You need a CV that works!

A revisited guide to CVs in the translation industry.

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1 | INTRODUCTION

When I wrote "Curriculum Vitae that works in the translation industry" back in 2011, I never expected it to be read by over 25,000 colleagues. It's a great honour and I'm happy that so many have found my publication useful.

Since then I've also helped over 500 translators and interpreters to improve their CVs. Many wrote to me saying that they saw a real increase in positive responses and projects as a result. This revised guide reflects what I've learned in the past two years and will hopefully help you get a CV that works. I believe that with a large number of clients, CVs are still our most basic marketing tool. It's better to get this right rather than lose a project.

I decided to set up my website - Business School for Translators - because I wanted to share my experience in getting started in translation with others through:

- **Lessons in business**
- **Interviews with translators**
- **Resources**
- **Courses**

Everything I do online, on my Facebook page, Twitter and other media is related to the business of translation. My posts, updates and tweets are there to encourage fellow translators and interpreters and to share business knowledge and our personal best practices.

And this is precisely why I decided to write an updated version of the guide. In my mind, if every translator can improve something in the way they do business, this has a positive knock-on effect for the whole profession. We all become stronger as translators and gain recognition as the professionals we are.

You need a CV that works. Why? Because CVs are our basic marketing tools.

TAKE ACTION
1 | Get ready to improve your CV
2 | Take a look at the Business School for Translators course
3 | Drop me a line with feedback

Guide: You need a CV that works!

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In this guide you'll find information that will help you to:

- **Ensure your CV reflects your professional profile**
- **Increase your chances of landing a project**
- **Work well with clients within the translation industry**

I should also add that this updated guide has benefited extensively from cooperation with colleagues. I would first like to thank Rose Newell for editing and proofreading the entire text. I would also like to thank Łukasz Gos-Furmankiewicz for his incredibly helpful ideas and advice, as well as all the colleagues who have provided me with inspiration (in particular those who contributed with questions and title suggestions).

Many thanks also to Alina Cincan from Inbox Translation for very helpful insights into CVs that failed at her agency, and to Clare Suttie, Nick Rosenthal, Mathieu Marechal, Levent Yildizgoren and to a well-established UK-based company for the pieces of advice they shared from the perspective of agencies and clients.

I sincerely hope this publication will help you develop a CV that works. We can take it even further and discuss your CV at an individual CV and cover letter review session.
I'd love to hear from you and read your comments. Go ahead and drop me a line at marta@wantwords.co.uk. You can also find me on Twitter @mstelmaszak and add me on LinkedIn, leaving a note explaining that you read my guide to CVs.

Marta

Short bio

My name is Marta Stelmaszak, a Polish – English translator and interpreter with six years of experience. I specialise in law, IT, marketing, and business. I'm a member of the Management Committee of the Interpreting Division at the Chartered Institute of Linguists and a Co-head of the UK Chapter of the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters. I'm also an Associate of the Institute of Translation and Interpreting, a qualified business mentor, a member of the Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship and the Chartered Institute of Marketing. I'm about to start a master's degree in Management, Information Systems and Innovation at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Recently, I've been awarded with the Higher Education Social Entrepreneurship Award.

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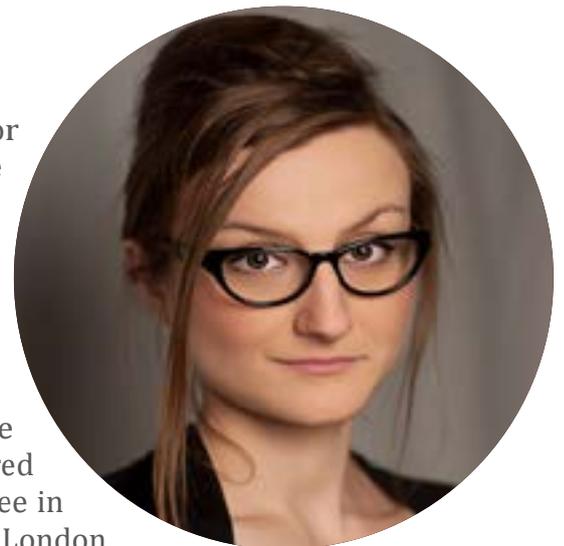
2 | PREPARATION AND PLANNING

Why do you need a CV?

I've been thinking about this seemingly obvious question for a long time. I have all sorts of marketing materials: everything from a website, to presentations, brochures and leaflets. But certain types of clients just keep on asking me for my CV. In the beginning, I couldn't understand that and thought perhaps I hadn't been clear or detailed enough on my other marketing collateral.

But I realised that some types of clients ask for CVs because it's the most common and uniform format that can be used to assess someone's suitability to do a certain job. It's also a well-established format that our brains have somehow become wired to read, so force of habit applies here, too. Websites can be muddled, have different tabs, or direct you to other bits of unnecessary information. Brochures can be beautifully designed, but may lack much-needed clarity of information. We all know what a CV is and this is by far the document we see most frequently over the course of our professional lives. A CV is a shortcut in the decision-making process. I am not saying it is right or this is the way it should be, but CVs do help us make up our mind about others. Here are some reasons why your prospective clients might ask you for your CV:

- **CVs help us make quicker decisions**
- **The format of a CV is familiar to almost everybody in a professional setting**
- **CVs may be required for quality processes or procedures**

As I said, this applies only to certain clients. It definitely applies to many translation companies, who need to be able to both process large numbers of similar applications and conform to certain quality standards, which in turn may require them to collect translators' CVs, personal documents and test translations (they don't do it because they like it!). When I worked at a translation agency, I simply had no time to look at websites or brochures. I used CVs to carry out some preliminary checks to make sure my translators had relevant experience and education.

TAKE ACTION
1 | Separate direct client from agency marketing
2 | Look at CVs in other professions
3 | List the reasons why your clients ask you for your CV

Direct clients seem to be quite different and don't tend to ask for your CVs nearly as often as translation agencies do. This is because our relationships with direct clients are very often at more of a buyer-supplier level. Such a relationship doesn't necessarily require a CV, as long as your buyer is convinced you're the right person to do the job. But some of my direct clients do still ask for my CV, simply because this is the format they feel familiar with. And you know what? I don't mind and I understand them. This may not be my preferred way of finding contractors, but if it works for them, I'm happy to provide my CV - so I want my CV to be as good as possible.

