

CV Advice

Whether a potential employer asks to see your curriculum vitae, CV or resume, they're looking for one thing – a document that proves why you're the ideal candidate to invest their time and money in. Essentially it's a sales brochure, pinpointing the interesting USPs (unique selling points) that make you stand out from the crowd.

There's no universally accepted format, but your CV should cover these elements:

- **Your details**

Include your name, address, phone numbers and email address so any interested employers can contact you easily. Information such as nationality, age and driving licence status are optional.

- **Personal statement**

One paragraph that immediately captures the attention of your reader and entices them to find out more about you. Be careful not to cram too much in. Instead take your main skill and relate it to the job you're after to show employers why you meet their needs.

- **Work experience**

List your most recent position first, continuing in reverse chronological order including the name, location, and dates of your employment for each company you have worked for.

Aim to use 5-6 bullet points wherever possible to highlight your responsibilities and achievements in each role so the person scanning your CV can quickly match up your experience with their job description.

- **Education**

Again, in reverse chronological order, give brief details of your academic and professional qualifications along with the grades you achieved. If you're looking for your first job since leaving education, include this information above any work experience.

- **Skills**

Whether you realise it or not you will have picked up many skills over the years, some tangible, some less so. Include every IT package or programme you have used as well as any foreign language skills you have gained, and state whether you're at a basic, intermediate or advanced level. Skills such as communication and project management are harder to substantiate and should be backed up with examples.

- **Hobbies & Interests**

Including these is optional and often used to fill up space at the end of the document. The

idea is to give the interviewer a more rounded picture and, perhaps, something more personal to discuss at an interview.

- **References**

It's not necessary to list referees on your CV, but you should state that details are available on request. If this is your first job, it's a good idea to nominate tutors or mentors. You'll obviously need to choose references that you're confident will give positive remarks, but you should also make sure they would be easily contactable by potential employers when the time comes.

- **A clear and simple layout**

Always keep your CV to two - three pages of A4. It should be clear to anyone reading your CV where to find the information they're looking for, with enough 'white space' to ensure they're not overawed at first glance.

The purpose of this document is not to get you the job, but to get you an interview. Always remember you're not writing a CV for yourself, you are writing it for your reader. As you write your CV, put yourself in their shoes. Keep it short, to the point and, above all else, interesting.

Due to the high volume of applications they receive, a recruiter will generally spend at most 20 seconds initially reviewing each CV, so it's important to get it right. If you follow the structure outlined above, you're on the right track to presenting the information in a clear, concise and persuasive way.

- **Things to watch out for**

Time spent making sure your CV is crisp and relevant is always time well spent. There are plenty of simple mistakes that are often overlooked that will turn your readers off before they've gone much further than your name and address.

- Resist the urge to jazz up your CV with images or colour
- Steer clear of long paragraphs
- Careful use of bold type can be effective, but don't overdo it
- Underlining should be reserved for website links only
- Use typefaces like 'Times New Roman' or 'Arial' - they're easier to read
- Avoid using font sizes smaller than 11pt, employers won't strain their eyes to read it
- Don't use txt speak and only use abbreviations if they're universally known

- **And finally...**

Check for spelling or typographical errors. Any errors are your responsibility and are one of the first things employers use to weed out the weaker candidates. Even if the role you're after doesn't require a high level of literacy, spelling errors scream lack of care, which is an undesirable quality for any recruiter. Don't put all your faith in a spell checker as many are set to American settings as a default. If you're not sure about a word, look it up in a dictionary.

Before you distribute your finished document or upload it to the Internet, get someone to look over it. Professional CV checkers see hundreds of CVs every day and can immediately spot things that may put off a potential employer.