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CV Review Checklist — Common Mistakes to Avoid

Spot the errors before recruiters do. A practical self-review guide for law students.

Fatal Error — fix immediately

Common Mistake — frequently seen

Polish Point — elevates your CV

How to use: Read each mistake. If your CV has this issue, check the box and fix it before sending. Items marked **Fatal** are deal-breakers — recruiters reject CVs for these alone. Be honest with yourself.

 **Issues Fixed So Far**

0 of 23 issues fixed

1 Formatting & Presentation

CV is longer than 2 pages (for students) or 3 pages (for junior lawyers) **FATAL**

Recruiters spend 6–10 seconds on first scan. A 4–page CV signals poor editing skills. Fix: Trim ruthlessly. Use 1 page if under 2 years' experience.

Using multiple fonts, inconsistent spacing, or misaligned sections **FATAL**

A messy format screams carelessness — fatal in a profession obsessed with precision.

Fix: Pick one clean font (Garamond, Calibri, or Georgia). Use consistent heading sizes.

Margins too tight (below 0.5 inch) or too wide (above 1.2 inch) COMMON

Cramped text is hard to read; excessive white space looks thin.

Fix: 0.7–1 inch margins on all sides.

Sending CV as a Word .docx instead of PDF COMMON

Word files can shift formatting across devices. Always send as PDF unless specifically asked for .docx. Fix: Save as PDF before sending.

File not named properly (e.g., saved as "CV_Final_FINAL2.pdf") POLISH

Recruiters download dozens of CVs.

Fix: Name it "FirstName_LastName_CV.pdf"

Quick Reference — Formatting Do's & Don'ts

✗ Font size 9 to cram in more content

✓ Font size 10.5–12 for readability

✗ Colourful headers & design elements

✓ Clean black-and-white, professional layout

✗ Tables that break when converted to PDF

✓ Clean sections with consistent spacing



2 Personal & Contact Details



Unprofessional email address (e.g., "coollawyer99@gmail.com") FATAL

This is often the first thing seen. An unprofessional email immediately damages credibility. Fix: Use firstname.lastname@gmail.com or similar.

Missing LinkedIn profile URL or GitHub (for tech-law roles) FATAL

Recruiters always check LinkedIn. Not having it listed looks like you're hiding something. Fix: Add your custom LinkedIn URL (linkedin.com/in/yourname).

- Including date of birth, religion, caste, or photograph (Indian CVs)** COMMON

Modern CVs (especially for firm applications) don't require these. Including them can invite unconscious bias. Fix: Remove unless specifically asked.
- Full home address instead of just City, State** COMMON

Your full address is unnecessary and wastes prime space.
Fix: Just put "New Delhi, India" or "Mumbai, Maharashtra."

3 Content & Writing Style



- Using a generic Objective statement instead of a Professional Summary** FATAL

"I seek a challenging role to grow my skills" = tells the recruiter nothing.
Fix: Replace with a 2–3 line summary of who you are, your strengths, and your goal area.
- Describing duties, not achievements ("Attended court hearings" vs "Assisted in 15+ bail applications")** FATAL

Duty-based descriptions are forgettable. Numbers and outcomes stand out.
Fix: Use action verbs + context + impact. Even rough numbers work.
- Overusing vague buzzwords: "hardworking", "passionate", "team player"** COMMON

Everyone says this. It adds zero value.
Fix: Show, don't tell. Instead of "hardworking," list what you delivered.
- Writing in full sentences with "I" ("I worked on...") instead of bullet-point phrases** COMMON

CV bullet points should start with action verbs, not "I".
Fix: "Drafted writ petitions..." not "I drafted writ petitions..."
- Listing skills like "MS Word" and "Internet Browsing" as key competencies** COMMON

Basic computer skills are assumed. Listing them makes it look like you're padding.
Fix: Replace with legal-specific tools: Manupatra, SCC Online, Lexis Nexis, WESTLAW.

- Not tailoring the CV for each application type (firm vs. litigation vs. NGO)** POLISH

A one-size-fits-all CV is less effective.

Fix: Keep a master CV. Create 2–3 targeted versions for different application types.

Strong Action Verbs for Law CVs

✗ Helped with research on cases	✓ Conducted independent legal research on constitutional matters
✗ Did drafting work	✓ Drafted legal notices, complaints, and written submissions
✗ Was part of moot court team	✓ Advanced to quarter-finals at [Name] Moot Court 2024, arguing petitioner's side



4 Grammar, Accuracy & Consistency



- Spelling or grammatical errors anywhere in the CV** FATAL

In law, precision is everything. A typo immediately raises doubt about your drafting skills.

Fix: Run Grammarly + manual proof-read + ask a friend to review it.

- Dates inconsistently formatted (May 2023, 05/2023, 2023 — all on same CV)** FATAL

Pick one format and stick to it across the entire document.

Fix: Use "May 2023 – July 2023" format throughout.

- Inconsistent verb tense (past tense for all previous roles, present for current)** COMMON

Current role = present tense. All previous roles = past tense.

Fix: Review every bullet point for tense consistency.

- Inflating or misrepresenting internship duration or responsibilities** FATAL

Background checks happen. Senior advocates and partners in India's legal market know each other.

Fix: Always be accurate. Honest CVs build long-term credibility.

5 Structure & Order



- Education listed after Experience (when you have limited experience)** COMMON
For law students and freshers, Education should come first.
Fix: Order — Summary → Education → Experience → Skills → Achievements.
- Moot court experience buried or missing entirely** COMMON
Moot court is highly valued by law firms and chambers. Don't hide it.
Fix: Create a dedicated "Moot Court & Competitions" section.
- Publications or articles not listed (even student blogs or journal notes)** POLISH
Legal writing shows thinking ability and intellectual engagement. Even one published note is worth listing.
Fix: Add a "Publications" or "Writing" section if applicable.
- References section saying "Available on request" — wasted space** POLISH
Recruiters ask for references when they want them. Don't use half a page for this filler.
Fix: Remove the section entirely. Keep 2 references ready to provide separately.

GET YOUR CV PROFESSIONALLY REVIEWED

Guru Legal offers **1-on-1 CV review sessions** where our legal professionals go through your CV line-by-line. We've reviewed 200+ law student CVs and know exactly what top firms look for. Book at gurulegal.in or WhatsApp **+91-7351771555**. 