How to use your ATS-friendly CV template

Everything in the example is fictional: Sara Malik, the companies, the university and every number. Use it to see what a finished CV looks like, then write your own in the blank file. Do not copy the lines.

The full page on our website
careermena.com/cv-templates/ats-friendly-cv/

What "ATS" means

When you apply through an employer's online portal, your CV goes into a hiring system called an applicant tracking system (ATS). The system reads your file, fills in the application form from it, and lets recruiters search CVs by words. A layout the system cannot read can lose your experience before anyone sees it. This template keeps to the layout these systems read most reliably. No template can promise how every system reads a file.

8 checks before you send

1. **Replace every sample line.** Nothing in the example belongs to you.

2. **Keep one column.** No tables, text boxes, icons, photos inside the page or skill bars. Greenhouse, a widely used hiring system, lists columns, tables, graphics, and text in headers, footers or text boxes as reasons a CV fails to read.

3. **Keep your contact details in the page body.** Name, phone, email and city go at the top of the page, not in Word's header or footer.

4. **Use the posting's own words, where they are true.** Copy 5 to 8 exact phrases from the requirements (a system name, a qualification, a task) into your profile and bullets, only where they describe what you really did. Recruiters search by these words.

5. **Give every role one result you can defend.** A number with its starting point works best: "from 18 to 14 days", "about 6.5% of one year's tender value". If your work has no numbers, use scope (team size, number of clients or cases), frequency, or a named deliverable.

6. **Write names and dates the same way everywhere.** The employer's name as on its website or your contract; dates as "Mar 2022 to Present"; the same format in every role.

7. **Test your file in 60 seconds.** Copy all the text of your CV and paste it into Notepad (Windows) or TextEdit in plain-text mode (Mac). If the order breaks or words run together, a hiring system may break it too.

8. **Save it the way portals read it.** Upload .docx or a PDF made from Word, not a scan or a photo. Keep the file small: some systems, for example Greenhouse, cannot read files over 2.5 MB. Name it like Sara-Malik-CV.pdf. After uploading, check every field the portal filled in for you.

How long?

> Advice: one page if you have under about 5 years of experience; two pages are normal with 8 years or more. Do not cut real results to fit one page.

Profile voice

> Advice: write the profile in the same voice as the bullets, without "I", as in the example. Cover letters keep "I".

Gaps and career changes

> Advice: if you had a gap of more than a few months, put one line in its place with the dates and what you did (for example, "Career break, Jan 2024 to Sep 2024: family relocation; completed CIPS Level 4"). If you are changing careers, open the profile with the job you want and the skills that carry over, and put the results closest to that job first in each role.

The details line: what to write

> Advice: if you already live in the Gulf, recruiters often look at this line first. Write only what is true; employers verify it. Examples:

- Residence: UAE employment visa, transferable
- Residence: Saudi Iqama (residence permit), transferable
- Residence: Cairo, Egypt. Can join within 30 days
- Driving licence: UAE (add it for field, sales and site roles)

Your current and expected salary never go on the CV. Give them in the employer's form or when asked.

Photo, nationality and date of birth: your choice

- **Nationality.** Add it when the job sets a nationality rule (for example, a post open to nationals only) or when the employer's form asks. Leave it out for employers that do not ask.
- **Photo.** Advice: some employers and agencies in the Gulf expect a photo; hiring systems do not need one, and Greenhouse lists photos among the things that can stop a CV from reading. This template has none. If an employer's form asks for a photo, upload it in the form. If you email your CV to an employer that expects a photo, use our Riyadh (Classic) template, which has a photo space.
- **Date of birth, marital status, religion, passport or ID number.** Leave them out of the CV. If an employer's own form asks for them, give them in the form.

English or Arabic CV?

> Advice: if the portal or the posting is in English, upload the English CV. Use an Arabic CV when the application is in Arabic or the employer asks for one, and for printed copies.

Fonts

The Word file uses Arial, which is installed on almost every computer, so the layout stays the same on the recruiter's screen.

Free on CareerMENA

- The full guide, with sources: careermena.com/guides/cv-for-gulf-employers-ats/
- Build your CV online, no sign-up: careermena.com/cv-builder/
- Verified jobs from employers' own pages: careermena.com/jobs/

Sources

Our editors read these official pages on 10 Nov 2026. If anything differs, the official page is the reference.

1. Parse risks (columns, tables, header and footer, text boxes, graphics, photos, image files) and the 2.5 MB limit
   https://support.greenhouse.io/hc/en-us/articles/200989175-Unsuccessful-resume-parse
2. Riyadh (Classic) template has a photo option
   https://careermena.com/cv-templates/