THE ATS CV PLAYBOOK

How to Write a CV That Gets Shortlisted Instead of Ignored

Most people don't get rejected from jobs.
They get filtered out before a human even sees their CV.

Not because they are unqualified.
Not because they don't have skills.

But because their CV is written in a way that **ATS systems cannot read, cannot match, and cannot rank**.

This playbook exists to fix that permanently.

Not with creativity.
Not with fancy templates.
Not with storytelling.

With a **clear structure, strict rules, measurable achievements, and ATS-first thinking**.

If you follow this playbook exactly, your CV will:

1. **Pass ATS filters consistently**

2. **Get matched to job descriptions with higher accuracy**

3. **Look professional to recruiters**

4. **Show achievement instead of activity**

5. **Position you as a candidate worth interviewing**

If you ignore even 20 percent of the rules, you will:

• Look generic
• Get scored low
• Get ignored
• And blame your luck instead of your CV

I'll give you the truth.
And I won't sugar-coat anything.

Let's begin.

1. WHAT AN ATS CV REALLY IS (AND WHY MOST CVs FAIL)

Before you learn how to write a strong CV, you need to understand the enemy: **ATS systems**.

What is ATS?

Applicant Tracking System.
It scans your CV for:

- Keywords
- Skills
- Job titles
- Tools
- Dates
- Industry terms
- Experience relevance
- Structure
- Seniority signals

If it doesn't find what it needs, you're filtered out.

Why ATS rejects most CVs:

1. **Wrong format**
   Fancy templates, two-column designs, icons, tables = ATS confusion.

2. **Weak keyword match**
   If your CV doesn't use the words from the Job Description, ATS thinks you're irrelevant.

3. **Storytelling instead of achievements**
   Long paragraphs get ignored.

4. **Irrelevant skills**
   Random skills lower match percentage.

5. **Missing tools**
   ATS often matches based on software/tech/tool names.

6. **Bad bullet points**
   Most CVs describe responsibilities, not results.

7. **CV is too long**
   Freshers and comebackers writing two pages = instant rejection.

Here's the hard truth:
If you don't respect ATS rules, your CV never reaches a recruiter's screen.
This playbook forces you into the 10 percent who get seen.

2. THE ONLY CV STRUCTURE THAT WORKS

There are hundreds of ways to write a CV.
Only one is reliable for ATS.

This one:

1. **Header**

2. **Profile Summary**

3. **Core Competencies (Keywords)**

4. **Key Skills**

5. **Work Experience**

6. **Education**

7. **Certifications**

8. **Projects**

9. **Additional Information**

This structure works because:

• ATS reads it cleanly
• Recruiters can scan it fast
• It forces you to match keywords
• Every section has a purpose
• Nothing unnecessary stays inside

Every section is a lever to increase match percentage.
Let's break them one by one.

3. THE CV HEADER

Your header is not a design area.
It is not for creativity.
It exists for **identification**.

Correct format:

FULL NAME
Location (City, Country)
Phone | Email | LinkedIn | Portfolio/GitHub (optional)

Rules you MUST follow:

1. **Never write full address.**
   ATS does not need:
   House No., Street, PO Box, Pin code.

Just write:
Bangalore, India
or
London, UK

2. **Use a professional email.**
   No:
   cutegirl123@gmail.com
   princeforlife@gmail.com

Use first-name + last-name formats.

3. **LinkedIn must be updated.**
   A dead profile communicates incompetence.

4. **Phone number should include country code.**
   +91, +971, +234, +44 — depending on your region.

Common mistakes to DELETE permanently

- Photos
- Icons
- Coloured banners
- Decorative line breaks
- Two-column headers
- Social media handles (unless relevant)
- Date of birth
- Marital status
- Gender

These break ATS or invite bias.

4. PROFILE SUMMARY — THE MOST MISUSED SECTION

Most people destroy their CV right here.

They write:
"I am a hardworking, dedicated, passionate individual seeking opportunities to utilise my skills…"

This is how ATS reads it:

Garbage. Zero keywords. Zero relevance. Zero value.

Your summary must be:

- Under 80 words
- No personal pronouns
- No adjectives
- No stories
- No generic lines
- No future plans
- No life philosophy

Your summary exists ONLY for one purpose:
Keyword match + skill positioning + instant relevance.

