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Tax CV guide

How to present your experience clearly and commercially

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What's inside this guide

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Why your CV matters

Most recruiters and hiring managers will scan a CV quickly before deciding whether to progress an application further.

> ***"A CV has one purpose and one purpose only – to get you an interview with a person who can give you a job."***
>
> \- *Bob Griffiths ICAEW Career Advisor*

That means your CV should immediately show:
- What you specialise in
- The complexity of your experience
- The environments you've worked in
- Where you've added value.

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What hiring managers look for first

Given that hiring managers will make an initial judgement on the first page, your key selling points need to be immediately obvious.

1. Qualification status

Make qualifications easy to identify:

- CTA
- ATT
- ACA
- ACCA
- STEP
- ADIT

If you're part-qualified, state your progress clearly.

For example:
CTA Part-Qualified - 2 exams remaining

2. Tax specialism

Employers want to understand where your core experience sits, for example:

- Corporate Tax
- Private Client
- Personal Tax
- VAT / Indirect Tax
- Employment Tax
- Transfer Pricing
- International Tax
- R&D Tax
- M&A Tax

3. Compliance & advisory exposure

One of the biggest mistakes we see is tax professionals underselling compliance work. In reality, strong compliance experience remains hugely valuable across both practice and industry.

Compliance work often demonstrates:

- Technical strength
- Attention to detail
- Risk management
- Process ownership
- Stakeholder management.

4. Scale & complexity

Context matters. Hiring managers want to understand:

- Portfolio size
- Client complexity
- Turnover exposure
- International operations
- Group structures
- Sector exposure.

Examples:

- Owner-managed businesses
- Multinational groups
- Listed businesses
- HNW individuals
- PE-backed organisations.

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Structuring your tax CV

There is no single “perfect” CV format. However, most successful tax CVs are concise, easy to navigate and achievement-focused.

1. Name and contact details

2. Professional profile

Summary of experience, specialism and key strengths.

3. Qualifications and memberships

4. Career history

Outline experience and achievements in reverse chronological order (most recent role first).

5. Systems and technical skills

Sarah Johnson
[City, Postcode]
[Email Address]
[Phone Number]
[LinkedIn Profile]

ACA and CTA qualified Corporate Tax Manager with 10+ years' experience advising owner-managed businesses and multinational groups on corporation tax compliance, planning and advisory matters. Experienced in leading teams, managing client relationships and delivering commercially focused tax solutions across complex environments.

Professional Qualifications

- **Chartered Accountant (ACA)** – Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW)
- **Chartered Tax Adviser (CTA)** – Chartered Institute of Taxation (CIOT)

Education

Bachelor of Science in Accounting and Finance
University of Leeds
Graduated: July 2010 (2:1)

Professional Experience

Corporate Tax Manager
Smith & Partners LLP, London
April 2019 – Present

- Lead a team of 10 tax professionals in delivering comprehensive corporate tax services to clients across various industries.
- Develop and implement tax strategies to optimise clients' tax positions and minimise liabilities.
- Oversee the preparation and review of corporate tax returns, ensuring compliance with HMRC regulations.
- Conduct in-depth research and analysis of complex tax issues, providing strategic advice and solutions to clients.
- Build and maintain strong relationships with key clients, delivering high-quality advisory services.
- Monitor changes in UK tax legislation and industry trends, advising clients on potential impacts.
- Successfully managed multiple projects simultaneously, meeting all deadlines and budget requirements.
- Achieved a 25% reduction in tax liabilities for clients through effective tax planning and restructuring.

Skills

- UK Corporate Tax Planning and Compliance
- Tax Strategy Development
- Tax Research and Analysis

How long should a tax CV be?

There are no strict rules, but as a guide:

Junior professionals
1-2 pages

Mid-level professionals
Typically 2 pages

Senior professionals
2-3 pages can be acceptable where experience is highly relevant

The most important point is relevance. Avoid adding information simply to increase length.

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Your profile is prime CV real estate

Many tax professionals underestimate the impact of their profile but it's one of the first things recruiters and hiring managers will read. It's your opportunity to quickly position yourself and explain the value you bring.

