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PART III



## PART III

# Boosting your professional profile

**Y**ou have now validated your career plan and built your action plan. Your next step is to gain visibility and to get in contact with recruiters, with a view of landing an interview.

Increasing your visibility means:

- Reflecting on the **key messages of your correspondence**
- Highlighting – both orally and in writing – your motivations, aspirations, beliefs and skills
- Structuring your speech and expressing yourself concisely.

To maximize your chance for success, it is vital that you **spend time preparing your job applications**.



Here's our advice for **preparing your résumé, cover letters and getting ready for job interviews**, as well as **increasing your presence on LinkedIn**, the network that has become essential for finding a job or an internship.

### A résumé is for...

- **Landing an interview:** your résumé is like a teaser
- Showing **who you are** and explaining your **professional plan**
- **Highlighting your skills** and, indeed, your expertise
- Providing a synthesized, comprehensive overview of your background.

## Example of French résumé


**3**

Nom, Prénom (ou l'inverse)  
 Âge (éventuellement)  
 Adresse  
 06.XX.XX.XX.XX  
[prenom.nom@gmail.com](mailto:prenom.nom@gmail.com)    
 Permis B, véhiculé

**1**

**TITRE DU CV**  
 Objectif du stage recherché, dates, durée

**4**



**2**

**ACCROCHE**

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**5**

**DIPLOMES & FORMATIONS**

2017 - ...

Où ?  
 Quel(le) diplôme/formation ?  
 Autres : président d'association, membre BDE, représentant des élèves, etc.

Quelle(s) distinction(s) ?  
 Quelle(s) bourse(s) ?  
 Autres : président d'association, membre BDE, représentant des élèves, etc.

**Compétences & réalisations**

Cours clés & projets académiques  
 Ex.: Mathématiques appliquées, Projet Scientifique Collectif (PSC), etc.

**Compétences mobilisées**  
 Ex.: analyser une problématique/une situation ; utiliser et/ou développer des concepts, méthodes, outils et techniques avancés de l'ingénieur ; travailler en équipe (4 pers.), multiculturelle et pluridisciplinaire ; assurer le suivi de l'activité d'une équipe via tableaux de bord, etc.

Activités, tâches, travaux significatifs réalisés  
 Ex.: organiser un événement, assurer la représentation des élèves, dispenser des cours particuliers, etc.

**Compétences mobilisées**  
 Ex.: développer des partenariats (5) dans le cadre la mise en place d'un forum entreprises (150 exposants – 50KE) ; assurer l'enseignement des mathématiques pour élèves en difficultés (3 heures/semaine) ; contribuer à l'amélioration du dialogue entre le corps professoral et les élèves, etc.

**6**

**EXPERIENCES PROFESSIONNELLES**

2017 - ...

Où ?  
 Quel ? Fonction occupée, mission, activités principales

2016 - 2

Où ?  
 Quel ? Fonction occupée, mission, activités principales

**Compétences & réalisations**

Activités, tâches réalisées significatives détaillées : contexte particulier, contraintes, méthodologie et outils spécifiques utilisés, intervenants, positionnement, résultats, interlocuteurs, etc.

**Compétences mobilisées**  
 Ex.: prendre la parole lors de séminaires (public de 150 pers. : chefs d'entreprises, investisseurs, etc.), élaborer et contrôler un budget (100KE), etc.

Activités, tâches réalisées significatives détaillées : contexte particulier, contraintes, méthodologie et outils spécifiques utilisés, intervenants, positionnement, résultats, interlocuteurs, etc.

**Compétences mobilisées**  
 Ex.: prendre la parole lors de séminaires (public de 150 pers. : chefs d'entreprises, investisseurs, etc.), élaborer et contrôler un budget (100KE), etc.

**7**

**DIVERS**

Langues : Lesquelles ? Niveau (B2/C1..., TOEIC, etc.)

Compétences informelles : Lesquelles ? Niveau (débutant, pratique quotidienne, confirmé, expert...)

