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# › JOB APPLICATION IN GERMANY

Application for internships and the career entry

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Career Development Center

## › JOB APPLICATION IN GERMANY

A written job application consists of a cover letter, a curriculum vitae (CV) and copies of the most important certificates and references. In Germany, it usually still includes a photo. Needless to say, the application should be clearly structured. It is important that all documents are of high quality as the application is a first indicator of your general accuracy.

Online applications are becoming more and more common in Germany as they facilitate the application process for applicants as well as for companies. Nowadays, a job application can be submitted in one of two ways: You can either send your application as an e-mail attachment or you can fill out a form on the company's website.

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YOUR  
CAREER!

CAREER  
DEVELOPMENT  
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## › THE COVER LETTER

In most cases, the job advertisement will tell you whom to address with your cover letter. If not, you can use the general salutation ‘Dear Sir or Madam’. However, it is always better to make the effort to find out the right person to contact, e.g. via the company’s website or by giving them a call.

The cover letter concisely provides the reader with information about your qualifications and your work related experiences you may have acquired beforehand. It should explain why you are interested in the work offered and why you consider yourself to be a good fit with the job. It is also very important to give insights as to why you want to work for the respective company.

### FORMAL REQUIREMENTS

The cover letter must not exceed one DIN A4 page. Likewise, the same font style and size has to be used throughout the whole application. A corresponding letterhead with your contact details (address, e-mail address, telephone number), the address of the recipient and the date are also required. An informative subject heading helps the reader to classify your application.

For traditional applications, the cover letter is loosely placed on top of the application portfolio while it is attached as the first page of the PDF file to online applications.

### STRUCTURE

An effective cover letter should be short and concise. Make the letter interesting to read. It is therefore crucial that you take your time and carefully think about how to structure the letter before you start writing.

#### Introduction

Start your letter by directly addressing the contact person (‘Dear Mr./Ms. + surname’). As your introductory sentence a statement about your general qualification can be just as interesting as pointing out why you are particularly fascinated by that company. On top of that, it is important to explain why it would benefit by employing especially you. Additionally, try to refrain from common phrases such as ‘herewith I apply for’.

#### Body

In this section you do not simply repeat your CV but rather highlight key information from it. Select those aspects that are related to the targeted position and its requirements. Try not to lose the reader’s attention, use interesting and surprising phrases, focus immediately on the most significant “selling points”. Demonstrate clearly that you are well informed about the company and the job. Make sure to refer to essential aspects from the job advertisement and, if explicitly asked for, also answer the question concerning your salary expectation. Consider the cover letter as a form of self-marketing.

#### BELOW YOU CAN FIND SOME HELPFUL HINTS:

- › Be professional and friendly.
- › Be enthusiastic and assertive but not pushy.  
Do not beg for a position.
- › Use simple, natural language, avoiding clichés.
- › Use positive words and phrases, e.g. sentences beginning with ‘I have’ or ‘I can’.
- › Do not start every sentence or paragraph with ‘I’.
- › Check your spelling.

### Closing Paragraph

Close the letter by reminding your potential employer why you are a good match for the job and the organization. As you are convinced to be the right person for the advertised position, use active and self-confident phrases. Sign off your cover letter with ‘Yours sincerely’ and affix your signature to it. Finally, refer to your enclosed documents without listing them in detail.







## › THE CURRICULUM VITAE

The CV is the central part of your application. It must not be longer than two pages and it includes a list of your education and training, your professional experiences and achievements. The sequence should be in reverse order, starting with the latest activities.

### HERE YOU HAVE AN OVERVIEW OF THE STRUCTURE:

- › Header: name of the applicant or the headline 'Curriculum Vitae'
- › Photo
- › Personal details: name, address, e-mail address, telephone number, birth date, place of birth, marital status, nationality
- › Education: university and degree, high school
- › Work experience: internships and jobs
- › Skills: computing, languages
- › Interests
- › (List of own publications)
- › (References)
- › Place, date, signature

### STRUCTURE

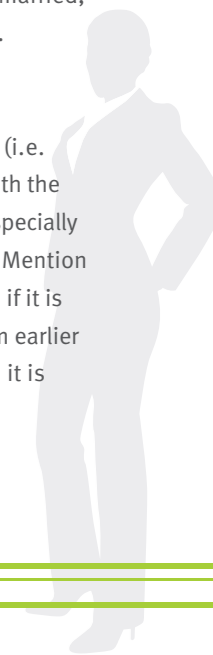
Traditionally, the dates in a CV have been arranged in chronological order, i.e. starting with the oldest information. Nowadays, you use a reverse order to make sure that the latest and most important career steps immediately catch the reader's attention, even when only skimming through the CV. A good CV is one that emphasizes the points that are considered to be most important. Despite the fact that there is not one single standard format it is vital that your CV follows a consistent pattern.

