

Writing a French CV and application

French B1 (intermediate) · Lesson

Quick answer: A French CV is one page in reverse chronological order, with contact details, experience, education, skills and interests. The lettre de motivation has three paragraphs (you, me, us) and ends with a formal formula such as Je vous prie d'agréer, Madame, Monsieur, l'expression de mes salutations distinguées.

Level: French B1 (CEFR intermediate) · **Standards:** CEFR B1, Writing

What does a CV look like in France?

A French CV (masculine) is short and clear: one page for a beginner, two at most for a long career. The most recent job comes first. A photo is optional, and nobody has to give age, marital status or nationality.

Aminata Diallo — Assistante commerciale (poste visé)

Coordonnées : Lyon · 06 12 34 56 78 · adresse e-mail

Expérience professionnelle
2022-2025 : accueil, rendez-vous

Formation
2020-2022 : BTS à Dakar

Compétences
Excel, anglais B2, gestion

Centres d'intérêt
Basket, cuisine, bénévolat

A one-page CV with its usual sections.

Section	What to write
Coordonnées	name, city, phone, e-mail
Poste visé	a title line: Assistante commerciale
Expérience professionnelle	dates, employer, tasks, newest first
Formation	degrees, courses, dates
Compétences	languages, software, driving licence
Centres d'intérêt	two or three real hobbies

CV lines

- 2022-2025 : hôtesse d'accueil, hôtel du Port, Liège. — 2022-2025: receptionist...
- J'ai géré les réservations et accueilli les clients. — I managed bookings and welcomed guests.
- Langues : français (langue maternelle), anglais (B2).

How is a lettre de motivation built?

The letter completes the CV: it explains why this job and this company. Keep it to one page and three paragraphs, nicknamed *vous*, *moi*, *nous*.

Expéditeur : nom, adresse

Destinataire : entreprise
Lyon, le 8 mars 2026

Objet : candidature au poste de ...

Madame, Monsieur,

1. Vous : pourquoi cette entreprise

2. Moi : mon expérience, mes qualités

3. Nous : ce que j'apporte, entretien

Formule de politesse + signature

The standard layout of a French cover letter.

A short model

Madame, Monsieur,

Actuellement hôtesse d'accueil à Liège, je vous adresse ma candidature au poste d'assistante commerciale.

Pendant trois ans, j'ai accueilli des clients et rédigé des courriers. Je suis organisée, rigoureuse et à l'aise avec Excel.

Je reste à votre disposition pour un entretien et vous prie d'agréer, Madame, Monsieur, l'expression de mes salutations distinguées.

Which formal formulas should you know?

Function	Formula
Greeting	Madame, Monsieur,
Opening	Je me permets de vous adresser ma candidature au poste de...
Experience	J'ai occupé le poste de... pendant deux ans.
Politeness	Je serais ravie de vous rencontrer.
Closing	Je vous prie d'agréer, Madame, Monsieur, l'expression de mes salutations distinguées.

Watch out

Do not translate "Dear Sir" or "Sincerely". French has no "Cher" for an unknown reader, and the closing is a long fixed sentence. Also, un résumé is a summary, not a CV, and une formation means training or education, not formation.

Culture note

French law forbids discrimination in hiring, which is why age, photo and marital status are not needed. A typical contract is a CDI (permanent) or a CDD (fixed-term); a stage is an internship.

Zoé's tip

Use the passé composé for what you did (j'ai géré) and the present for what you are (je suis rigoureuse). Read your letter aloud: if it sounds like a text message, make it more formal.

Key points to remember

- A CV is un CV (masculine), usually one page, newest experience first.
- A photo is optional; age and marital status are not required.
- The letter starts with Madame, Monsieur, and has three paragraphs.
- Use the passé composé for past jobs and the present for qualities.
- CDI is a permanent contract, CDD fixed-term, stage an internship.

Writing a French CV and Application: frequently asked questions

How long should a French CV be?

One page is the norm for students and young workers, and two pages is the limit for a long career. Recruiters read quickly, so list the newest job first and keep each task short.

Do I need a photo on a French CV?

No. A photo is optional, and you do not have to give your age, nationality or marital status. Many candidates leave the photo out.

How do I begin a French cover letter?

Start with Madame, Monsieur, if you do not know the name. Then state the job: Je vous adresse ma candidature au poste de....

How do I end a formal French letter?

Use Je vous prie d'agréer, Madame, Monsieur, l'expression de mes salutations distinguées. Add Je reste à votre disposition pour un entretien before it if you wish.

What is the difference between CDI and CDD?

A CDI is a permanent contract with no end date. A CDD is a fixed-term contract, for example six months, often to replace someone or cover a busy period.