

# T A L E N T S & E X P E R T S

FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL

## COTALEX PAPER Application

3rd revised and expanded edition,  
November 2013

with additions 2022  
english 2022

This paper was originally written to help my candidates (who are very rarely newcomers to the job market) with their CVs, but now it also deals with other aspects of the application process that I can comment on from my own experience.

Please excuse this quick and dirty translation from German that I did on stormy nights in the monastery on St. Google.

It will be full of mistakes and imprecise expressions or idioms that no self-respecting English speaker would use. I very much regret that, but I couldn't do otherwise in the time available. I take full responsibility for this and appreciate any correction you can offer to me.

If it helps other people outside its original target group with their applications – I am happy. You may pass it on free of charge, but you may not change it.

Kai Cordt

In my work as a personnel consultant, I see about 500 applications and CVs every year, and not all of them are a cause for joy.

In all companies, documents with deficiencies are an absolute criterion for exclusion during the first screening of candidates. The potential employer may assume that the standards are known, and he suspects that someone who deviates from them will also have other deficits. So it is worth investing some effort.

Other rules currently apply to IT.

If you can code well, fit into the team and don't demand an astronomical salary, you could also apply written on an ALDI paperbag. Anyway- it would be helpful if your qualifications and experience were easily recognisable, for example through a project list. On the other hand, it is never a mistake to have just as professional documents as the rest of the (working) world. In case of doubt, it will rather bring advantages.

Of course, formailia, which can be decisive for German applicants, will not be the same for foreigners. Nevertheless, it is certainly not a mistake if you know and observe the local standards. Under certain circumstances, this can have a decisive influence on the decision-maker's assessment.

After all, an application is not only a vehicle for hope and should make the best possible impression on the recipient, it is also time-consuming and expensive.

I think that even if you automate parts of the process, you will need between 20 and 30 minutes for an application, and if you send it by post, you will also need more than 10 € for a folder, postage etc.

## Content

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2. career
3. Other activities and skills

### II. appendix

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2. appendices
3. cover letter

## I. Curriculum vitae

Your CV has only one purpose: to give the reader a short and complete overview of your career, and that means it has to be short. And complete.

A CV of more than two pages is too long, even with a 30-year successful career. There are also exceptions to this rule: people in project-orientated jobs such as developers can attach a multi-page project directory.

A CV consists of three parts, always in the same order:

1. the personal data
2. the career
3. other activities and skills

Below I will explain the most important aspects of each point

For general design:

- Use tables instead of tabs or spaces for lists.
- Do not use more than three different fonts in your entire CV
- When structuring the graphic, use a few highlighted words rather than different or differently sized fonts and underlining.
- Always write out the months and the numbers one to twelve in the sentence.

04/1965 - 08/1969      ABC GmbH, Group Manager Sales Saxony,  
from May 1967 district manager east, eleven branches with 250 employees

- Stick to schemas that have been used once (e.g. dates like "09/2012") throughout your CV – as far as this makes sense.

The graphic design I propose below is one that you can't go wrong with. I occasionally see really well-crafted CVs with very different graphics.

The first word of your resume should be "Curriculum vitae" or "Resume"

1. Personal Information

If you want to insert a first page with your photo, please enter your address and contact details on this first page. Alternatively, mount the photo in the header of your CV and add your address and contact details in the first paragraph.



¶

**Resume**

¶

¶

**Personal data**

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© Image courtesy of anankml / FreeDigitalPhotos.net

Name	Pileus Albertus Huhn
Address	Wiesenweg 12, 28857 Stenkendorf (Stenkelfeld district)
Phone, eMail, Mobil	01234 123 456, phuhn@web.de, 0166 123 45 67 89
Born	April 1, 1959 in Rijswijk, Netherlands
Nationality	german
Marital status	Single, two children

¶

If you're a foreigner, or if the recipient can't tell from your name, add your nationality. If you were born abroad, complete the place of birth with the country in which it is located.

2. Career

The career is the actual curriculum vitae and includes the stations of your education, training and your professional life. There are two ways of sorting the career chronologically: the German and the international. Pick the one your reader will likely prefer.

