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How-to applications in Germany

Your career starts today.

Manuel Rothenberger (version of April 9th, 2026)

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Where do I start my application process?

Applying is often overwhelming. Many companies don‘t answer. You might not be sure which parts of your life are worth it to talk about or how to shorten it to fit. So let‘s start this journey together at exactly this question. Where do I start?

Once we got ourselves an overview and find a nice starting point, everything else will slowly fall into place.

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The usual look at the application process

Search

- What do you **need**?
- What can you **find**?

Application

- What do **they want**?
- What can **you offer**?

Interview

- What do **they** want to know?
- What do **you** want to know?

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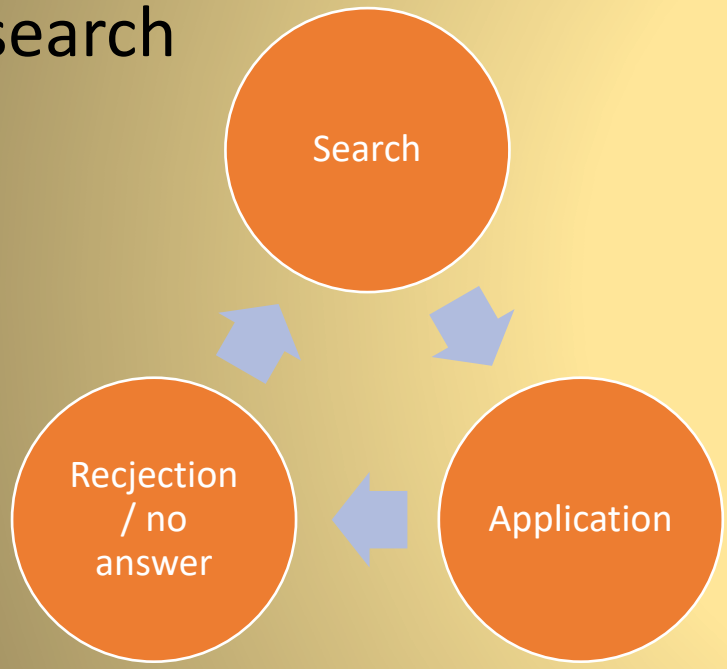
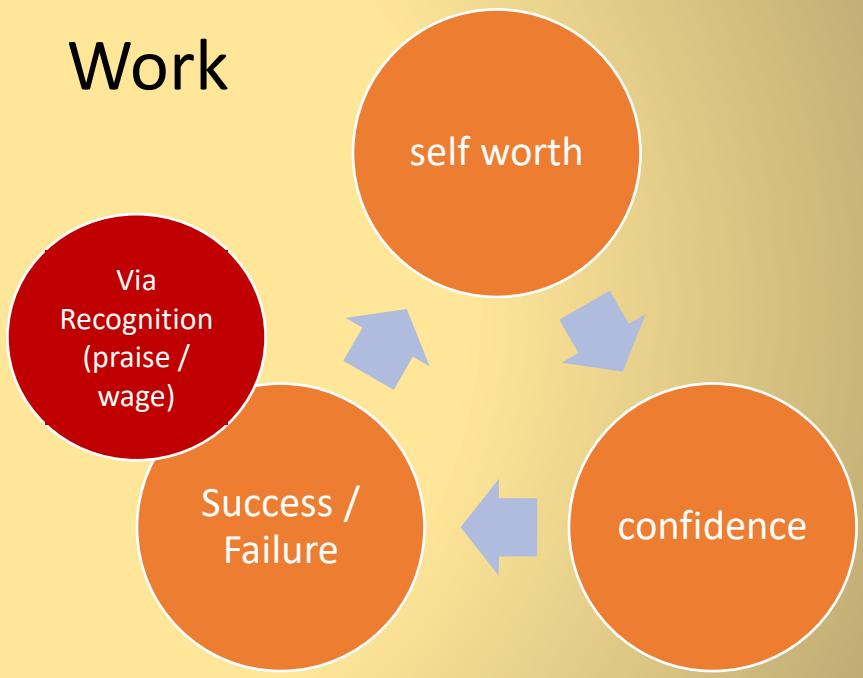
But is it a straight line or a vicious cycle?

Job search



Work



These patterns are very similar. And they are toxic. Let‘s see, how we can escape them. We might learn from this, how our job search should start

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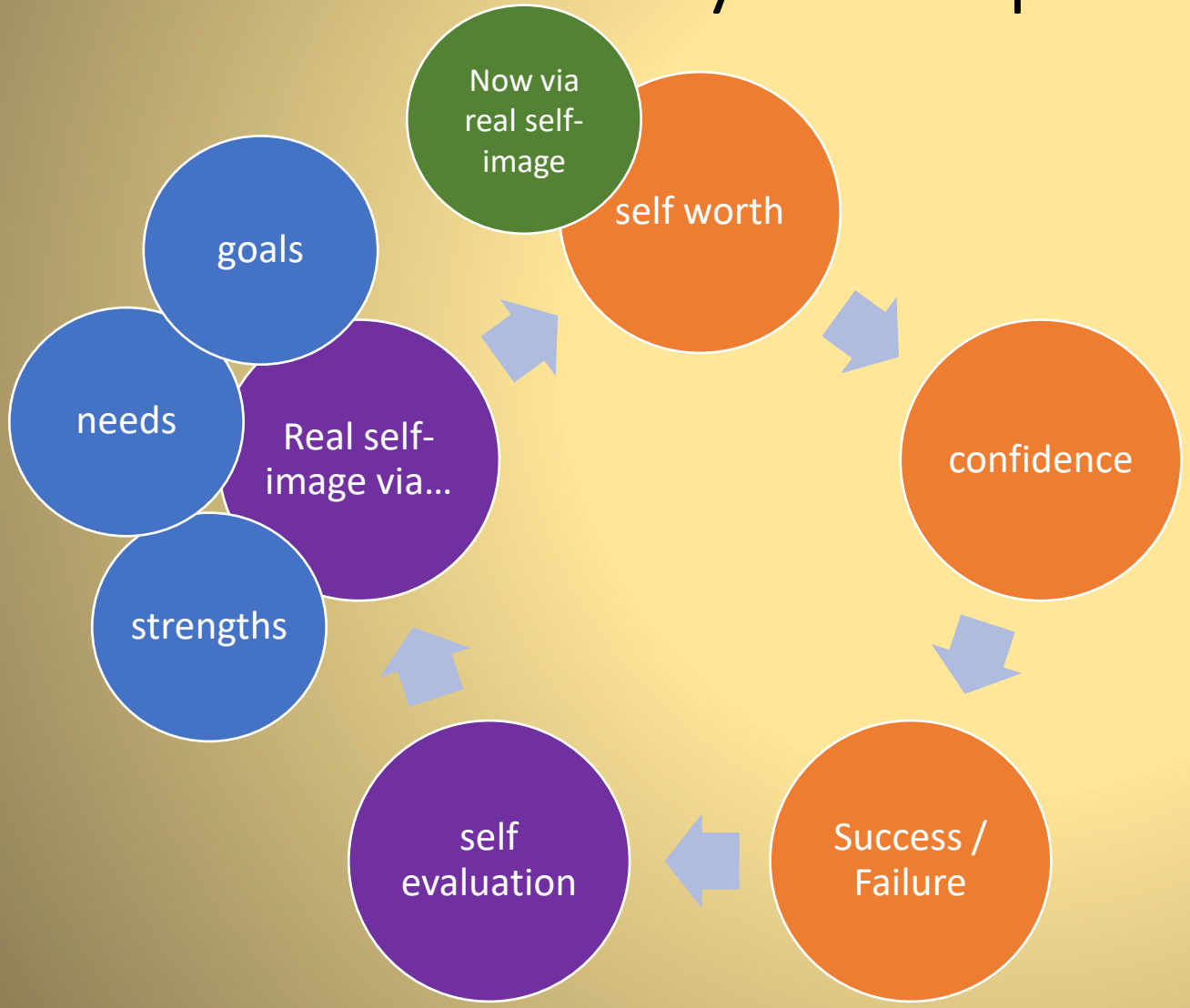
From a vicious cycle to periodic growth!



Let‘s add two more stages. After each success/failure we should evaluate ourselves. This enables us to do another second stage – create a real self-image. This consists of our goas, needs, strengths and possibly more! So we need to know more about ourselves.

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Your reality

What can I do reliably?
- Qualifications
- Experience
- Languages

Physical / Mental Requirements
- Health
- Strength
- (dis-)abilities

Which role(s) is/are natural to me? E.g.:
- Executor (gets things started)
- Critic (asks questions that might hurt)
- Supporter (keeps things flowing)
- Creator (brings new ideas)
- Stabilizer (stays calm)

How do I work personally?
- Responsibility
- Multitasking / one task at a time
- Treatment of knowledge gaps

How am I organized?
- Time management
- Information management
- Use of digital media

Handling of complex situations
- Resilience
- Decision making
- Priorities in contradicting requirements

How do I work in a team?
- Conflict management
- Situational communication
- Clarity of tasks / room for individuality

What is important to me?
- Ethical and moral values
- Quick job vs. more money / safety
- Work flows and documentation style

Weaknesses
- Downsides of your role(s)
- Lack of experience
- Bad management

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Search for your own self …

Write one whole page about you (see “Your reality”), at least about:

- Strengths
- Experience
- Knowledge
- Abilities
- Personality traits
- Goals

Important: Stop to use adjectives that just sound nice. Instead, reflect your own life and behavior patterns to your advantage. Take your list about you and think about the usefulness for the employer. Understand that competencies are stable patterns of consistent behavior and not properties from the shelf. One time does not make it knowledge but a first contact experience.

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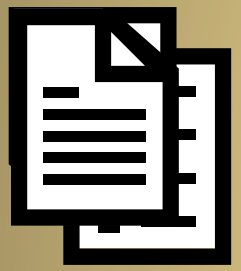
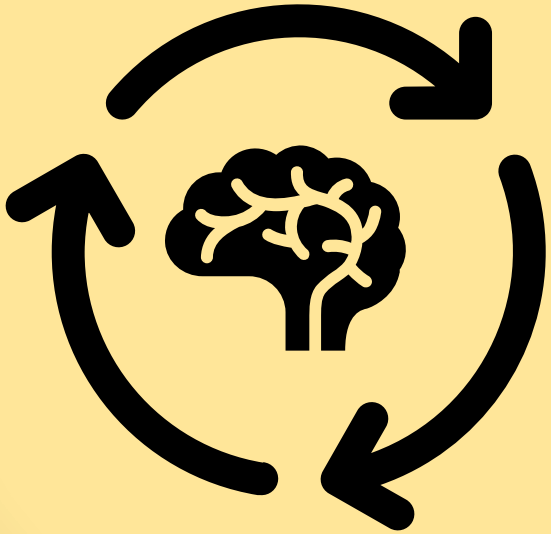
… then search for a job



Update your info
- CV
- Online (LinkedIn)
- Newsletters



Get Active!
- Offline Events (e.g. fairs)
- Search for companies (ads, google, etc.)
- Check out companies online
- Networking

Learn from your results
- Typical phrases
- Job descriptions
- Adjacent tasks

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Your search process: think it through!

- You want results in German and from Germany – use German!
- English searches will give you results from all kinds of countries and cultures (including but not limited to: USA, Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Australia and lots of countries in Asia and Africa where English is a second every day language)
- Consider medium and small companies. 90% of the German job market is made of medium and small companies – especially medium, so called “Mittelstand”. If you don’t consider those companies, you eliminate 90% of your job chances.

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Organize your process (example!)

Company name	Industry	Homepage	Social Media	Priority	Last check	Notes

Keep track of

- the companies you have already checked out,
- the industry they are part of
- where you can find information about them (homepage, social media channels),
- how high the priority is to check them out regularly,
- when you checked last time for new positions, and
- notes of whatever you recognize and deem important to keep in mind

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Organize your process (example!)

Position	Company	Link to job offer	Application deadline	Aplication channel	When sent	Answer	Planned call on status

Keep track of

- the positions you found that are interesting for you,
- the companies that published them,
- the link to the job offer,
- the application deadline,
- the channel via which you sent your application documents (e-mail, online platform, post),
- when you sent out your application,
- what the answer was (invitation to interview, refusal), and
- when you plan to contact them to ask them for an update if you did not get any answer yet (7 – 10 days after deadline, or around 2 - 3 weeks when there was no deadline)

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Networking – basics

- LinkedIn is a tool for visibility, continuity, and professional exchange. You can build up and keep a network and show interest (without self-promotion).
- Posting is optional; reacting thoughtfully is often more effective.
- Engage when you can add value: ask relevant questions, share perspectives, acknowledge others.
- A network grows through repeated, low-pressure interactions over time with calm presence, availability and give-and-take (not with a high frequency!).
- You put in effort without being able to see what effect it will have much later. “Speed-running” it is not possible.

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Networking – framework

- More than half of your network should consist of “real” contacts (people who know your work or have interacted with you meaningfully).
- Other contacts can become real over time through continued interaction.
- Keep your profile professional, clear, and context-appropriate.

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Networking – new contacts

- Connect with people you meet in relevant professional contexts (conferences, workshops, projects).
- When discovering people online, engage with their content first. Be useful, don't requests – maybe over time you build a relationship or you get into an actual conversation.
- Send connection requests when there is context — and mention that context.
- A connection request should never be the start of a relationship — it should be a continuation.

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Networking – stay in contact

- You don’t need frequent or direct messages.
- Avoid empty small talk or “just checking in”.
- React selectively when you have something useful to add.
- Silence is fine — but disappearance is not. Presence should be calm, not absent.
- Familiarity grows through usefulness, reliability, and calm presence — not demands.

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Networking at the university

ORTE

Twice per year, January and June

Freiberger Alumni Netzwerk

Guest

Campus specialist

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Evaluation of job offers

Target of the company: Laws, goals and culture of the company, tasks for you

Check for…

- Tasks
- Competencies, experience
- Framework (times, location)
- Contact information for questions
- Application process
- Expectations towards application documents (extent, wage, availability, etc.)

… and ask yourself:

- What is necessary / desirable?
- Is this something I want to do?
- Does the paycheck pay my bills?
- Can I reach my workplace or do I need to move?
- What are the working hours?
- How long will the contract last?
- What do you (not) know?

