

University of Surrey

Careers Service

<http://www.surrey.ac.uk/careers>

Effective writing

This leaflet is designed to help you with the use of vocabulary, spelling and grammar when writing your CV and covering letter, or when completing application forms. You may find it most helpful to use it together with our leaflets *Writing Your CV*, *Application Forms* and *Speculative Applications*.

Action words

You don't need to write in long sentences or use lots of fancy words to put together an impressive CV or application. However, it is important to describe things clearly and positively. By using positive 'action' words, like the ones in the table below, you can give a clear description of the experience you have, and the role you played in a particular project or task. Avoid non-specific words like helped, which don't really tell the employer what you actually did.

acquired	discovered	measured	reorganised
administered	disproved	merged	reported
advised	distributed	minimised	researched
amended	documented	modernised	resolved
analysed	doubled	monitored	restored
appraised	edited	negotiated	restricted
arranged	eliminated	networked	reviewed
assembled	enlarged	observed	revised
assessed	established	obtained	revived
audited	estimated	operated	saved
bought	evaluated	ordered	scheduled
built	examined	organised	selected
budgeted	expanded	originated	set up
calculated	familiarised	oversaw	shaped
checked	finished	passed	simplified
coached	forecasted	persuaded	sold
collaborated	formed	pioneered	solved
collected	formulated	planned	specified
compiled	founded	predicted	standardised
completed	generated	prepared	stimulated
composed	guided	presented	streamlined
concluded	identified	prevented	strengthened
condensed	implemented	processed	stretched
conducted	improved	produced	structured
confirmed	improvised	programmed	studied
constructed	incorporated	progressed	suggested
consulted	increased	promoted	supervised
controlled	initiated	prompted	supplied
converted	inspired	proposed	supported

coordinated	installed	protected	surveyed
corrected	instigated	proved	taught
corresponded	instituted	provided	tested
counselled	instructed	published	tightened
created	integrated	purchased	trained
decreased	interpreted	quantified	translated
defined	intervened	realised	treated
delivered	interviewed	recommended	trimmed
demonstrated	introduced	recorded	tripled
designed	invented	recruited	uncovered
detected	investigated	redesigned	unified
determined	launched	reduced	unravelling
developed	led	referred	wrote
devised	logged	regulated	
diagnosed	managed	rejected	
directed	maintained	renegotiated	

Useful adverbs

Adverbs are a great way to communicate how you have achieved something and indicate your personal qualities concisely. You might be able to include some of these in your applications and CVs.

Accurately	Analytically	Appropriately
Astutely	Calmly	Carefully
Clearly	Competently	Competitively
Comprehensively	Concisely	Confidently
Consistently	Constructively	Correctly
Courteously	Creatively	Critically
Diplomatically	Discreetly	Dynamically
Effectively	Efficaciously	Efficiently
Energetically	Enthusiastically	Helpfully
Imaginatively	Impartially	Judiciously
Logically	Methodically	Passionately
Patiently	Persuasively	Politely
Politically	Positively	Precisely
Productively	Promptly	Punctually
Purposefully	Quickly	Rapidly
Reassuringly	Regularly	Reliably
Resourcefully	Responsibly	Responsively
Safely	Smoothly	Strategically
Successfully	Succinctly	Suitably
Supportively	Tactfully	Thoroughly

Or you could use adjectives instead, in phrases like

In an organised manner
In a friendly way
With a practical approach
With an open attitude

Some other useful adjectives:

Adaptable	Assertive	Caring
Collaborative	Commercial	Encouraging
Flexible	Inclusive	Open
Proactive	Professional	Sensitive
Sympathetic	Systematic	Versatile

Commonly misspelled words

These are the CORRECT spellings of words that people often get wrong in letters, CVs and application forms.

Accommodation	Appalling	Affect (verb)
Availability	Benefit	Defer / deferred
Definite, Definitely	Driving licence	Environment
Effect (noun)	Excellent	Experience
Extremely	Independent	Liaison
Necessary	Occur / Occurred	Opinion
Persuaded	Practice (noun) / practise (verb)*	Prefer / preferred
Professional	Receive	Recommend
Relevant	Responsibility	Successful

* the difference is the same as for advice / advise.

Help with grammar and English usage

If you are uncertain about the correct use of grammar and other aspects of English usage, you may find the following useful:

University of Surrey English Language Support Programmes

<http://www.surrey.ac.uk/languages/English/in.html>

University of Surrey Skills Pack <http://www.surrey.ac.uk/Skills/pack/contents.html>

BBC Grammar Guide <http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/grammar/>

The Open University offers free, online courses on more advanced aspects of writing at <http://openlearn.open.ac.uk>