

CV basics - Format

What should my CV look like?

In the last issue, we looked at the cardinal rule of CVs

- *Your CV should be no longer than 2-3 pages*

Two is better than three. Unless you are retired President of the United States, a former Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union or the Director General of the BBC, there is no excuse for not getting it onto two sides.

Why the obsession with two sides?

Two reasons:

- It shows you understand what a CV is for, and can order your thoughts and structure them in such a way as to convey the image you wish and
- No recruitment consultant has the time to wade through pages after page of your personal details. They want the facts and just the facts.

Structure

Put the information the recruitment consultant needs first. That means your name (but not your address) and your employment history starting with your most recent position.

Education, your home address, hobbies and pastimes, and all the other information goes at the end. Until you have been selected for interview, your address is not needed.

Make sure your contact details are clear however. You do not want to be selected for interview and then find that no one can get hold of you.

Layout

For most people, unless you are going after a position in a creative industry, stick to a very simple, clear and straight forward design. Always keep in mind that your CV is going to be scanned. It will be a very key discipline to keeping it clear and readable, and should discourage you from the excesses of Microsoft Word's layout tools.

- **Typeface**
Chose a clear, straight forward font. On the PC, Arial and Times New Roman are a good choice. You can use both — perhaps using Arial as your headline font, and Times New Roman as the body text. Do not use more than two font families in a document — although with careful use you can make use of Arial Black and Arial Condensed.
- **Type size**
Fonts should never be used at less than 10pt — a typical broadsheet newspaper uses 8.5pt type — anything less than that and first the OCR will not pick it up, and secondly you are not going to make the person reading it terribly happy.

- **Type styles**

Although there is no problem in using bold fonts, be sparing in the use of italic. OCR software can be fooled by italics. Avoid underlining for the same reason, and under no circumstances use black — or indeed any other colour — boxes with white text in them. The OCR will almost certainly fail to read the text.

The same goes for shadow, outline and any other of those bizarre timesteps that Word allows you to use. That typographic disaster zone "Word Art" — which allows you to make your name appear to be shaped like a ball — is best left to publishers of the village newsletter and the corporate sport and social club, where it is much admired.

- **White space**

Allow your text some space to breathe. Do not be tempted to set 1 cm margins on the basis you can get more on the page. It will look cramped and unprofessional.

- **Consistency**

Devise a style sheet and stick to it. Think about the hierarchy of headings — section headings: Profile, if you have to have one, Career and achievements, education, other information; then how are you going to present your job titles (dates, Job title, company name).

This is where the use of different fonts can help. Use differing weights and font sizes to help the reader pick out the key information. Perhaps 14 point Arial for the main sections headings, then 12 point Arial bold for the second level headings, with 10 point Times Roman for the main body text.

- **Printing and paper**

If you are sending in a paper CV (as opposed to sending a word attachment) then consider very carefully the quality of paper. You should use at least 100gsm paper, typical photocopier paper is only 80gsm and tends to look a bit flimsy. Conqueror weave is a very popular choice. Stick to white paper as your CV will almost certainly be photocopied.

Preferably use a laser printer, although an ink jet on its highest setting on good quality paper is probably indiscernible. Stick to black and white.

- **Email**

Find out if the company will take the CV as an attachment or requires it in the body of the email. If it is the latter there is not much you can do about layout. Keep your layout as simple as possible, and avoid formatting commands. Older email programs are not able to pass on even the simplest text commands, so make sure your CV is readable and clear as a text only file.

Some companies will take CVs as email attachments. Sending attachments carries a risk of transmitting viruses. Do ensure you have anti-virus software installed. Apart from really annoying any prospective employer or consultant, if your CV is infected, most companies will quarantine your mail and it will never be seen.

Like it or not, Microsoft Word is the *de facto* standard. If you do not have Word, then send your CV as an RTF document. Do not send other proprietary formats (.wps etc). Remember if you use a Mac to put the file extension on the filename.

Language

- Use bullet points
- Keep sentences short
- Active not passive verbs
- Stick to facts, not opinions
- Use standard job titles, not company specific ones. This will increase your chances of your CV being found in a key word search

Powerwords to use

Accelerated	Accurate	Achieved
Acquired	Adapt	Administered
Advised	Ambition	Analysed
Appraise	Appropriate	Approve
Arrange	Aspired	Assess
Assisted	Auditing	Averting
Avoiding	Awareness	Budgeted
Building	Built	Capable
Centralising	Challenging	Clarified
Clients	Coaching	Communicating
Completed	Conceived	Confidence
Consolidating	Constructive	Convincing
Co-operated	Co-ordinate	Cost saving
Created	Customers	Deadlines
Decided	Delegated	Delivering
Demonstrated	Dependable	Designed
Determined	Developed	Devised
Diagnosing	Effective	Efficient
Eliminating	Enabling	Enforcing
Engineered	Enhanced	Ensuring
Enthusiasm	Established	Evaluated
Exceeded	Exceptional	Executed
Expanded	Experience	Finalised
Financed	Flexibility	Forecasting
Forming	Formulated	Founded
Gaining	Generated	Goals
Governed	Graduated	Guiding
Headed	Helpful	Honest
Humour	Imagination	Impact
Implemented	Improved	Improvised
Increased	Influencing	Ingenuity
Initiated	Innovated	Inspired
Integrity	Interpreting	Introducing
Judgement	Launched	Led
Liaised	Located	Loyal
Maintained	Managed	Marketed
Mediated	Monitoring	Motivated
Negotiated	Nominated	Notable
Objectives	Obtained	Operated
Opportunity	Organised	Oriented
Originated	Overcome	Perceived
Perfected	Performed	Permanent
Persuading	Piloted	Pioneered

Placed	Planned	Practical
Prestige	Preventing	Produced
Professional	Proficient	Profit
Progress	Promoted	Proposed
Proved	Provided	Providing
Publishing	Punctual	Purchasing
Qualified	Quantify	Raising
Reasonable	Recognised	Recommend
Recruiting	Reduced	Regulated
Reliable	Reorganised	Reported
Represented	Researched	Resolving
Responsible	Results	Reviewing
Satisfied	Saving	Scheduled
Securing	Selected	Selling
Significant	Simplified	Sincerity
Solved	Standardising	Stimulated
Strategic	Streamlined	Structured
Substantial	Succeeded	Supervised
Supported	Team building	Testing
Thorough	Thoughtful	Tolerant
Trained	Transferred	Transformed
Trebled	Understanding	Upgrading
Useful	Utilised	Validating
Verified	Versatile	Vital
Vivid		