

CV Formatting Checklist for Agency Recruiters

Spot and fix the usual formatting problems before you send a CV to a client.

Recruiters need to send clean, consistent CVs to clients — fast. Run through these checks before you hit send to avoid messy files, missing details, and ATS parsing errors.

Before you start

- ☐ **The client's CV requirements** — format (Word/PDF), file size limits, and naming conventions.
- ☐ **Access to the original CV files** — PDFs may need converting or reformatting.
- ☐ **Your agency's house style** — font, margins, and how to display dates.
- ☐ **Time for a final read-through** — even a quick scan catches glaring errors.
- ☐ **Basic formatting tools** — Word, Google Docs, or your editor with track changes.

Layout and formatting

- ☐ **Use a standard font** — Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman at 11–12pt.
- ☐ **Consistent margins and spacing** — ≥ 1.27 cm margins, 1.15–1.5 line spacing.
- ☐ **Avoid tables and text boxes** — many ATS scramble them; use bullets and line breaks.
- ☐ **No headers or footers** — ATS scanners often ignore or misread these areas.
- ☐ **Clear section headings** — bold or slightly larger; avoid all caps.
- ☐ **Contact details at the top** — name, phone, email; no full address unless requested.
- ☐ **Consistent date format** — e.g. Jan 2020–Dec 2022; avoid “Present”/“Current”.
- ☐ **No photos or logos** — they break parsing and clutter the CV.
- ☐ **Convertible bullet styles** — standard solid circles or dashes only.
- ☐ **Appropriate length** — usually two pages max; three for senior roles.
- ☐ **Avoid hyperlinks** — ATS and clients often strip them or show messy URLs.
- ☐ **Clear file name** — “Firstname Lastname - Job Title.docx”, not “CV_Final_v3”.

Content accuracy

- ☐ **Check candidate name spelling.**
- ☐ **Verify contact details** — phone and email current and professional.
- ☐ **Confirm job titles match the roles applied for** — don't overstate.
- ☐ **Dates align with employment history** — explain gaps or overlaps.
- ☐ **Skills reflect the job description** — remove outdated or irrelevant ones.
- ☐ **No unexplained acronyms** — spell out industry-specific terms.

- ☐ **Education and qualifications accurate and verifiable.**
- ☐ **Achievements quantifiable where possible** — metrics over vague phrases.

Compliance and PII

- ☐ **Remove irrelevant personal data** — DOB, marital status, nationality, religion (Equality Act 2010).
- ☐ **Strip photos** to avoid bias; many UK/EU clients prefer anonymised CVs early.
- ☐ **Avoid full home addresses** — town or postcode is usually enough.
- ☐ **Check GDPR compliance** — retain only what's necessary; anonymise sensitive details.
- ☐ **Remove national insurance / social security numbers** — never send these to clients.
- ☐ **Be cautious with references** — no referee contact details without consent.

ATS compatibility

- ☐ **Keep CV structure flat** — avoid columns, tables, and complex sections.
- ☐ **Use standard headings** — “Work Experience”, “Education”, “Skills”.
- ☐ **Avoid special characters and fancy bullets** — simple dashes or circles.
- ☐ **Save as .docx** unless the client specifies otherwise.
- ☐ **Check for hidden characters** — copy-paste from LinkedIn/PDF inserts invisible breaks.