On another note, directors, CEOs and CFOs have CVs, too, and they don't think there's anything wrong in being asked for them. We shouldn't feel slighted by the expectation, either.

What is the purpose of your CV?

We often write CVs because we feel we have to. We treat it like an ordeal because we know everybody will be asking for it. And it gets even worse when we realise we'll be assessed and chosen (or not) on the basis of this short document. With all that in mind, it's very easy to forget what the ultimate purpose of a CV is: to be chosen. In short, a CV has to:

Make your CV attractive, impressive, persuasive, informative and actionable!

- **Make the reader read it (attract)**
- **Impress the reader (impress)**
- **Persuade the reader that you're the right person to do the job (persuade)**
- **Provide all information needed to make a decision (inform)**
- **Make the reader want to write you an email straight away (call to action)**

You also need to consider what you're trying to achieve with your CV. You may be sending it to get:

- **A single freelance project**
- **Long-term freelance cooperation with an agency**
- **Freelance cooperation with a direct client**
- **An in-house translation position**
- **A multilingual vacancy**

You need to adapt your CV with these different opportunities in mind.

TAKE ACTION
1 | Write down the purpose of your CV
2 | Write down what you're trying to achieve with it
3 | Prepare different CVs for different purposes

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It is essential to have a clear and established strategy when writing your CV. Without going into the law of attraction or magical thinking, the purpose helps you stay focused when structuring your CV and makes it easier to decide what to include and what to omit.

I have different CVs for different purposes: a shorter and more concise one for single projects, and a more elaborate one for long-term cooperation. I also have a different version for freelance cooperation to the one I use for direct clients. All this requires a conscious approach to the function and purpose of the CV.

We can't forget that our CVs are our most basic marketing tool. In my years of experience, I have sent more CVs to potential clients than any other materials. I realised that my CV is perhaps the strongest marketing tool that I have, and its ultimate purpose is to make my clients choose me. A very important point to remember here and apply in our attitude is to be persuasive but not pleading. Think like a CEO or a director: you're a professional who provides high-quality services.

Who will be reading your CV?

I'm sure I don't need to tell this to any translator, but all texts (including our CVs) are written to be read by specific people in specific contexts. This is the foundation of the job we're doing. But all too often we forget that we write our CVs to be read by others. This simple fact has a number of serious consequences, affecting everything from the format to readability and content.

TAKE ACTION

1 | Write down all the people who might read your CV

2 | Identify the key points they're going to look for

3 | Do some research on how to impress them

Writing with the audience in mind is something I consider very important. In fact, whatever I write, I always imagine my ideal reader reading it and I try to envisage the impression my text makes on him or her. Even now, when I type these words, I can see you in front of your computer reading it and looking for specific tips and snippets of advice. I try to imagine the situation you're in: maybe you're getting quite desperate because your CV is not yielding the results you want, maybe you've just finished your degree and you're ready to start translating professionally, maybe you're just double-checking that you have everything covered. I can almost see your office and your cup of coffee [Editor's note: ...or translator's teacup!]

CVs are written to be read. Always write with the reader in mind. Does your CV speak to your client?

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Imagining all the above helps me write something as real and useful as I can. It's an exercise that they always teach writers: imagine your reader and write for him or her. I was taught that during my creative writing course, but at that time I thought it could work only with novels and prose. Back then, I failed to realise that the same happens with professional writing. Making this switch in my mind was one of the most important steps in my career. I started writing marketing materials that were far more persuasive and attractive and the quality of my results skyrocketed.

One of the basic tasks we have as marketers (and we need to be them in our own businesses) is to analyse and segment our clients. I cover that extensively in my course, but I'll try to introduce you to this concept in brief.

To give you an example, I have three broad segments of clients: translation agencies and companies, lawyers and law firms, and IT companies. Of course they have further sub-divisions, but these are the main categories I can identify and subdivide. Each segment has certain features and is looking for specific qualities in the people they work with. I know a lot about lawyers and what they're looking for, for example. Based on this segmentation, I have drawn up an image of an Ideal Customer Avatar who works in the legal field. I called him Johnny the Lawyer.

I think I can explain all this much better in talking, so please have a look and watch a recording of my presentation in Madrid in May 2013. Start at 56:26 where I talk about creating the Ideal Customer Avatar:

TAKE ACTION
1 | Try to create your Ideal Customer Avatar
2 | Analyse what works with your Avatar
3 | Make a list of points that would impress your Avatar
4 | Do some research before sending your CV to clients

To help you start drawing up your own Ideal Customer (or Reader) Avatar, consider who may be reading your CV:

- **A project manager who has trained as a translator**
- **A project manager who has not trained as a translator**
- **An HR specialist**
- **A PA (personal assistant)**
- **CEO**
- **A project manager in a huge translation company**
- **A project manager in a small translation company**

Think how the roles and background of these people should influence the focus and objectives of your CV. I'm sure you'd agree that a PM who is trained in translation will require slightly different information than a PM who may have only superficial knowledge of what our job entails.

Research your market

As I mentioned, it's really important to know your reader and to make sure you give the right information with the right level of detail. Getting to know your reader (in fact, your client) is the central point of all marketing. If you work with lawyers, as I do, look at their CVs. See what sort of data they include, what they find important, and what they bring to the fore to impress others. Do some digging (LinkedIn is great for that) to find out what ticks your clients' boxes.

This is one side of the story. Another important point is to understand the rules of CV writing in different professional (and cultural) environments. You may even want to consider hiring a professional CV writer who may know something about your target readership that you're missing because you're not trained in this area.

But perhaps the most important market research exercise to carry out before you begin to write your CV is to look at CVs of other translators from a variety of language combinations. Do that to see what they're doing, what they're writing about and what layouts they are using. Make notes and highlight the parts that you find useful and that you'd like to include on your own CV. Of course, don't copy or steal someone else's layout (or content!). Source inspiration and information, but please, be ethical about it.

The next step is to narrow down your search and look at the CVs of translators in your language combination. This will be excellent food for thought and a very beneficial exercise. Believe me, you'll be inspired by people's experience and background. Don't feel overwhelmed if you come across somebody with so much more experience than you have. We all started somewhere. Learn to feel inspired by people who got to the point where you want to be.