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Evaluation of job offers – what to look out for

- A good job offer will tell you the difference between demanded skills and nice-to-have but optional skills. Look out for words that make difference. If there is none, it's probably not optional. This does not mean that you can't apply, but the chances go down. For sure you should not just act as if you have skills that you don't have yet. You can mention that you are open to learn them, but you should not give them more space than that.
- If there is a name as a contact you should probably use it to address this person in a cover letter and e-mail. Even if this person will not be the one that checks your documents it will be better than a general one like "dear sir or madam".
- Write down details and words that you deem important, either for the cover / motivation letter or for your future job search. Keep in mind, though: repeating words like a parrot will be obvious. If you did not have contact with specific tasks or terms then you should not focus on them.

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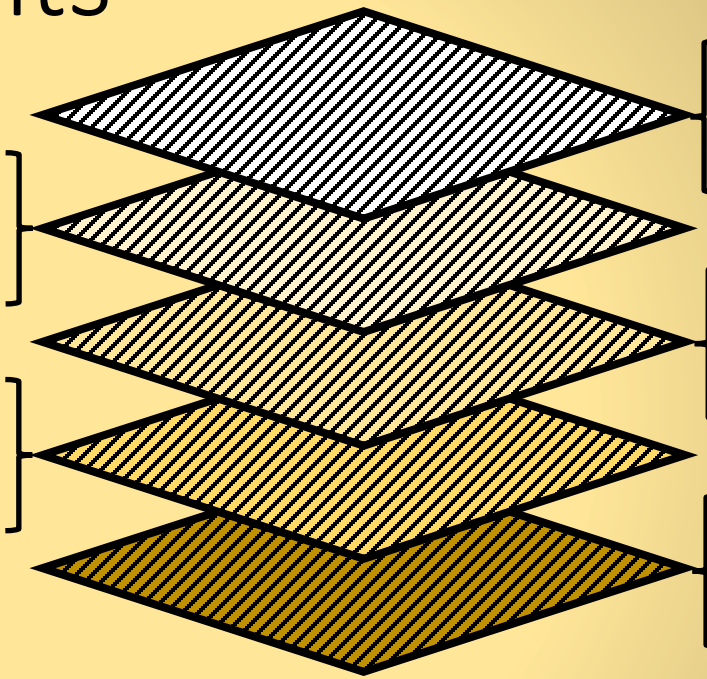
Application documents

Purpose of those documents:
- easy overview of your life,
- most relevant stations,
- important skill sets



Cover sheet
- ➢ 1 page

Cover letter / motivation letter
- ➢ 1 page

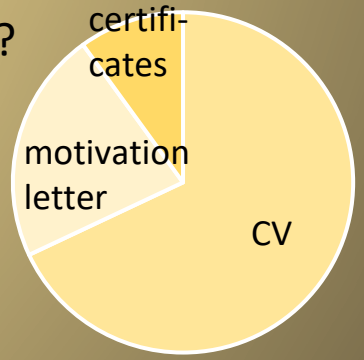
CV / resume
- ➢ 1-3 pages by context

Certificates
- ➢ only relevant

References
- ➢ last 10 years
- ➢ only relevant

- ❖ Should be in German for a German position
- ❖ Individualize for every application process
- ❖ Anti-chronological order within each layer
- ❖ Uniform layout in the documents you created
- ❖ Good fonts: Arial, Verdana, Times New Roman
- ❖ PDFs
- ❖ **Avoid Europass!** It‘s obvious when you use it, it does not look good and you claim to know how to use MS Word – then use it!

What do HR base their decision on?



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Application documents

Cover letter (Anschreiben) vs. motivation letter (Motivationsschreiben)

- A **cover letter** explains, why your life prepared you for the job you are applying for. It explains why you are the best person for the tasks that need be done and leads through your life stations.
- A **motivation letter** explains, what your motivation and intention is to apply for a role or learning opportunity. It can refer to life stations but is much more “soft” in its approach. In a way you explain your life choices.
- In **Germany** a cover letter is much more common. You should always check what

Curriculum vitae / CV vs. resume

- A CV is a full overview of your education, work experience, scholarships, projects, skills, etc. In general it is only used for academic positions and can be as long as 3 pages.
- A resume is a short (1 page) overview of only those stations and skills that are needed for the position.
- In **Germany** a CV is more common, but it should still only be up to 2 pages right after completing your education.

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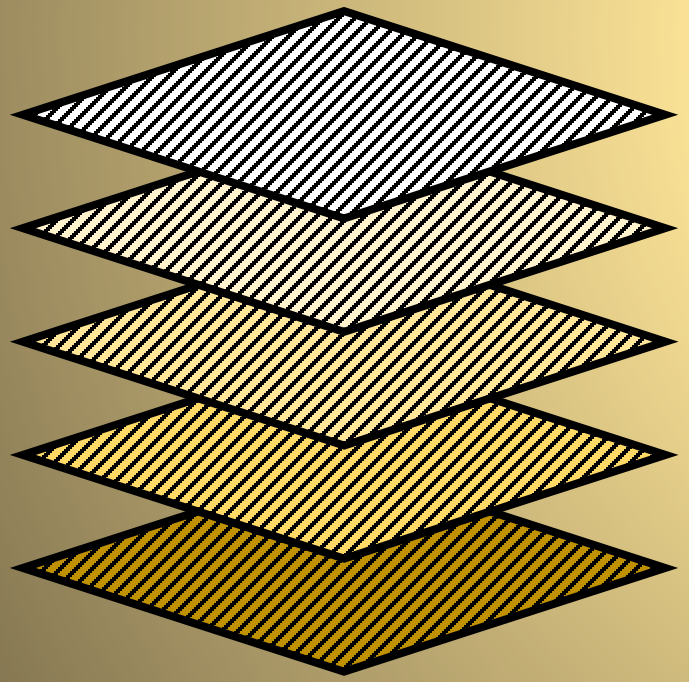
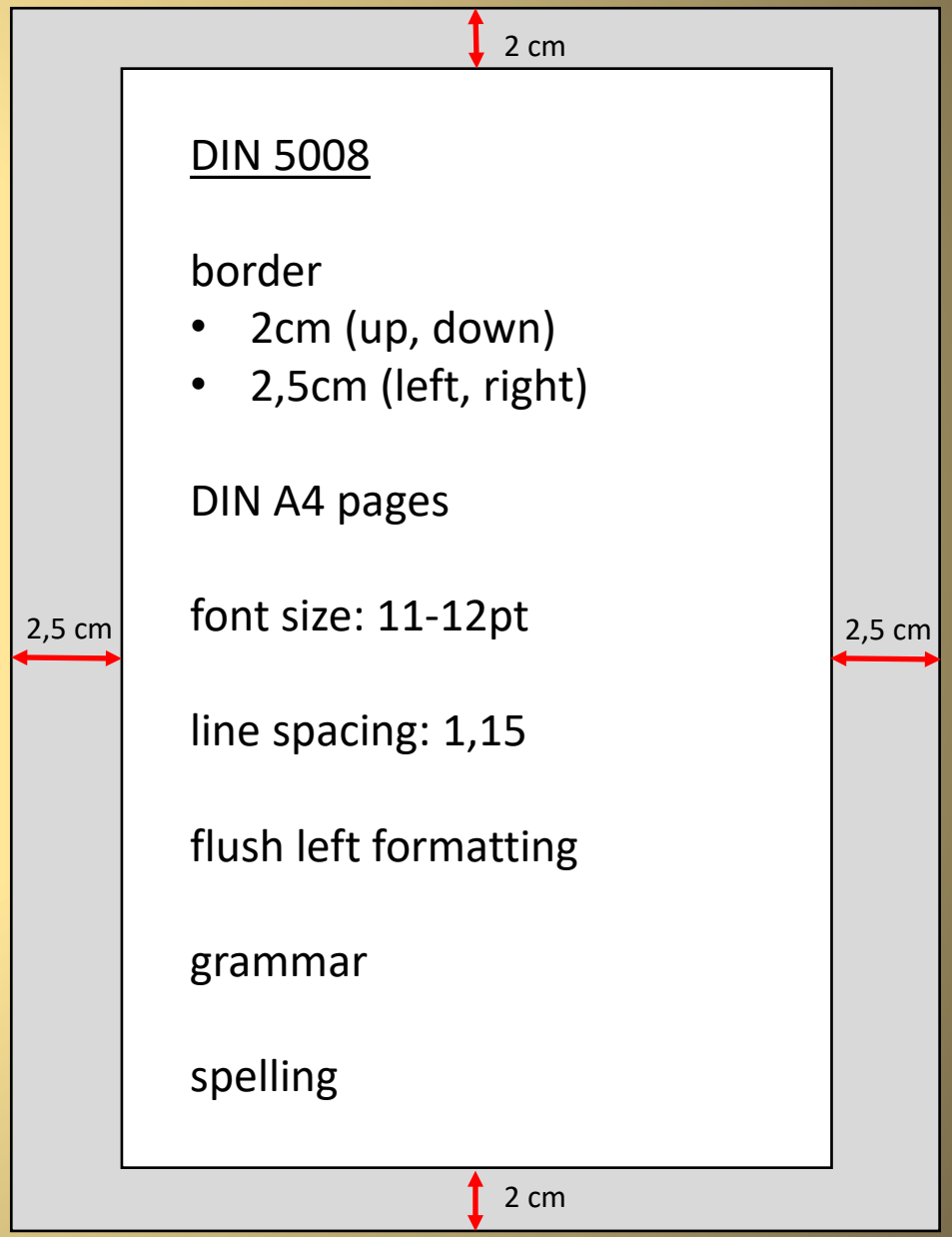
Application documents



Different tools can be used to create cover letters and CVs. We will have a look at a few often used tools and how they help:

- MS Office
- LaTeX
- Canva
- Europass
- flowcv, novoresume



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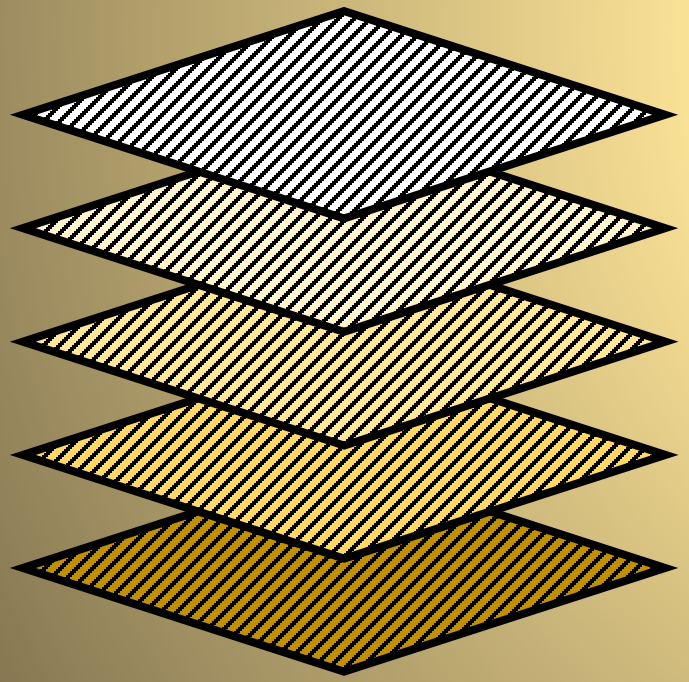
Application documents

MS Word – Standard solution



Offers:

- templates for consistent structuring („headline 1“, „paragraph“, etc.)
- Grammar and spelling check (choose base language of document)

Benefits

- Easy to learn, very common
- Export in PDF is reliable

Disadvantages

- Formatting errors by copying (e.g. from PDF to Word)
- Automatic formating and correcting can disturb

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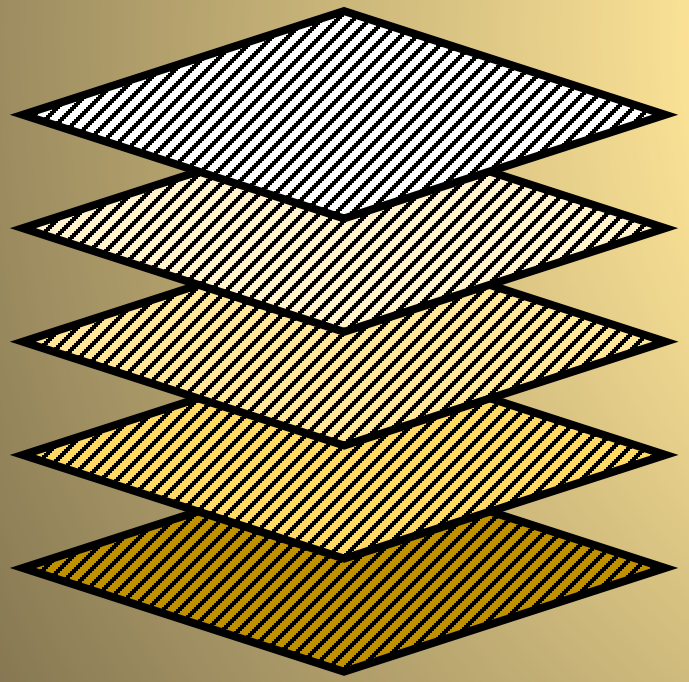
Application documents



LaTeX (with moderncv package) – Professional solution

Offers:

- Automatic consistent structuring and formatting
- Grammar and spelling check (choose base language of document)

Benefits

- Export in PDF is reliable independently from device
- Could even be easily adjusted per job offer via creative use of if-statements

Disadvantages

- Learning curve (syntax, error messages, compilation)
- Visual preview only with right environment (e.g. overleaf in browser)

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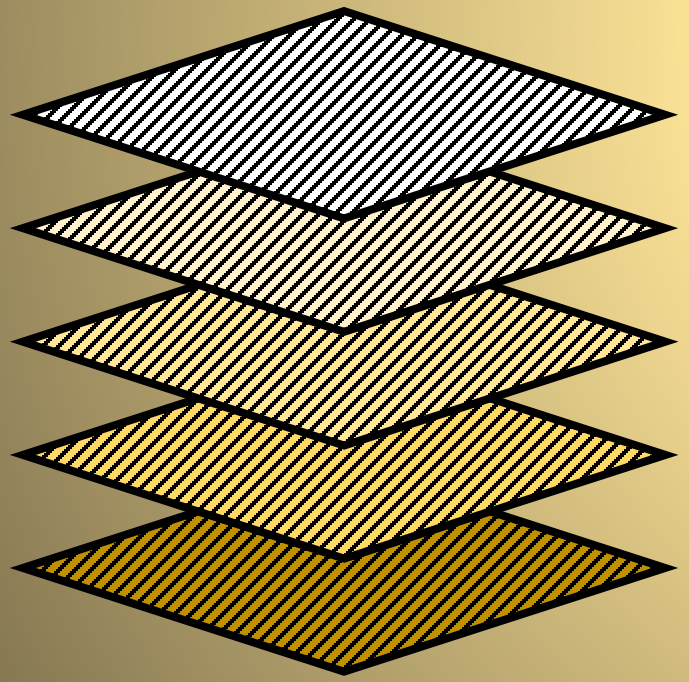
Application documents



Canva – Visually pleasing, but critically usable documents

Offers:

- Templates online available
- Export in PDF is available (and should be used!)