German

Education

· elementary school

· high school

vocational training

career

· 2008 Company 1

· 2012 Company 4

International

career

· 2012 company 4

· 2008 company 1

vocational training

Education

· high school

· Elementary school

It will look like that:

**Education**

04/1965 - 08/1969	Henriette Huhn Elementary School, Stenkendorf
08/1969 - 04/1978	Calimero High School, Stenkendorf, Abitur

**Professional training**

09/1978 - 09/1981	Chicken Inc. Germany, Stenkendorf, commercial training Degree: industrial clerk
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**Studies**

09/1885 - 09/1989	University of Kiel, agricultural economics, degree: M.Sc.
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**Career**

11/1989 - 09/1994	Agrarconsult Müller GmbH & Co. KG, , Leipzig, Junior Consultant
03/1995 - 12/1999	Chicken Inc. Germany, Stenkendorf, Management Assistant, Construction management of the European HQ in Stenkendorf ~250 Mio DM
04/2001 - 06/2001	European Commission, Brussels, Agricultural Policy Unit, Assistant to the Head of Unit
07/2001 - 05/2002	Unemployed
06/2002 - 09/2003	DeRuter Vegetable Seeds, Inc, Bergschenhoek, NL, Sales Representative Lower Saxony
10/2003 - 06/2005	DeRuter Vegetable Seeds, Inc, Bergschenhoek , NL, Sales Manager Germany
10/2005 - present	Monsonto Agrar Deutschland GmbH, Borken, CSO Seeds Germany



No entry in the list should require more than 2 lines and correspond to the following scheme:

from- to | Company | place | function

Please make sure that the names of the companies are correct, that the hyphens are the same length and that you always put the commas in the same place.

It is essential that you avoid listing your activities in the respective function, e.g

10/2005 - present	Pil Huhn sen. Alutore GmbH, Stenkendorf, part-time office worker Activities: incoming mail outgoing mail Purchasing office supplies Reception switchboard
-------------------	---

This does not apply to IT people or other professions who want to specify the tools or languages etc. used for the position.

Trust your reader with a little expertise. He assumes that you were a clerk at reception in a medium-sized company and took care of the mail or that one of your tasks in the field was acquiring new customers.

Only special tasks and special highlights are worth mentioning that do not normally belong to the scope of your functional area, such as the construction of a company building for the assistant to the management.

You do not need to list short periods of time between jobs.

Digression: alternative structures

Some of my candidates have been advised to structure their careers thematically, something like this:

**School education**

08.1994 – 06.1998	School A
08.1998 – 06.2004	School B
08.2007 – 06.2008	School C

**University**

10.2008 – 01.2012	University A
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**Internship**

06.2011 – 09.2011	Company B
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**Vocational training**

08.2004 – 06.2007	Company A
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**Employment**

06.2007 – 08.2007	Employee ...
06.2008 – 09.2008	Service worker
05.2012 – heute	Sales staff

**Unemployed**

02.2012 – 05.2012	
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This structure forces the reader - and that is exactly the intention - to deal with your CV and your documents longer than usual.

This can have a positive effect or lead to frustration/aggression reactions in the reader, for example if he notices that he is being manipulated or if he is more annoyed by the need for more intensive work than by your qualifications. Which I think is more likely.

I don't recommend this tactic in general. In my area of work, you are usually not part of a selection process as in a normal job advertisement.

Now attach times that are not part of the career but should be explained or are of particular interest. Stays abroad that are important for professional or personal development are also listed here. If you were a professional soldier and your time as a soldier is not flanked by training: list it within your professional career.

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**Military Service**

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09/1981 - 08/1985	Bundeswehr, Feldhuhnbatallion 123, Stenkendorf, Soldat Dismissal Rank: Lieutenant
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**Further Education**

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2002	Nederlands voor Buitenlanders, Amsterdam Summer University
2005	Future Politics in Agriculture, FAO Seminar, Barcelona

**Stay abroad**

¶

10/1994 - 02/1995	Travel Asia by motorbike
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¶

**3. other activities and skills**

List commitments that are important to you, your language skills, awards and hobbies.