Correct Summary Framework

1. Start with who you are professionally

Aspiring HR professional
Data Analyst trainee
Digital Marketing beginner
Junior Frontend Developer

2. Add your domain strength or area of focus

Talent acquisition
Power BI, Excel
Social media, content
React, JavaScript

3. Mention one achievement or proof (even small)

Handled campus hiring project
Built dashboards
Managed business pages
Built 3 portfolio components

4. Align with the target role — or the target role at a specific company if customising that application

Generic roles (best for bulk applications):
Looking for HR Assistant roles
Looking for Data Analyst opportunities
Looking for Social Media Executive positions
Looking for Frontend Developer roles

Company-specific (only when customising each application):
Looking for the HR Assistant role at Deloitte
Targeting the Data Analyst role at PwC
Applying for the Social Media Executive role at Nykaa
Aiming for the Frontend Developer position at Zoho

(Keep the company name at the **end**, not the beginning.)

Example

Aspiring HR professional building a strong foundation in recruitment, sourcing, and HR operations. Completed an academic research project on employee competency development and contributed to hiring tasks during training. Skilled in MS Office, coordination, communication, and documentation. Looking for the HR Assistant role at Deloitte to support structured recruitment workflows and daily HR functions.

Clear.
Precise.
ATS friendly.
Zero fluff.

Hard Rule:

Never cross 80 words.

5. CORE COMPETENCIES — THE SECRET ATS WEAPON

This is the most underestimated section.

This block alone can increase your ATS match rate by 25–40 percent.

Why?

Because ATS scans your CV for exact match keywords.

If the JD says:

• Stakeholder management
• Talent sourcing
• Boolean search
• HRIS
• Screening
• Onboarding

But your CV says none of these, ATS thinks you don't know them.

Rules for this section:

1. **Take these keywords directly from the job description.**
   Do NOT guess.
   Do NOT write broad phrases.
   Do NOT write tools you haven't touched.

2. **Keep it minimal: 5–7 items.**

3. **Format in a single line pattern:**
   HR Operations | Recruitment | Screening | Coordination | HRMS

What NOT to write here:

- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Interpersonal skills
- Hardworking
- Creative

These add ZERO ATS value.

6. KEY SKILLS — BUT WITH STRICT LIMITS

Most students misuse this section.

They dump 30 skills they found on Google.
ATS penalises this heavily.

You will list only:

Core Skills

5 items
Directly related to your domain.

Technical Skills

3–5 tools
Only if you have used them.

Soft Skills

Maximum 1–2
ONLY if they appear in the Job Description.

Examples:

Digital Marketing:
Core: Social Media Management, Content Writing, Analytics
Tech: Canva, Meta Business Suite
Soft: Communication

Data Analyst:
Core: Data Cleaning, Reporting, Dashboards
Tech: Excel, Power BI
Soft: Problem-solving

HR:
Core: Screening, Recruitment, HR Operations
Tech: MS Excel, ATS tools
Soft: Communication

Frontend Developer:
Core: HTML, CSS, JS
Tech: React, Git
Soft: NA (if JD doesn't ask)

Hard Rule:

Do not list tools you cannot demonstrate.
If a recruiter asks you one question about Tableau and you freeze, the interview is over.

7. WORK EXPERIENCE — THE MOST INFLUENTIAL SECTION

This is where 80 percent of ATS scoring happens.

Your bullet points must follow a strict formula:

Action Verb + Task + Method + Result

Examples:

• Improved LinkedIn engagement by 40 percent by creating weekly content calendars and executing targeted posting strategies.
• Reduced screening time by 30 percent by standardising resume sorting criteria and using basic Boolean filters.
• Built automated Excel templates that cut reporting time from 3 hours to 45 minutes per week.

Rules for bullet points:

1. **Max 40 words each.**
   If it feels long, you are storytelling.

2. **Minimum 2, maximum 4 bullets per role.**

3. **Never list responsibilities.**
   Only achievements.

4. **Use numbers wherever possible.**
   Numbers turn noise into proof.