Benefits

- Creative solutions with freedom of design (only useful in creative fields)

Disadvantages

- Does not fulfill standards and could be ignored
- No control of formatting

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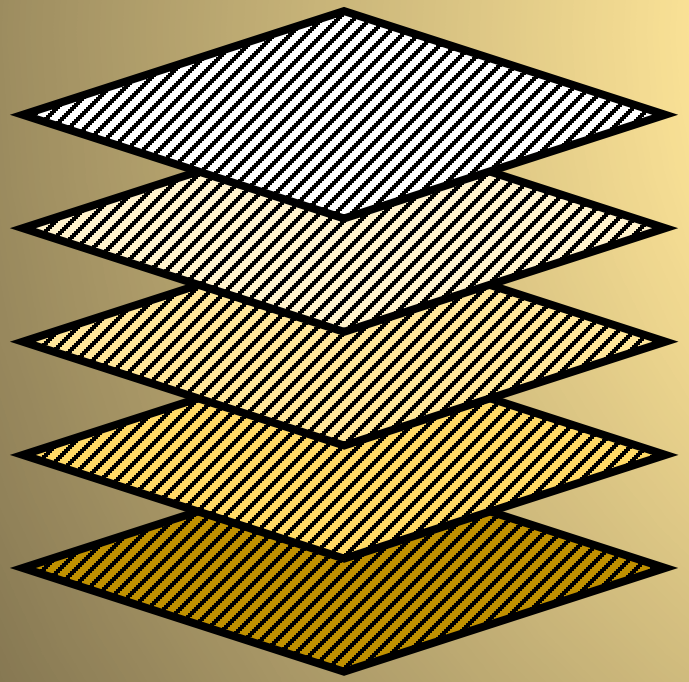
Application documents

Europass – useful when demanded, not recommendable otherwise



Offers:

- Structure is consistent

Benefits

- None!

Disadvantages

- Structure is defined, no adjustment to standards possible
- Too few space
- PDF export often fails
- Not recognized as professional, but lazy
- Only CV, the letter must be done with another tool

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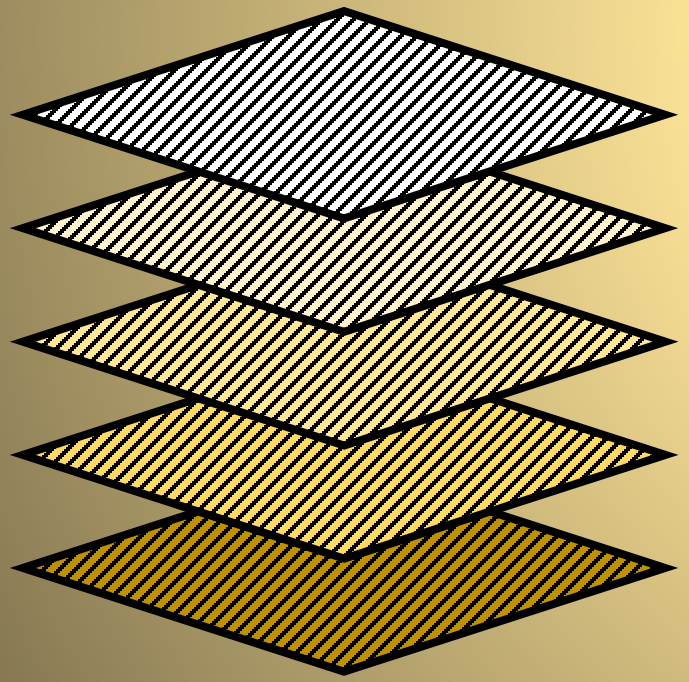
Application documents

Flowcv, novoresume – versatile, quick, often professional tool with few restrictions



Offers:

- Structure is consistent
- Often more pretty and structured than Europass

Benefits

- Adjustments to names of headers
- Easy to navigate

Disadvantages

- Might still restrict you too much for the content you need to add
- Only CV, the letter must be done with another tool

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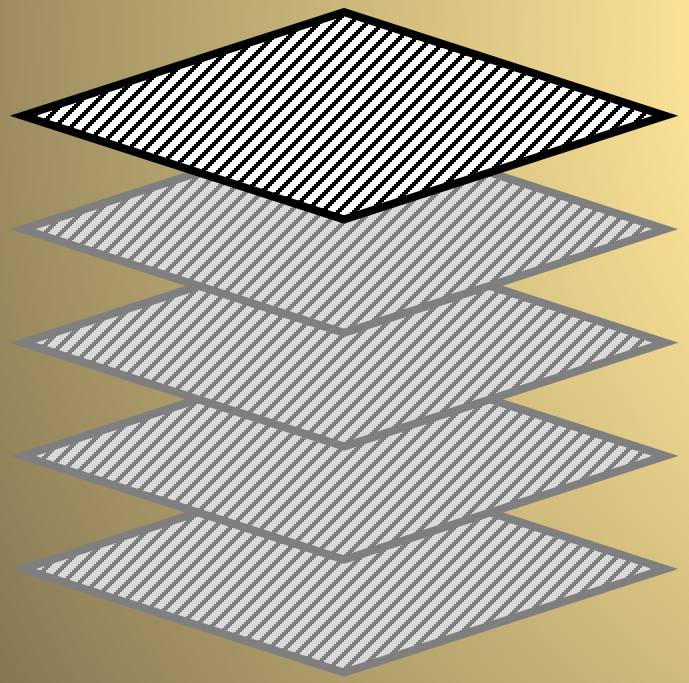
Cover sheet



Usually not needed, but can be added

Only makes sense to make a good first impression, which means it should have a **picture** (different or apart from the picture in your CV)

Should not contain much information, but only:

- Name
- Highest degree
- Contact information

Can be adjusted stylistically to fit to the company

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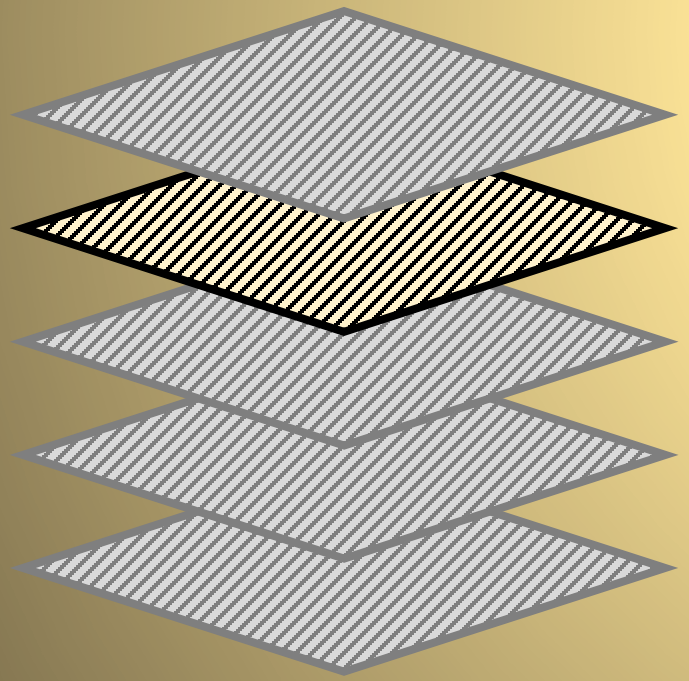
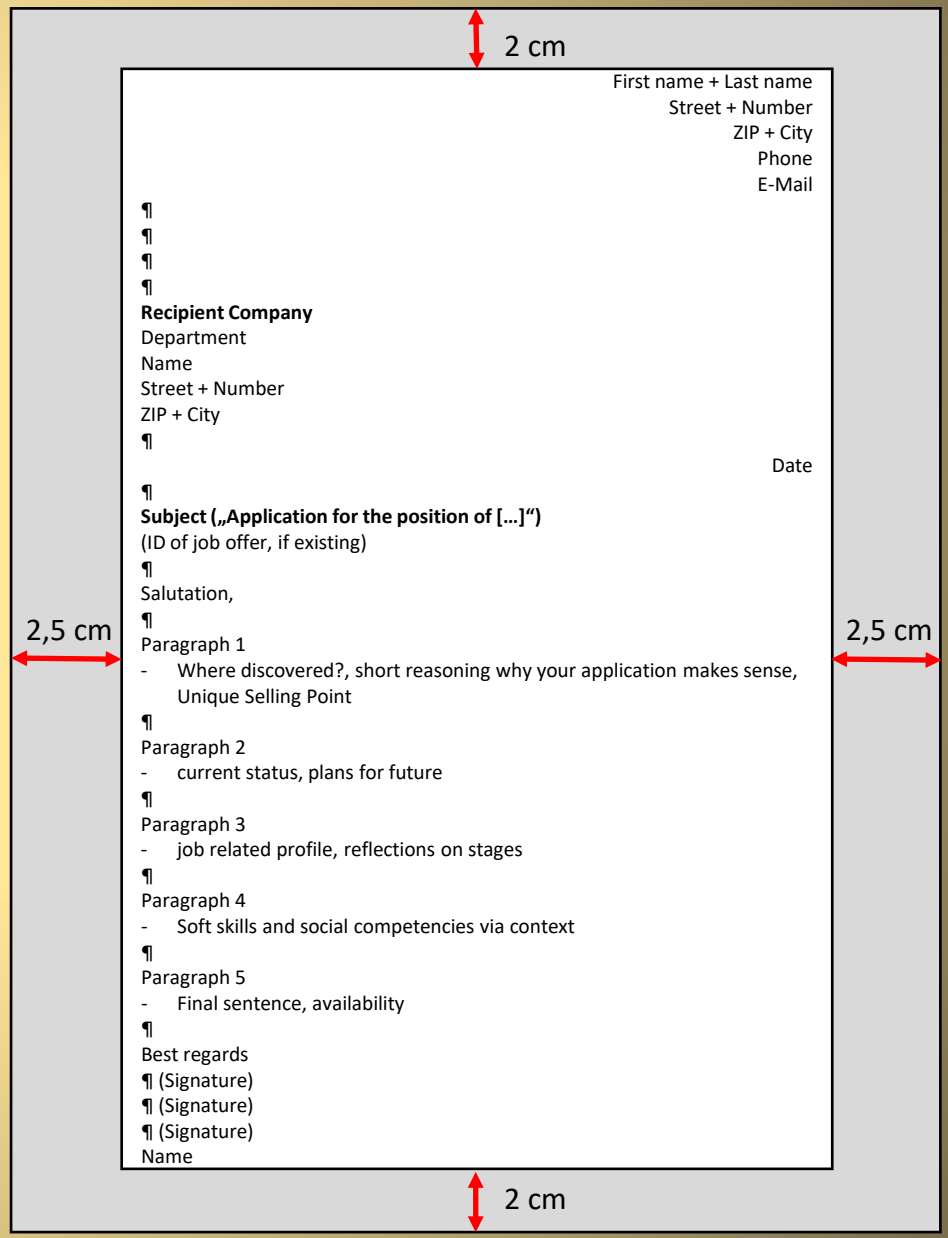
Cover letter



Content: story-time

- The example on the right shows how your story might be structured.
- Take it as a check list for topics that should be covered.
- Create a nice flow in your text.
- It is obvious if you put no effort to individualize but try to fit it to 10 companies. It reads exactly like that: detached from the company.
- If you can send the letter with only 2 copy-paste-changes to several companies, it‘s absolutely generic and detached.



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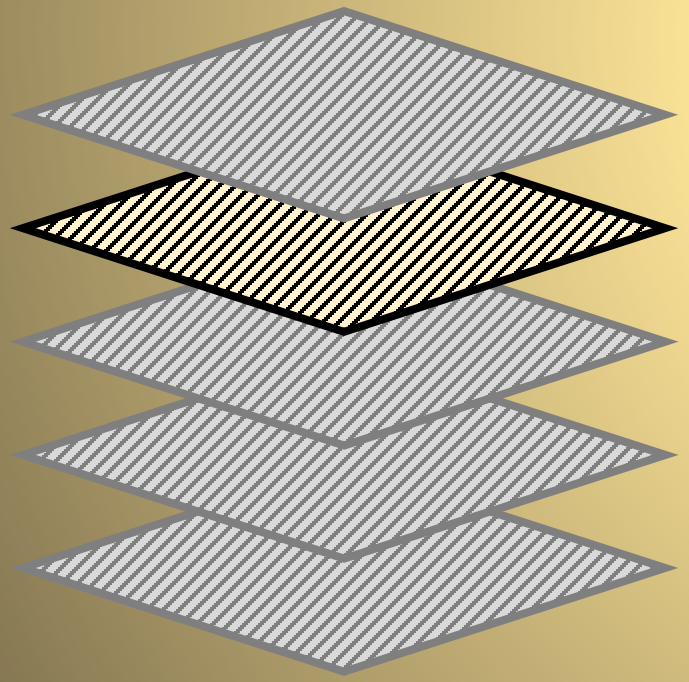
Cover letter



A few rules to think about before you start to write

(1) The first impression is the most important one! (first paragraph)

(2) Show, don't tell ("I am creative and good at communication" is not a given and should be shown via life stations instead of said aloud)

(3) Do your research for each company: homepage, instagram, facebook, LinkedIn, etc.

