

CV TIPS



Sitting down to write your CV can seem like a daunting task. But never fear! We're here to help. We've seen a lot of CVs in our time, and we know how important a well-written CV is to really sell your skills and personality. Equally, we've seen a lot of poorly constructed CVs. It's very simple really: if your CV isn't right, it won't sell you well enough and won't get the job (or salary) you want.

We've put together a list of top tips to get your CV really standing out.

I. PREPARATION IS KING

Before you even put finger to keyboard, think about the following:

- **What kind of job are you looking for?**
Make sure your CV reflects your aspirations as much as your experience so far.
- **Who will be reading your CV?**
A specialist recruiter? The hiring manager? HR? Make sure you're tailoring your CV to reflect the audience.

Once you have these basics in mind, spend some time gathering the key details such as contact information, qualifications, dates and current responsibilities. From the start, you need to make sure everything is relevant. If you have a job description in mind, think about matching your strengths and use any relevant keywords attached to it.

Be honest with yourself. Aim to strike a balance between selling yourself without exaggerating your skills and achievements. Remember: this will be the basis for interviews and you could discredit yourself if you stretch the truth or outright lie.

2. STRUCTURING YOUR CV

Start with your name as the heading, not "curriculum vitae". (You wouldn't start a letter with the title "letter"!)

Then include the following information in this order:

- Contact information (use this in your header/footer too)
- Personal profile and objectives
- An overview of your technical skills
- Career history, with your most recent job first
- Education
- Hobbies and interests

In most cases, employers are more interested in your work experience than your education. However, if you're a fresh grad or if you've recently finished a relevant educational course, then list this section before your career history.

3. FORMATTING YOUR CV

Most jobs get a huge amount of applications, so it's vital to **make sure your CV is easily readable** and gets across all the key points during a quick scan.

DO

- Create your CV in Microsoft Word and always send a Word version of your CV to recruiters (they may need to upload it to a portal or put it in corporate branding)
- Keep to two or three pages. If you have been a senior manager on several contracts then four pages is acceptable (but no more!)
- Keep your CV A4 sized in portrait style.
- Stick to a white background and don't include any decorative borders.
- Choose black font and a simple typeface for the main body e.g. Arial (10 points, never less) and use this font style consistently.
- Highlight headings using italics or bold. Avoid capitals and underlining, as this can look aggressive.
- Keep paragraphs under five lines long.
- Use bullet points when listing duties.
- Stay reader friendly by keeping a good amount of white space on the page

DON'T

- Don't include a photo of yourself. Photos can inspire snap judgements and add no real value.

4. PERSONAL DETAILS

- Have you changed your mobile number since you last looked for a job? This may seem obvious but make sure your phone numbers are up-to-date.
- Use a professional email address, and not one based on nicknames. We know of employers who receive so many applications they filter out people who don't have sensible email addresses. As an example, firstnamelastname@emailprovider.com is more likely to be taken seriously than smartypantsxxl@emailprovider.com.
- Include your full address and post code. Your post code is essential as many recruiters, in house and agency, will search job boards and databases for candidates within a certain distance from their office. If you don't have a post code on your CV, you'll be missing out on opportunities!
- Include your LinkedIn page URL and make sure this is customized (there are more details on how to do this at the [LinkedIn Help Centre](#)).

DON'T

- Don't disclose your age or date of birth. These will be removed by any professional recruiter or HR as it opens hirers up to discrimination accusations.
- Don't include your marital status, place of birth, religion, number of children or pets. These details aren't relevant.

DO

- You should list your Driving Licence with your personal information. Only list additional licences if they are relevant to the job.
- List your Security Clearance/CRB/Disclosure Scotland status with your personal information.
- List your VISA information at the top of your CV with the type of VISA and Expiry Date, e.g. HSMP Tier 1, valid until August 2016.

5. PROFILE AND OPENING STATEMENT

This has become an essential part of any CV. We would say two short well-constructed paragraphs outlining your strengths and motivations are ideal here. **This is an opportunity to sell yourself**, so please make sure you highlight anything key to the role such as experience in a relevant industry or sector, key technologies for the job which you are familiar with, and any aspirations that are relevant.

Write from the first-person and avoid rolling out clichés such as “I work well in a team or on my own”. Generic CV speak can put people off. If you’re stuck for ideas, spend some time looking at job boards reading adverts for positions you may be interested in and see what words come up frequently. When people are scan reading a document, they often look at the first and last sentences of paragraphs so keep this in mind when you are constructing your profile. Again **make it as relevant and succinct as possible**.

