

## Writing a good CV

A well written and presented CV could make a huge difference when it comes to securing you an interview for that perfect job, especially given the levels of competition that you face when you're looking for work. At the very least, a good CV will ensure that you promote yourself to your best advantage and make a good initial impression to your prospective employer.

So how do you write a good CV and how should you lay out the information on the page? There is no 'one size fits all' solution to construct the perfect CV; it is your personal document that reflects you and therefore can be structured and presented as you wish. However, there are some 'do's and don'ts' that we think you'll find useful and have written some advice below that will help you.

### General Tips

Your CV should be laser-printed in black ink using a plain typeface, on good quality A4 white/cream paper. Decorative borders are not necessary (unless you are a designer or in the arts!), nor are photographs of yourself as these could lead to a decision being made about your suitability before the reader has even read the content of your CV or had the chance to meet with you.

### How long should a CV be?

You sometimes hear people say that a good CV should ideally cover no more than two pages and never more than three. To be honest, as long as your CV has all of the relevant information in the first few pages, it could be longer (within reason). Aim to ensure that the content is clear, structured, concise and relevant. Using bullet points rather than full sentences can help minimise word usage and make the CV easier on the eye as well as easier to scan read but even if you use bullet points, please make sure that you still include all of the relevant detail.

### One size doesn't fit all!

A good CV and covering letter should be tailored for each job application – This is vital for any successful application. You must ensure that you highlight your key skills and the experience that you can offer that would be most relevant for the role that you are applying for.

The completed CV needs to be checked carefully for grammatical errors and spelling mistakes and to ensure that it makes sense. Ask an independent person to review your CV before you send it as it's easy to miss mistakes when you've been going over the same piece of text many times over. Remember, you only get one chance to make a first impression!

Remember when writing and structuring your CV that you are marketing yourself and that a potential employer will use the details provided to make a pre-judgement about you and also to form interview questions. It should be clear and easy to read. Gaps in career history should be explained and falsehoods and inaccuracies avoided at all costs – Don't lie about dates on your CV as a good interviewer will nearly always find you out and even if they don't in the interview, your referees will not be able to corroborate the dates that you have falsely given.

There is no reason to include your reasons for leaving each job on your CV but be prepared to answer these questions in your interview.

### **Current salary details should not be included.**

A good covering letter should always accompany your CV and again should be tailored for the application and job that you are applying for. If you are applying for a role online via a job board such as Monster or Total Jobs, there is usually an option to write a few lines, or to select from a list of pre-written templates. Please try to always write your own words rather than be tempted to use the templates as it always looks as though you've put more thought and effort in if you do.



## What information should I include in my CV?

### ***Personal details***

Most CVs start here, but take care to avoid adding any details which may invoke any potential discrimination, such as religious affiliation, age, nationality etc. Since 2010, the Equalities Act states that it is unlawful to discriminate based upon any of these (any many other) personal traits, however human nature means that this is not always adhered to! We therefore suggest removing any personal information from your CV that may invoke potential discrimination and affect your application success.

### ***Profile***

Your profile is your opening statement to the reader of your CV. It should scream 'employ me' from the rafters and really whet the reader's appetite to read on and get to know you through your CV. A good profile will be no more than a paragraph of text, where you simply talk about the type of work you are looking for, the key strengths and skills that you could offer and the type of career that would best bring out those strengths. Try not to be tempted to try and lift content information from someone else's CV or to use clichéd phrases!

### ***Education & Qualifications***

Ensure that you include details of all of your professional qualifications and examination results, including the names of institutions, and the dates attended in reverse order; university/college before school results.

It is also worth adding here any vocational or courses that you may have attended since leaving school. That first Aid course that you attended may not sound that important, but it could be an additional skill that your new employer may find useful!



### ***Employment Experience/Career History***

Career history should always be presented with most recent job role first and then descend chronologically, with the correct job title and employment dates. To start with, write a paragraph to sum up your role and your duties and then 'bullet' the day to day responsibilities, as this makes it easier for the reader to skim the content quickly. You could try to think of 2 or 3 'key achievements for each role to add to the content. In particular, things that will set you apart and make you stand out against the crowd. These could be projects at work that you have been involved in, secondments, or perhaps you won a major client for your employer or helped to put a process into place to save the company money?

### ***Computer Skills***

It's fair to say that the vast majority of job roles will now require a basic level of computer literacy. This is a good place to include details of any computer packages that you may have used proficiently (such as Microsoft Office or Sage. List as many as you can competently use, but if the last time you even looked at a spreadsheet was twenty years ago, don't say that you can use Excel – you'll be found out! If you feel that your PC skills might be a little rusty, there are plenty of private and also some state funded centres that will be only too happy to offer you a course to bring your skills up to scratch. Please give us a call if you'd like a recommendation.

### ***Hobbies and Interests***

Keep this section short and don't include anything that may give your employer a negative impression. Your main interests might be partying with your friends and Facebook, but to an employer this might read 'likes going out during the week and getting drunk and then sits on Facebook all day when they should be working!'.  
Referees - These can simply be 'Available on request'.

The order in which you present these and the emphasis which you give to each one will depend on what you are applying for and what you have to offer but should include your previous 2 employers or if you have only worked for one company, perhaps 2 suitable contacts within that employer, or maybe a personal reference in addition. So now you know how to write a good CV, go to the next factsheet which will talk about writing your Covering Letter in more detail.

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