Develop the edge

I've read a few books and guides on CVs and copywriting, and they all agree on one aspect: the most successful CVs are those that are the most relevant to your reader. That's why I don't believe in generic CVs.

It's quite obvious and I'm sure you'd agree with me: things that seem to be more relevant to us draw our attention more than a more general message. If a piece of text looks like it is applicable to you, you're more likely to read it. Like this guide! It's the same with CVs.

This point is linked to the specialisations that we, as professionals, should develop. But even if you're still working on your specialisation or developing your particular angle, expressing a good semblance of this on your CV will make it much more effective.

After you've identified your client segments and Ideal Customer Avatars, make sure that your CV presents you as the expert they are looking for in the field they work in. Structure and tailor your CV in a way that gives you a clear edge over the competition. For example, on my CV for lawyers everything from my professional headline to CPD courses is relevant to the legal field. Of course I have more professional, academic and vocational experience but this is all listed on my website. I want my CV to have a clear, defined edge that speaks to my reader.

I know that as you read this guide, you're most likely rewriting your existing CV, not writing it from scratch. Look at it now and check if you can identify one strong edge. Try to summarise it in one sentence.

Developing the edge helps you position your services. You should aim closer to a lawyer than to an office assistant.

CVs not one CV

By now you must have realised that it's not possible to cater for all purposes and for all audiences with just one CV unless you work in one narrow area of specialisation with only one client segment. The rest of us who are not so lucky have to prepare different versions of our CV. I have three different CVs for the three areas I work in, and then another one for interpreting, and yet another one for direct clients, and of course a very general one for reference purposes. Of course, all of them are in the two languages I work in.

Cultural differences

By way of a warning when reading this guide, many CV writing rules differ depending on the culture. I'm based in the UK and that's why some of my points may not be applicable in every country.

To give you an example, photos are always an issue. In the UK, everybody is advised not to include photos on CVs for reasons of potential discrimination. But that's not clear either. If you include a photo, you may be in a better position to build real business relationships. In other countries, take France, Germany and Poland for example, we're expected to include our photos.

An important note on photos: it's better not to include any photo rather than one that's strikingly unprofessional. You should be aiming at general business attire, depending on the cultural expectations, of course.

The length of your CV may also be different from country to country. In the United States you're usually expected to squeeze everything on to one page, while in the UK two pages are a standard.

Planning sections

Now that we're done with all the preliminary points, grab a piece of paper and write down the following sections: professional headline, personal details, profile statement, key achievements, professional experience, qualifications and education, memberships, publications, CPD, skills. Now we're ready to cover CVs section-by-section! Make notes as you go to improve your CV straight away.

TAKE ACTION

1 | Research culture-bound CV guidelines related to length, structure and sections

2 | Plan a number of different versions of your CV depending on the audience, purpose and area of specialisation

3 | Print a copy of your CV, grab a pen and let's have a look at it!

Cultural differences in CV formats and content can't be ignored. Tailor your CV to your reader's culture.

3 | CV SECTION BY SECTION

First impression

In the previous edition of my guide I wrote that it takes as little as twenty seconds for your reader to assess whether your CV is worthy of their interest. This was two years ago and I think that in 2013 it takes even less. It certainly takes me around ten seconds to decide if a CV is interesting or not. Have you tested how long it takes you?

I like looking at it like this: you have somewhere between ten and twenty seconds to impress your reader and hook their attention. This is the first and most important impression you're going to make on your reader.

It sounds cruel, I know. But if you don't make the best impression possible in the first few seconds, your reader may not even get down to where you talk about your Master's in Translation Studies or the fact that you've translated a published book.

Here are some most common first impression mistakes on CVs:

- **Including too many personal details, such as nationality, gender, date of birth, place of birth, marital or civil status or number and even age of children**
- **Listing three telephone numbers, two email addresses and a full postal address**
- **Describing education dating back to high school**
- **Saying you're a beginner and newcomer**
- **Stressing the fact you're always available, flexible, and self-motivated**
- **Adding too many irrelevant details in general**

Instead, you should make sure that you use your ten to twenty seconds to grab your reader's attention with relevant and interesting information. Make sure that the reader will learn you have the right skills and that you're experienced in using them within this short timeframe. It's a good strategy to mention something that will make you look like an insider to your reader. For example, I mention my law-related education within the first few seconds to give a signal to the reader that we're not so different. The more relevant you can be, the better.

To make sure that your CV passes the first impression test, measure how much of your own CV you can read in fifteen seconds and draw a thick line there. This is how much your reader is going to see before they decide whether they should invest in reading on. What are they going to read? Is it interesting? Is it relevant?

Personal details

Personal details are the first thing at the top of our CVs, but they're often ignored by the reader on the first reading. And quite rightly so – they're not likely to be the decisive factors in landing you a project. Of course it's important to add all necessary information, such as your name, surname, and basic contact details. You may want to add your Skype login, Twitter, LinkedIn, or a link to your website. Be sure to observe the points made before regarding excessive personal details – don't waste those ten to twenty seconds.

As discussed, there is some debate when it comes to adding photos and I recommend that you take your target culture into account. Some of our colleagues also add logos of any organisations they belong to. I used to do that, but now I just showcase them on my website.

Professional headline

Developing your edge and grabbing your reader's attention start with an effective professional headline. Such a headline should reflect who you are and what you do, in as much detail as possible, taking care to remain concise. Your headline should include your language combination, field of expertise and what you do. Mine is quite simple on my legal CV: "Polish – English Legal Translator". No unicorns or magic sparkles. I like this minimalist approach and I believe that clear-cut headlines work, following the principle of "it does what it says on the tin".

A good professional headline can also be used to enhance your relevance to a specific target group.

TAKE ACTION

1 | Set a timer for fifteen seconds and start reading your CV. Where did you get to?

2 | Ask a friend to look at your CV for fifteen seconds and share their first impressions

3 | Delete everything that's not necessary

TAKE ACTION

1 | Draft three possible professional headlines and play around with them

2 | Write down your profile statement and make sure that almost every word there carries meaning

3 | Look at your profile from your Avatar's perspective

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Profile statement

This is where we can make the right first impression. The profile statement gives you some space for two to three sentences that you can use to present who you are and what you do in the most appealing way. It should encapsulate your profile and work as a pitch.