5. **Use past tense for previous roles, present tense for current roles.**

6. **Follow reverse chronological order.**

7. **Dates must be in this format:**
   Jan 2023 – Present
   Not:
   January 2023 to Present
   Jan'23 – Present
   01/2023 – Present

ATS reads inconsistency as errors.

8. EDUCATION — SIMPLE, BUT EASY TO RUIN

Freshers, comebackers, and career switchers misuse this section constantly.

They write:

• Percentage
• CGPA
• Course details
• Hobbies
• Addresses
• Professors' names
• High school achievements
• Entire subject lists
• School projects
• Three-line descriptions
• Unnecessary history

ALL of this must be deleted.
Nobody cares.

Here is the ONLY format that works:

Degree | University Name | Location | Year

Examples:

BCom | Kerala University | Trivandrum, India | 2022
MBA (HR) | Nottingham Trent University | Nottingham, UK | 2024
BTech (CSE) | VTU | Bangalore, India | 2021

Rules:

1. **Do NOT add high school details** if you have a college degree.
   (If the JD specifically asks, you can add it, but 99 percent of roles don't require it.)

2. **Do NOT add descriptions** of your degree.
   "Studied advanced HR policies…"
   Nobody cares.

3. **Do NOT list irrelevant modules.**
   Add modules only if they align with the target role.

Correct examples:

Relevant Modules:
• HR Analytics
• Organisational Behaviour

For Data Analyst:

Relevant Modules:
• Statistics
• Data Visualisation

4. **Do NOT add GPA unless it's outstanding.**
   8+ or 80%+ only.
   Otherwise it weakens your profile.

9. CERTIFICATIONS & TRAINING — POWERFUL IF USED CORRECTLY

This is one of the most powerful sections for freshers and comebackers, but only if used properly.

The correct format is:

• Certification – Provider – Year
• Course – Platform – Year

Examples:

• HR Fundamentals – Coursera – 2024
• Excel Basics – Microsoft – 2023
• Meta Social Media Marketing – Meta – 2024
• Power BI Essential Training – LinkedIn Learning – 2023

Rules:

1. **Do NOT list more than 4–6 certifications.**
   Anything more looks like desperation.

2. **Do NOT add irrelevant certifications.**
   "Python for Beginners" on an HR CV?
   Pointless.

3. **Do NOT add certifications older than 5 years** unless they are directly relevant.

4. **Do NOT add fake course names** copied from YouTube.

5. **Do NOT mention incomplete courses.**
   Only finished ones.

Why this section matters:

• ATS reads certification keywords
• Recruiters use it to filter untrained candidates
• It strengthens a weak profile
• It shows effort and learning discipline

If you're a homemaker returning after a break, or a fresher without achievements, certifications become your "proof of seriousness".

10. PROJECTS — THE SECRET TO PROVING SKILLS WITHOUT EXPERIENCE

Most students list projects incorrectly.

They write essays.
Or they add 10 useless details.
Or they describe the process instead of the outcome.

Your project section must show:

1. **What you built**

2. **Why you built it**

3. **What result you achieved**

4. **What tools you used**

That's it.

Correct format:

Project Title
One-line objective + one-line result.
Key Tools: A, B, C

Examples:

HR Interview Tracker System
Created a structured interview evaluation tracker to standardise candidate scoring. Improved report clarity for hiring managers.
Key Tools: Excel, Forms

Social Media Revamp for a Small Business
Designed a 30-day content strategy that increased engagement by 45 percent.
Key Tools: Canva, Meta Business Suite

Sales Dashboard Project
Built a Power BI dashboard to visualise revenue trends and improve decision-making.
Key Tools: Power BI, Excel

Portfolio Website
Developed a personal website showcasing projects and skills.
Key Tools: HTML, CSS, JavaScript

Rules:

1. Max **1–3 projects** only.
2. Each project must have a **clear purpose**.
3. Each must show a **result**, even if small.
4. Tools must be **real**.
5. Never exceed **3–4 lines** per project.

Why Projects Matter:

For freshers, projects carry more weight than education.
For comebackers, projects prove readiness.
For career switchers, projects make the transition believable.

When there's no experience, projects become your experience.

11. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION — A SECTION THAT CAN EITHER HELP YOU OR EMBARRASS YOU

This section looks optional, but recruiters check it more than you think.