(4) Individualize strongly depending on what you find and how it correlates with your life

(5) Better 2 days per application than 10 applications per day

How to approach the text? - AIDA rule

- Get their ATTENTION
- Raise their INTEREST in you
- Create a DESIRE to hire you
- Call them to ACTION to invite you

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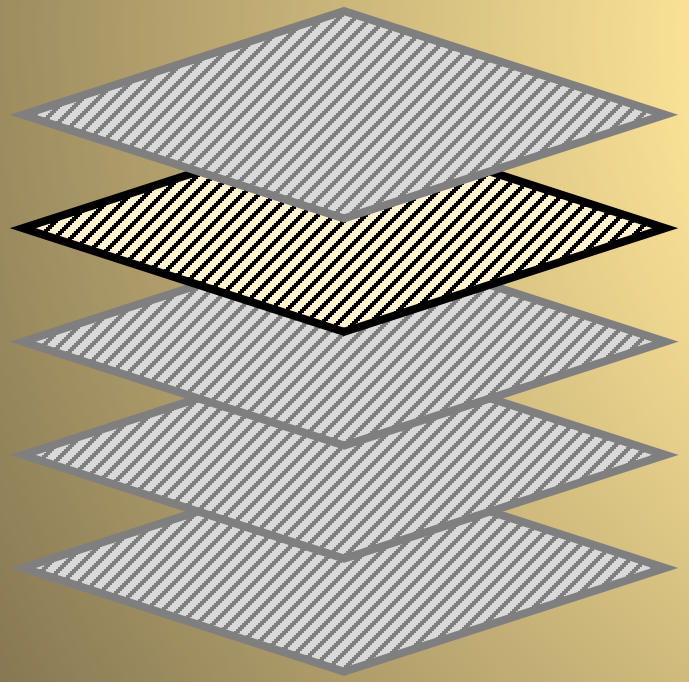
Cover letter – an example



We will have a look at 2 opposing examples, important:

- They are not equally long. Length is a bad indicator, though, because making it longer artificially without following the rules of thumb will not raise its quality.
- The example is shown paragraph by paragraph. That does not mean that you should concentrate on having exactly this structure. As before: a good flow and covering the checklist of topics (when applicable) is important.
- One example is bad, because it shows a generic text, that only uses the overview from before as a skeleton and fills it with interchangable, meaningless buzzwords, claims skills instead of referencing sources of them and is detached from a specific company to allow sending it to several companies.
- One example is good, because it tells a story that speaks for itself, shows skills without having to point them out and uses information of the company to show specific interest and connections to the job opportunity. You will not be able to just copy it, cause then you have to make changes in such a way that you will turn it into the bad example.

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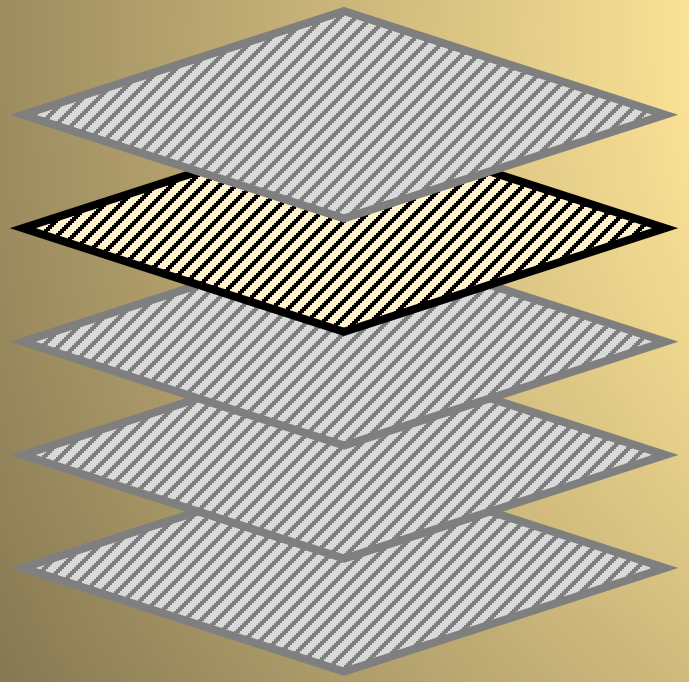
Cover letter – an example



Paragraph 1

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to apply for the Process Engineer position. I am very motivated to apply for this position because your company is innovative and well established in the field of mechanical engineering. I believe that my profile fits very well with your requirements and that I would be a valuable addition to your team.

Dear Ms. Schneider,

I am applying for the Process Engineer position at Krause & Neumann Maschinenbau GmbH, which I found via LinkedIn. In several of your recent posts on the LeanLine 2025 initiative, you describe challenges related to stabilizing assembly processes that evolved from customized projects. This focus on reducing variability and making processes more transparent immediately stood out to me, as it reflects the type of production-related problems I have focused on during my studies.

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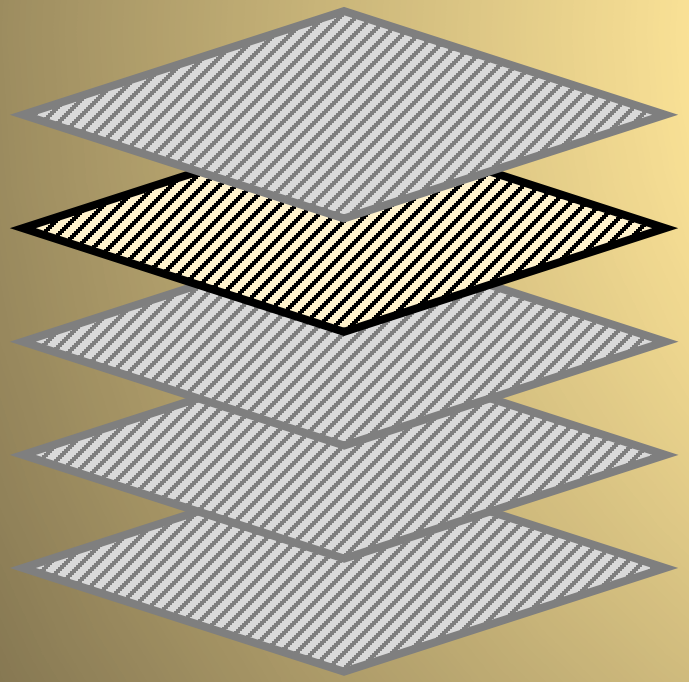
Cover letter – an example



Paragraph 2

Currently, I am completing my Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering and am looking for a challenging position in which I can further develop my skills and gain professional experience. My goal is to work as a process engineer in a successful company and grow both personally and professionally.

I am currently completing my Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering and am in the final phase of my studies. At present, I am gaining practical experience through an internship in a manufacturing environment at Freiberg Compound Materials GmbH, while preparing to start my Master's thesis later this year. Following graduation, I am seeking an entry-level position in process engineering that allows me to work close to production to refine my skills and turn my knowledge into experience.

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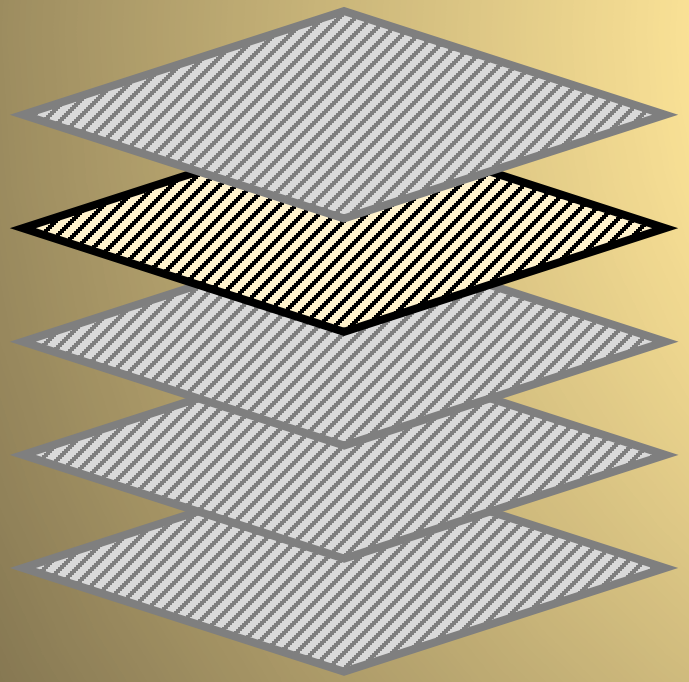
Cover letter – an example



Paragraph 3

During my studies, I gained knowledge in manufacturing processes, production planning, and quality management. I completed several projects and internships that helped me develop a strong technical background. These experiences prepared me well for the tasks of a process engineer and enabled me to apply theoretical knowledge in practice. This experience closely mirrors the challenges described in your assembly optimization projects.

During my studies, I worked on a semester-long project analyzing a semi-manual assembly process with high product variance. Instead of redesigning the product, our task was to understand why lead times and quality outcomes differed significantly between similar orders. By mapping the real process flow, comparing planned and actual process times, and documenting informal workarounds, we identified key sources of variability and derived concrete proposals for standardization and documentation.

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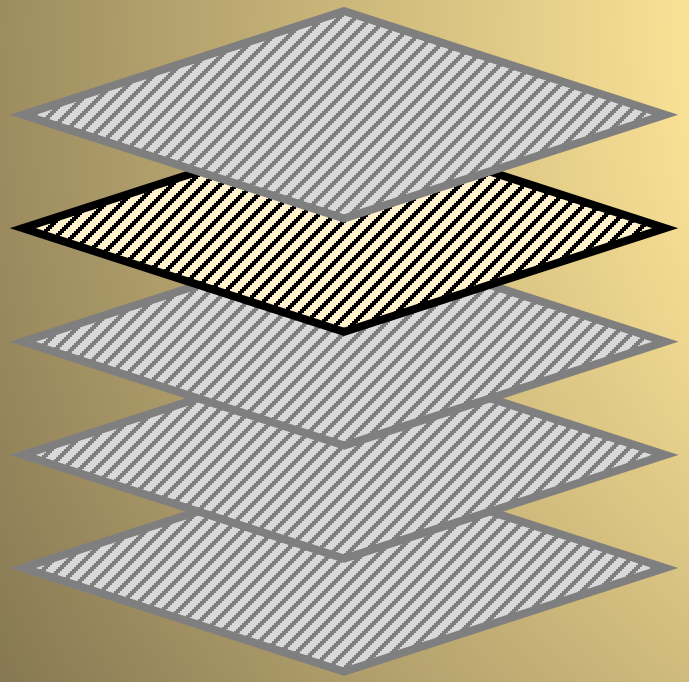
Cover letter – an example



Paragraph 4

I am a motivated, reliable, and flexible person with strong teamwork and communication skills. I am able to work independently as well as in a team and always give my best to achieve good results. I am highly committed and eager to learn new things.

In addition, I worked at different opportunities (university projects and internships) in interdisciplinary teams explaining and discussing process improvements and analytical findings with people from different backgrounds. Taking into account the needs and thematical understanding of everyone was an essential part of overcoming challenges and getting results that are robust from different angles.

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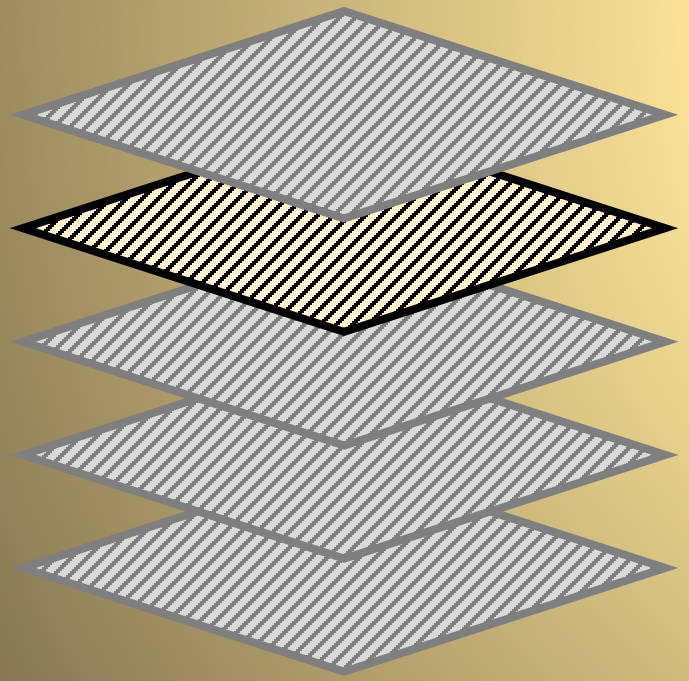
Cover letter – an example



Paragraph 5

I would be available to start work from October 2026. I would be pleased to discuss my application in a personal interview.

Yours sincerely,

I will be available to start full-time employment from October 2026. I welcome the opportunity to further discuss how my background can contribute to your ongoing production optimization efforts.

Yours sincerely,

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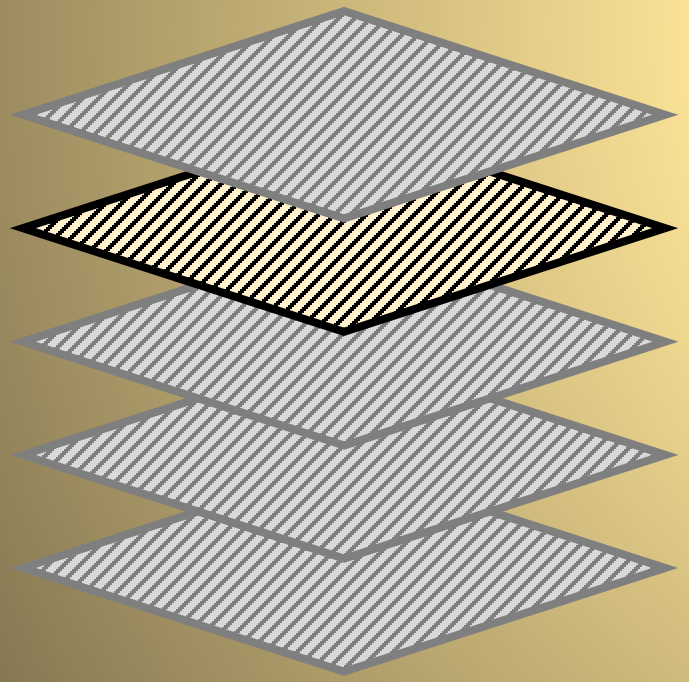
Cover letter – the process



Your text does not have to be perfect right away. You can start with a first draft and gradually work your way toward a strong result. Over time, writing a cover letter will become easier. The following checklists are meant to support you in this process.

The **red flags** help you identify elements in your text that are likely to raise eyebrows when someone reads it. For every “yes,” you should revisit that part of your text and consider how it could be improved. The goal is to eventually be able to answer every red flag question with “no”.

The **quality indicators** help you assess how strong your text already is. It is neither necessary nor, depending on the situation, always possible to meet all quality criteria at the same time. Your goal should be to answer “yes” as often as possible.

The **self-test** is a supporting approach to visualize your progress and help you understand where your text has weaknesses and how severe they are.