Autres (préciser) : Bénévolet  
 Sport  
 Centres d'intérêt  
 Distinctions



## 1. Title of your résumé

- This is the target position for (when responding to a job opening), the job you are looking for (when sending off a spontaneous application) or your **desired goal in the context of a job/ internship request**
- **You can mention traits that make you stand out** from other potential candidates and that make your application stronger “**at first glance**” (*e.g.* desired specialization, specific qualifications and/or technical skills, like project management, CISCO certification, etc.).
- **Not a compulsory step** but makes the résumé **easier to read** and more **dynamic**

## 2. Summary (3 to 5 lines max.)

- Summarize your academic **and professional background, your assets and your career plan**. *E.g.* study/training course, target job and target sector, your key skills...
- **Why?** So that the person of contact can instantly understand your professional plan.

I am passionate about social entrepreneurship and the implementation of transformation projects at the core of company activities. I had solid training throughout my engineering course at École Polytechnique and I am convinced that companies, when dedicated to human-oriented causes, can be extraordinary forces for positive transformation in society.

**ELECTRONICS ENGINEER**  
specializing in **TELECOM**  
(Training in Electrical and Electronics Engineering/Signal Processing)

**Study, Research and Development Engineer**  
Specialized in: properties and applications of magnetic materials.

**Confirmed recruitment consultant**  
4 years of experience in office recruitment, 3 of which were spent as a junior consultant specializing in engineering professions.

### Water and Environment Engineer

In 2nd year of study, seeking a 10- to 12-week internship starting June 2018

Passionate about the environment, I am committed to developing solutions depending on the specific needs of given territories

Skills: applied mathematics, economics, IT.

Average time for a recruiter to look at your résumé



### 3. Personal details (3 to 5 lines max.)

- ▶ Full name, address, telephone numbers and email addresses, presented in a clear and legible format (e.g. for French phone numbers: 04.32.27.15.14 or 04 32 27 15 14, but not 0432271514). Make sure to include the country code if you are applying to a job abroad  
**ATTENTION:** playful email addresses like discodiva1981@gmail.com are a bit too offbeat and come across as unprofessional. Opt for a simple format: smith.john@address.com or j.smith@address.com
- ▶ Indicate your networks: as well as blogs, etc.



- ▶ Make sure to verify any hyperlinks you insert
- ▶ Age, marital status, nationality, etc. are to be given **only when necessary** (e.g. give your nationality when applying for an internship at the Ministry of the Armed Forces).

### 4. Photo or not photo?

- ▶ NO OBLIGATION, but preferable for positions in communication, business, customer relations, consulting, etc.
- ▶ If you want to include a photo, choose one that highlights your personality! Pick a serious photo, but one that makes you appear pleasant and approachable (“serious” does not have to mean “no smile”!)
- ▶ Get your photo taken professionally, if possible.

### 5. Education and qualifications

- ▶ Describe your **academic background:** degree name, year it was awarded or when it will be awarded, institution and location, specializations, other details like merits you received, etc.
- ▶ Write about **skills used during specific work projects** (collective science projects, memoires, publications, etc.) or as part of particular roles you fulfilled (student representatives, treasurer of an association, etc.), during your course of study.
- ▶ Mention if you have ever received any merit scholarships or specific distinctions, etc.
- ▶ Try to **show aspects that reveal something about you or your background**, fitting in with what the company is looking for. This will captivate the recruiter.

### 6. Work experience

- ▶ **Highlight your professional background**, placements, internships, summer jobs, etc., giving the duration of each experience and the context, where applicable (work-study contracts, seasonal positions, working in parallel with studies, etc.)
- ▶ Base each experience on your significant achievements: name, business activity and size of company, period of work, title of role, duties, responsibilities held/activities carried out, concrete results achieved or contributions made, constraints, etc. For the most significant ones, bring attention to the skills you used
- ▶ **Prioritize:** an experience that lasted four years should definitely take up more space (due to more detail) than one that lasted only four months.



## Contextualizing my skills

We suggest that you use the following format when recording each experience

- Action (management, negotiation, supervision...);
- Action objective;
- Action context (this is what reinforces the skill, giving it more depth, e.g. action taken in a critical situation);
- Results obtained.