¶

**other activities and skills**

¶

1997 - 1980	Youth leader, Board of Directors, Jugendclub Chickenfun, Stenkendorf
2003 - 2007	Chairman of the Agrar working group of EUREGIO in Kleve
Languages	English, Dutch
Driving licence	A,B,C1
PC	Full
Hobbys	Joggin, Polo, City trips

You have the greatest freedom in this section, but you should stick to the truth.

Occasional visits to Cologne (if you live in Bonn or Düsseldorf) do not count as city trips, and anyone who says polo is a sport should know the rules and the scene. Anyone who writes "read" here should be able to answer spontaneously the question of what they last read. Finally, sign your CV with the place and date, because it is a certificate.

Borken, June 1<sup>st</sup> 2012¶

¶

**Pil Huhn**

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Since by definition you cannot forge your own certificate, if you provide false information you are not guilty of forgery but of (attempted) fraud.

I don't think you should accentuate your CV differently or adjust the content for each application. If you have a German and an international version, you only need to add them occasionally.



If Mr Huhn were only 35, his CV would certainly fit on one page. However, a second page is not a disadvantage if it serves to provide clarity. It also gives us the opportunity to increase the spacing and the font size.

As you can see on the next page, once the table borders have been set to "none", the CV is complete. To add a little elegance to the whole thing, set the inner cell margins to 0.1-0.05 on all sides, depending on how you manage the space. (In Word you can find the settings under Table-Table Properties-Table-Options-Default Cell Boundaries)

### Common mistakes

The mistakes I see most often on resumes are:

- too long and with too many details
- loveless or confusing design
- more than 3 fonts
- too heavily nested tables
- Different fonts or font sizes where they should actually be the same
- Paragraph spacing is incorrect
- Incoherent dates, i.e. two dates that shouldn't overlap, overlap
- unexplained gaps of significant duration
- humorous masking, e.g. "school of life" instead of "unemployed"
- Application photo in casual clothing

Not so long ago it was customary to give the name, date of birth and profession of both parents, today the information about the elementary school and the photo are often omitted. With IT professionals, I see so-called "CVs" that only start with the first job. Decide what is most useful in your case.

The complete CV looks like:

# Resume



## Personal data



FreeDigitalPhotos.net



© Image courtesy of anankml /

Name	Pileus Albertus Huhn
Adress	Wiesenweg 12, 28857 Stenkendorf (Stenkelfeld district)
Phone, eMail, Mobil	01234 123 456, phuhn@web.de, 0166 123 45 67 89
Born	April 1, 1959 in Rijswijk, Netherlands
Nationality	german
Martial status	Single, two children

## Education

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## Career



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03/1995 - 12/1999	Chicken Inc. Germany, Stenkendorf, Management Assistant, Construction management of the European HQ in Stenkendorf ~250 Mio DM
04/2001 - 06/2001	European Commission, Brussels, Agricultural Policy Unit, Assistant to the Head of Unit
07/2001 - 05/2002	Unemployed
06/2002 - 09/2003	DeRuter Vegetable Seeds, Inc, Bergschenhoek, NL, Sales Representative Lower Saxony
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## Further Education



2002	Nederlands voor Buitenlanders, Amsterdam Summer University
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## Stay abroad



10/1994 - 02/1995	Travel Asia by motorbike
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## other activities and skills



1997 - 1980	Youth leader, Board of Directors, Jugendclub Chickenfun, Stenkendorf
2003 - 2007	Chairman of the Agrar working group of EUREGIO in Kleve
Languages	English, Dutch
Driving licence	A,B,C1
PC	Full
Hobbys	Joggin, Polo, City trips

Borken, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012

**Pil Huhn**

Pil Huhn

## II. Appendix

### 1. Design

Your application, if you send it by post, should include a cover letter (loose) and a folder with your CV and its attachments.