This section of your CV is probably the most underestimated. But look at it this way: this is what your reader is going to read in the first ten to twenty seconds. This is your one and only chance to hook your reader and make sure they continue reading.

It takes less than 20 seconds to make a decision if a CV is worth attention or not. Do you make the best use of this time?

There are some pieces of information I think work particularly well in our profile statements: areas of specialisation, summary of experience, unique elements in our educational history, CAT tools we use, or even daily capacity (which often helps us to educate our clients).

I'm a fan of using impersonal grammatical constructions throughout my CV, but then again it may depend on the culture and traditions. Using first person is not wrong, but it may strike some of your readers as odd or even unprofessional, depending on their culture and preferences.

Key achievements

There is a bit of a debate around listing key achievements on a freelancer's CV. I think we need to look at the role this section plays on our CVs first. If you call it "Key achievements" it's almost guaranteed your reader is going to look at it. This is a quite clever way of ensuring the reader's interest is still high enough to continue reading after the first twenty seconds. And if you have your reader's attention, this is where it's perfectly okay to list three to five bullet points with the most important and impressive facts about your career.

I know it's difficult to think about key achievements and then list them. It can feel a bit pushy or overly confident. But this is the place where you can show you're different from other translators who may be considered for the same project.

TAKE ACTION

1 | Decide whether to include "Key achievements" or "Highlights"

2 | Make a list of points to include in this section

3 | Ensure that your key achievements or highlights will impress your reader

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Look for inspiration in:

- **University education**
- **Interesting or important assignments**
- **Publications**
- **Lectures or presentations**
- **Continuing Professional Development**
- **Client recommendations**

This section is of course optional, as I often note with my students at the Business School or in my individual CV assessments. If you don't feel comfortable with referring to it as "key achievements", "career highlights" is a good alternative. You may want to include some milestones or turning points there.

Some more off-the-wall ideas to add here might include tough situations you've been through, difficult topics, the way you've dealt with a challenging subject, how you met a particularly tight deadline or helped a client get the results they desperately needed.

Professional experience

The section of our CV where we talk about our professional experience is the central point of every freelancer's CV. It simply has to be effective. There are some points I think are essential, such as:

- **Including the fact you work as an independent translator, even if you're just starting out. Omitting it may give the impression that you're not really serious about it.**
- **Listing the types of documents you work on.**
- **Mentioning previous relevant experience.**

TAKE ACTION

1 | Decide whether to take a chronological or skills-based approach

2 | List of your experience and divide it up into manageable sections

3 | Add recent or memorable projects and describe them in further detail

For me, the crucial part of professional experience is actually a true and detailed account of the work you've done so far. On my legal translation CV, I list types of documents I've translated under the areas of law I work in. I try to give more detailed information for the most recent (or most interesting) projects, including the topic and word count of the document. I quite like numbers and I think they work well on our CVs, so the more numerical data we can include, the more convincing we look.

Those of us who have had their work published and are not forbidden to disclose this by our agreements with clients should provide a link to examples of such work. The rest of us can simply link to our portfolio where we can provide samples of our translations.

After describing your current experience as a translator, you naturally want to move to past experience. Just a word of caution here: you don't need to include everything you've done in the past. Again, try to apply the principle of relevance and find things related to translation or languages that were a part of your past jobs. Or if your previous positions support a specialisation you work in, make sure you mention these, too.

Another approach to describing your experience is a skill-based format. I'm not an expert in using this format, but I did some reading and found out that it's recommended for people with several short-term positions, who are trying to change careers, and those just starting their career. Here are some examples (click to enlarge).

Qualifications and education

For freelancers, experience matters more than education. What we know and can do as translators carries more weight than what we've learned at school, wouldn't you agree? And it should be reflected in the structure of our CV, where experience goes first, followed by education.

When talking about your qualifications, it's a good idea to link to their descriptions. For example, when talking about the Diploma in Translation, add a hyperlink to the Chartered Institute of Linguist's website where the qualification is described. Not every client will be aware of what the qualification entails and what the requirements are.

I also think that including some more details about your degrees can be helpful. Why not experiment with adding two or three modules that were covered during your Masters in Translation Studies or Bachelor in your foreign language(s)? You'd be surprised how many clients don't know what's involved.

Memberships

Professional memberships are important in every translator's profile. Sometimes even abiding by Codes of Conduct can be used as marketing, especially for legal translators. When listing them, consider linking back to directories or websites.

I would like to make a general comment regarding professional organisations for translators. They are of invaluable help for individual professionals and they help us build a stronger industry together. If you're not a member yet, do consider joining one or even a few that are relevant to you both geographically and in terms of your target market. The benefits are many and I always mention them in the Business School for Translators course.

Publications

If you have more publications (or published translations) than you can fit in the achievements or highlights section, it may be a good idea to list them under a separate headline. Again, I would recommend keeping things as relevant as you can. Where possible, link to them. The most courageous of us could link to an online bookstore where the translated books are available.

Continuing Professional Development

With more and more CPD opportunities out there, it's easier than ever to hone your skills and work on your specialisation. Listing additional courses, webinars, seminars, conferences, or other CPD activities helps you build an image of a dedicated and serious professional. Again, link to your courses and course providers for more information.

Skills

This section has always caused the majority of problems. What should we write here? Personally, I don't list my skills on the legal CV, because I try to include what I can do and who I am in other sections of my CV. I wouldn't find much else to mention down there, and I even find it a bit redundant on this CV.

If you do like to mention your skills, consider writing about computer skills, personal skills, additional languages and interests here. However, you should be careful not to include skills that are too basic, or entry-level skills that are expected of you anyway.

TAKE ACTION

1 | Compile a list of associations you belong to, also those related to your fields of expertise

2 | List all publications and pick them according to your CV's purpose

3 | Keep an up-to-date CPD record and include the highlights on your CV

4 | LANGUAGE THAT WORKS

Language versions

It may be stating the obvious, but our CVs need to be in the languages we work in. As translators, we're the first ones to advocate that native language works best when convincing people, so we need to act like that, too. If you work with clients whose language is not your native, it's best to have your CV professionally translated (you know, professional translation has a few benefits…) or at least proofread by a native translator or editor.