*Example:*

*Negotiation of five institutional partnerships within the framework of the École Polytechnique X-Entreprises Association, resulting in the launch and the funding of a forum (with 150 participating companies).*

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## 7. Miscellaneous

- ▶ Use this section to state: your **additional skills** (IT, language and technical skills, etc.) *that you haven't yet mentioned or that you acquired outside of a purely professional context*, as well as your **hobbies and interests**. Make sure always to give the action, context and results obtained (e.g. creation of a children's video game while volunteering at an association for a year; two years of bi-weekly mathematics tutoring for high school students who required extra support, etc.).

### My résumé must always...

- ▶ Have an attractive aesthetic, and be structured, clear and organized with easily identifiable sections and headings so that it reads smoothly.
  - ▶ Avoid overly technical jargon (unless necessary and relevant).
    - ▶ Be personalized and honest.
    - ▶ Steer clear of spelling and grammar errors.
      - ▶ Be full, but not stuffed.



## Do I have an impactful résumé?

Verify the quality and legibility of your résumé with this checklist. Don't hesitate to ask people you know for help (parents, friends, teachers, etc.).

Theme	Questions	Comments
Personal details	<input type="checkbox"/> Is it legible? <input type="checkbox"/> Has everything been included?	..... ..... .....
Title of résumé	<input type="checkbox"/> Does it explain clearly what I am looking for?	..... .....
Summary	<input type="checkbox"/> Does it reflect my offer of service? <input type="checkbox"/> Does it highlight my assets? <input type="checkbox"/> Is it succinct?	..... ..... .....
Work experience	<input type="checkbox"/> Are the duties and activities specific enough? <input type="checkbox"/> Have I included concrete results? <input type="checkbox"/> Have I mentioned key skills that are relevant to the duty?	..... ..... .....
Education and qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/> Have I mentioned all the qualifications I have obtained? <input type="checkbox"/> Have I included any particular specializations? <input type="checkbox"/> Have I included distinctions, where applicable (e.g. scholarships and prizes)?	..... ..... .....
"Miscellaneous" section	<input type="checkbox"/> Do all elements include context, action and specific results?	..... ..... .....
Format	<input type="checkbox"/> Is it aesthetically pleasing? <input type="checkbox"/> Does it read clearly and smoothly? <input type="checkbox"/> Does it show off my personality and set me apart?	..... ..... .....
Language	<input type="checkbox"/> Is it appropriate? <input type="checkbox"/> Have I avoided overly technical terminology?	..... ..... .....
Relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Does the résumé capture your attention?	..... .....

General comment on your résumé:

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 .....



## A cover letter is for...

- Describing your professional plan and showing the recruiter **what you can bring** to the company
- Showing your **real interest** for the target position, company, etc.
- Going into **more detail** on specific points from your **résumé**.

Despite the growing use of online job boards and social networks, and, indeed, the arrival of video presentations, **the cover letter remains a crucial part of most recruitment processes**, whether in its classic handwritten format or sent as an email (in the latter case, it is referred to more often as a cover email or a “pitch email”).

A cover letter is a document of **ideally ½ page in length**, with a maximum length of 1 page.



### 1. The “hook”

This is the **first sentence of your letter, which will determine whether or not the recruiter wants to read on.**

- No more than **3 to 4 lines**
- Talk about the target company, bringing attention to links between specific issues faced by the company (concerns, projects in development, innovations, etc.) and your offer of service (*e.g.* what you can contribute and how).

- If you don’t have much professional experience, place more emphasis on your education and other activities (volunteering, associations and societies, etc.). Develop on knowledge you have acquired that would be useful for the position, as well as professional skills and the potential you have to offer.

### 2. A personalized cover letter

Your cover letter allows you to emphasize what makes you “**special**”; **what makes you stand out** from another potential candidate.