This section should be concise (around 4-6 lines), relevant and tailored to your level of experience. A good profile should quickly cover:

- Qualification status
- Tax specialism
- Number of years of experience
- Sector exposure
- Key strengths.

Avoid generic statements

Most CVs contain phrases such as:

- "Hardworking"
- "Team player"
- "Works well independently"
- "Excellent communication skills"

These don't really tell an employer anything meaningful. Instead, focus on:

- Technical capability
- Commercial exposure
- Leadership
- Stakeholder management
- Measurable impact.

Weak example

Hardworking tax professional with excellent communication skills who works well independently and as part of a team.

Stronger example

ACA and CTA qualified Corporate Tax Manager with 10+ years' experience advising owner-managed businesses and multinational groups on corporation tax compliance, planning and advisory matters. Experienced in leading teams, managing client relationships and delivering commercially focused tax solutions across complex environments.

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Presenting your experience effectively

One of the most common tax CV mistakes is listing responsibilities copied directly from a job description. Most hiring managers already know what somebody in your role is expected to do. What they really want to understand is:

- The complexity of your work
- The scale of responsibility
- Where you've added value.

Responsibilities explain what you did, achievements and context demonstrate the impact you had. Where possible, include:

- Portfolio size
- Turnover exposure
- Number of entities
- Stakeholder management
- Team responsibility
- Reporting timelines
- Project ownership.

This helps employers build a much clearer picture of your level, commercial exposure and the complexity of your experience.

Weak example
Responsible for corporation tax compliance.

Stronger example
Managed corporation tax compliance process for a portfolio of 120 owner-managed businesses with turnovers ranging from £2m-£80m.

Weak example
Prepared VAT returns.

Stronger example
Reviewed and submitted UK and EU VAT returns across multiple entities, helping improve reporting accuracy and reduce filing delays.

Weak example
Managed junior staff.

Stronger example
Mentored and reviewed work for junior tax staff, supporting technical development and improving review turnaround times during peak periods.

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How to showcase achievements

Strong tax CVs explain outcomes, not just duties. Hiring managers want evidence that you:

- Improved something
- Solved problems
- Added commercial value
- Influenced processes
- Managed complexity.

Use measurable outcomes where possible

The strongest achievements often include:

- Percentages
- Cost savings
- Timelines
- Efficiencies
- Reduced risk
- Improved accuracy.

Examples of strong achievement statements

- Reduced corporation tax reporting timelines from 10 days to 6 days through process redesign and improved coordination across finance teams
- Led HMRC enquiry process resulting in successful resolution with minimal financial adjustment
- Supported implementation of revised VAT review procedures following acquisition of overseas entities
- Improved client turnaround times by streamlining tax return review processes
- Developed Excel-based reporting tools using Pivot Tables and macros to improve management reporting efficiency
- Supported integration of newly acquired businesses into group tax reporting framework.

Don’t undersell process improvements

Many tax professionals assume process or compliance improvements are “just part of the job”. In reality, these examples often demonstrate:

- Initiative
- Commercial awareness
- Leadership
- Problem solving
- Technical capability.

These are exactly the types of things employers want to see.

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Using the STAR approach

One of the easiest ways to strengthen achievement statements is by briefly explaining:

S	T	A	R
Situation	**Task**	**Action**	**Result**
What was happening?	What were you responsible for?	What did you do?	What improved?

This approach and can help make your experience sound more commercial and achievement-focused.

Weak example
Assisted with group tax reporting.

Stronger STAR-based example
The group had recently acquired multiple overseas entities which created delays in tax reporting processes. Supported implementation of revised reporting procedures across finance teams, improving reporting accuracy and reducing month-end delays.

Another STAR-based example
The management accounts process was taking too long to complete each month. Developed Excel-based reporting tools using Pivot Tables, VLOOKUPs and macros which reduced reporting timelines and improved efficiency across the finance function.

Should you include client names?
Where confidentiality allows, including recognisable clients can add credibility but this isn't essential. You can instead describe:

- Sectors
- Business size
- Ownership structure
- Portfolio complexity.