Professional CV and resume writing services

It's been pointed out to me by one of our colleagues on LinkedIn that investing in professional writing services may be a good idea. It's not something I've ever tried, because I'm on the other side of it: I've done some training for CV consultants and coaches, but if you feel you're getting a bit stuck with your CV, hiring someone to write it written for you may be a good idea. From time to time I provide CV consultancy sessions. If you're interested in one, visit The Alexandria Project.

Using power words

When comes to writing a CV, it's very important to use power (or action) words. Their role is to introduce information in a more powerful and appealing way. Have a look at some power words you may want to use on your CV! Let's start with power verbs:

Arranged	Ordered	Achieved	Administered
Categorised	Organised	Built	Advised
Collected	Prepared	Created	Analysed
Compiled	Recorded	Developed	Approved
Corrected	Registered	Established	Completed
Distributed	Reserved	Expanded	Conducted
Filed	Responded	Founded	Controlled
Incorporated	Reviewed	Identified	Coordinated
Logged	Scheduled	Implemented	Defined
Maintained	Screened	Increased	Delivered
Monitored	Supplied	Initiated	Demonstrated
Observed	Updated	Managed	Performed

There are also some power nouns: ability, capacity, competence, effectiveness. These work quite well on our CVs. We can't forget about adjectives: active, competent, consistent, pertinent, proficient, qualified, resourceful, versatile... The list could be much longer!

I think a word of caution is needed here: all these power words work well, but we need to apply common sense. Every now and then I receive a CV that's full of power words but lacks meaningful content. I'm sure you've also seen some examples of that, and I guess I don't have to tell you to watch out. But it's best to be on the safe side!

More than in any profession, in translation we're assessed on the language we use. Make sure you make the right impression.

Consistency

Consistency is one of the features of our work we're judged upon as linguists. Our CVs are great tools to show that we know what we're doing and that we're good at making things consistent. It's important to make sure that all your sentences have full stops, all your bullet points have consistent capitalisation, and all fonts are the same where they should be.

Proofreading

Just like consistency, spelling is something we'll be judged on. Running an automatic spellchecker is not enough. Print your CV out and ask two or three colleagues to read through it. It's also a good idea to review your CV every few months, even if just to make sure there are no unnoticed mistakes.

Updating

It's also important to keep all CVs up to date. We all develop and learn new things. My best tip here would be to introduce a schedule of updates. For example, I always update my CVs every three months. I add all new CPD courses, new projects I've completed, and new skills I've aquired. This structured approach allows me to keep all documents tidy, but I can also use the updated version to email my existing clients informing them of any updates.

TAKE ACTION

1 | Print out three copies of your CV and ask your friends to go over it
2 | Prepare a schedule for updating your CV
3 | Make sure all CV versions are consistent in basic details

| W O R D S |

Marta Stelmaszak
www.wantwords.co.uk

5 | THE BENEFIT OF ONLINE CVS

Online CV platforms

The fact that our CVs are usually viewed and assessed online is a huge benefit. Depending on your target reader (and client), as well as your field of work, you may want to use some online platforms allowing to present your CV in a different – and perhaps more appealing – way. The tools I talk about in this section are not all just meant for our CVs, but they may also prove incredibly useful in landing you good jobs.

LinkedIn

It's become almost a standard now, and it allows for a whole new level of networking. If you don't have a profile yet, it's really worth considering putting one together. And if you do, you should drop me (Marta Stelmaszak) an invitation with a note that you know me from this ebook.

Apart from giving you the ability to add details about your background, LinkedIn also allows you to localise your profile into other languages. I have both an English and Polish profile. LinkedIn also gives the opportunity to export a profile into a PDF document. Not to mention the fact that you can collect references there.

Vizualize.me
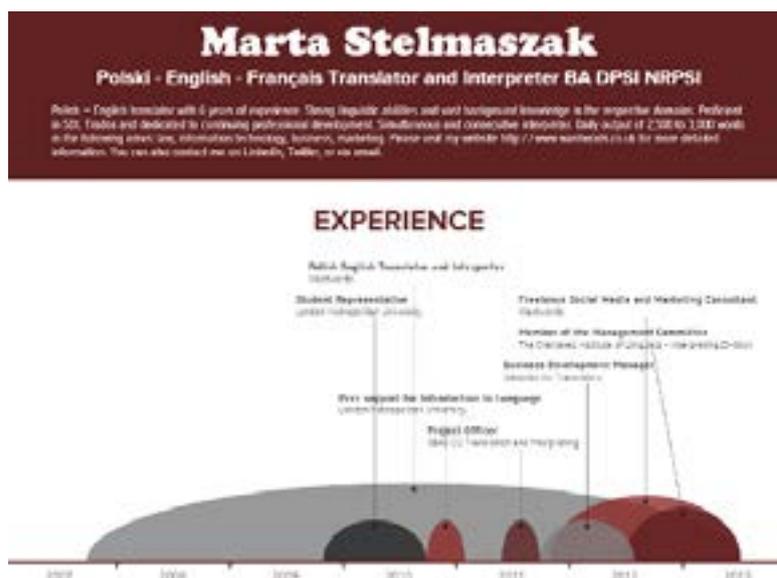
And if you already are on LinkedIn, you're just one step from creating a visual CV by importing all your LinkedIn data into this platform. You can play around with a number of options, including colours and shapes.

The coolest part of this platform is the languages view which works great for translators. It shows which countries on Earth are covered by the languages you work with.

Vizify.com

This platform may be useful for those of us who work in the more creative fields. It uses Twitter and Facebook data to create a mini presentation of your profile. Out of ten screens, one is devoted to showcasing your career.

Links

Apart from a variety of platforms to host our CVs, the benefit of the fact that our CVs are hardly ever printed nowadays is that we can add links to provide further information. Think of all the things you could provide a link to:

- **Your degree or university website**
- **A description of your qualification**
- **Your portfolio**
- **A video you've subtitled**
- **A book you've translated**
- **Other published work**
- **Your visual recorded CV or a short video introducing you and your business**

Have you considered including links to these elements? Making something so easily available encourages the reader to actually click on the link and have a look at what's on the other end.

Additional elements

I've already mentioned linking to video introductions to your business, but you may also consider linking to presentations or publications that are hosted online. A small icon or a button on your CV will encourage your reader to click. Interpreters may want to include a link to a sample of their voice hosted on Soundcloud, for example. You could also consider adding "action buttons", e.g. "request a quote" or "email me".