#### In order to do this:

- Review the important information on the **target position** listed in the job description and see how it matches up with your profile

### 3. Your plan and the company’s plan

- Take a look at **what you can offer the company** in order to fulfill their needs and compare this with **what the company can bring you**, in relation to your professional plan
- Show that **you have informed yourself about the company**: its strengths, its values, its position in the market, etc.
- **Your determination and your uniqueness** must come across in the cover letter.

#### 4. Let's meet!

- In this final section, you are inviting the recruiter to meet with you. This invitation must hint at the beginning of a **possible collaboration**
- **Avoid overly emphatic vocabulary** (except for jobs in administration)
- Remain **courteous** in order to evoke mutual respect and to show off early on your ability to switch on the “customer service” mode.

#### For your guidance:

- “I remain available should you require any additional information.”
- “I would be delighted to meet with you in order to...”
- “I am available to meet you for an interview/appointment.”
- “Should you wish to arrange an interview with me, this would allow me the opportunity to discuss in greater depth...”

#### AND DON'T FORGET:

- “Yours sincerely,”
- “Best regards”

#### Always...

- Be careful with your presentation: the care you take when writing your cover letter translates as the care you take when working, implying dedication and professionalism.
- Choose your words wisely: use technical terms (but not too technical!), make reference to specific company values, etc.
- Be professional and provide concrete evidence (figures, results, context of the position, job environment, etc.).

### The cover email or “pitch email”



Taking the place of a standard cover letter, the cover email may sometimes be required for certain recruitment procedures. This is usually specified (application “by

email”) or implied (if, for example, no cover letter requirement has been mentioned) in the job description.

#### And HOW DO I WRITE IT, exactly?

- A cover email is just as important as a cover letter. However, *when it is required*, your cover email must be even punchier. Make it shorter and get right to the point from the beginning

- Over a maximum of 15 lines, you must:
  - Prove that you are **THE candidate** who is ideal for THE job on offer;
  - **Introduce yourself** and describe exactly where you are in your career;
  - Detail your **professional experiences, your assets, your motivations**, your potential, etc.;
  - Land the interview.
- Include your **résumé** as an **attachment**
- Use a professional email address with a format like: `firstname.lastname@website.com`
- Write the reference for the job offer in the **subject** of the email (if applying for a specific job) and/or mention the **person to whom you are sending the application**
- **Don't forget the usual formal greetings and sign-offs**, which, although perhaps “softer” than in a letter, are still appropriate:
  - “Dear Sir/Madam” at the beginning (depending on the recipient(s))
  - “Cordially”, “Sincerely” or “Kind regards” may be enough to sign off.

## An interview is for...

Whether “**classic**” (by telephone or in person) or “**less classic**” (escape game, cocktail reception, meet-up, video interview, etc.), the goals of a job interview are **always the same**:

- For the recruiter: to verify if you are the perfect person for the position
- For you: to verify whether the position matches you and your career plan.

### 1. Is the first impression always the right one?

**Answer:** not always.

However, depending on the case, the recruiter will fortunately (or not!) use this first impression to form an opinion of you, and this opinion will remain all throughout the interview.

Our advice: **make the most out of the first few minutes.**

### 2. A well-prepared interview = a successful interview

So, you are a talented actor, you feel at ease in interpersonal relations and you

have great communication skills. However, do not rely too heavily on your ability to improvise. And, if these qualities are not true of you, a successful interview is still one that requires *a minimum* of preparation.

#### Top preparation means...

- **Getting informed:**
  - Gather information on the company, the sector, its position in the market, its development projects, etc.;
  - Research the skills required for the job on offer, the ways in which the job can evolve, etc.;
  - If possible, get to know the name of the person (or names of the people) who will interview you, their back-

ground, their sphere of action within the company, who they work with. Ideally, you could even try to discover what motivates them, which values they hold dear, what they require, what they are looking for, etc. If you cannot get all this information, try to find out as much information as possible during the interview, as this could be useful for improvising and adapting what you say, where necessary.

