



Vivalis Recruitment Process

How to Apply - A guide

This guide has been written specifically for this company and the advice contained herewith is meant as guidance only NOT a complete rule.

September 2008

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The Cover Letter

It is very important to write a good informative cover letter, as it gives you the opportunity to sell yourself to your potential future employer. Your covering letter is used along with your CV / application form as a tool for selecting potential candidates and therefore it is important that you read the advert clearly as it often asks for specific information to include in your cover letter or gives specific instructions.

You never get a second chance to make a first impression so PLEASE spell check your letter and CV and also check your punctuation and grammar. This could be the difference between you getting an interview or not.

The covering letter should be tailored to the specific job, so again, read the advert carefully, highlight all the key words, skills and attributes that the position requires and use these skills and attributes in your response.

Example Letter

Jamie Spencer
2 The Downs
Field View Street
Chester
CH9 1XY

Tel: 01695 112233

28th September 2008

Private and Confidential

The Human Resources Department
Vivalis Limited
22 Grimrod Place
Skelmersdale
WN8 9UU

Dear Sir / Madam,

Vacancy - Laboratory Technician

I am writing in reference to the above advert which was advertised on your website and enclose a copy of my current CV for your consideration.

I believe I have the skills and experience you require and have also achieved my BTech National in Applied Science. I am currently working for Laboratories Incorporated in a similar position which has broadened my laboratory experience specifically in the areas of colour matching and chemical and physical testing.

As requested, my current salary is £xxxx per annum plus a company pension scheme.

I would relish the opportunity to meet with you discuss my experiences and what I could bring to the role at Vivalis and am available for interview at your convenience.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Jamie Spencer

The Curriculum Vitae (CV)

First impressions count - and your CV will determine the first impressions that a prospective employer forms of you. It's vital you get it right, because a good CV will ensure you get noticed and ultimately secure you an interview.

There are no definitive rules to writing a good CV, but there are some basic guidelines you can follow to ensure your CV is presented professionally. So here are some general points about writing your CV - followed by a step-by-step guide on how to write each section.

For maximum impact your CV should follow a logical layout with headings and section breaks. Ensure your spelling and grammar is correct, do not just run your CV through spell check as this will not identify "typos", discrepancies or grammatical inconsistencies such as the difference between their and there!

- **Be clear:** use bold text and bullet points to ensure you highlight specific information.
- **Be focused:** Emphasize your relevant skills and experience, tailoring your information to the specific job application.
- **Be concise:** As an employer we don't want war and peace just a summary of your experiences and achievements. Your CV should not exceed 2/3 typed A4 pages.
- **Proof Read:** It is imperative that you fully proof read your CV to make sure that you have accurate spelling and grammar. If you're unsure, ask a friend or relative to read your CV for you.

This guide takes you step by step through one of the CV layouts that we recommend to candidates. The first page of many CV's focus on personal details and education - however, it is your employment experience and ability to do the job that is most significant to recruiters and prospective employers. So this layout follows a style you may not be familiar with, but it presents your strengths and key skills in the most relevant and effective way.

Full Name

Address

Contact Details (telephone, mobile, email etc)

This can be displayed in anyway – you can show off your computer skills but remember to keep it professional

Personal Profile

This is an optional section and can be used to indicate your career aspirations and to convey in a positive way why you are seeking a career move. Be aware however that a poor personal profile can do more harm than good, so don't try to be clever. Avoid terminology that has no relevance to your CV, for example, and steer clear of clichés and buzzwords. Use your personal profile to honestly reflect your skills, experience, attitude and behaviour.

Key Achievements

- Your key achievements form an important section of your CV. It needs to really engage your prospective employer - so use facts, figures and timescales to demonstrate that you are a competent achiever in your current and previous roles. Don't be afraid to sell yourself, but substantiate your claims with solid evidence.
- Using bullet points makes your achievements easier to read - and remember to use strong words that demonstrate what you actually did, words like led, organised, designed, formed, developed, significantly improved/reduced, successfully created and so on.
- The achievements you select for this section should reflect a number of different competencies, tailored to the job for which you are applying. Don't simply focus on the financial and sales element of your position, for example, and completely overlook your achievements relating to people manager or customer service, or it may raise doubts about a lack of people skills.
- Finally, compare your achievements to the results of your colleagues whenever appropriate to convey the real impact of your contribution - this adds a useful perspective to your achievements and enables the reader to more fully understand what you have to offer.

Career History

Your career history is a compact summary of your employment history and the responsibilities that you held in each post.

Start with the most recent or current employer, detailing the month/year you started and finished, together with the Company name and location as shown below. If you had a number of different roles within the same Company, list the dates and then detail the specific roles and responsibilities below.

For every position held, summarise the key facts and figures below each employment entry - include details about the size of your team etc. This is critical information and helps an employer or recruiter to correctly assess your level of experience.

For clarity, your key responsibilities should be bullet pointed - and remember to include any extra responsibilities that would make you stand out from your colleagues. Don't make the mistake of confusing key responsibilities for a full job description.

Finally, explain any gaps in your employment history by detailing the dates along with a short, concise sentence providing the reason why you were not working - travelling the world, for example, or spending time with family.

So, your career history section should look something like this: -

**Jan 2002 – Present Day Laboratory Technician
 Laboratories Incorporate**

Responsible for colour matching, chemical and physical testing, liaising with quality control and research and development.

**Jan 2002 – Feb 2003 Laboratory Assistant
 Chemistry Corporation**

Education and Qualifications

Present your most recent qualifications first, providing details for your most important and relevant qualifications - reduce this detail for less significant qualifications. List any relevant training courses or company training your have received by date and course title.

