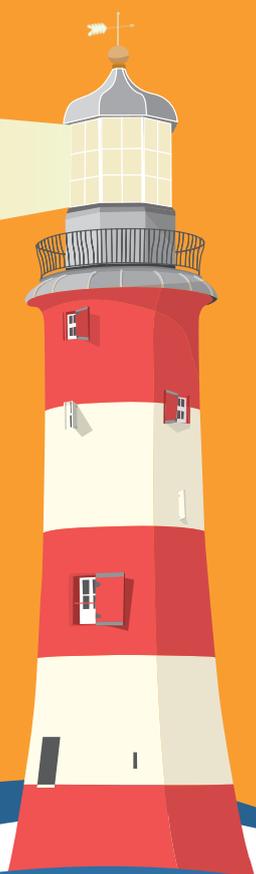


CAREER HACKS



CREATIVE CVs – A SHORT GUIDE



**CAREERS &
EMPLOYABILITY**
WITH
**PLYMOUTH
UNIVERSITY**

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INTRODUCTION - WHY SHOULD I USE A CREATIVE CV?

In the digital age when almost every creative student or graduate has an online portfolio showcasing their work, it is also an option to have a summary document in the form of a Creative CV. Most employers will look at these profiles before the interview stage of the job application process. Art, design and media undergraduates may also target employers by sending them a Creative CV that displays their creative skills and provides information that one would typically find on a standard CV. The Creative CV will give factual personal details such as education, work experience and technical skills but will also showcase the creative skills essential for working in the chosen industry. A Creative CV can also be an integral part of an online portfolio.



THIS BRIEF GUIDE WILL SHOW YOU:

- ✓ The main differences between a conventional CV and a Creative CV
- ✓ Key features of an effective Creative CV
- ✓ Using a Creative CV to apply for both advertised vacancies and to apply on spec
- ✓ Hints and tips on developing your CV and linking to an online portfolio
- ✓ Where to look for examples of Creative CVs and other online resources to help with the process

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A CONVENTIONAL CV AND A CREATIVE CV

With so many different types of CV formats to choose from it is important that you select wisely and that your CV is appropriate for the type of role.

Choosing a format that does not fit the role or industry could result in your application being rejected at the short-listing stage and ultimately mean you will not be getting that all important interview.

The design of a Creative CV will depend on what it is being used for, and you will need different variations depending on whether it is for an advertised job, speculative application, a showcase or for funding, competitions etc. Different industries will require evidence of different skills dependent on their markets and client groups.

While the general aim of any CV is to secure yourself an interview by effectively communicating how your skills, experience and achievements meet employer requirements, there are some clear differences between a conventional and a Creative CV:

CONVENTIONAL CVS:

- Focus on communicating skills and experience with just the written word
- Typically, a 1-2 page black and white document
- Format allows you to provide clear details of your qualifications, work history, responsibilities, interests and achievements and relevant skills
- Provides a useful document in which you can collate real examples of where you have gained relevant knowledge, skills and experience – essential for completing online application forms



INDUSTRIES WHERE CREATIVE CVS ARE LIKELY TO BE REQUESTED OR ARE MOST COMMON INCLUDE:

- Artists in general, including those who produce items and those that perform
- Illustration and animation
- Design including fabric, clothing, 3D, interior and graphic
- Architecture and landscaping design
- IT professionals, including web development and design, information architecture and most areas of similar working
- Engineering design
- Media design and production, to include producers, script writers, film makers and photographers
- Journalism and publishing
- Digital advertising, public relations, sales and marketing

CREATIVE CVS:

- Much more embellished with photographs, graphic design and logos
- Used to showcase your skills to employers in the creative sector
- Allows you to demonstrate creative skills in a way that a potential employer can see and feel through the actual design of the CV
- CVs can take many forms and are used for many different purposes including video, 3D design, animated, interactive, infographics, made into items like t-shirts, presentation boxes, cans or cartons

If you are looking for a role within the creative industries a Creative CV may give you an advantage. However, you should still consider carefully if it is appropriate for every role.

Before applying with a Creative CV, you should consider the following:

- Does the job description or employer call for a Creative CV?
- Would demonstrating your creative skills help you to meet the job criteria?

When it is not appropriate to use a Creative CV:

- Any role where creative skills have no relevance to the job role
- When you are applying for a non-creative role and you want to use colour/graphics to help you stand out from the crowd, this might not impress the employer
- For a wide range of industries in the commercial sector such as banking, finance, business management and retail where a more conventional approach is the norm

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE OF YOUR CV

It cannot be emphasised enough that there is no standard CV format, creative or otherwise. Creative CVs provide amazing possibilities for experimentation with a range of formats and an excellent opportunity for you to showcase your design skills and individual style.

There is flexibility in how the information is presented and the exact order can be adapted to emphasise your most valuable strengths. For example, you may place an important section or fact higher in your CV to ensure it catches the reader's attention.

CREATIVITY

Have you displayed your creative skills through design?

Is your CV innovative and does it stand out from the crowd?