Use this section to show:

- Languages
- Relevant tools
- Professional interests
- Availability
- Nationality (only if visa-dependent)

Correct format:

Languages: English (Fluent), Hindi (Native), Malayalam (Beginner)
Tools: MS Office, Google Workspace
Interests: Business books, creative writing, personal finance
Availability: Immediate

Rules:

1. **Do NOT list hobbies like dancing, cricket, cooking, movies, travelling.**
   You are not in a school competition.

2. **Do NOT list tools you don't know.**

3. **Do NOT list religion, caste, marital status, family details.**
   Instant red flags.

4. **Do NOT make this section longer than 3–4 lines.**

12. FORMATTING RULES — THE NON-NEGOTIABLE PART

Every single formatting mistake you make reduces your ATS readability score.

These are absolute rules.

RULE 1: NO TABLES, TEXT BOXES, SHAPES, ICONS OR TWO-COLUMN LAYOUTS

ATS cannot read these correctly.
Canva templates fail because of this.

RULE 2: FONT MUST BE STANDARD

Use only:

- Arial
- Calibri
- Helvetica

Size:

- 10–11 for content
- 12–14 bold for headings

RULE 3: NO COLOURS

Stick to black text on white background.

RULE 4: NO UNDERLINES EXCEPT FOR LINKS

Underlines confuse ATS as possible hyperlinks.

RULE 5: ONE PAGE ONLY

Unless you have 7+ years of experience.
Freshers and comebackers always stick to one page.

RULE 6: PROPER SPACING

Leave enough whitespace for recruiters to breathe.
But not so much that your CV looks empty.

RULE 7: SAVE AS PDF ALWAYS

Unless the employer asks for DOCX.

RULE 8: FILE NAME MUST BE CLEAN

Bad:
newcv_final_final_revised_2024.pdf
resume1.pdf

Good:
Rahul_Menon_CV.pdf
Amrita_Sharma_HR_Assistant_CV.pdf

13. THE MOST COMMON CV MISTAKES (AND HOW TO FIX THEM)

Here is the brutal truth:
Most CVs don't fail because they lack skills.
They fail because of avoidable stupidity.

Mistake 1: Writing Responsibilities Instead of Achievements

Bad:
• Responsible for managing social media
• Worked on Excel
• Helped HR team
• Responsible for recruiting

Fix:
• Increased reach by 40 percent
• Automated Excel reports
• Completed end-to-end hiring for 12 roles

Mistake 2: Using Generic Soft Skills

Delete:
Teamwork
Hardworking
Leadership
Multitasking
Fast learner

These are not skills.
They are basic expectations.

Mistake 3: Writing Long Paragraphs

No paragraph in a CV should exceed 2–3 lines.
Paragraphs kill readability.

Mistake 4: Adding Too Many Skills

25 skills = zero credibility.
ATS sees it as "keyword stuffing".

Mistake 5: Lying About Tools

Recruiters test you instantly.
Fail once — you're done.

Mistake 6: Two-Page CV for a Fresher

Instant rejection in most cases.

Mistake 7: Copying CVs from Google or Canva

ATS = failure.
Recruiter = confused.
Outcome = rejection.

Mistake 8: Random capitalisation and inconsistent formatting

Makes you look careless.

A CV is a **quality test**.
If your document is sloppy, recruiters assume your work will also be sloppy.

14.   THE BULLET POINT WRITING SYSTEM

Here is the hard truth:
Most bullet points are useless.

They describe tasks, not achievements.
They describe responsibilities, not outcomes.
They describe activity, not impact.

A bullet point is not a story.
It is not a diary note.
It is not a job description.

A bullet point exists for only one purpose:

To prove value.

And there is only one formula that works:

ACTION VERB + TASK + METHOD + RESULT

Examples of action verbs:

- Improved
- Reduced
- Increased
- Executed
- Built
- Managed
- Designed
- Analysed
- Created
- Delivered
- Coordinated
- Optimised

These are strong, measurable, high-power words.

Examples (BAD to GOOD)

Bad:
• Worked on social media posts

Good:
• Increased page engagement by 40 percent by creating weekly content calendars and optimising posting times.

Bad:
• Helped in recruitment

Good:
• Executed end-to-end recruitment for 8 roles by screening CVs, coordinating interviews, and managing candidate communication.