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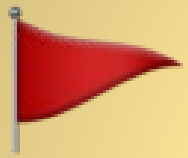
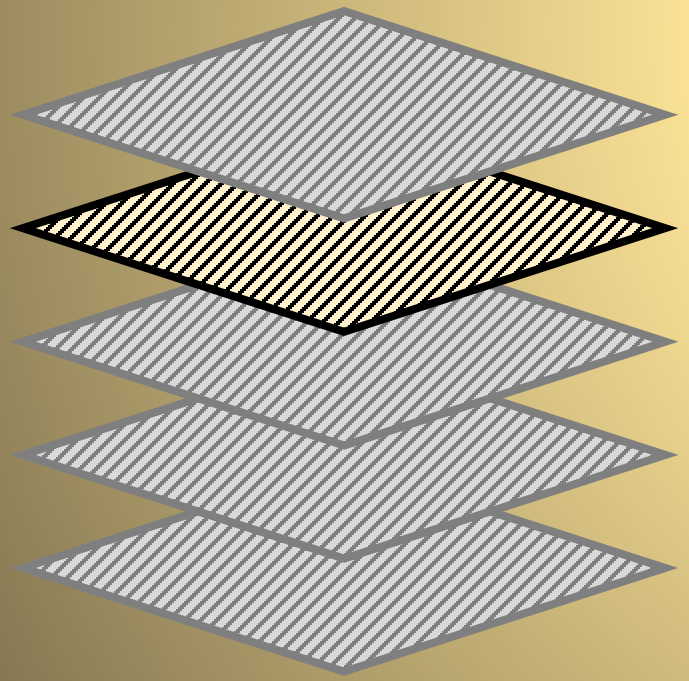
Cover letter – Checklist red flags





☐ **Interchangeability (yes / no)**

The text would work just as well for any other company (within the same industry). I have not established a real connection to the company culture, current projects, or the specific role I am applying for.

☐ **Claims without evidence (yes / no)**

The text makes statements about me but does not show why they are true. I describe myself using adjectives instead of telling the story of when and how I observed these traits or skills in my own work.

☐ **Thematic instead of operational description (yes / no)**

The text states what I have been exposed to, but not what I actually did. I list modules, areas of knowledge, or job titles, but not concrete responsibilities, problems I addressed, or decisions I made.

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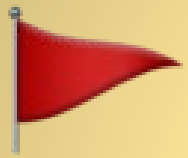
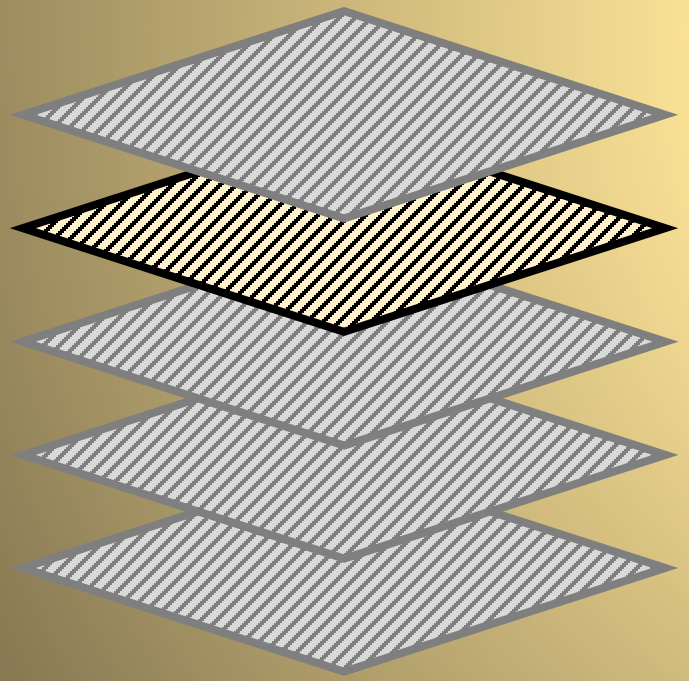
Cover letter – Checklist red flags





☐ **Unclear direction (yes / no)**

The text expresses interest, but no direction. I talk about personal development, gaining experience, or enthusiasm, without stating the next steps I want to take.

☐ **Spelling and grammar checks (yes / no)**

I trusted my own language skills or the skills of an AI and did not use a second or third tool to make sure that there are no errors in my text.

☐ **Use of language (yes / no)**

I used English as the language of choice for application documents meant for a German job offer.

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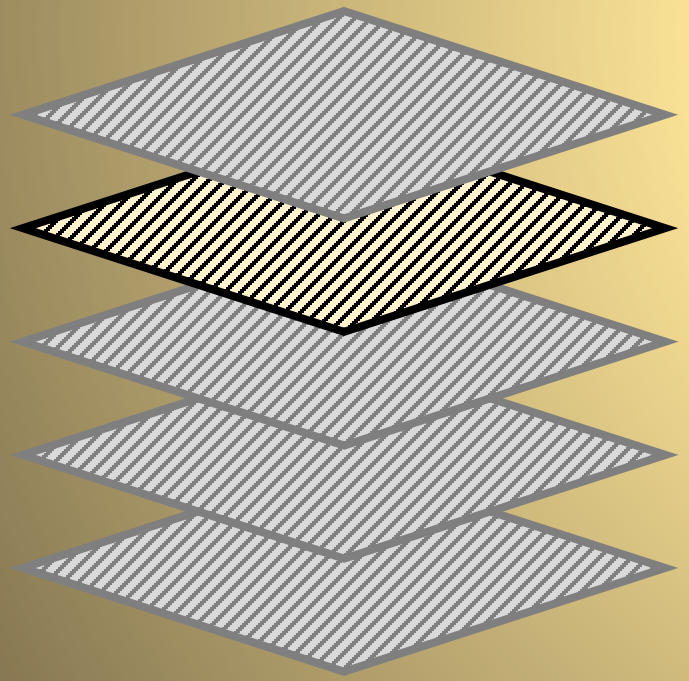
Cover letter – checklist quality indicators



Concreteness & clarity (yes / no)

☐ It becomes clear <u>what</u> I have worked <u>on</u> in practice (not just on a thematic level).

☐ An outside reader could explain <u>what</u> I actually did.

☐ The text describes <u>at least</u> one concrete situation, task, or problem.

Way of thinking and working (yes / no)

☐ The text shows <u>how</u> I approach problems or make decisions.

☐ It becomes clear <u>what</u> I analyzed, questioned, or improved.

☐ My <u>role</u> in the respective context is identifiable.

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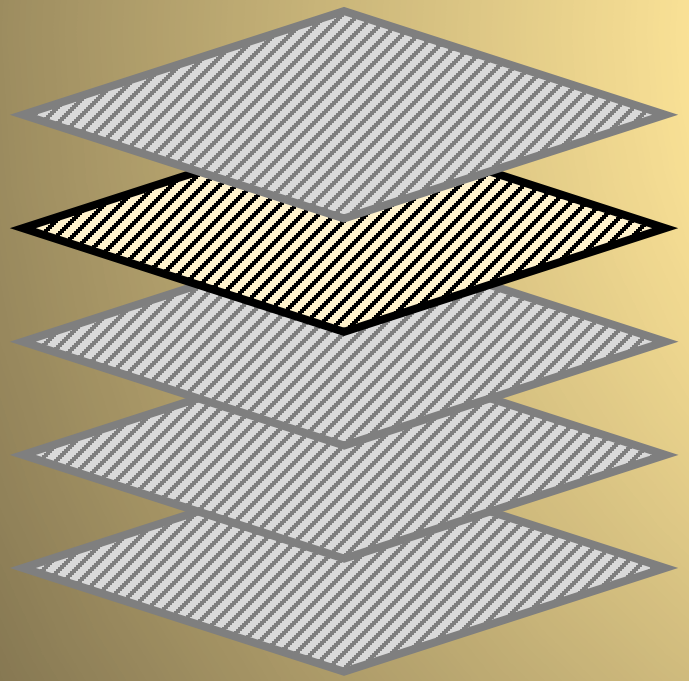
Cover letter – checklist quality indicators



Relevance to the company (yes / no)

☐ The text refers to real topics, challenges, or focus areas of the company.

☐ The connection between my background and the position follows a clear and logical line.

☐ The fit for the role is shown, not claimed.

Development & direction (yes / no)

☐ The text makes clear where I currently stand (academically or professionally).

☐ It is clear what kind of experience I want to gain next.

☐ My interest in the position appears focused, not arbitrary.

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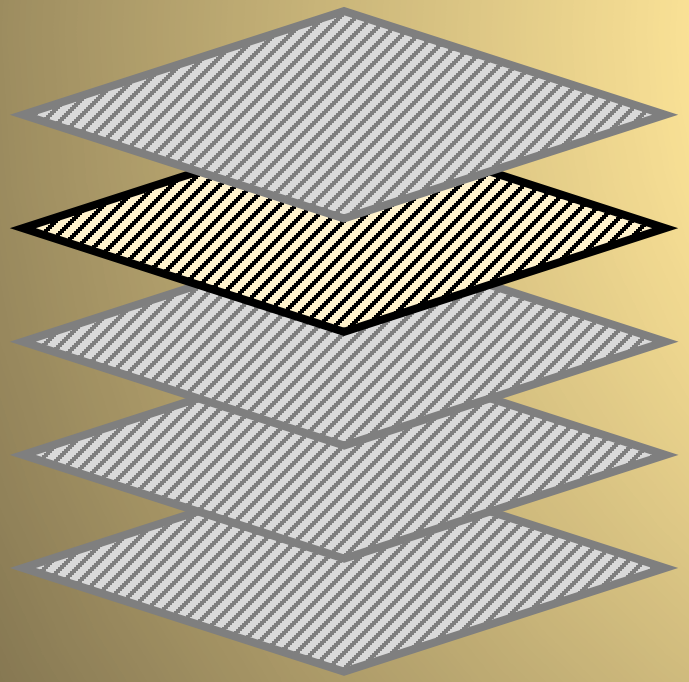
Cover letter – self-test



Basics

☐ After reading the text, another person could explain why this specific company makes sense for me.

☐ I could not reuse the text for a different position without significant effort.

☐ Each paragraph still works without adjectives.

Extended

A motivation letter should strike a balance between references to the company, the advertised position, and your CV. Self-references without context should be kept to a minimum. Mark every place in your text where you **explicitly** refer to one of these sources (use one color per source). A colorful paragraph is a good sign. Count the number of references per source (do not count words!). The following slides explain what to look for.

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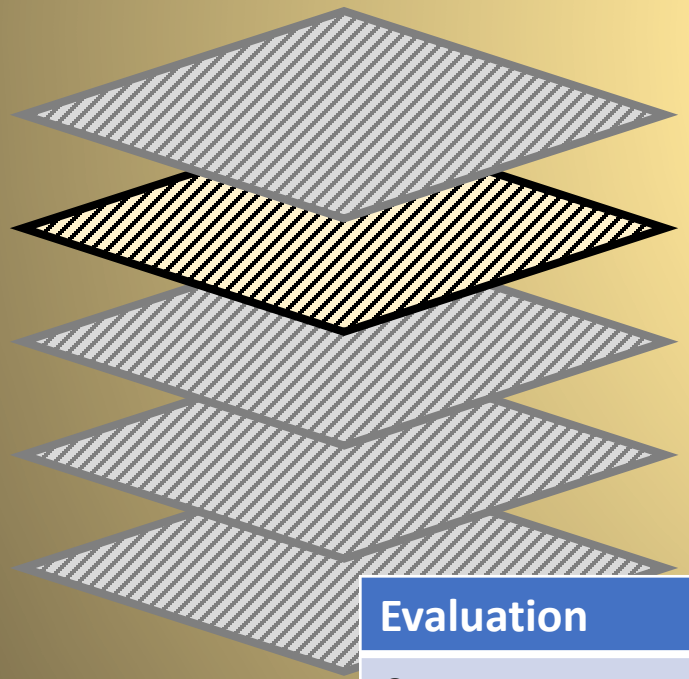
Cover letter – self-test (extended)



(1) Company (social media, website) regarding projects, initiatives, statements, company culture, products, processes, focus areas, or strategies.

X Do not count generic value judgments (e.g. “innovative,” “industry-leading”)

O Count references that would only be possible with prior research

Evaluation	0	1	2 – 3	> 3
Company	Interchangable	Minimum	Good research	Past the topic

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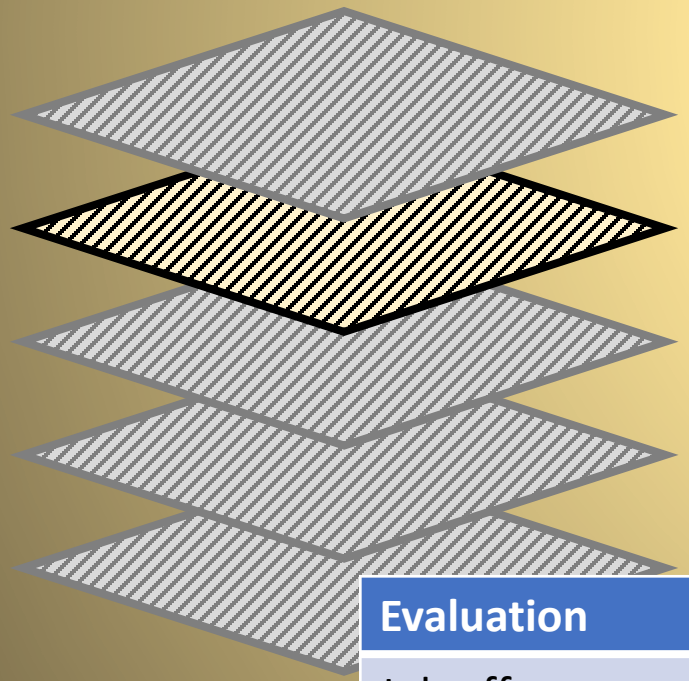
Cover letter – self-test (extended)

(2) Job posting regarding tasks, requirements, priorities, or focus areas.

X Do not count paraphrases or repetitions of the job description (ideally, these should not appear at all)

O Count references that originate from your own experience and are used to demonstrate your suitability for the role



Evaluation	0	1	2 – 3	> 3
Job offer	Blind to the role	Minimum	Good fit	Lengthy

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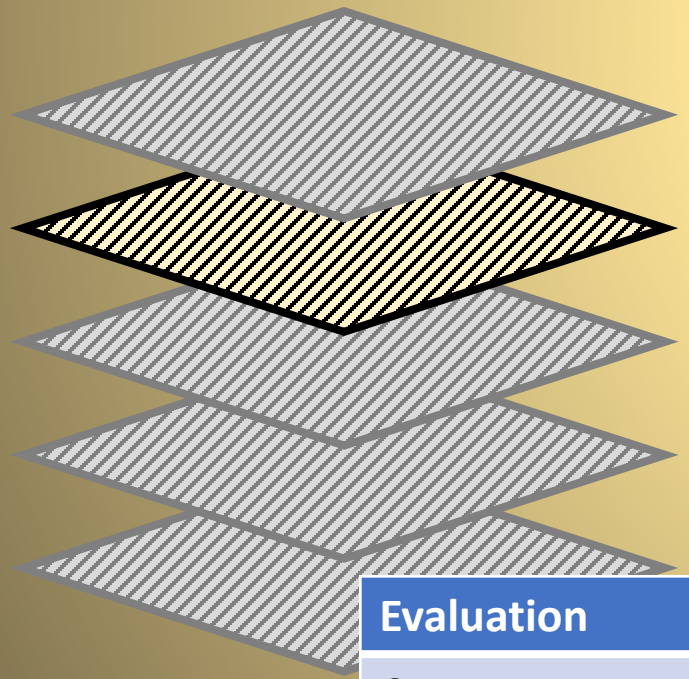
Cover letter – self-test (extended)



(3) Résumé / CV regarding what adds to cv entries by describing tasks, ways of thinking, or outcomes, provide motivation or decision-making context, explain connections between different stages.