➤ **Getting to know yourself:**

- Gain a perfect overview of your résumé (professional and/or personal background) and your skills;
- Keep the content of your cover letter (or email) in mind, especially any details that are relevant to the job (whether you responded to a job offer or sent a spontaneous application), as the interviewer might wish to bring up certain points you mentioned;
- Think of specific questions you are likely to be asked about your career, your dream job, etc., as well as the position on offer;
- Practice talking about yourself in terms of your personality, qualities, faults, etc., so as not to be caught off guard on the day;
- Think about how you will come across, which points you will highlight or not, depending on the style of the interview, whether it be prescriptive or more flexible.

➤ **Knowing your position and your competition;** understanding yourself objectively:

It is better to plan in advance if you believe the interviewer will ask you

about your salary expectations. This way, you can propose a realistic salary (usually the gross annual amount, except for civil service positions) calculated according to the relevant job market and the type of job. Make sure to give a good range that allows for negotiation of a decent salary.

If applicable, take with you a number of documents (publications, memoirs, files, specification documents and technical documents) that could captivate the interviewer's interest and support your application.

- Make every effort to ensure that **the interview takes place in the best possible conditions**<sup>1</sup>.

### 3. Why not make a pitch?

No matter the format of the interview, at some point, you will have to “sell” yourself and/or “sell” your professional plan.

Simply put, you will have to make a **pitch**.

**What exactly is a PITCH?**

- Giving a two-minute introduction
- Responding to the (in)famous phrase, “Tell me about yourself...”
- Introducing your service offer and getting the other person interested in order to convince them of the benefit of potential future collaboration.



1. To do so, see 1/ “Is the first impression always the right one?”

## Basic pitch structure



Complete the following exercise to help you build your pitch.

**Summarize the key aspects of your background in relation to the job vacancy.**  
(E.g. *your identity, your academic background, your favorite subjects, etc.*)

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**Present your achievements and skills that are in line with the duties of the job.**  
(E.g. *successes, objectives achieved, results obtained, etc.* – see “*Significant achievements*”)

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**Show your motivation for the position and the company**  
(E.g. *motivations related to the company: values, services/products, clients... and related to the position: issues, duties, types of projects, tasks..*)

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**Describe your assets or what you can offer the company (offer of service)**  
(E.g. *Skills* – see *Parts I & II of the Handbook*)

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## 4. Some possible interview questions

### Basic questions to...

#### ► Understand your personality traits

1. If your friends were asked to describe three or four things about you, what could they tell me about you?
2. What motivates you in your life? What is your reason for getting up in the morning?
3. What kind of personalities bother you the most?
4. Where do you see yourself in five years?
5. Do you have any hobbies or interests?
6. Etc.

#### ► Find out more about your studies and general education

1. Why did you choose that course?
2. Which subjects and fields of study did you find the most interesting, and why?
3. How did your education help you prepare for the world of work?
4. If you had the choice to do a different course today, would you choose something different or the same course?
5. What did you like the most about student life?
6. Etc.

#### ► Learn about professional skills you have acquired, and which you have used throughout your career

1. I ask you to... (install a new IT system, test a molecule, prepare a presentation for the board of directors, etc.), how do you proceed?
2. What quality or skill can you bring to the table that another candidates do not have?

3. Which skills do you think would need to be mastered in order to perform this role successfully? Do you think you have them, and, if so, why?
4. Do you think you can evolve with your job or make your job evolve?
5. Do you know (or would you know) how to manage a team?
6. Etc.

#### ► Get to know more about your past and future work experience

1. You completed a company internship/company internships. Talk to me about this/these experience(s). What did you gain?
2. In relation to your different experiences (internship, volunteer work, seasonal job, etc.), which ones did you enjoy the most, and why?
3. What difficulties did you face and how did you overcome them?
4. What do you look for in a job?
5. Where do you see your ideal career? What kind of organization and environment would you be working in and what type of profession would it be?
6. Why did you apply to this job? Do you have any other current leads?
7. What are your salary expectations?
8. Do you think you might have too much (or not enough) experience for this position?
9. Why should I give you this job?
10. Do you have any post-interview questions?
11. Etc.