For example:
"Portfolio included multinational manufacturing groups, PE-backed businesses and HNW individuals."

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Tax-specific achievement examples

Corporate Tax
- Managed corporation tax compliance for multinational group with turnover exceeding £500m
- Supported tax aspects of acquisitions and restructuring projects
- Improved year-end reporting timelines through automation and process improvements.

Private Client
- Managed portfolio of HNW individuals, business owners and trusts
- Supported inheritance tax and succession planning projects
- Built strong client relationships resulting in increased referrals and retention.

VAT / Indirect Tax
- Led HMRC VAT enquiries and supported successful resolution
- Improved partial exemption methodology across multiple entities
- Supported cross-border VAT compliance for international operations.

Employment Tax
- Supported PAYE and benefits reviews across UK and overseas employee populations
- Assisted with IR35 and off-payroll working assessments.

Transfer Pricing
- Prepared OECD-compliant transfer pricing documentation
- Supported implementation of intercompany pricing policies across international entities.

In-house Tax
- Worked closely with finance leadership to improve tax reporting processes
- Supported international expansion projects and overseas tax compliance requirements.

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Systems and technical skills

Hiring managers also want to understand how quickly you can add value operationally. Where relevant, include systems such as:

- Alphatax
- CCH
- OneSource
- SAP
- Oracle
- Sage
- Power BI

For Excel, be specific:

- Pivot Tables
- VLOOKUP/XLOOKUP
- Macros
- Power Query

Career breaks, long tenure and interim work

Many tax professionals worry unnecessarily about these areas. In reality, career breaks and long tenure are extremely common and rarely a concern when presented clearly.

Career breaks

A short explanation is usually enough. For example:

- Relocation
- Professional study leave
- Career break to care for family member
- Parental leave

You don't need to over-explain personal circumstances. If relevant, you may also include:

- Courses completed
- Voluntary work
- Committee roles
- Continued professional development.

Long tenure

Staying with one employer for a long period is not a negative. In fact, many employers value loyalty and progression. The key is showing how responsibilities have evolved over time. Highlight:

- Promotions
- Portfolio growth
- Leadership exposure
- Project involvement.

Interim and contract work

If you have completed multiple short-term assignments, it can sometimes help to group them together under: "Various Interim Tax Assignments"

This keeps your CV cleaner and avoids repetition.

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Common tax CV mistakes

Listing responsibilities without outcomes
Focus on achievements and impact wherever possible.

Including too much technical jargon
Remember that HR and recruiters may review your CV before technical hiring managers.

Generic profiles
Your profile should reflect your actual specialism and experience.

Underselling compliance work
Compliance remains highly valuable and commercially important.

Too much detail on older roles
Recent experience is usually most relevant.

Poor formatting
Use:

- Clear headings
- Consistent spacing
- Professional fonts
- Bullet points.

Spelling and grammar mistakes
Use 3rd person and not 'I' or 'my' and always proofread carefully.
Useful tip: read your CV out loud to yourself.

Formatting tips

Keep formatting simple

Avoid:

- Excessive colours
- Graphics
- Overly designed templates
- Large blocks of text

Use:

- Professional fonts
- Clear spacing
- Consistent layout.

Save as PDF

Unless requested otherwise, sending your CV as a PDF is usually the best for preserving formatting.

Use a professional filename

Avoid: CVFINALFINAL2.pdf

Use:

- JaneSmith_CV.pdf
- JamesBrown_TaxCV.pdf

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Final CV checklist

Before sending your CV, ask yourself:

- Is my current role clear within the first page?
- Have I shown achievements as well as responsibilities?
- Is my tax specialism obvious?
- Have I included scale and complexity?
- Are my qualifications easy to identify?
- Is the formatting consistent?
- Have I removed unnecessary information?
- Have I proofread thoroughly?
- Is the file saved professionally?

Thinking about your next move?

Let's talk!

Whether you're actively exploring the market or simply want advice on how your experience is positioned, Andy Craven specialises in supporting tax professionals across practice and industry throughout the UK.

Andy can help with:

- CV feedback
- market insight
- interview preparation
- salary benchmarking
- career planning.

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Tax recruitment | UK

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