Tip: an applicant for a Games Concept Artist graduate role would use stylistic approaches on the CV that could interest companies looking for a specific style of illustration whereas an applicant for a Multi-media film and video role may create a video CV

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE OF YOUR CV

All Creative CVs will adhere to some basic guidelines, as follows:

Tip: keep it simple and concise; make use of clean spaces as well as showcasing creative design appropriate to the industry

PRESENTATION

Will it be easy for a busy employer to read your CV quickly?

Are there any spelling or grammatical errors?

Is the medium appropriate for your chosen industry?

Have you evidenced your skills, experience and attributes relevant to your chosen industry?

This should include your competency in the range of creative software (e.g. Adobe Suite) showing which packages and levels of ability. Creative CVs often use graphic icons to illustrate clearly the levels of competence.

Is it easy for the employer to find your contact details? As your CV is a marketing document, your name and contact details should be prominent and easy to read.

Is it interesting to read?

CONTENT

Tip: focus clearly on the industry so for a digital media role a video CV or interactive web portfolio may be appropriate

SPECULATIVE OR ADVERTISED ROLES

SENDING YOUR CV FOR AN ADVERTISED ROLE

- Evidence and showcase your key selling points for the industry or organisation.
- Ensure your relevant skills (creative and technical), knowledge and experience, match the person and job specification.
- If you have a portfolio of your work, ensure there is a link or access within the CV.
- Keep it factual and highlight the key areas, inspirations, channels in which you work, and the systems, procedures and equipment you use.
- Describe what and why you enjoy what you do.

SENDING YOUR CV SPECULATIVELY

Emailing a CV “on spec” is often the norm for advertising, PR, marketing, publishing and media roles. Sending a speculative application rather than applying for an advertised role will require you to spend time finding the information you need to tailor your CV. Consider the following:

- You may wish to contact the company for guidance on what they are looking for.
- Research the company, what are their values, reputation, latest projects?
- Look at their website, social media pages and marketing materials to see if this provides any insights into what they look for.
- Recognise in yourself what you have to offer. You need to be able to clearly communicate what you would bring to the company.
- Find some common ground – the company will want to make sure you fit, can you appeal to their business idea or values through what you say in your CV?
- Do you know anyone that works for the company? Can they provide any insights or insider information to help with your application?

CREATIVE CVS, ONLINE PORTFOLIOS AND BRANDING

Numerous platforms exist to allow students and graduates practicing in the creative industries to showcase their portfolio online. You can choose to design your own website if you have the appropriate HTML coding skills and knowledge. Alternatively use a web hosting platform such as Wordpress or Wix to showcase your work. This will take both planning and development time to create a professional site, so you will need to have a schedule to plan towards a successful web presence. All of these options will allow you to also add a CV as a downloadable PDF which could be developed to show your artistic style and showcase your design skills.

In your portfolio and CV try to convey elements of your personal style that you have been honing whilst at university. You want to stand out from the crowd as an individual. However, remember not to overdo it and, if needed, seek a second opinion. Style over substance is not always a good idea so be alert to the machinations of your imagination! In general, less is more and minimalism works best, as can be seen in designs by some of the most successful multi-national companies in the digital domain.

If you are a designer you will know that bright red writing on a bright green background does not work, multiple colours and fonts on a CV often look horrible. Steer clear of ornate frames around photographs, make sure you use a good photograph, make sure your bullet points fit with the rest of your CV. Many typographers argue that you should never, ever use Comic Sans.

At the stage of developing your portfolio, CV or other promotional material, it is important to be aware of the overall message you are conveying with your web presence across a range of social media platforms. In commercial terminology, this is your brand. You can use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn to promote yourself and showcase your best work. Ensure a consistent approach is used so your overall style, logos and photographs maintains a common theme to convey your brand.

Depending on the creative discipline you have studied, you may decide to save sections of your portfolio as PDF files, which can easily be downloaded and sent on to design recruitment agencies or submitted to an employer.



SHOWCASING CREATIVITY IN YOUR CV: SOME TIPS

- 1** CVs are subjective, what works for one company may not work for another, **research the company** (website, social media pages, marketing material etc.) and use the job description (if available) to find a design or style that fits.
- 2** CVs must **appeal and communicate** well both visually and with written content.
- 3** There is no right way of completing a CV however, it is important you **understand the target audience**, tailor your CV to the role and provide evidence that demonstrates a range of skills and qualities suitable for the role.
- 4** Personal Profile/ Statement (also known as designer's or artist's statement) are optional in a CV but they are a great introduction when well written. Consider including who you are, what you have to offer and what you are looking for. **Highlight some key points in your profile**, being careful not to duplicate information in other sections of your CV or covering letter.
- 5** Typically placed at the top of a CV your Personal Profile/Statement should be as strong as possible to **grab the reader's attention** and encourage them to read the rest of your CV.
- 6** UK legislation states that **employers cannot** take into account age, gender or marital status when selecting candidates so there is no need to include these in your CV.
- 7** Your CV can be used to **showcase artistic abilities** appropriate to the chosen industry, for example, using Illustrative styles appropriate to Concept Art for the Games industry.
- 8** Every employer will require a unique set of skills, qualities and experience to fit their advertised role so make sure you **change your CV to match the job description**. Falling into the trap of sending the same CV for a number of different roles may result in you missing the criteria and giving the impression that you aren't really interested in the role.