### Some “atypical” questions that might sidetrack you a bit...

1. Which fictional or historical character do you identify with the most, and why?
2. If I gave you a magic wand to make ONE wish, what would it be?
3. Which ONE object would you take with you to a desert island?
4. Etc.

### Further questions (in French):

<http://etudiant.lefigaro.fr/les-news/actu/detail/article/les-deroutantes-questions-posees-a-l-entretien-d-entree-a-oxford-9426/>

<https://www.journaldunet.com/solutions/emploi-rh/informatique-questions-a-l-entretien-d-embauche-chez-google-apple-hp-dell/>

## LinkedIn is for...

Whether you are a student, already employed or seeking employment, LinkedIn is the most popular network nowadays for building professional exchanges (recruitment agencies and company recruitment officers...).

This job monitoring tool is used for:

- Developing your professional network
- Looking for jobs
- Increasing your visibility
- Finding information on sectors and companies.

### How do I make my profile visible?

Here is some basic advice (not exhaustive)...

#### 1. Your photo

- Use a professional photo, preferably 450 × 450 pixels
- Upload a profile personalized cover photo (a banner) with your core statement or slogan.

#### 2. Your professional title

- Indicate your student status (below your name)
- Specify key skills, favorite subjects and languages.



### 3. Your personal details

- Give your phone number so that you can be reached easily.

### 4. Your summary

- Pay particular attention to writing this section in order to make people want to get to know you as a future professional contact
- Mention the key points of your career plan: your skills, convictions, interests, the type of sector or organization you would like to work in, etc.
- Explain how you would like to make your contribution, referring back to details from your pitch, for example
- Give your phone number so that you can be reached easily.

### 5. Your work experience

- Give the role you held (intern in IT support, financial analyst, examiner for French preparatory class)
- Highlight your experiences (1<sup>st</sup>- and 2<sup>nd</sup>-year internships, collective science project, etc.) as significant achievements or contextualized skills
- Include keywords so that recruiters can find you more easily on job boards.
- Use the personal pronoun “I”.

### 6. Your qualifications

- When applying outside of France, we suggest that you present your educational background in the following format (**for Licence/Master/Doctorat – LMD**)
  - French Classes Préparatoires to Grandes Ecoles or Bachelor’s Degree (if you have a Licence);
  - Bachelor of Science and Engineering;
  - Master’s degree.

### 7. Your skills and recommendations

- Bring attention to your skills
- Ask for recommendations from tutors, colleagues, etc.

### 8. Other advice

- Optimize your profile so that search engines can find you, by including keywords in the various sections (profile, professional title, summary, etc.)
- Fill it out with media (videos, photos, websites, blogs, etc.)
- Think carefully about your target before uploading posts.



## Is my LinkedIn profile visible?



Check your visibility on LinkedIn. Don't hesitate to ask people you know for help (parents, friends, teachers, etc.).

Theme	Questions	Comments
Photo	<input type="checkbox"/> Is it aesthetically pleasing? <input type="checkbox"/> Is it professional?	..... ..... .....
Slogan	<input type="checkbox"/> Is it catchy? <input type="checkbox"/> Is it succinct? <input type="checkbox"/> Is it relevant? <input type="checkbox"/> Have I included key skills?	..... ..... ..... .....
Summary	<input type="checkbox"/> Is it catchy? <input type="checkbox"/> Is it precise? <input type="checkbox"/> Does it make people want to get to know me? <input type="checkbox"/> Have I highlighted my skills and specializations?	..... ..... ..... .....
Work experience	<input type="checkbox"/> Have I described my professional background? <input type="checkbox"/> Do all experiences include keywords? <input type="checkbox"/> Have I included significant achievements?	..... ..... .....
Education and qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/> Have I highlighted my course of study? <input type="checkbox"/> Have I mentioned all the qualifications I have obtained? <input type="checkbox"/> Have I included distinctions, where applicable (e.g. scholarships and prizes)?	..... ..... .....
Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Are the skills mentioned in line with my career?	..... ..... .....
Recommendations	<input type="checkbox"/> Have I included recommendations from clients, colleagues, etc.?	..... ..... .....

General comment on your profile:

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