X Do not count dates, titles, or time periods (use them only if absolutely necessary)

X Do not count pure repetitions of bullet points (ideally, these should not appear)

O Count references that add value to the résumé and provide context

Evaluation	0	1	2 – 3	> 3
CV	Redundant	Minimum	Good addition	Lengthy

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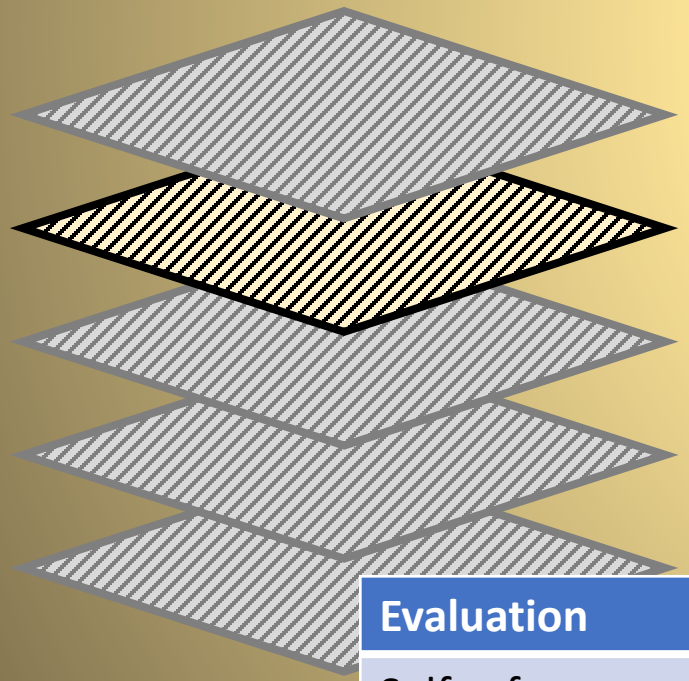
Cover letter – self-test (extended)

(4) Self-reference regarding general goals (e.g. “further development,” “gaining experience”), self-descriptions without context (e.g. “flexible,” “motivated”), or sentences that do not mention the company, the role, or a concrete experience.

X / O Be deliberately critical here!



Evaluation	0	1	2 – 3	> 3
Self-reference	Perfect	Unproblematic	Very generic	Absolutely generic

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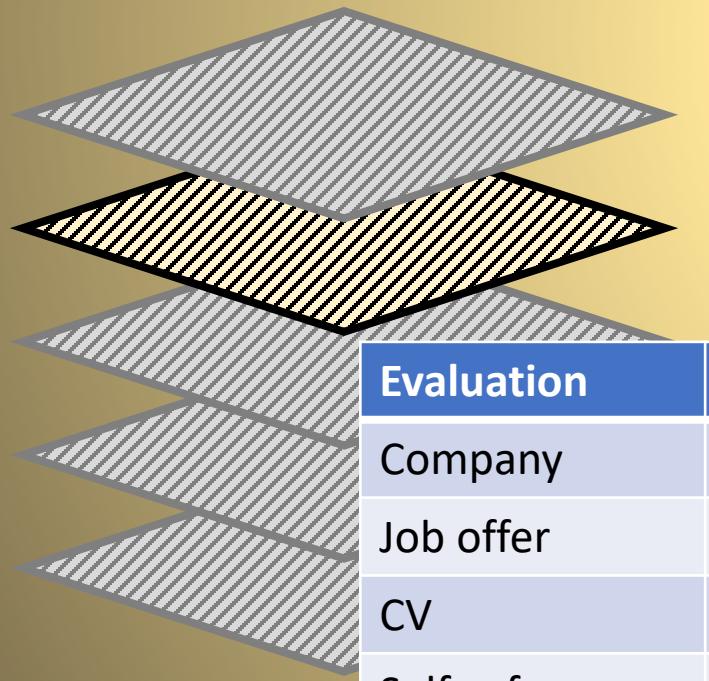
Cover letter – self-test (extended)

Extended

Based on your evaluation, you can now decide what to work on next.

X You do not want to write a text that is interchangeable, redundant, generic, long-winded, or role-blind — a text that misses the point.

O You want to write a well-researched, targeted, and contextualized text that complements your cv effectively.



Evaluation	0	1	2 – 3	> 3
Company	Interchangable	Minimum	Good research	Past the topic
Job offer	Blind to the role	Minimum	Good fit	Lengthy
CV	Redundant	Minimum	Good addition	Lengthy
Self-reference	Perfect	Unproblematic	Very generic	Absolutely generic

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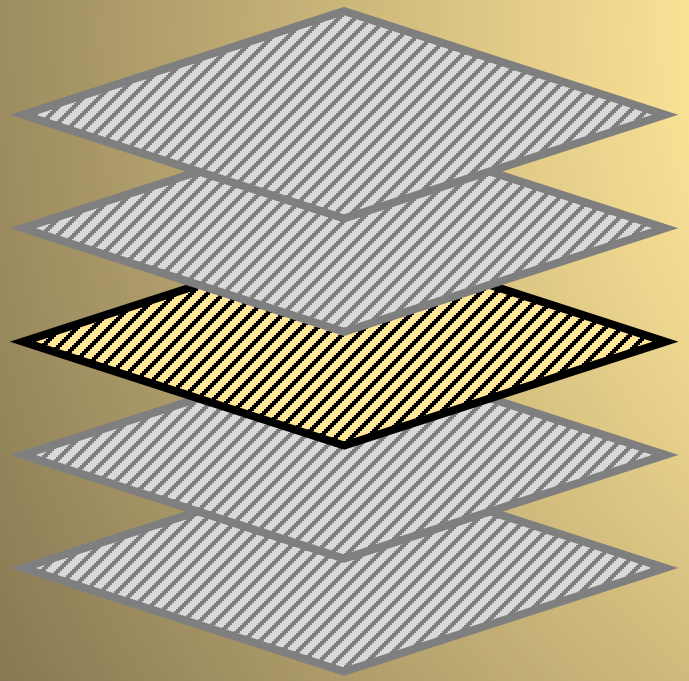
CV



Content: facts, not stories

- Most of the time tabular (see example), sometimes flowing
- Connections to the cover letter and the job offer

Layout (when having control):

- Use formatting as offered (\section{} in Latex, headlines and paragraphs text formatting in MS Word)
- Use bold and italic to structure the information
- Use times of life stations to highlight the transition between them and make it easier to get a quick overview

Thomas Template

Templateroad 1 ⬩ 12345 Templatecity ⬩ 0123 / 456789 ⬩ email@domain.de ⬩ xing@maxmuster

PERSONAL INFORMATION

FOTO

born	at the 1st January 1988, in Templatecity
family status	married, 2 childs (care ensured)
handicap	60% (severely disabled)

PROFESSIONAL CAREER

since 02/2018	**Senior Projektmanager** **Templatecompany AG** Templatecity ⬩ professionalizing projektmanagement ⬩ launch of CNC milling process ⬩ quality assurance and process monitoring
01/2016–01/2018	**Projektmanager** **Templatecompany GmbH** Templatecity ⬩ professionalizing processes ⬩ optimization of internal CNC processes
10/2015–12/2015	professional realignment
08/2012–09/2015	**Trainee production department** **Templatecompany eG** Templatecity ⬩ supporting of the process optimization

EDUCATIONAL CAREER

10/2006 – 08/2012	**master student geoinformatics** **Templatecompany GmbH** Templatecity ⬩ emphasis: sample topic ⬩ master thesis: sample topic ⬩ quality assurance and process monitoring
10/2004 – 09/2006	**bachelor student geoinformatics** **Templatecompany GmbH** Templatecity ⬩ emphasis: sample topic ⬩ bachelor thesis: sample topic ⬩ quality assurance and process monitoring

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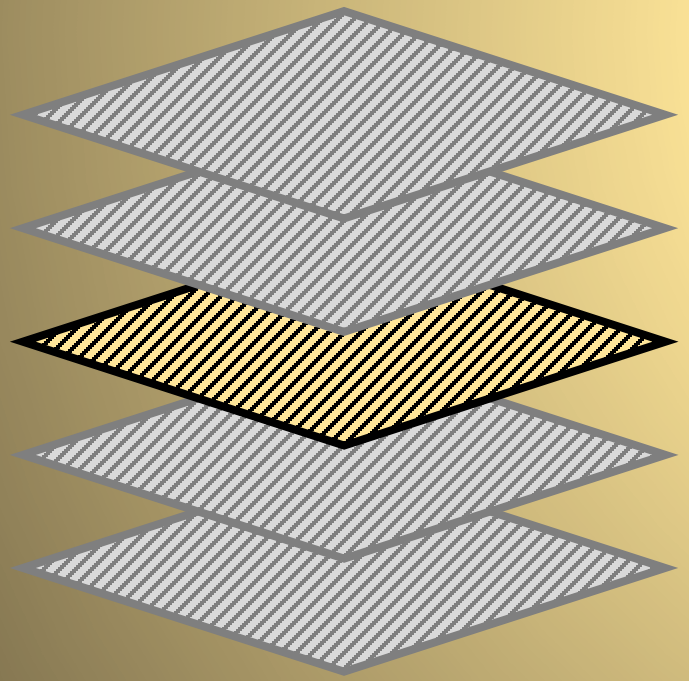
CV



Important sections that are needed most of the time:

- Work experience
- Education
- Soft Skills
- Languages

Additional sections that might also apply to you:

- Scholarships
- Projects
- Voluntary work

These lists are not meant to be complete, but to show you sections that appear often.

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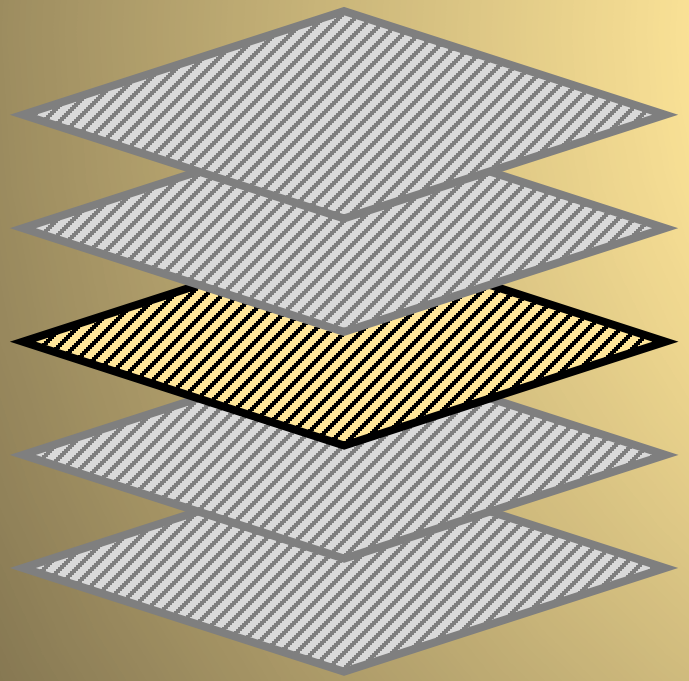
CV



Sort your information into these sections as it fits. Order sections by importance, that often means:

- professional experience and education before everything else
- which of those 2 comes first depends on you and where you are in your life (if you just finished your degree it‘s probably your education, after 5 years of work it‘s probably your professional experience, this can look different, when you switch professions)
- Often projects get an own section. Provide context by adding dates. Maybe sort them into stations of education or work experience, if it fits for maximum context.
- A few sections like skills and languages might fit best into an own column, like a sidebar. But that is a question of style.

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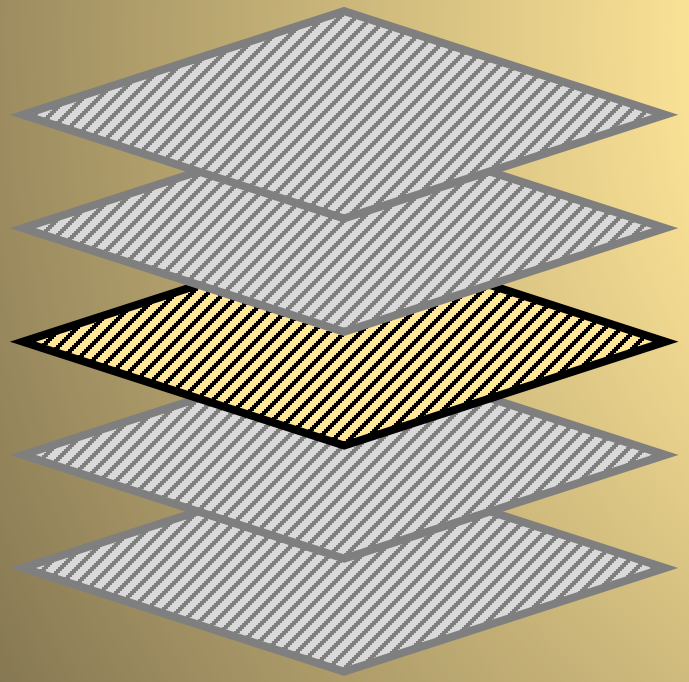
CV



You need to write the details per station as bullet points

- 3 to 5 bullet points give it volume without being overwhelming
- keep the bullet points short and simple

A picture is optional, some companies might specify not to add any

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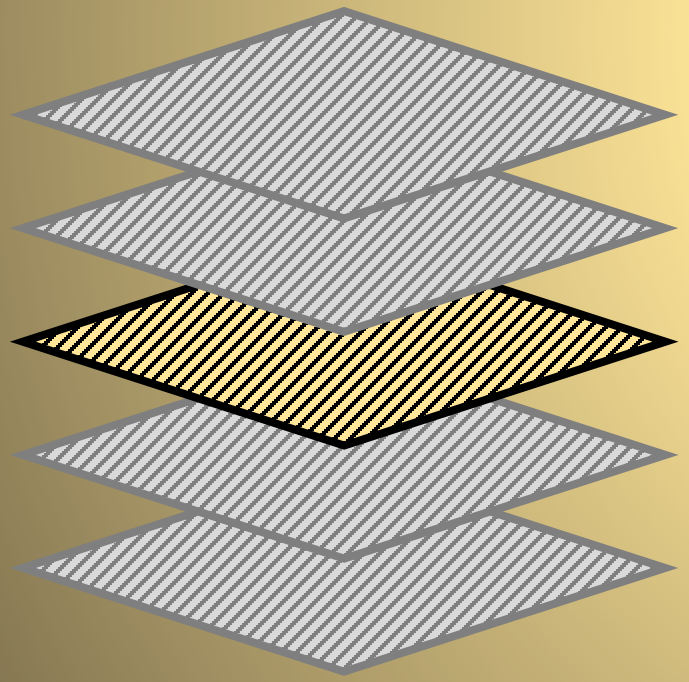
CV – short profile



In Germany a “short profile” with 5 sentences summarizing half the content of your CV is atypical – we don’t summarize a summary, which a CV already is as we covered before. Also, if you have space problems, the rest of your CV is more important.