Take an envelope with a cardboard back, DIN C4, white, with a window. This saves handling address stickers, protects the application folder and looks good.

Stick the stamp neatly onto the envelope.

You may find these comments exaggerated, so here's a little story:

A few years ago we looked after a German group and learned from recruiting that the board of directors had decided on a temporary hiring freeze. One of my employees was working in a theater project at the time, and a day later two of the employees from the department happened to show up there and wanted to buy 20 tickets for an event. Incidentally, one of the ladies remarked that she was under a lot of stress at the moment, which made my employee wonder, since he knew they weren't hiring anyone at the moment.

"Oh," said the lady, "we recently placed an ad and received 450 applications, now we're supposed to present 30 of them to the Human Resources Director tomorrow. But we can't read 450 applications, so we first sorted out those on which the address labels were crooked."

For cost reasons, but also because of the handling, I tend to use ordinary loose-leaf binders or folders into which the documents are laminated. Ring-bound folders or oversized folders with multiple fold-out pages are unwieldy and don't stack well.

Only use application folders a second time if they come back absolutely new. So don't spend too much money on the folders, you can usually only use them once and often you won't get them back at all.

You may find that outrageous, and in the days when you had a new job after 20 applications, that was also unusual. But back in the 90s, we received over 4,000 applications for an ad for a PC technician position in Madrid. That overwhelms every employer.

If - and this will be usual - your portfolio has made it out of the cover, it usually ends up in a pile.

There are usually three of them:

First, two are formed: one with the applications that are shortlisted [A] and a second with those who are immediately rejected [B].

A person decides on which stack your application ends up. He devotes his full attention - or as much as he could spare -to your documents, for 20 to 90 seconds.

During this time he reads your cover letter (in full, or until he starts to get bored), he takes a look at your CV and maybe at the first two references.

In a second round, the first pile becomes two again: The one with the favorites [A1], these are the candidates who are asked for an interview in the first round, and another for the 2nd choice [A2], who get them an acknowledgment of receipt with the note that the selection process will take some time and serve as a reserve.

Your application folder is now - hopefully - on one of the A piles, along with maybe 50 others. It would be an advantage if the HR manager wanted to show his colleague from the department what he already has, or if he wasn't sure which favorites to choose, if your folder were discreet and pleasant to look a bit different from others. For the CV and supporting documents (not the cover letter!) you could perhaps use very light-colored paper and a loose-leaf binder with a matching colored spine. Something like that. When it comes to applications in the creative sector, you can be - more creative.

If you are applying by email:

do so in a single PDF file. Name it after yourself (not after the company or Application.pdf. I get many CV from different people that are all named "CV.pdf" and have to rename them all before saving. That's boring. The email itself should be a duplicate of the cover letter. It is worth to scan your signature for use in the email.

## 2. Attachments

Attach to your CV in the following order (regardless of how it is sorted in the CV, always sorted from new -> old):

1. Your job references
2. Certificates and certificates of professional qualifications
3. the last school report card
4. Certificates of further training, seminars, certificates

The copies used here must be of the same quality as the original.

Many employers, especially those who want an application by e-mail for the first contact, would like to receive a short application and the complete application folder at the first interview. I also ask my candidates for a PDF file with a CV with a photo and the last two references. In such circumstances:

When confronted with such a request, the recipient will certainly appreciate it if you comply with their request and do so. Even if you find what you would like to do sounds better to yourself.

### 3. Cover letter

The cover letter is the first thing the person who decides how to proceed with your documents sees. And: You can basically do whatever you want here, because there are hardly any specifications for the content of the cover letter.

The following comments and examples can only be guidelines within which you have to fill in and design your cover letter yourself. It is particularly important that the content of your cover letter is tailored to your personal situation and circumstances.

#### 1. Common faults

We owe the most common mistakes in cover letters to the invention of the form letter and spelling correction.

There is nothing wrong with using the serial letter function when creating your cover letter. If you do this, please first print in a new document and be sure to check for each (!) cover letter:

whether the salutation in the recipient's address is identical to that in the greeting

whether automatically inserted paragraphs are really intended for this specific recipient

I often get applications where exactly that is not the case.

