permission if you do decide to include them). Alternatively, you could state ‘References available on request’.

Remember: Get the content right before you start focusing on the design! Tailor your CV to the role and organisation. For further advice on how to approach writing content, please refer to our ‘**Guide to CVs**’.

Getting Creative!

Any creative CV you develop needs to market yourself and show off your creative talents. Be aware that if you are applying for a creative opportunity using a creative CV then organisations are likely to scrutinise it that much more. For example, if you are applying for a photography role but your CV includes poor quality images, you are unlikely to be shortlisted for interview.

Ultimately, your creative CV needs to market your creative talents, so think carefully about how you can incorporate creativity in your CV that **adds value** to the content and information you have already included.

Some things to consider:

- **CV length:** Most creative CVs are one page, but two pages might be appropriate depending on the information you want to include.
- **CV templates:** We would encourage you to avoid using an online creative CV template. The idea of a creative CV is that it is unique to you. That said, there are some really useful web-based tools out there that can assist you in the production of visual elements, such as using infographics to represent your skills, for example <http://vizualize.me/> and <https://www.canva.com/>.
- **Use of colour:** If using colour in your CV, check how it looks when printed out as black and white. A light colour for a section heading, for example, may look great on the screen but may be barely visible when printed black and white.

- **Images:** Images should 'add value' and should be your own! They need to be relevant to the type of opportunity and organisation you are approaching. Make sure images don't distract from written content or obscure text. Don't forget that the main way in which you can market images of creative work is via your portfolio or website, so don't overuse images within your CV.
- **Typography:** When arranging written text make sure it is readable and appealing. You may want to consider the typeface you use, font size, line-length and line-spacing. Typography will be particularly important for graphic design companies reviewing your CV.
- **Links to portfolio / website:** When including any links to online portfolios, showreels, blogs and websites, make sure the links work and that your platforms are up-to-date and professional.
- **Branding:** Consider the design of your CV as your 'brand'. It is important that the 'branding' of your CV is consistent with your other professional platforms, websites and online portfolios.
- **Format:** PDFs are a good way to send a CV electronically as any images and formatting won't be distorted, particularly if you have developed your CV using design software. Always think about the compatibility for the organisation receiving your CV.
- **2D versus 3D:** You may decide a 3D version of your CV is most appropriate for getting you noticed by an employer, but think about the time and potential cost of creating, for example, a milk carton or chocolate packaging version of your CV (see: <https://www.careeraddict.com/create-a-3d-cv>). Even if you do create a 3D version, it might still be helpful to develop a 2D document-based version that can be emailed, should the employer request it.

Finally, it is essential that the information in your CV is easy to find and easy to read. Often employers spend just a few seconds taking an initial look at a CV. If it is not easy for them to find the information they need, then they are likely to disregard it.

Further Resources and CV Templates

To get inspiration, Adobe Express (which is free for Bath Spa University students) includes many example templates for creative CVs that give ideas for visual layout. You can find it here: <https://www.adobe.com/uk/express/create/resume/cv>

Other useful website links;

- <https://www.dit.ie/media/careers/careershandouts/cvsandcoverletters/Creative%20Guide%202011.pdf> – Creative CV Guide by DIT

- [https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/careers/documents/students/other/creativecvguide\(1\).pdf](https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/careers/documents/students/other/creativecvguide(1).pdf) Jan Cole Creative CV Guide
- <https://weare.guru/creative-cvs/> - mainly 2D CV examples including lots of infographic CVs
- <http://mentalfloss.com/article/55829/11-creative-resumes-designed-stand-out-> interesting examples of 3D creative CVs.
- <https://www.armstrongappointments.com/15-creative-job-applications-that-really-worked/> - interesting examples of alternative creative CVs
- <https://www.canva.com/learn/50-inspiring-resume-designs/> - examples plus advice on making your CV stand out

Creative CV Checklist

The following checklist has been designed as a guide to help you assess your creative CV before you submit it for any opportunities.

Content

1. Have you identified the skills and qualities needed for the opportunity you are applying for and provided evidence of how you meet them? Or, if applying speculatively to an organisation, have you identified what the organisation might be interested to know about what you can offer them in terms of your skills and experience?
2. Do you make use of industry specific language appropriate to the role you are applying for within your CV?
3. Are the sections of your CV arranged in a way that draws attention to the most important information early on?
4. Have you used reverse chronological order for any section that includes dates (i.e. most recent date first)?
5. Have you avoided long paragraphs of text?
6. Have you made sure your CV doesn't contain any spelling or grammatical errors?

Formatting and presentation

1. Is your CV 'attention grabbing' without being distracting?
2. If you have used more than one page, is the format consistent across both pages?
3. Have you made sure that the use of colour, images or logos doesn't distract from any written content?
4. Have you used a clear font style that is easy to read?
5. Have you experimented with capitals, bold or italics for headings and sub-headings to achieve a consistent and clear layout?

6. Have you maximised the space, for example, ensured good balance of 'white space' on your CV?
7. Does your overall design theme run through your entire marketing package e.g. business cards, online portfolio and professional online networks?

Further Support From Bath Spa Careers

If you would like further support from Bath Spa Careers, please visit [MyCareer](#) where you can book a personalised appointment, ask us a question, browse further resources, attend informative events and search our huge jobs database.