Bad:
• Worked on Power BI dashboards

Good:
• Built automated dashboards in Power BI to visualise revenue trends and reduce reporting time by 60 percent.

Bad:
• Handled Excel sheets

Good:
• Cleaned and organised datasets to improve reporting accuracy and cut manual errors by 30 percent.

Bad:
• Managed customer queries

Good:
• Resolved an average of 15 customer queries per day, improving satisfaction ratings by ensuring 100 percent follow-up closure.

Rules for every bullet point:

1. **Use numbers whenever possible.**
   Numbers are proof.

2. **Never exceed 40 words.**
   If you exceed this, you're rambling.

3. **Start with a strong verb.**
   Never begin with "Responsible for".

4. **Focus on impact.**
   What changed because of you?

5. **Align with the Job Description (JD).**
   If JD says "reporting", your bullet must reflect reporting.
   If JD says "coordination", your bullet must show coordination.

6. **Use present tense for current roles**
   Use past tense for older roles.

Checklist for a perfect bullet point:

[ ] Does it start with a strong action verb?
[ ] Does it show a measurable or visible impact?
[ ] Does it include a method or tool?
[ ] Does it relate to the target job?
[ ] Is it under 40 words?
[ ] Does it avoid storytelling?
[ ] Does it avoid responsibilities?

If anything is missing, rewrite it.

15. HOW TO REWRITE A WEAK CV INTO A STRONG ONE

The biggest challenge for most candidates is this:

"My profile is weak."
or
"I don't have achievements."

Wrong.
You do.
You just don't know how to express them.

Here is how to transform weak statements into strong ones.

Weak Statement Types:

1. Responsibilities

2. Tasks

3. Team statements

4. General activities

5. Unmeasurable contributions

Let's take each one.

1. Turning Responsibilities into Achievements

Weak:
• Responsible for managing calls

Rewrite:
• Handled 20–25 customer calls per day and resolved 90 percent of issues within the first interaction.

Weak:
• Responsible for data entry

Rewrite:
• Entered and validated 300+ records weekly with 99 percent accuracy using Excel.

Weak:
• Responsible for content

Rewrite:
• Created and published 15+ posts monthly across social platforms, increasing reach by 30 percent.

2. Turning Tasks into Impact

Weak:
• Prepared reports

Rewrite:
• Automated weekly reports using Excel formulas, reducing preparation time from 3 hours to 45 minutes.

Weak:
• Conducted interviews

Rewrite:
• Conducted initial screening for 50+ candidates and shortlisted top profiles based on predefined criteria.

3. Turning Team Contributions into Personal Achievements

Weak:
• Part of the digital marketing team

Rewrite:
• Collaborated with a 3-member team to plan and execute a 30-day content strategy that increased engagement by 45 percent.

Weak:
• Worked with HR team

Rewrite:
• Supported the HR team by coordinating interviews, maintaining tracker updates, and ensuring smooth candidate experience.

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4. Turning "General" Work into Measurable Work

Weak:
• Helped with operations

Rewrite:
• Supported daily operations by maintaining schedules, updating trackers, and coordinating with 5+ departments.

Weak:
• Assisted with hiring

Rewrite:
• Assisted end-to-end hiring for entry-level roles by screening CVs, organising interviews, and updating recruitment dashboards.

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5. Turning Career Break or Homemaker Experience into Professional Value

This is where comebackers struggle.
But the truth is:
A break does not destroy your profile.
Poor communication does.

Here's how to turn homemaker / career gap experience into strength.

Weak:
• Career gap for personal reasons

Rewrite professionally:
Career Break | 2020–2023
Focused on family responsibilities while maintaining professional readiness through self-learning in digital marketing, MS Office, and communication skills.

Weak:
• Homemaker

Rewrite:
Career Break | 2019–2024
Managed household operations, budgeting, planning, coordination, and daily problem-solving while completing certifications in HR operations and communication.

Key rule:

Never apologise for a break.
Never justify it emotionally.
State it professionally.
Show continued learning.

16.   HOW FRESHERS CAN COMPETE AGAINST EXPERIENCED CANDIDATES

Freshers complain:
"Sir, I don't have experience."