If you manage to make it absolutely unique and show yourself from an angle that is not in your CV already, you can make an elegant addition (**note:** in over 100 hundred CVs I have seen two that were outstanding). If you want to use it, you should make it right. That means: keep it easy to read and comprehend.

You can achieve that with 3 – 5 well engineered bullet points. And also here: don’t just use a lot of adjectives from your favorite “100 soft skills that make you shine” list. Instead, say who you are (with as few words as possible using your profession and your strongest experience) and what you are interested in (for example by expressing your career goal in the company). Add some personality with your most important traits.

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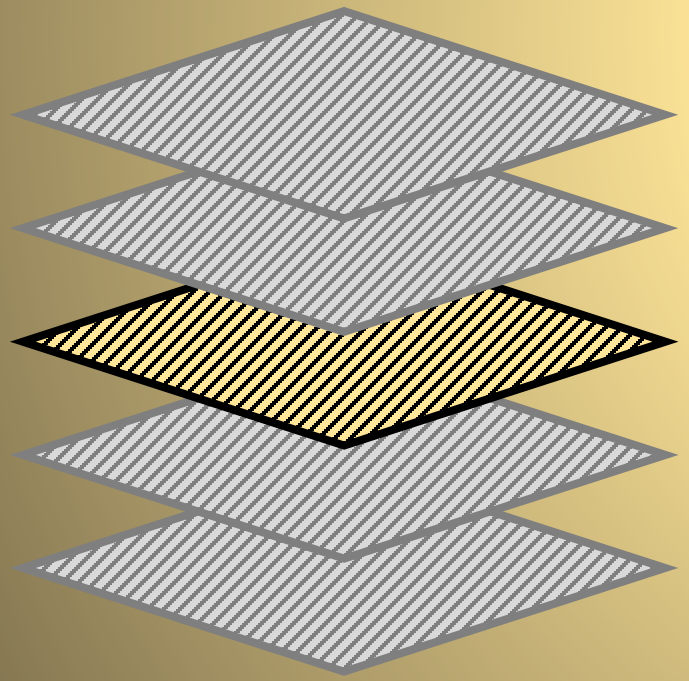
CV – the process



Your CV does not have to be perfect right away. You can start with a first draft and gradually work your way toward a strong result. Later you will only need to update your existing CV as you progress in your career as long as you don't change the basic style. The following checklists are meant to support you in the process of creating it in the first place.

The **red flags** help you identify elements in your CV that are likely to raise eyebrows when someone reads it. At least because it will be difficult to navigate your CV if you answer with "yes". For every "yes," you should revisit that part of your CV and consider how it could be improved. The goal is to eventually be able to answer every red flag question with "no".

The **quality indicators** help you assess how strong your CV already is. It is neither necessary nor, depending on the situation, always possible to meet all quality criteria at the same time. Your goal should be to answer "yes" as often as possible.

The **self-test** is a supporting approach to visualize your progress and help you understand where your CV has weaknesses and how severe they are.

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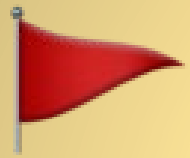
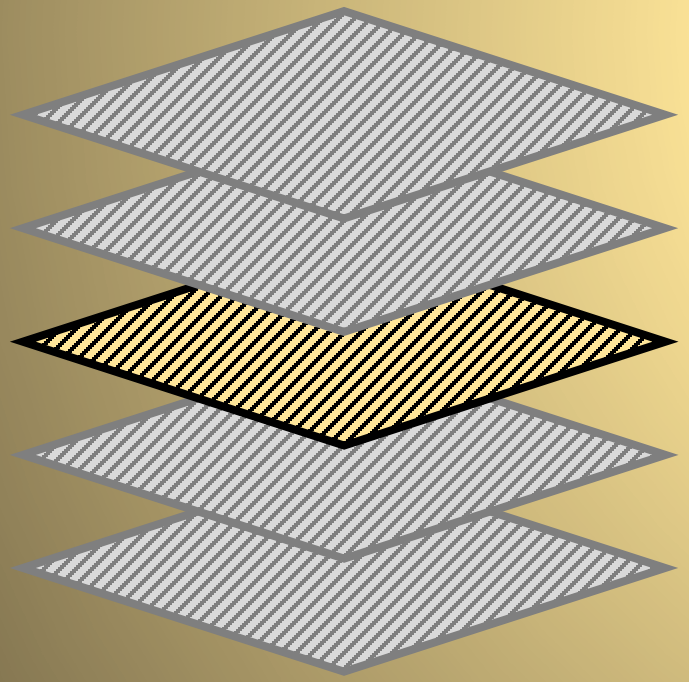
CV – Checklist red flags



☐ **Mix-up of topics (yes / no)**

I have mixed my work experience (not projects!) with my education. I have placed my certificates and extra-curricular courses within my university education.



☐ **Full separation of topics (yes / no)**

I have separated my theses and university projects from my university education in an own section without giving any context (via dates and words).

☐ **Generalized experience (yes / no)**

I only gave information about experiences by mentioning titles, but I did not add details via bullet points. I have not added much information about times (year + month).

☐ **Spelling and grammar checks (yes / no)**

I trusted my own language skills or the skills of an AI and did not use a second or third tool to make sure that there are no errors in my text.

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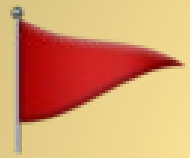
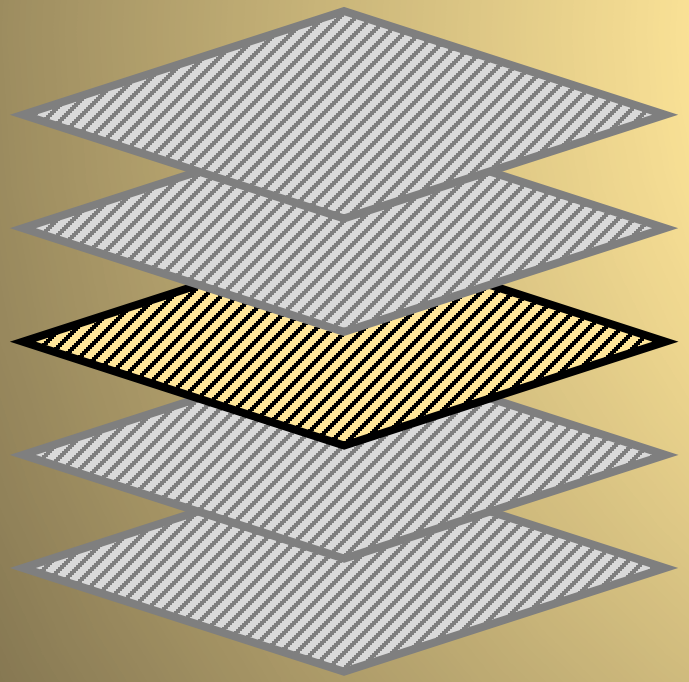
CV – Checklist red flags



☐ **Use of language (yes / no)**

I used English as the language of choice for application documents meant for a German job offer.



☐ **Inconsistent formatting (yes / no)**

I have used 3 different fonts, 4 different font sizes, but no template format for headlines or paragraphs. My style changes mid document.

☐ **Overboarding layout (yes / no)**

I use more than 2 columns to arrange my information. I have 3 or more levels for my bullet points. In one of my columns there is more than 1/3 of the page white space compared to the other column on the same page. My chosen template does not allow me to move information as needed.

☐ **Graphical representations (yes / no)**

I used graphics to show my skills instead of words.

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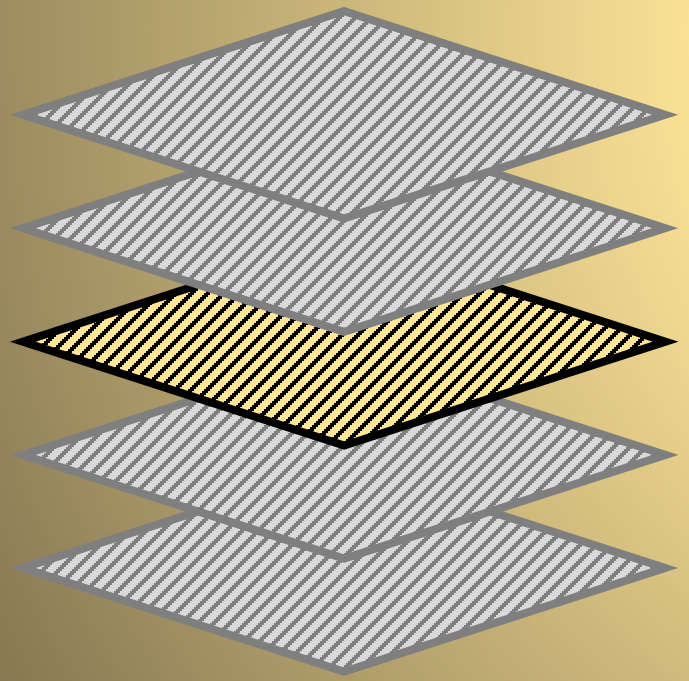
CV – checklist quality indicators



Concreteness & clarity (yes / no)

☐ It becomes clear what I have worked on in practice (not just on a thematic level).

☐ An outside reader could explain what I actually did.

☐ The bullet points indicate the level of responsibility.

Way of thinking and working (yes / no)

☐ The CV shows my development as a clear path.

☐ It becomes clear what I learned depending on the opportunity.

☐ My role in the respective context is identifiable.

Development & direction (yes / no)

☐ The points make clear where I currently stand (academically or professionally).

☐ It is clear what extent of experience I gained so far.

☐ My interest in the position appears as the next logical step.

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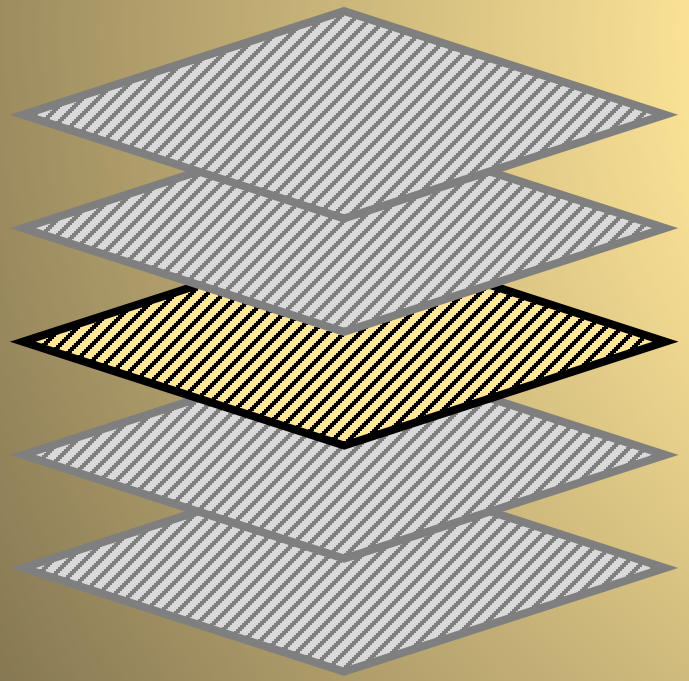
CV – self-test



Basics

☐ After reading the CV, another person could explain how I got my expertise and how deep my expertise goes.

☐ Another person can find a specific section when taking it from a staple of documents within 2 seconds or less.

☐ My CV is designed and written in such a way that a real person as well as a software should be able to find all information with ease.

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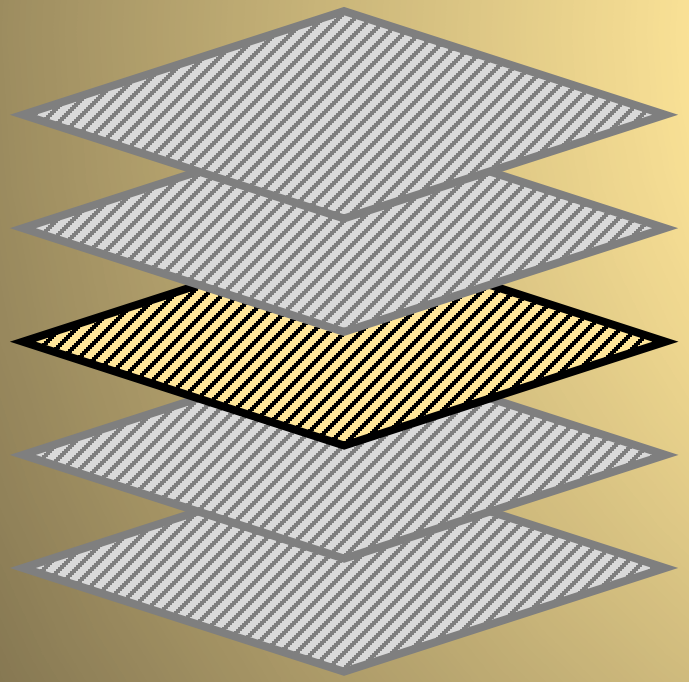
CV – self-test



Extended

Your cannot change what your life has been so far and there is a limitation on how much you can make yourself appear better suitable for a position. Use colors to indicate (just for yourself):

- experiences and knowledge that fit to the job offer (green),
- soft skills and knowledge that is nice to have (yellow), and
- what has nothing to do with it (red).