### Personal details

The first section typically refers to your personal details, where you list the place and date of birth. In Germany, it is common practice to name your marital status (single, married, separated, divorced or widowed) and your citizenship.

### Education

In this category you list the names of the institutions (i.e. university, school) you have attended, starting again with the most recent ones. For your studies, HR personnels are especially interested in your major or your focuses, respectively. Mention grades and the topic of your Bachelor or Master thesis if it is related to the position you are applying for. Grades from earlier years of your education are also important. However, it is sufficient to only list your last high school diploma.





### Work Experience

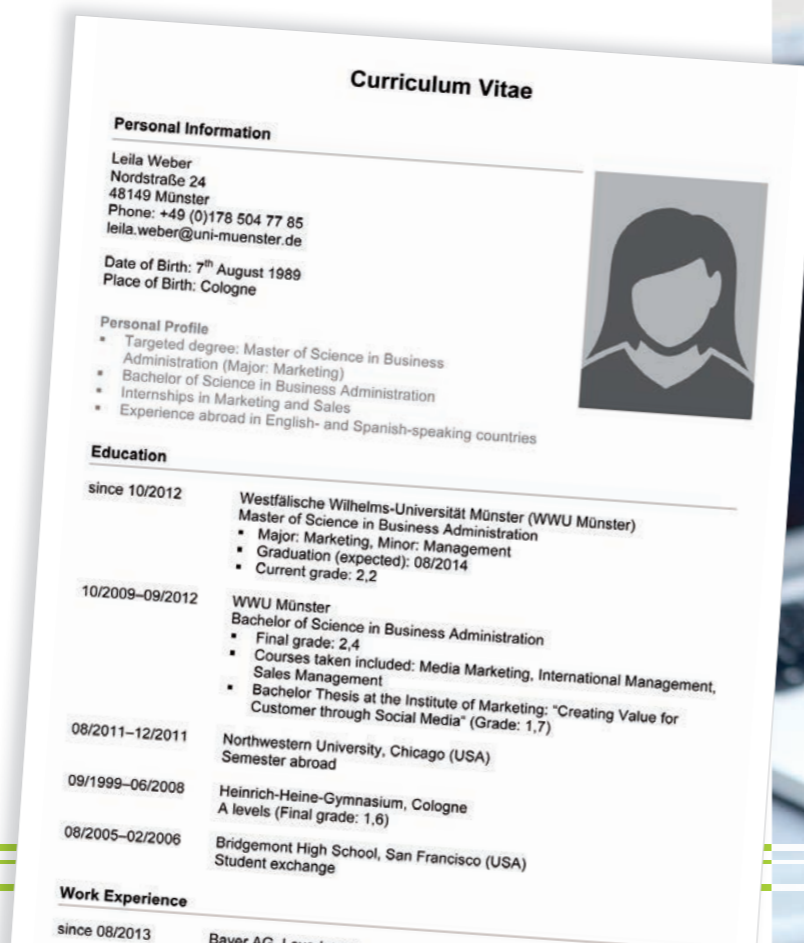
In this section you list your internships, jobs and other relevant employments you held during your studies. Precisely describe the tasks you performed, using bullet points and action words such as ‘developed’, ‘planned’ and ‘organized’. Even working in a restaurant or shop improves team skills and your abilities to work with customers. Here it is important to relate the skills to the job you are applying for. A finance job for example involves numeracy, analytical and problem-solving skills – so focus on these. In case the company you worked for is rather unknown, give some details about its size and the industrial sector. Do not simply list the corresponding years for your previous occupations (e.g. 2001–2005) but include the months as well (e.g. 01/2001–06/2005).

### Experience abroad

If you wish, you can include this category in your CV, describing when, where, how long and why you spent some time abroad. However, you should list each stay only once and in the corresponding category of your CV. Internships abroad should be listed under ‘Work Experience’, while the participation in a language course for which you received a certificate belongs to the category ‘Skills’ (languages).

### Computing

Your CV should also include information on your computer skills. It is not sufficient to only list them (e.g. ‘MS Office’); be more specific and explicitly mention the computer programs you are familiar with (e.g. ‘Word, Excel, Access’). In addition, you should rate your computer skills by classifying them from ‘beginner’ to ‘expert’.







### Languages

Nowadays, foreign languages are an essential prerequisite. But be careful not to exaggerate. Truthfully assess your language skills as they may be checked during the job interview. The usual categories are: 'native speaker', 'business fluent', 'fluent' and 'basic'. Only use 'business fluent' if you have really been in a situation where you had to negotiate in the respective language and if you have acquired experience abroad. 'Fluent' is inferior to 'business fluent' and means that you are able to communicate without any problems. It is recommendable to submit certificates to prove that your language skills are above community college level (e.g. Cambridge Certificate or TOEFL).