Reality:
You don't have experience because you don't know how to create it.

Here is how freshers build a strong CV:

1. Build Skill-Based Projects

Don't wait for a job to build experience.
You can build projects anytime.

Digital marketing:
Create a mock brand campaign.
Optimise a page.
Audit a brand.

Data analyst:
Analyse a sample dataset.
Build dashboards.
Clean data.
Present insights.

HR:
Create interview trackers.
Build hiring process flowcharts.
Prepare job descriptions.
Build HR templates.

Frontend:
Build 3 components.
Build a simple portfolio website.
Create a landing page.

2. Take Internships (Virtual or micro internships)

Your placement guarantee engine already gives this.
Use it properly.

3. Add certifications that actually matter

Not random courses.
Domain-specific, skill-building, tool-based certifications.

4. Write projects like achievements

Bad:
• Completed HR project on employee satisfaction

Good:
• Analysed survey responses from 120 employees and identified key factors influencing satisfaction using Excel.

5. Use STAR thinking even for projects

Situation
Task
Action
Result

Example:

Situation: A small business has low engagement
Task: Improve reach
Action: Built strategy
Result: Engagement up 45 percent

Convert this into a bullet point:
• Increased engagement by 45 percent by designing and executing a 30-day content strategy for a small business page.

17. HOW COMEBACKERS CAN BUILD CREDIBILITY FAST

This part is critical for homemakers and people returning after a gap.

Recruiters judge comebackers harshly on:

- Confidence
- Relevance
- Skills
- Readiness

You fix all of these with:

1. **Certifications**

2. **Projects**

3. **Internships**

4. **Strong bullet points**

5. **Correct summary**

Here's the correct comeback summary formula:

"Aspiring [Role] returning to the workforce after a structured learning phase. Skilled in [skills/tools], experienced in managing [relevant experiences from life], and recently completed [project/internship]. Seeking [role] to apply skills and gain practical experience."

Example:

Aspiring HR professional returning to the workforce with foundational skills in screening, communication, and coordination. Completed training in HR operations and recruitment, along with hands-on internship tasks using Excel and applicant tracking tools. Seeking HR Assistant roles to apply learning and gain structured experience.

Clear.
Confident.
No apology.
No emotional language.
Just direction.

18. HOW TO HANDLE CAREER SWITCHES WITHOUT LOOKING LOST

Career switchers panic because their previous experience looks irrelevant. But here's the truth:

Every job has transferable skills.

You just need to translate your old skills into the new domain language.

Examples:

Sales → HR
Customer communication → Candidate communication
Pipeline follow-up → Interview coordination
CRM updating → ATS updating

Teaching → Digital Marketing
Explaining concepts → Creating content
Planning lessons → Planning campaigns
Engaging students → Engaging audiences

Operations → Data Analyst
Process optimisation → Data-driven insights
Tracking updates → Reporting
Monitoring workflows → Analysing patterns

Your job is to **translate**, not hide.

19. HOW TO PROVE VALUE WITHOUT Big Achievements

Not every role gives you big numbers.

But every role gives you:

• A task
• A process
• A method
• An outcome

You must turn these into measurable statements.

If numbers are not available, use:

• Faster
• Better
• Improved accuracy
• Reduced errors
• Streamlined
• Standardised
• Enhanced clarity
• Supported end-to-end

These are measurable without exact metrics.

20. A COMPLETE ATS-FRIENDLY CV EXAMPLE

Below is a model CV that follows every rule from this playbook.
This is the level your students must aim for.

FULL NAME
Bangalore, India
+91 XXXXX XXXXX | email@email.com
LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/name | Portfolio (optional)

PROFILE SUMMARY (Under 80 words)

Aspiring HR professional with skills in recruitment, screening, candidate coordination, and HR operations. Completed HR operations training and contributed to hiring activities through internship tasks involving Excel, trackers, and communication workflows. Strong in documentation, follow-ups, and interview scheduling. Seeking an HR Assistant role at Deloitte to apply HR fundamentals and support end-to-end recruitment processes.