Online threat

As much as I am a fan of all these online developments, I'm also aware of the risks and threats we're exposed to on the web. As a word of caution, you should take care to protect yourself from CV scams and identity theft. If your CV is publicly available, scammers can take it and send it around, pretending they're you. I recommend reading this white paper on translator scams and identity theft as well as taking a look at João Roque Dias's translator scammers directory. In addition to all preventive measures mentioned on these two links, I would advise specifying on your CV that all emails to you should be sent to and will only be sent from one specific email address, preferably linked to your website. In my case it's marta@wantwords.co.uk.

TAKE ACTION

1 | Include links to provide more details about your education and experience

2 | Make sure to read up on identity theft and scams, and protect yourself against the risks

3 | Check that all your online CVs contain the same basic information

6 | LAYOUT AND DESIGN

Readability

I'm not an expert on design, but I do know that our CVs have to be clean and readable. Bright colours, small fonts and intricate font styles may work against us. Bold and italics can be used to differentiate bits of information, while the use of all caps is best avoided.

Standing out

Design is something we can use to make our CVs stand out. Getting your CV professionally designed may be a good idea. Or you can simply try playing around with colour, if you happen to have an eye for design. I don't.

Layout templates

For a more traditional approach, you may want to use a ready-made layout templates, for example those available in MS Office 2010. It's as easy as downloading a template and filling it in with your data. And it looks so much better already!

On some occasions, we may be required to use the Europass format. I'm not a big fan of it, as it's tailored for job-seeking purposes. If you absolutely have to use it (for example when taking part in a tendering process), make sure it reflects the freelance nature of your work.

When sending your CV, it's better to use a PDF format (like this guide) for a number of reasons:

- **PDF documents make a more professional impression than DOC files**
- **PDF documents are the industry standard**
- **PDF documents look the same on every device – what you see is what your client will see**
- **PDF documents are safer**
- **PDF documents can be viewed with Acrobat Reader, which is a free download**

You don't need special software to create a PDF. Later versions of Microsoft Office have this feature built in, as does Open Office, which is available free online. You can also use one of the various free PDF printers available online.

7 | TIPS FROM TRANSLATION COMPANIES

When I started writing this ebook, I also got in touch with a few owners and managers of various translation companies. I've heard back from some of them, and I thought you'd really appreciate these suggestions.

Clare Suttie, Atlas Translations

However you contact a client, at some point they will look at your CV. They will form an impression of you almost immediately - so that impression needs to be instantly brilliant! Anyone applying for work as a translator, interpreter or Project Manager within the language industry must present a PERFECT CV. It's imperative that you understand how to show your achievements and experience clearly and to your best advantage. I often see CVs of really talented people who are just not doing themselves justice - and I am sure they miss out on jobs as a direct result."

Project Coordinator at a well-established UK translation company

You have three seconds to make an impression – make sure your email introduction contains the necessary information: language combination(s), specialist subjects, qualifications, years of experience, software proficiency and rates. The introductory email is your cover letter so make sure it stands out for the right reasons.

Nick Rosenthal, Salford Translations

* Focus on key benefits to your potential customers, rather than a simple list of "I've done this, I've done that"

* Be hard-hitting from the start. Put your key benefit, or your unique selling point, in the very first sentence. Catch the reader's eye (and interest!) in the first sentence, and they'll want to know more.

* Do check your document and covering note through carefully. Then check them again. A single spelling error or clunky construction at this point will mean your potential customer loses all interest.

* Send your material out on a targeted, individual basis. There is nothing worse than receiving an email that is clearly addressed to one of our competitors. Sending out a mass mail with all recipients on bcc (or worse, visibly copied in!) is almost as bad, and will do nothing at all to make your potential customers feel that they are somehow special for you.

Mathieu Marechal, Trad Online

❝ *Translators, be bold and let agencies know that you exist - and let us know exactly why we should consider you before other translators with that language pair. If you don't have a specialisation, then sell me on how clever and professional you are.*

There are lots of translators with good CVs. Sometimes lots of references don't make a difference, but I can give you one example of ingenuity: a Korean translator we work with listed all her clients' logos on one page - eye-catching, but of course, she did have some big brands to put in there.

If translators are on LinkedIn or ProZ and have good feedback from clients we like to see that - it's good to know that they take care of their online persona and have some business sense.

It's also more and more important for translators to be skilled in IT (basic HTML, being able to handle online translation platforms) or have knowledge of DTP, and of course be willing to use CAT tools as needed.

If the CV somehow shows us that we're dealing with a pleasant and communicative personality, that will give you some extra brownie points.

Levent Yildizgoren TTC Language Services Limited

❝ *In my opinion the CV should be written with the customers and end game in mind. Some of the must haves for me when I am checking out translators CVs include:*
  - A current photograph.
- Top three specialist areas.
- How easy it is to communicate with them.
- Their service offer - why should we use their services.
- Clear message about their experience level.
- Professional memberships.

Thanks to Alina Cincan from Inbox Translation

When I first mentioned I was writing an updated version of my ebook, Alina got in touch and offered to compile a list of CV don'ts, based on the translators' CVs she receives at her company. I would like to thank Alina for being so proactive and taking the time to share her insights. Alina sent a five-page-long document, which is extremely useful and offers a lot of relevant suggestions. The following 5 pages are based on the notes Alina sent to me. Thank you, Alina!

The Don'ts of CV Writing from Alina Cincan, Inbox Translation

" Some details have been changed so as to preserve the anonymity of the authors (e.g. all names have been replaced with John/Jane Doe, dates and numbers slightly altered). All my comments are marked in red.