In general, the following applies to the creation of your texts (also in your CV): Use the spelling correction, it is a blessing. I get letters - even more often than letters in which the salutation differs from the address - in which simple spelling mistakes have not been corrected. An easily avoidable deficiency that completely discredits you as an applicant.

Unfortunately, the spell checker does not find errors where a word is spelled correctly but is misspelled in its context. You can only find these errors when proofreading. Proofreading differs from reviewing or reading in that you read each word individually, checking for any mistakes. This requires a high level of concentration and a certain distance from the text.

If you have drafted a text and revised it a few times, you will not have this distance. Either you take a break of at least 24 hours, or - and that would be ideal - you find a retired German teacher\* who will thankfully do this for you.

Another common cover letter mistake is: it's too long.

It usually goes hand in hand with the repetition or anticipation of the CV. Be sure to avoid this.

Your resume is a look back, your cover letter should be a look forward.

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\* Many thanks to Tinka from Münster

## 2. Instructions

Your cover letter is a letter that follows the formal rules for letters and is only one page long. You should print it on white 110g paper, it feels good and stands out from other applications.

Explain in the subject line for which position you are applying and what the reason for your application is, i.e. "Application as an industrial mechanic in response to your advertisement in the Rheinische Post of May 29, 2013" or "Unsolicited application as a sales representative".

Now, after the salutation, 3 paragraphs follow:

in the 1st you explain in 3 lines who you are,

(And that without repeating the curriculum vitae in prose. However, you are allowed to point out special features that could be of interest to the reader.)

2. why you should be hired, and

3. why you want to work in this company.

You will hardly have any problems with the first two paragraphs, with the third you may have to use your imagination and/or flee into general terms, especially if you know little concrete about the new employer. You can usually find points of contact on their website.

In Kurt Tucholsky's opinion, compliments should always be two notches coarser than you think is possible. But don't overdo it!

Then, if requested - but only then - state your income expectations and end with the usual sentence about the joy that an invitation would trigger in you.

Let's assume that Mr Huhn would apply for a position in sales, then his cover letter might look like this:

# T A L E N T S & E X P E R T S

FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL

## **Pileus Albertus Huhn**

Wiesenweg 12, 28857 Stenkendorf  
01234 123 456  
0166 123 45 67 89  
phuhn@web.de

P. A. Huhn, Wiesenweg 12, 28857 Stenkendorf  
DeRuter Vegetable Seeds, Inc,  
Hogeweyselaan 32

2345 AB Bergschenhoek

Niederlande

Stenkendorf, 21. März 2002

Application Sales Representative Lower Saxony (Vak 2223 @Stonestep.de)

Dear Drs van Schouten,

I am a graduate agricultural economist and have experience in agricultural consulting and in the staff work of an international company with a focus on controlling, but above all I have sales-oriented training in poultry production.

My professional development has enabled me to gain insights into a wide range of processes in the agricultural sector and has led to good networking with decision-makers on the manufacturer side as well as with decision-makers in administration.

Together with social skills, the best communication skills, consulting skills and the joy of taking responsibility for my own success, this is a perfect basis for a sales orientation in my future professional development.

Your company is known to me from my time in consulting as an innovative company with a good reputation among my consulting clients at the time. In particular, your innovative approaches in poultry production (minimizing the use of medicines through optimized, species-appropriate husbandry and reducing the stress level of the animals according to Temple Grandin's approach) are excellent unique selling points that would be extremely attractive to represent in terms of sales.

I would be very happy about the opportunity to introduce myself in your company.

Kind regards

**Pil Huhn**



Now, if you've considered all of this advice (**or have deviated from it for a good reason**) and the job you're applying for is a really good match for your qualifications, you should be lucky enough to be called in for an interview.

Incidentally, it doesn't do any harm if you phone the HR department or the recipient two days later to ask whether your application has arrived.

Be content with any answer, the purpose of the call is to distinguish your name and application from the pool.

I wish you success!