The more green and less red your CV is the better. That does not mean that you should just delete the red parts. How your tell your story is important as well. Are you sure that you haven't learned anything important there? The colors might show your chances to be accepted and if you might need to work on your expertise or your self-presentation.

But remember: in Germany knowing German is more important than another certificate.

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How to decide for a style

- Lots of aspects in an application can be subjective in their exact implementation
- Try to find a compromise between feeling comfortable and presenting yourself professionally, standing out and keeping the information clean and clear
- A color scheme that is close to the company can help to create a visual connection
- One finds a simplistic approach appealing, another one thinks it lacks creativity
- You cannot meet every taste, but you don’t have to – you need to present yourself
- It’s most important that the other person can get to know you. If “you” is colorful and creative or simple and monocolored is a personal question and might be part of the process

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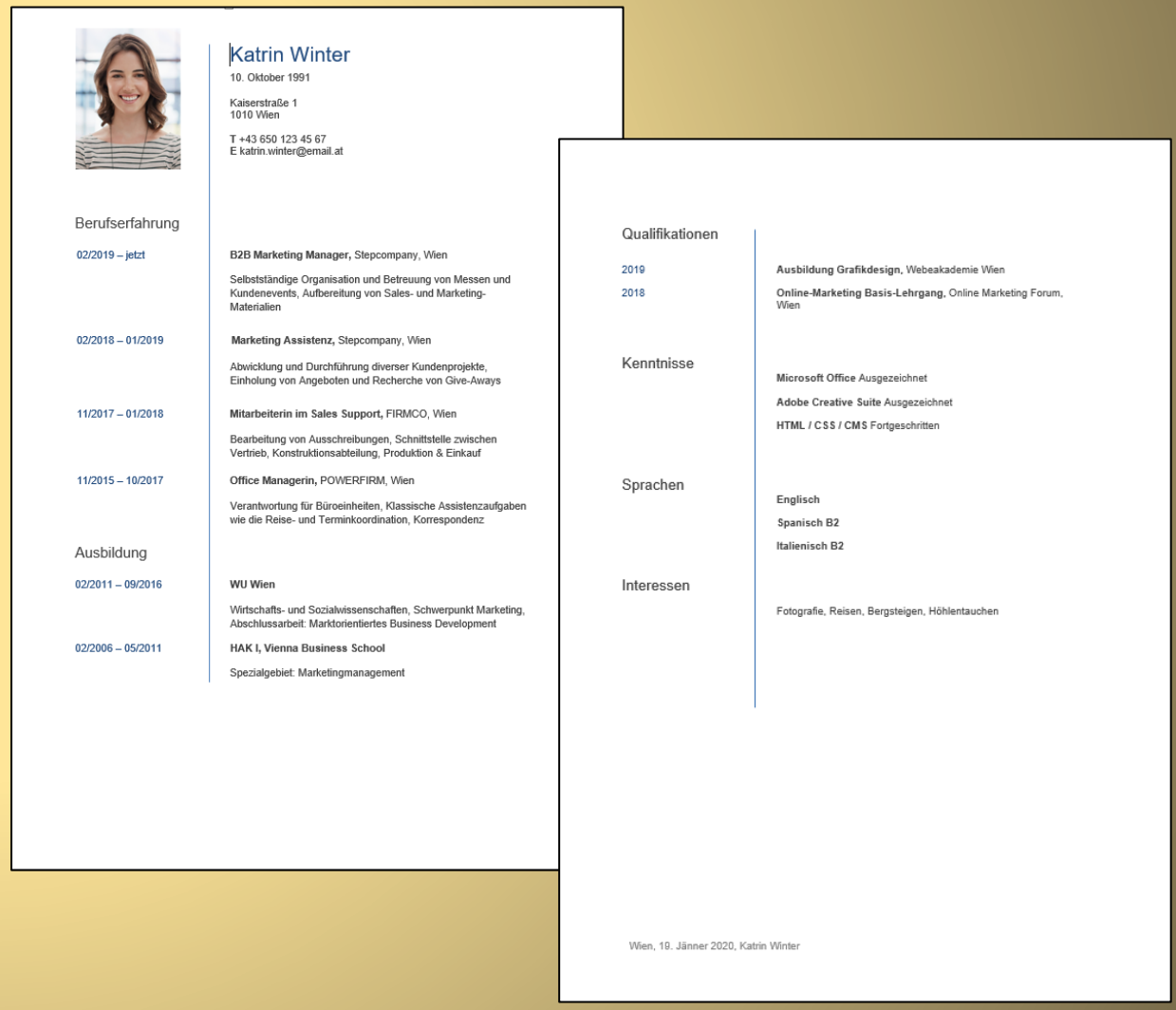
Evaluation of examples

- Simple
- 2 colors to highlight
- The order determines the importance alone
- Easy to understand
- Not standing out by being flashy
- Using words to evaluate skill levels are widely understood



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10. Oktober 1991

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Berufserfahrung

02/2019 – jetzt
B2B Marketing Manager, Stepcompany, Wien
Selbstständige Organisation und Betreuung von Messen und Kundenevents, Aufbereitung von Sales- und Marketing-Materialien

02/2018 – 01/2019
Marketing Assistenz, Stepcompany, Wien
Abwicklung und Durchführung diverser Kundenprojekte, Einholung von Angeboten und Recherche von Give-Aways

11/2017 – 01/2018
Mitarbeiterin im Sales Support, FIRMCO, Wien
Bearbeitung von Ausschreibungen, Schnittstelle zwischen Vertrieb, Konstruktionsabteilung, Produktion & Einkauf

11/2015 – 10/2017
Office Managerin, POWERFIRM, Wien
Verantwortung für Büroeinheiten, Klassische Assistenzaufgaben wie die Reise- und Terminkoordination, Korrespondenz

Ausbildung

02/2011 – 09/2016
WU Wien
Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften, Schwerpunkt Marketing, Abschlussarbeit: Marktorientiertes Business Development

02/2006 – 05/2011
HAK I, Vienna Business School
Spezialgebiet: Marketingmanagement

Qualifikationen

2019
Ausbildung Grafikdesign, Webeakademie Wien

2018
Online-Marketing Basis-Lehrgang, Online Marketing Forum, Wien

Kenntnisse

Microsoft Office Ausgezeichnet
Adobe Creative Suite Ausgezeichnet
HTML / CSS / CMS Fortgeschritten

Sprachen

Englisch
Spanisch B2
Italienisch B2

Interessen

Fotografie, Reisen, Bergsteigen, Höhlentauchen

Wien, 19. Jänner 2020, Katrin Winter

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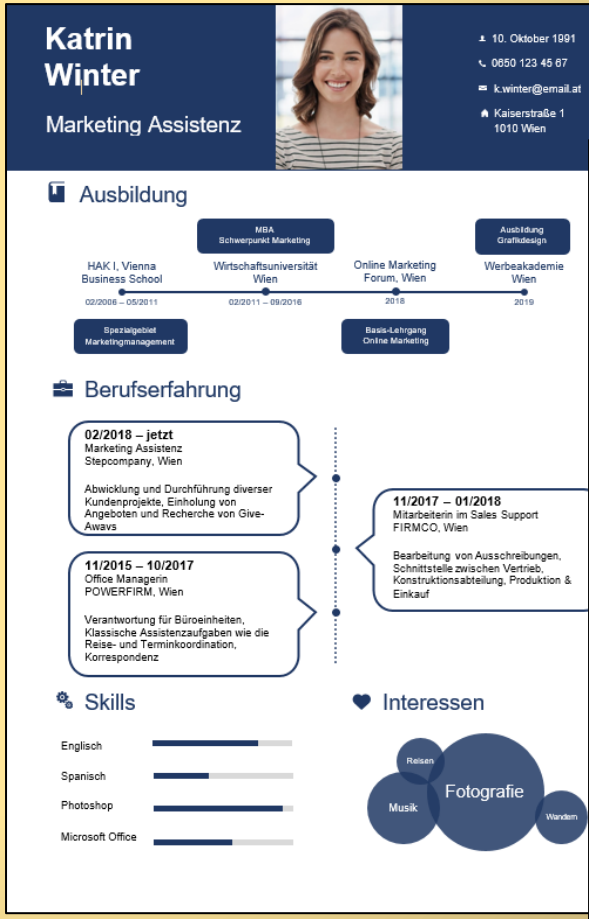
Evaluation of examples

- Colorful and creative
- 2 - 3 colors to highlight
- The order and structure determine the importance
- 2 columns give less horizontal space and make more lines per point necessary
- Point system to highlight strong skills with more diversity without more space for wording, but invite to question the exact message – also ATS cannot interpret a graphical representation



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How to present yourself

Authenticity

Stories – not phrases

Personality by examples

Short and meaningful

How?

Be honest!

Don‘t copy!

Reflect yourself!

Get feedback!

Don‘ts

- Unprofessional e-mail address
- Too personal information
- Listing weird hobbies
- Irrelevant job experience
- False advertising
- Absurd salary expectations
- Indirect speech (woulda-coulda-shoulda)
- Avoid europass!

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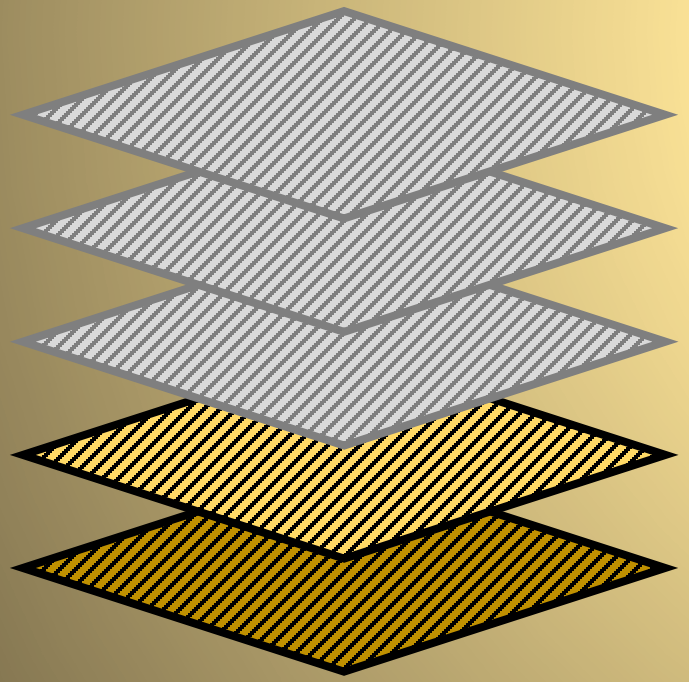
Appendix



- Can include:
  - Certificates of your highest degree
  - Certificates of further educations
  - Language certificates (only last)
  - Visited workshops (only relevant)

  - Employer references (only when asked for permission, not expected in Germany, so most people don't provide it)
- nothing older than 10 years

Employer references work differently in Germany. People don't expect one here. That is why you will not get one in general. If the person you would usually ask a reference of gave you already grades for the projects you did with them (like professors) then you got already your reference – it's the grade in your transcripts. In Germany you get usually an employment reference for a job that you did with a working contract, which is an official transcript in words.

So: don't feel bad if you apply in Germany and don't have references apart from your transcripts. It's normal in Germany and references are nearly worthless here – your own performance counts and not who you know and if they would recommend you. If you get something like that it has a strong meaning from the one who gave it to you, but it might still not be taken into account and have no influence on your chances to get a job.

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Interviews

mostly a simple conversation, but also:

- behavioral, case, stress and competency based interviews
- video and group interviews (assessment center)
- on demand interview (record your responses to a number of interview questions for the hiring manager to review)

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Questions from the company

All of these questions should be easy and comfortable to answer if you did your homework (learning about company and write down facts about yourself)

- About CV, cover letter, strengths/weaknesses, job description
- What about our company / position appealed to you?
- Where do you see yourself professionally / privately in 5 years?
- If we ask your family/friends, […] (e.g. how do you work under pressure), what would they answer? / How would we experience you if […] (e.g. everything goes wrong)?

Red flags

- How do you feel about overtime?
- Do you plan to have children? (you are allowed to lie here and say “no”)

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Possible questions from you

- How are the working hours regulated? Is constant availability desired?
- What goals / projects are in the pipeline for the company?
- How will employees be involved to achieve them?
- Who will my colleagues / clientele be?
- What is the hourly / monthly wage?
- What are the next steps?

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Preparation for all interviews

- be well rested, groomed and dressed, have breakfast
- prepare something to write on
- study your own application documents and the job advertisement
- prepare questions!

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Preparation for interview questions

- Take the questions, that could be asked by the company and formulate answers
- The goal is not to prepare answers that you can repeat in the interview
- You can test this way, if you can give an answer that you are pleased with
- Evaluate the answer the same way you would evaluate your CV (see red flags, quality traits and self-tests)

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Extra preparations for online interviews

- tech-check (borrow additional cameras and headset to be prepared for failing equipment)
- Prepare your room (ventilate, no direct exposure to light from the front or back, white or monochrome background)
- make your environment aware, so there will be no disturbance (partners, roommates, pets, kids)
- glass of water

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The contract

= an agreement of wills

- Applicant is not a suppliant, but a service provider
- Both sides make an offer and then they haggle.

You define your market value with what you write in your application documents.

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FAQ

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FAQ 1: Where can I find jobs?

- Online Job Markets (“Stellenportal”)
- Company homepages
- Federal Employment Agency (Agentur für Arbeit)
- Personal networks
- Career Fairs

- Search Engines

- Internships: https://www.iaeste.de/en/
- Secret tip: https://jobs4internationals.de/

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FAQ 2: Can I send English applications?

Yes, but a company will probably still expect German skills (mostly B2 and above) and an application is the first time you can show those skills – it's another first impression together with your first paragraph. Why would you give up on that first impression? Doing this is also no "lie" about your abilities. You are simply showing effort.

Tipps, if you are still unsure:

- A website shows if a company is internationally active.
- You can ask the HR department.

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FAQ 3: What should I say as expected wage?

In Germany you either work under a collective agreement (e.g. public servants, teachers, etc.) or you “haggle”. As a junior or a senior with only experience outside of Germany you might not have much room. You will have later opportunities to ask for raises, rise up to seniors or change companies with better payment and opportunities

Find a tool of your choice to find out about the range in your field and if you are without experience start at the lower end. Every couple of years you will have a meeting to talk about an individual raise.

https://www.gehalt.de/

https://www.glassdoor.de/Geh%C3%A4lter/index.htm

https://www.levels.fyi/de-de?tab=levels

Your wage depends on your market value and the budget of the company.

There is a minimum wage in Germany: 13,90 €/hr (from January 1st, 2026)