CORE COMPETENCIES (ATS Keywords)

Recruitment | Screening | HR Operations | Coordination | Candidate Communication | Excel

KEY SKILLS

Core Skills:
• Recruitment
• Screening
• HR Coordination
• Documentation
• Communication

Technical Skills:
• MS Excel
• ATS Tools
• Google Workspace

Soft Skills (JD-specific):
• Time management
• Attention to detail

WORK EXPERIENCE

HR Intern | Zylentrix | Remote | Aug 2024 – Present
• Screened and shortlisted 80+ candidates using predefined criteria, improving the initial match accuracy for hiring managers.

• Coordinated interviews across 3 timezones using structured follow-ups, ensuring 95 percent candidate attendance.
• Maintained candidate trackers in Excel, improving weekly reporting clarity and reducing update errors by 30 percent.
• Prepared job descriptions and posting templates aligned with business needs.

Customer Support Associate | Local Business | Kerala | Jan 2023 – May 2024
• Resolved 20–25 customer queries daily through structured communication and follow-up.
• Improved response consistency by maintaining detailed call logs and feedback reports.
• Handled billing issues with 98 percent accuracy using Excel-based tracking systems.

EDUCATION

MBA (HR) | IGNOU | India | 2024
BCom | Kerala University | India | 2021

CERTIFICATIONS & TRAINING

• HR Fundamentals – Coursera – 2024
• Recruitment & Talent Acquisition – LinkedIn Learning – 2024
• Excel for Workplace – Microsoft – 2023

PROJECTS

Interview Tracker Automation
Built a structured Excel tracker for interview scoring and status updates, improving clarity and reducing manual errors.
Key Tools: Excel, Forms

JD–CV Mapping Exercise
Created a mapping framework to align skills and experience with job descriptions for improved match rate.
Key Tools: Excel, JD Analysis

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Languages: English, Hindi, Malayalam
Tools: Excel, Google Workspace, ATS (basic)
Availability: Immediate

This is how a clean ATS CV looks:
No noise.

No fancy design.
No unnecessary text.
Just clarity, structure, and proof.

21. WEAK CV VS STRONG CV (SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON)

Most students cannot judge their own CV quality.
They think everything they write "sounds good".

This section shows why most CVs fail.

1. Summary Section

Weak Summary:
"I am a hardworking, dedicated individual looking for an opportunity in HR where I can utilise my skills and grow with the organisation. I am passionate about HR and good at communication."

Problems:
• No keywords
• No skills
• No experience
• No proof
• Emotional language
• Zero ATS value

Strong Summary:
"Aspiring HR professional with skills in screening, recruitment coordination, and documentation. Completed HR operations training and contributed to candidate sourcing and interview scheduling tasks. Skilled in communication, Excel, and follow-ups. Seeking an HR Assistant role at Deloitte to support end-to-end recruitment processes."

Why strong:
• 100 percent keyword-aligned
• ATS-friendly
• Clear and confident
• Value-focused
• Under 80 words

2. Bullet Points

Weak:
• Responsible for helping HR team
• Worked on Excel

- Did screening
- Coordinated interviews

Strong:

- Screened and shortlisted 80+ candidates using predefined criteria, improving match accuracy.
- Coordinated interviews across 3 timezones, achieving 95 percent attendance.
- Maintained candidate trackers, reducing reporting errors by 30 percent.

Why strong:

- Measurable
- Action verbs
- Methods + results
- JD-aligned

3. Skills Section

Weak:

- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Hardworking
- Communication
- Excel
- Social Media
- Time Management
- Dedication
- Multitasking
- Decision-making

This list is meaningless.
It's a collection of random Google keywords.

Strong:

Core: Recruitment, Screening, Candidate Coordination, Documentation
Tech: Excel, ATS Tools, Google Workspace
Soft: Time management (Listed ONLY if in JD)

Why strong:

- Lean
- Relevant
- JD-based
- ATS-readable

22. HOW TO TAILOR YOUR CV TO ANY JOB DESCRIPTION (THE JD-MATCH FRAMEWORK)

Applying with the same CV for every role is the fastest way to get ignored.

You must adapt your CV to every job description (JD).
But this does not mean rewriting everything.

Use this 5-step JD-Match Framework.

Step 1: Identify Keywords in the JD

Look for skills, tools, tasks, and domain terms.

Example:
• Screening
• Recruitment
• Communication
• Excel
• Interview coordination
• HRIS

These become your **Core Competencies**.