Personal details (taken from various CVs)

o   Marital Status: Married, with three children.
o   Religion: Muslim
o   Civil status: married; two sons aged 13 and 17
o   Profile: Male,35, single

DON'T!
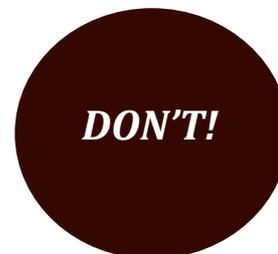
Personal statement

o   Desired employment: teacher **(while applying for a translator job)**
o   Objectives :
                Be punctual and on deadline
                Faithful and be creative
                Being after having hard work and sincere colleagues worldwide **(??!!)**
o   I can offer my translation expertise in the following fields: **(followed by blank)**
o   Mission: *You Will Not Regret If You Choice Me* .
 o   My experience in delivering language training to children and adults would be of the greatest value for your school. **(wrong recipient or just carelessness?)**

Skills

o   French (not fluent) – **is it relevant then?**
o   I.T. knowledge: The user level knowledge of a computer (Microsoft Windows 95 – Windows 7; Microsoft Office; Apple Macintosh). Knowledge of type.
        (No idea what the last sentence means)
o   Note: have extensive experience in (above boldface letters) fields!
        (he had listed a few areas of specialism)

Language and proofreading

o   Currant position : Translator **(my first thought...)**
o   **Area of expertise's (in cheeses – really reminded me of Pilgrim's Choice ad)**

Email address

o   pinkbunny@whatever.com **(The real examples could not be given for obvious reasons, but some of them are quite funny)**

Name of file

o   Jane Doe* targeted_CV
o   New-john*_cv.doc
o   CV_template.doc
o   C.V.111.doc
o   jane_doe*_cv_clinic.pdf
o   Backup-of-CV-JnDoe*-17-Jan-2013emply-and-Custmr-1.doc
o   Doe-f s-without-cv.docx
o   COVER-LETTER-AS-TRANSLATOR.docx
o   cvgeneral.doc
o   CURRICULUM-VITAE-Update-Doe.docx **(where Doe is not the name of the candidate)**
o   CV-II.doc

Cover letter or email

You cannot expect to be taken seriously if you put the following in your cover letter or email:

o   Could you please guide me from where i can get the translation work as i am also interested in doing the translation work. I would really appreciate if you can guide me for the same.
o   It is to be noted that it gives me great pleasure to work as a freelance translator (Online translation), under the auspices of your great company.
o   Let me tell you about myself, I am the best & my broad range of vocabulary makes me unique.
o   I am looking at a long term relationship with you
o   I translate most types of translation as : translation, proofreading, editing, subtitle, voice-over, localization, DTP and transcription **(Translating translation type of translation, I'm in awe!)**
o   Hi
       If you need a translator (French - English , English - French , German - English, English - German) I am at your disposal .
       I ask you * / source word for translation .
       I do high quality translation .
       You can see my CV as Attached File .
       Please reply .
       I wish you all the best .

DON'T!

o My previous employers are fully satisfied with my sincere work and I can efficiently work in global time zones with great energy and enthusiasm.
o hi,my name is Jane Doe,i live in london,…..,i am looking for work as translater and interpeter,i speak arabic,french and english,.please find my CV attached looking forward to your reply. thank you
o I am 21 i lived in normandy for 7 years i am 100% fluent in french i have previously translated for the French gendarmes no problem . **(Mother tongue: English)**

Formatting and layout

When using a CV template (not a bad thing, of course), at least make sure you delete the fields not filled in, don't leave them blank.

State personal website(s)

Publications Presentations Projects Conferences Seminars Honours and awards Memberships References	• 2008 – 2009 Business courses at ****

ANNEXES

Replace with list of documents annexed to your CV. Examples:
• Copy of Master degree diploma
• Copy of Bachelor degree diploma

The following are excerpts from CVs we received (data has been changed, but formatting was left as in the original)

Want
| WORDS |

2003 – Present: Freelance translator.

Translation of contracts, brochures, websites, and more (English, German, Swedish, Dutch ↔ Italian) through translation agencies (Agency 1, Agency 2, Agency 3, Agency 4), for clients such as **Client 1, Client 2, Client 3, Client 4, Client 5, Client 6, Client7**. Other direct clients: marketing and advertising agencies **Agency 1, Agency 2, Agency 3** and **Agency 4.**

The paragraph was in fact longer (double in size), but the idea is that this structure is difficult to read. Some bullet points would have been useful.

Jane Doe
jdoe@yahoo.co.uk 0000000000 (Primary Phone)86 Whatever houseSomewhere This roadLondon, Postcode
Career level achieved
Student (Higher education/Graduate
Work experience
Job1Workplace1 FieldLondonJune 1997 - July 1998Duties involved
............**Workplace2**FieldMilanAugust 2003 - August 2005The job entailed ....

And it goes on like this, without proper spacing, very difficult to read. It may have been a problem of compatibility, it was a Word document, probably an older version that does not read properly if opened with a newer version.

The one below is clearly an example of corrupted Word document.

PERSONAL DATA• •
•

 Surname and Name• • **Jane Doe**• • Address• • Name of street, number **city, country**• • **Telefon Nummer**• • **Mobile phon** ....

• **Jane Doe**• • **Address**• • **Name of street, number** city, country• • **Telefon Nummer**• • Mobile phon ....

Jane Doe• • **Address**• • **Name of street, number** city, country• • **Telefon Nummer**• • Mobile phon ....

• **Address**• • **Name of street, number** city, country• • **Telefon Nummer**• • Mobile phon ....

Address• • Name of street, number **city, country**• • Telefon Nummer• • **Mobile phon** ....

• **Name of street, number** city, country• • **Telefon Nummer**• • Mobile phon ....

Name of street, number city, country• • **Telefon Nummer**• • Mobile phon ....

• **Telefon Nummer**• • Mobile phon ....

Telefon Nummer• • **Mobile phon** ....

• Mobile phon ....

Mobile phon ....

Other

o   Longest CV: twelve pages - the candidate listed every single project they had worked on

o   Sections written in bright green

o   Name in a colorful rectangle and with a star on each side

☆John Doe☆

o   On our application form, the candidates are asked to attach their CV: Most of them do, of course, some attach maybe a copy of a diploma, but we had two candidates that attached a picture of a car and pic of the candidate and his girlfriend respectively.

Thank you Alina for such great input!

8 | QUESTIONS ANSWERED

When working on the ebook, I also asked you - my dear readers - to send in your questions regarding CVs. My Facebook page was on fire for a few days, and I've collected over 20 questions. Take a look at some of them!

> **How much job history should I include? I worked meaningless jobs for a few years before going to uni.**
>
> **Jonathan Hemming**

It seems to me that "meaningless" is the key word in your question. If these jobs were meaningless and are not relevant to what you want to do as a translator, there's no need to include them. If, however, they helped you develop your skills, you may want to mention them on a skills-based CV. I've seen colleagues who worked in bilingual customer service or as bilingual secretaries and mentioning these jobs is definitely a bonus.