SOME EXAMPLES

"I am a versatile, proactive, board level manager with wide range of skills encompassing sales management, marketing, operation efficiency and corporate planning. Having worked in highly pressurised situations, I have shown the necessary skill set to bring complex situations to a fruitful conclusion. I have been instrumental in orchestrating and managing teams during complex and innovative sales of technologically advanced ...

"A business leader with a natural ability to communicate effectively at all levels and build cohesive and functional teams. I have developed a strong understanding of how businesses really operate, the politics that influence decisions and how global issues affect them."

"I am a self-starter with the ability to build from nothing and also successfully lead change programmes ... I look to 'add value' to an organisation, whether it is the company I work for, or a client. I base my success on establishing excellent rapport in my professional relationships, commitment to every task I undertake, and honesty and integrity in everything I do. I am highly ambitious and I have drive, determination, and the ability to succeed, whilst delivering results."

"Over 20 years' experience in sales and implementation of high value adding IT solutions to the financial community throughout Europe"

6. TECHNICAL SKILLS OVERVIEW

This section should be used to quickly demonstrate that you have the skills required for the position you are applying for. Keep it relevant and don't be tempted to list every technology you've ever worked with. **This is a snapshot of your experience for a particular job, not a game of buzz word bingo!** Remember that anything you list here is something that you could be asked about at interview.

7. QUALIFICATIONS AND CERTIFICATIONS

This is more important for permanent employees than contractors. If you're in the early stages of your career then list your qualifications at the start of your CV after your profile. If your qualifications aren't very relevant or recent you can put them after your career history.

- Make sure you list the dates for subjects you've studied and the institutions you've attended.
- If you have an honours degree, list the classification.
- Many people forget to mention if they won a class medal or gained a distinction. Definitely include these as they can differentiate you from your competition.
- Don't write a long, rambling description of your course content: a brief overview will do.
- A-Levels and Higher Grades will usually only be asked for when applying for permanent placements. If you do want to include these, then outline your grades and be prepared to remember what subjects you studied if you summarise them (such as "3 A-Levels A,A,C"). If you don't include these on your CV, make sure you have details to hand just in case you're asked for them.
- List relevant certifications with dates and where possible the certification number.
- Include any relevant, recent training that is recent; don't include a COBOL course from 1985 if you have been a Java Developer since 2003.

8. CAREER HISTORY

- Start with your most recent position
- List the date, employer, and position held.
- If the company you have worked for is not a household name, provide a brief summary. For example: "Harvey Nash is a global leader in professional recruitment and executive search with a strong presence throughout the UK. I specialise in permanent roles within the SME sector in Scotland". This will help recruiters match up any relevant experience with companies they work with and give them an idea of your role within the context of the organisation.
- If you've held many positions at one company, treat these as different positions held in one period of employment. You don't want someone who is scanning your CV to think you've changed employer regularly if you've actually had a stable career history. You also want to show off progression where possible.

- List your duties and responsibilities including duties performed, budget responsibility, scope of the role, team size, challenges and achievements as well as the key technologies you used.
- If you've been in a role for a consultancy, try not to outline every project you've been involved in. This invariably leads to repetition, and with this format you are often telling the recruiter more about the company and their projects than your role and daily duties.
- Don't go into exhaustive detail about positions that aren't that relevant to the job you're applying for, but account for the roles so there are no gaps in your career history.
- Bullet points are an excellent way to break this section up, but make sure you have a mix of prose and that the document is not full of fragmented sentences.
- Make sure that the tense you are writing in is consistent and correct.

9. REFERENCING ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

If you've been working in academia or have had an extended period of learning or research, it's a good idea to provide a few examples of work. Where possible, hyperlink the paper to your CV when listing it (and **don't forget to check the link works!**).

This will allow people to delve deeper into your studies with ease and may benefit you if it's of interest to them or relevant to the role. If you've been published several times and are looking for a position out of academia, only list three to five most recent or most prominent publications and mention that a full list can be provided on request.

10. HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

Hobbies people are most interested in reading about are those which involve **finance, technology, business or have been a major achievement**. Only list other activities and sports which are recent and you're prepared to talk about. Don't put down things you did at school if this was years ago and think carefully about what opinions can be formed. Don't list any of the following: UFO spotting, drinking or anything about guns!

11. REFERENCES

Make these available on request and don't list people's details on your CV. You never know who may find your details and contact them without you knowing. This will also prompt you to speak to your referee prior to anyone calling them.

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Check there are no unexplained gaps. If you've had any career breaks, outline them briefly such as renovating property, career break to look after children, worldwide travel, return to education etc. If you don't explain the breaks, it could look suspicious to a potential employer.

Ask yourself the following questions when reviewing your CV:

- **Have you avoided repetition?**
- **Is everything is relevant?**
- **Is anything missing?**
- **Have you focused on your strengths?**
- **Have you used action words?**