Step 2: Match Skills Section to JD

Your skills must reflect the JD using exact wording.

Example:
JD says: "Candidate communication"
Your CV should say: "Candidate communication"

Even a small mismatch reduces ATS score.

Step 3: Rewrite 1–2 Bullet Points to Match JD Tasks

If JD says:

"Maintain candidate pipelines"

Rewrite a bullet as:

• Maintained structured candidate pipelines using Excel and ATS tools.

Step 4: Add Relevant Tools

If JD mentions:

- Excel
- Google Workspace
- ATS

You MUST include them as long as you know them.

Step 5: Rewrite Summary to Match The Role

Example JD: HR Assistant
Rewrite summary:

Aspiring HR professional with skills in screening, documentation, coordination, and HR operations. Skilled in Excel and candidate communication. Seeking HR Assistant roles to support end-to-end recruitment workflows.

Takes 20 seconds.
Improves ATS match by 40–60 percent.

23. TROUBLESHOOTING — IF YOU GET ZERO INTERVIEW CALLS

Here is the truth:
If you apply to 100 jobs and receive **zero** responses, your CV has one or more of these issues:

1. Your Skills Don't Match the JD

Solution:
Rewrite skills + competencies based on the JD.

2. Your Summary is Weak

Solution:
Rewrite using the summary framework.
Ensure ATS keywords appear early.

3. Your Bullet Points are Activity-Based, Not Impact-Based

Solution:
Rewrite bullets using the Action Verb + Task + Method + Result formula.

4. Your CV Format Is Breaking ATS

Solution:
Remove:
- Columns
- Icons
- Tables

- Canva design elements
- Coloured sections

Use a clean one-column layout only.

5. Your Project Section Is Missing or Irrelevant

Solution:
Add 1–3 domain-related projects.

6. Your Certifications Are Outdated or Irrelevant

Solution:
Add 2–4 fresh certifications.

7. Your File Name is unprofessional

Solution:
Rename to:
Firstname_Lastname_CV.pdf

8. You Are Lying About Skills

Solution:
Remove tools you don't know.
Recruiters test instantly.

9. Your English is unprofessional

Solution:
Rewrite summary + bullets in simple, clean language.

10. You Didn't Tailor the CV to the JD

Solution:
Follow JD-Match Framework.

24.   THE FINAL 20-POINT ATS CV CHECKLIST

Before you apply for any job, check all 20 points.

If even one fails, FIX it.

FORMAT CHECK

[ ] 1. One to Two page CV
[ ] 2. Clean, single-column layout
[ ] 3. No icons, tables, shapes, boxes
[ ] 4. Standard fonts (Arial/Calibri/Helvetica)

[ ] 5. Font size 10–11
[ ] 6. PDF format

HEADER CHECK

[ ] 7. City + Country only
[ ] 8. Professional email
[ ] 9. Updated LinkedIn

SUMMARY CHECK

[ ] 10. Under 80 words
[ ] 11. Contains clear JD keywords
[ ] 12. Uses no personal pronouns

SKILLS CHECK

[ ] 13. No more than 5 core skills
[ ] 14. Only real technical tools
[ ] 15. Soft skills ONLY if JD requires

EXPERIENCE CHECK

[ ] 16. Strong action verbs
[ ] 17. Bullet points < 40 words
[ ] 18. Impact + method + results

PROJECT & CERTIFICATION CHECK

[ ] 19. 1–3 relevant projects
[ ] 20. 2–4 relevant certifications

If all 20 boxes are checked, your CV is shortlist-ready.

CONCLUSION

A CV is not a list of your history.
It is not a creative document.
It is not a biography.
It is **a marketing tool**.

It exists for one purpose:

To get you an interview.

Nothing more.
Nothing less.

And the only CV that gets interviews today is:

- ATS-friendly
- Keyword aligned
- Achievement-focused
- Professional
- Lean
- Clean
- Structured
- Backed by projects
- Supported by clear skills
- Tailored to each JD

If you follow this playbook exactly, you will outperform 90 percent of job seekers.

If you skip steps, guess, decorate, or copy Canva templates, you will get filtered out.

The difference between rejection and selection begins with this document.

Master it.
Respect it.
Use it properly.

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