

Applying for a job necessitates two written products: a letter of application and a *curriculum vitae* or *résumé*. This Skill Sheet explains the minimum requirements for a curriculum vitae, and gives some pointers regarding the contents of a letter of application. Since the mid 1980s the number of applicants per job offered has often ran into the hundreds. People often need to apply several times in order to successfully gain employment. At the same time increased flexibility demanded by organisations makes it very likely that people will gain in job mobility. The phenomenon of repeated applications creates a sizeable market of people waiting for advice on ‘how to apply’ and ‘how to write winning résumés’, to name just two titles from many books concerning job applications. Go into the library and you will find shelves full of tips and advice. This Skill Sheet merely lists some requirements that can be used by all academics who are applying for a job.

1 Contents of your letter of application

Dedicate the most important part of your letter to the reasons why you find this job, with this particular organisation, interesting. The way in which you do this gives your prospective employer two kinds of information: (1) on your motivation, but also (2) information on your ability to formulate a number of solid arguments in a well-considered sequence. The second type of information might be more important than the first.

What kind of motivation/argumentation you should always include in your letter:

- **Personal motivation:** by explaining what your background is and why you think you have the qualities necessary for the job, you can show to what extent you are capable of analysing yourself, in a sufficiently critical manner. Can you assess what your background (education, work experience etc.) is ‘worth’ for this particular organisation? By doing this, you explain why you think this organisation *should* be interested in you.
- **Organisation motivation:** by explaining why you have chosen this particular organisation, you can show to what extent you have already been capable of analysing the organisation that you want to work for. Why do you think this organisation *could* be interesting for you?
- **Situation motivation:** what are the circumstances that have prompted you to apply for the job? If you can make it clear that you have a good job at the moment (so you do not really *need* the job), or that there are plenty of other *realistic* (!) alternatives, a prospective employer might be more interested than if it seems that you badly need the job, and that there are hardly any alternatives.

In ‘smart’ job applications you use the principles of barter (⊕A9) in your letter of application. The letter of application can be considered the *first phase in a bargaining process* in which experienced bargaining actors aim at reaching *mutual benefit* (⊕F4, F9). So you should not only be prepared to address the traditional question ‘what can you offer the organisation’, but also the more assertive question: ‘what can (not: should) the organisation offer you?’ Being assertive - within the confines of your relative bargaining position - shows the prospective employer that you are capable and willing to bargain for the benefit of both parties. An intelligent employer will find this characteristic appealing (⊕G4).

- Additional pointers
 - Use the other requirements for writing a letter listed in B19.
 - Should you write your application by hand? Hand-written letters seem old fashioned. So in general better abstain from sending hand-written letters of application, unless explicitly requested. You might decide to send a hand-written letter if you know that the organisation uses graphology experts as part of the application procedure.

- When sending a letter of application, especially if you do this spontaneously and not for an official vacancy, make sure that you address it to the right person and department in the organisation.
- Should you invest time working on the layout of your CV? It may be worthwhile to design an interesting heading or logo, which contains your name and address and a symbol which says something about who you are. Such a logo tells the prospective employer at least one thing: if the logo is creative, that you have thought about how to present yourself. That still distinguishes you from many other applicants.
- References: enclose copies of supportive references (if available) as further annexes. Note in your letter that these annexes are there.

2 Contents of your Résumé/Curriculum Vitae

■ Personal details

Name:	write your name in full
Born:	full date, place of birth
Residence:	present address in full
Telephone:	country code - telephone number
Fax/email:	if available include them
Gender:	male/female
Marital status:	married/single; number of children
Languages:	active knowledge of: ... passive knowledge of ...

■ Education

year to year	Your last educational institution: [Institution name] , [City, (State/Province)], [Degree/Achievement].
year to year	University education: [Institution name] , [City, (State/Province)], [Degree/Achievement: Master's, Bachelor's and/or postgraduate education].
year to year	Secondary education: [Institution name], [City], [type of education] Other types of formal education that you attended and completed.

■ Work/Professional experience

Month, 19xx to the Present	[Company Name] , [City, State], [Position held]. [Details of position].
Month, 19xx to Month, 19xx	[Company Name] , [City, State], [Position held]. [Details of position].
Continued	Do not forget to include information about any possible work placements.

■ Other activities/Organisations

List other information that might give an impression of your qualifications and interests. Membership of organisations (in particular when you have done management work), part-time or unpaid consulting work; hobbies (if relevant); international exchange experience; voluntary work. List the positions held, and for what period (see above).

■ Publications/Thesis

List the theme of your thesis, and in the case of any other official publications: the full bibliographical references.