June 2002	BTech National	Applied Science		
June 2001	AS Level	Chemistry (A)	Physics (B)	Maths (B)
June 2000	GCSE:	Maths (A)	Chemistry (A)	Physics (B)
		Biology (B)	RE (B)	English Language (C)
		French (C)	German (C)	English Literature (C)

References

You need to supply two references - and ideally, one of these should be your current or most recent employer. Rest assured, they will not be contacted without your permission being requested. However it demonstrates that you are comfortable with the referees being contacted at the appropriate time.

The Interview

If you have successfully gained an interview you will want to make the best impression you can. Here are some tips and points to help you achieve this;

1. **Dress smart and relevant to the position** – if it a professional position, wear a business suit – if it a distribution position – wear smart casual wear (not your best tracksuit!), make sure you are clean and groomed.
2. **Prepare for the interview** – Some questions you can easily predict - but other questions may be more unexpected. The better you prepare, the better your position - and the greater your confidence. So, focus your preparation around what you believe to be the key competencies and skills of the job for which you are applying for. Check out the company information and find out what you can, go over the advert and plan your examples of experience you have. Write down some of the questions and think about how you would approach the answers. Try rehearsing with your friends or family, but don't fall into the trap of repeating your answers in parrot fashion. Keep it natural. Try writing out your answers too as this will help you commit the information to memory.
3. **Plan your route** – ensure you know where you need to be and how long it will take you – you may even want to do a dummy run
4. **Be early** or the very least on time! – you will often be required to sign in at reception to please do not leave it to the last minute
5. **Know who you are meeting** – greet them with a strong but friendly handshake

Frequently Asked Interview Questions

There are many different kinds of questions you could be asked at your interview, covering topics such as your career, personality and motivation. Below you will find a list of the most frequently asked questions to help you in your preparation.

Career Questions

- Why did you move from Employer X to Employer Y? (It is important for you to be able to explain why you have moved to different jobs, but you do not want to appear a job hopper. The Company will want to be confident you will stay with them, so be prepared to discuss and explain your reasons for leaving and don't be evasive).
- Describe your Career history to date and your achievements.
- What are your Career aspirations?
- What were your responsibilities in each role?
- Why do you want to join our Company?
- Tell me what you know about the Company and the role?
- What are your current KPI's and how are you performing against them?
- Who would you say are our competitors?
- Who would you consider to be your main competitors? How often do you review their performance?
- How do you measure customer service?

Personality Questions

- How would you describe your management style?
- What are your weaknesses and strengths?
- How would your friends and colleagues describe you?
- Give me 5 words that best describe you?
- Give me 5 words that your colleagues would use to describe you?

Motivation Questions

- What motivates you to be successful?
- What has been your greatest achievement?

Open Question

- Tell me about yourself ?
(If asked this question, be prepared to talk openly about yourself. Don't be tempted to waffle – you should enable the interviewer to get to know you, but make sure you answer in a structured manner).

Competency Based Questions:

A competency or behavioural interview question is one whereby you are asked to provide an example of a past situation to demonstrate you have a particular skill. Interviewers seek to obtain information about your past behaviour as they believe this is the best predictor to future behaviour.

Interviewers will be looking for you to provide specific examples about exactly what you did in such situations, not what others did or what you would do hypothetically. You will be asked to discuss your answer in detail, you will often be probed on the example and you will need to ensure you can qualify your answer - interviewers are often particularly interested in the outcome of the situation. Examples of competency questions include:

Leadership

- Can you give me an example of an occasion where you have been required to show resilience in order to overcome a difficult situation or tough trading conditions?
- Can you tell me about a time when you have empowered your team or an individual in order to gain commitment for completing a task?

Teamwork

- Can you give me an example when you have had to launch a new business initiative to the team? How did you launch it? How did you ensure everyone understood the benefit of the launch?

- Can you give me an example where you have taken over a new team and you have improved team morale? What steps did you take to understand your team and how did you measure your success?
- Tell me about a time when you have worked efficiently as part of a team?

Customer Service

- Can you give me an example of a time when you have exceeded a customer's expectations?
- What actions have you taken in the past to improve customer service?
- Describe an occasion when you have received praise relating to the levels of customer service that you have delivered?

Planning and Organising

- Describe a time when you had to take on extra work at short notice, talk to me about how you prioritised tasks and what the outcome was?
- How do you monitor the progress of tasks or projects?
- How do you manage your time and objectives?

Salary Negotiation

This can be a tricky subject! To avoid any uncomfortable situations, state your salary expectations in your covering letter. Be realistic, look for a 5-10% increase of your current salary as a guideline.

At the End of the Interview

Be prepared to ask a number of questions as most interviewers will give you an opportunity for this at the end of your interview. You can plan your questions in advance and whilst researching the Company. Asking informed questions at this point shows you have a genuine interest in the position for which you are being interviewed. Remember not to be negative and try to ask open questions which enable the interviewer to open up and discuss the organisation with you. Examples of the questions you might ask include:-

- What are the opportunities for training and development?
- What are the organisation's future plans?
- Could you tell me about your experience in the Company?

If you feel confident and you have built a good rapport with the interviewer, ask them when the next stage of the recruitment process will be. Don't be afraid to say you have enjoyed meeting them and make sure you thank the interviewer for their time - then smile and leave with a strong hand shake and good eye contact.

What Happens Next?

At Vivalis, we aim to contact each individual whether they are successful or not.

Should you not be successful, your details will be kept on file for a period of 3 months and you would be contacted if any suitable vacancies arose which meet your specified skills and experiences.

You can ask for feedback – this is usually best done shortly after the interview