

Writing your CV

Your CV is the first impression that a potential employer will have of you, so make sure that it reflects a professional image. Ensuring that your CV is complete, concise and correctly written will help you get your first interview.

Many recruitment professionals will advise you to rewrite your CV each time you reply to a job advertisement, making sure that you use the key words from the advertisement. Tailoring your CV in this way will help you match your skills and achievements to the requirements of the job and the employer.

For example, if a job asks for "proven leadership skills", you can emphasise any positions of management or team leadership in your CV. For example, you could write in your personal profile "Team leader with five years' experience in sales supervision" or in the career history section "Directed a sales team to achieve 50% growth in client base".

Organising the information in your CV

Tailoring your CV to each job you apply for also means that you can vary the order of sections in your CV to make the most important information stand out. For example, if the job advertisement emphasises a particular professional skill, you can put a Key Skills section first.

How you plan your CV also depends on your own experience. For example, if you have been working for a number of years, your work experience is probably much more relevant than your educational background. But if you have only just left University, your educational grades will be more prominent.

Generally, a CV includes the following information:

contact details

career objective

personal profile

key skills

career history

education and qualifications

interests

references

You can choose to omit the sections on interests or references, or merge the personal profile with the key skills. What you include depends on the job you are applying for, as well as your job history.

Chronological or functional?

A chronological format lists the jobs you have had in chronological order, starting with the most recent. It is particularly useful if you want to show career advancement and promotions in one particular sector. If you are applying for a similar job to the one you have now, a chronological CV shows a potential employer how your experience and skills can benefit the company.

A functional format focuses less on job titles and dates, and more on your skills and achievements. It is a good choice if you do not have much work experience or if you are trying to change direction in your career and so do not have much experience in your new chosen area.

How to write your CV

Keep your CV concise and use positive, "active" vocabulary to highlight your skills, experience, achievements and strengths. For example, instead of writing "I can manage multi-million dollar projects" you could write "Successful track record of managing multi-million dollar projects".

Some examples of powerful, descriptive language:

manage, supervise, lead, organise, advise, negotiate, delegate

increase, expand, develop, achieve, build, strengthen

deliver, generate, establish, analyse

create, solve, design, produce, streamline, devise

Remember to feature any achievements that relate to the job you are applying for, and to show how what you did benefited the company. For example, instead of describing your job responsibilities, say what you did that was good. Perhaps you saved the company money, or you grew the business, or you got new clients.

The different sections of your CV

Career objective

This tells the employer at a glance whether you fit the vacancy. Try to be as concise and informative as possible and relate your objective to the job.

For example:

Career objective: to develop marketing skills in the food industry.

Personal profile

This section can contain a couple of sentences that describe you and your working style.

For example

Marketing executive with over five years' experience in retail. Specialised in e-commerce and web optimisation.

Key skills

In this section, list your key professional or technical skills.

For example

- identifying and analysing new markets
- developing and implementing marketing strategy
- maximising web presence

Career history

Your most recent job should come first. Also include any relevant experience as well as anything that taught you a useful skill. You should also give the names of the companies you worked for, along with the dates you were there. Try to fill in all the gaps. If you were unemployed at a certain time, you can write something like "Personal projects".

Education and qualifications

Put your most recent education first. You don't need to put high school (secondary school) exams and grades unless they are particularly relevant, or required by the job. You should give the dates of your studies, as well as the institutions and the qualifications you gained.

For example

1987 - 1991 University of London

BA Hons French and German

Some academic abbreviations:

BA (Bachelor of Arts)

BSc (Bachelor of Science)

Hons (Honours)

MA (Master of Arts)

MPhil (Master of Philosophy)

PhD (Doctor of Philosophy)

In the education and qualifications section, you should also give the details of any relevant training courses you have completed. Include the name of the diploma or certificate that you gained after completing the course.

For example

1991 - 1992 London Institute of Marketing

Diploma in Marketing Management

Additional information

This section could include any additional skills that you have, or particular interests relevant to the job. For example, "I am familiar with most Microsoft programs. I also speak French and Spanish fluently."

References

Many potential employers like to see references from previous employers. However, candidates for a job might prefer not to include references at this stage, but to write something like "References available on request".

Correct tense use

For previous experience or educational study, you will need to use the Past Simple tense.

For example

1987 - 1992: Secretary to the Managing Director, Unicorp Ltd

I managed all correspondence?

To describe your present job or experience that exists up to now, you should use the Present Perfect or the Present Simple tense.

For example

From 1998 to present day: Office supervisor, Unicorp Ltd

My responsibilities are to?

I oversee a team of accountants?

Since 1996, I have managed the administration department.

Tips

1. Your CV should look attractive and it should also be easy to read. You can use

bullet points to emphasise key points and to help your reader to find information quickly. Using bullet points will also help you avoid starting every sentence or paragraph with "I". Instead, you will be able to use nouns to focus on activities and achievements. Leave space on either side of the text to allow the reader to make notes.

Use a font that is easy to read. Remember you can use bold font to make information stand out. Don't forget to use headings and sub-headings.

2. Your CV should fit onto one or two pages of normal sized office paper. Across the top you can put your name, address and contact details.

3. Keep your CV relevant. Ideally each CV you send out should be tailored to the job you are applying for. For every requirement mentioned in the advertisement, think about how your experience, qualifications and achievements will help you meet that requirement.

Check that you have included all the information required. For example, if the job advertisement requires you to live in London, make sure that this information is prominent on your CV.

Explain any gaps in your work history and avoid making claims that are untrue or misleading.

4. Check for spelling mistakes and correct use of tenses and grammar.

5. Always send a covering letter with your CV.