### Interests and commitment

The person reading your application will also want to learn about you as an individual. Thus, your personal interests can also convey a positive image of yourself. For instance, you can highlight your overall social commitment. It is an important criterion for a job employment, especially for larger firms. An applicant who is engaged in extracurricular activities beyond his or her studies is expected to be able to think out of the box. Those activities are perfect proof for your soft skills. Even if you are merely a member of your local sports team, it is always good to be engaged in some sort of association or organization. The personnel manager can draw conclusions from this with respect to your soft skills such as your ability to work in a team or your communication skills. However, be

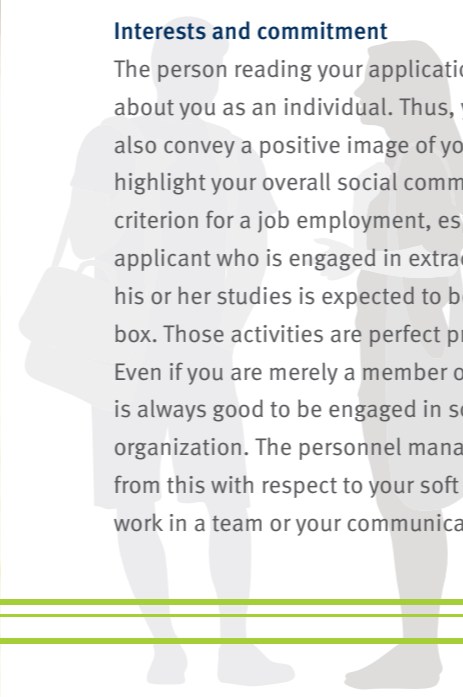
careful when it comes to extreme sports such as cliff diving or free climbing as they entail a high risk of being injured.

### References and certificates

References can be included in your CV. It is, however, not mandatory. Your certificates and references demonstrate your expertise and experience. Attach all certificates that qualify you for the job you are applying for. In some cases it is worthwhile having your references and certificates translated into German, for example when applying to smaller companies. Normally, it is sufficient to provide your school-leaving and university certificates, as well as references or certificates of employments for companies that you previously worked for. However, if you have any other aces up your sleeve – such as other certificates, internships abroad etc. – do not hesitate to mention them. When stating references, do so by giving the full name and contact details. Always make sure to inform the persons before naming them as a reference.

### Gaps in the CV

In principle, a gap in your CV does not automatically disqualify you. Nevertheless, be prepared that gaps may be held against you. It is therefore important that you do not leave room for speculation. To fill those gaps it is advisable to also mention occupations that are irrelevant for the targeted position but that are meaningful in principle.





## › THE JOB INTERVIEW

### *You have been invited to a job interview? Congratulations!*

The next challenge will be to prepare yourself. Needless to say, it is important to arrive on time and to wear adequate attire that corresponds with the occasion of a formal job interview: a suit and tie are generally appropriate for men, while a ladies' suit with a skirt or trousers is appropriate for women.

Usually, the job interview is held between you and two company employees: a specialist manager and an interviewer from the personnel department. The job interview will typically start with some small talk, followed by the interviewer telling you a little bit about the company. Then you will be given the chance to introduce yourself. Do not misstate the facts in your CV – which should be no problem as long as you told the truth when applying for the job. Do not just recount the bare facts of your CV but instead focus on specific aspects in greater detail in order to underline successes and to create an overall positive impression through your personality.

First and foremost, the objective of your prospective employer is to ascertain whether you are capable of carrying out the job advertised in terms of your knowledge and skills. Moreover, the interviewers would like to find out how the company will benefit from your personality and whether customers and colleagues will enjoy working with you. The simple rule for a job interview is just to be yourself. Demonstrate that you are interested in your interview partners but do not limit

yourself to questions that could be easily answered by the company's website. You will give the best impression with a healthy mixture of self-confidence and curiosity for the company and the work.

#### SOME TIPS ON PREPARING FOR A JOB INTERVIEW:

- › Do research on the company before going to the job interview.
- › Plan your route – arriving late for the job interview always leaves a bad impression.
- › Make sure that you know the name of your counterpart(s).
- › Bring necessary documentation – make a checklist of documents that you will need for the job interview.
- › Your clothing should be neat, pressed, and professional looking.
- › Sell yourself and be honest – do not be submissive but also do not show off.
- › Be authentic and do not use standard answers.
- › Based on your research about the company, ask questions that show your knowledge of the business and industry.



## › CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

You are studying at the Münster School of Business and Economics and you are looking for an internship? You are at the end of your studies and want to prepare for your career entry?

The Career Development Center (CDC) offers you the opportunity to get in touch with companies, to acquire essential skills during various workshops and to optimize your application documents.

### USE OUR COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES FOR STUDENTS!

- › Workshops
- › Career Counseling
- › Business contacts
- › Information center

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