

The **ATS-Safe** CV Checklist

A quick, honest pass before you send your CV anywhere. No gimmicks and no “beat the bot” tricks — just the formatting that lets software read you, and the content that makes a recruiter stop.

01 • FORMATTING THAT PARSES CLEANLY

So the software reads every line

- ☐ **Single-column layout** — no side-by-side columns that get read out of order.
- ☐ **Standard section headings** — Work Experience, Education, Skills.
- ☐ **Contact details in the body**, not tucked in the header or footer.
- ☐ **No text boxes, tables or graphics** holding key information.
- ☐ **A common, legible font** and normal round bullet points.
- ☐ **Saved as a .docx** unless the advert specifically asks for PDF.
- ☐ **A clear file name** — Firstname_Surname_CV.docx.

02 • CONTENT THAT GETS YOU SHORTLISTED

So a human keeps reading

- ☐ **A short, targeted profile** at the top — three or four lines, not an essay.
- ☐ **Tailored to the specific role** — not one generic version sent everywhere.
- ☐ **The advert’s own keywords**, used where they’re genuinely true of you.
- ☐ **Outcomes, not just duties** — what changed because you were there.
- ☐ **Your strongest evidence in the top third** of page one, where it’s seen.
- ☐ **Numbers where you have them**; honest qualitative results where you don’t.
- ☐ **No empty clichés** — “hardworking team player” with nothing to back it.

03 • THE ESSENTIALS, RIGHT

The details that quietly cost interviews

- ☐ **Two pages** for most professionals; **one page** for graduates.
- ☐ **Reverse-chronological** work history — most recent role first.
- ☐ **Dates that line up**, with any gaps briefly and honestly explained.
- ☐ **UK English throughout** — “organised”, not “organized”.
- ☐ **No photo**, and no age, date of birth or marital status.
- ☐ **Proofread** — no typos, consistent spacing and formatting.

04 • BEFORE YOU HIT SEND

Three questions, every time

- ☐ Would a recruiter see your fit in the **first ten seconds**?
- ☐ Does **every bullet earn its place**, or is some of it just filler?
- ☐ Is **every claim true** and something you could stand behind at interview?

THE HONEST BIT

An ATS isn't a bot you “beat” — it's software that reads and files your CV. Clean structure gets you read; strong, relevant, truthful content gets you shortlisted. Anyone promising secret formulas is selling you something. That's the whole game.

READING IS GOOD. A SECOND OPINION IS BETTER.

Want a human to check yours?

Send your CV for a free, no-obligation review. A person — not a scanner — will tell you what's working, what isn't, and whether we can help.
Reply within two working days.

[Get your free CV review → shortlistlane.com](https://shortlistlane.com)