> **"I wonder if there is some way of reflecting that you spend a lot of time using social media for professional purposes on a CV?**
>
> **Merche García Lledó**

That's a good one! It may be something you want to include in the highlights of your career, or where you talk about CPD. Don't laugh at me, but I do believe social media is a useful source of CPD activities. What about: "Active user of Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn for the purposes of intercultural exchange and keeping up with the mother tongue/source language?"

> **"One doubt: The companies I work with do not want me to include their name on my CV. How should I include this on my CV aside from "I have been working with a big translation company since 2005"? (this is just an example)**
>
> **Rita Menezes**

If they say no, then it's a no. It would be a good idea to concentrate on describing the types of projects you deliver more than on companies you work with. You can quite cleverly provide enough details about the assignment without really breaching any NDAs.

Marta Stelmaszak
www.wantwords.co.uk

❝❝ Sometimes I'm not sure what is relevant, for example if I should include or highlight that I have lived for a period of time in a certain (foreign) country.

Merche García Lledó

It depends on whether you can explain why you think it's relevant. Simply adding "I lived in Norway for two years" doesn't do the trick, but if you add something along the lines of "which allowed me to develop a thorough understanding of Scandinavian culture", it makes all the difference. I've seen people saying: "I have travelled to a number of countries, including Peru, Chile, Argentina, USA, France, Spain, Italy, and Azerbaijan" and that's it: no context, no purpose, no relevance. But if you can somehow give it some relevance, you're on the right track.

❝❝ How to manage having different CVs for different target markets, e.g. I have a tech/science translator's CV, a literary translator's CV (wishful thinking at the moment, that one!) and a freelance writer's CV. I find it very difficult to keep on top of continually updating them all. Also, would it be a good idea to have a 'general CV' covering everything I do?

Jane Ellis

I think the key management tip I could give here would be to draw up a strict schedule for updating all your documents. If you want to make the most of it, keep your updating schedules for your website, blog, online profiles, CVs and CPD records in alignment. Then it takes only one day to make sure everything is up to date. I also have a general CV, but I tend to use it as a personal reference, just for my eyes only.

❝❝ I am not sure if I should give the names of the translation companies I currently work with.

Serli Varjabetyan

You always, and I repeat: *always* have to ask for permission to do that. The best way to go about it is to ask if you can mention their names when you ask for references. If you don't ask, you may expose yourself to an unnecessary risk.

" **How could I make my CV an eye-catcher (while providing as much information as possible and yet still not being boring)?**

Giovanna Infante

And

" **I'd like to know how to go about making an original CV (aesthetically I mean). Is there a special website with specific templates or should I use a professional service to put my CV together?**

Sophie Savvides

I'm a minimalist, so I rely on white space. But I'd advise you to look around online for inspiration in other industries. People out there have great ideas and you may find something that you could adapt to suit your business. You can always hire a professional designer to go over it. It doesn't cost a fortune and may prove to be a worthwhile investment.

There are some templates available online, and at the moment I'm using one myself. My general rule here would be: step into your client's shoes. What would they like to see? What would impress them? What would 'to stand out' mean to them?

" **How to make complex info easy to understand for HR/VENDOR MANAGERS that are NOT really familiar with the translation business to understand - yes, this happens! For example, when someone is bilingual, has worked in many companies and/or as a freelancer in a lot of different countries providing many services (but not all language combinations).**

Giovanna Infante

I'm a big fan of simple and clean. If you think something you write is too confusing, make it simpler and then explain when you are further on in your email exchange. Try to remind yourself what you want to achieve with your CV and ask yourself whether all the details are really relevant or necessary. Some of them can be expanded upon on your website or LinkedIn profile.

❝ What seems to be better choice: a chronological or skills-based CV?

Aleksandra Milcic Radovanovic

That's a tough one! Mine is mixed. In a way it is chronological, as I talk about what I did before I became a translator (or what I'm doing now that's not covered under this umbrella), but when I talk about my translation experience, I concentrate on the examples of texts I've translated within given areas of specialisation and the skills I've acquired.

I've seen both approaches used by some quite accomplished colleagues so I don't think there's a golden rule here.

❝ How can you emphasise your skills and/or translation work experience when you don't have a specialisation?

Patty Lamour

First of all, I think becoming specialised would be my first step. It's hard to survive when you cover all topics - I wouldn't be able to do that for too long, as there are some areas I don't even enjoy (like medicine). However, in the beginning, you may struggle with finding and working on your area of specialisation. Have a look at this video where I talk about precisely this issue.

❝ Do we have to include a hobbies section?

Oriana Hurdugan

Hobbies (or interests) are usually associated with employment-seeking CVs. When you want to get hired, it's quite important for your prospective employee to know a bit more about you, more than just the hard facts. The hobbies section on these CVs provide an insight into your personality. Is that happening with freelancers' CVs? I personally doubt it. As some colleagues would say here: "I'm not there to be liked. I'm there to do my job." There may be something to this approach.

You need to use your common sense here. Consider whether this section is relevant to your reader.

9 | THANK YOU

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this guide! I hope you found it useful and that the changes you've implemented will help make your business flourish! I recorded a short video for you to wish you good luck, take a look!

A quick favour to ask:

If you feel this guide has helped you, I'd be very grateful if you could spare five minutes of your time to complete this short questionnaire. It would be of great help to my business, too.

If you'd like to learn more, please take a look at the courses I'm running.

Marta Stelmaszak

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http://www.wantwords.co.uk/school
Twitter: @mstelmaszak
LinkedIn: Marta Stelmaszak

PRINTABLE CV CHECKLIST

CHECKLIST	DONE
1. I am writing this CV because...	
2. The purpose of my CV is to...	
3. My CV is going to be read by...	
4. I have listed: • Personal details: name, surname, contact, titles • Professional headline with my working languages • Profile statement: two to three lines and key skills in bullet points • Key achievements or highlights • Professional experience: Name of company, dates, position, summary and achievements • Qualifications • Professional memberships • Publications • General Skills	
5. I have proofread my CV	
6. I have formatted it	
7. I have printed it, read it and given it to my friend for a review	
READY TO SEND OUT	