- 9** **Detail the software you can use** and show what level of competence you have in Adobe packages for example.

10 **Substance over style** is the general rule for most CVs.

- 11** Grammar, punctuation and spelling are important in a CV; ask a friend or family member to **proof read your document** before sending.

- 14** Sometimes designers try to make their CVs stand out with complex infographics or unusual formats. This can look a bit gimmicky and only makes the CV more complicated. It's really great to **add personality**, but make sure that whenever you add elements to your CV, it's for a good reason. It's most important that it is clear, visually appealing and that your skills are well-communicated.

- 12** **Be concise**. Success will be based on your entire portfolio, not just your CV. It's important to show your creative-thinking and not just the final design, but at the same time keep it concise so you have more work to show in the interview.

- 13** A **well-defined personal brand** consists of clean logos, easy-to-read fonts and colour palettes that represent personality and design style. By doing this, you will shine in comparison to the less thought-out CVs and portfolios that are sent through.

- 15** Everyone has the same old stuff on their CV – software skills, uni results, hobbies. Try to **think outside the box** for new ways to present it. Could you use a diagram or a graph instead of a table somewhere? Could you use personalised icons to draw attention to highlight your key skills?

FURTHER RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

CREATIVE CV GUIDES

Jan Cole's Creative CV Guide:

Comprehensive Guide with Numerous Examples

[https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/careers/documents/students/other/creativecvguide\(1\).pdf](https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/careers/documents/students/other/creativecvguide(1).pdf)

Guardian Careers Blog: How to word your CV for maximum effect

Use industry key words in your CV to make sure you get found

<https://www.theguardian.com/careers/careers-blog/how-to-word-your-cv-for-maximum-effect>

Guardian Careers: How to make an infographic resume for job success

<https://www.theguardian.com/careers/careers-blog/stand-out-applying-work-infographic>

University of the Arts London

Specialist Arts university with a bank of careers and CV resources

www.arts.ac.uk/student-jobs-and-careers/

University of the Arts London: How to write a CV

<http://www.arts.ac.uk/student-jobs-and-careers/get-jobs-advice/how-to-write-a-cv/>

Manchester Metropolitan University: Designing a Creative CV

<https://www2.mmu.ac.uk/media/mmuacuk/content/documents/careers/guides/Designing-a-Creative-CV.pdf#page8>

University of Oxford: CVs for Creative Careers

<http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/cvs-for-creative-careers/>

FOR IDEAS AND INSPIRATION TRY THE FOLLOWING:

Creative Bloq:

<http://www.creativebloq.com/create-perfect-design-portfolio-111153>

Creative CVs on Pinterest:

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/UniofHertsCEE/creative-cvs/?lp=true>

Visual CV:

<https://www.visualcv.com/>

Vizualize Me:

<http://vizualize.me/>

Moonfruit:

www.moonfruit.com/blog/digital/how-to-create-online-cv

Bubble Jobs:

www.bubble-jobs.co.uk/career_portal/

Wired Canvas:

<https://wiredcanvas.com/2015/08/websites-artists-how-make-artist-website-using-wordpress>

FINAL CV CHECKLIST

- How does your layout look- is it clear and visually appealing or overcomplicated?
- Imagine you were the employer, can you find evidence of all of the job requirements?
- If you are applying speculatively have you fully researched the company and are confident that you know what they are looking for?
- Have you included a link to your online portfolio, online blogs, and social media pages?
- Have you checked for spelling and grammar errors? Many employers will reject a CV based on mistakes which can be easily rectified. Errors suggest to an employer that you might be careless or even that you don't want the opportunity that much.

- Have you asked anyone at the Careers & Employability Hub for feedback on your CV? Make sure you bring the opportunity information with you.
- Have you taken your application one-step further by attaching a covering letter to your CV, introducing yourself and your CV, stating your reasons for writing and highlighting your skills and experience?
- Engage with the Careers & Employability Service Accelerate programme to build your confidence and improve your knowledge and skills in key employability topics.

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If you want to discuss any aspect of your Creative CV, please come and see us in the Careers & Employability Hub on the ground floor of the Roland Levinsky building. We are open year-round Monday – Friday from 8.30am – 4.30pm (excluding bank holidays). Check our website for revised opening hours during the summer and Christmas breaks as well as any other holiday periods before you visit. We can offer you a short appointment to answer questions and provide general feedback, or a longer appointment to look more in depth at your career planning around your CV. We can also provide support via email or telephone for students who are unable to see us on campus. If you are struggling to find suitable opportunities, confused about your options or stuck with any area of your career planning, get in touch with us.

Careers & Employability support is available to all students from all stages at any point of their career planning **and for up to three years** after completing your programme.

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