

## CV Advice

### Your CV

Your CV is an essential career document needed to present yourself effectively in the job market. A good CV will considerably boost your chances of getting a face-to-face interview by highlighting relevant skills, experience and value to a potential boss.

There are no rights and wrongs when it comes to writing and presenting a CV, and each document will be as individual as the jobseeker it belongs to. However, by following some basic principles you will be able to present the information in a clear, concise and persuasive way.

You may need to put together more than one CV if you intend to apply for different types of job across different sectors. This will enable you to emphasise the particular achievements, skills, experience and personality qualities that a particular employer is looking for. It is usually possible to tell what an employer is looking for from the job advertisement or job description; alternatively you may need to research the role and the company yourself to ensure that your CV has the right focus.

### Content

An employer will expect to find information covering the following areas:

**Personal details** - include your name, address, phone numbers and email address. You may wish to add details of your nationality, birth date and driving licence, but this is not obligatory.

**Work experience** - list the most recent experience first, as it brings to the fore the most recent and, often relevant and responsible work. Describe your work experience in short sentences using straightforward, positive language. As well as describing the job, point out any general qualities that arose from the work such as ability to manage staff or work to tight deadlines.

**Education** - list brief details of qualifications - GCSEs, A-levels, and degree - along with grades attained. Applicants looking for their first job since school college or university can include their education information before work experience.

**Skills** - include specific skills such as IT skills or languages.

**References** - it is usual to provide the names and contact details of two referees, one of which should be your most recent employer. Graduates and school leavers with limited work experience can nominate college lecturers, teachers or managers during work experience. Be sure to tell your referees in advance, so they will be prepared.

**Hobbies** - including details of your interests away from the workplace is optional. By adding details of specific hobbies, you are giving an employer a more rounded picture of your personal qualities, don't overdo it. Do not use a long list of hobbies to cover up a lack of work experience.

## **Presentation**

Ensuring your CV is well presented and easy to follow is as important as including all the relevant information. Most employers see hundreds of CVs and yours may get less than a minute of their time.

Most people follow a historical CV format, as this is familiar to employers and is easy to write with employment history placed in chronological order. It also gives a good idea of career progression. However, if your career history is fragmented due to career breaks or a period of unemployment, you may consider a skills-based CV that highlights your abilities and aptitudes. It gives you the chance to describe what you can do, rather than detailing a list of jobs.

Whatever your choice, your CV should look clear and tidy with all the information easy to find. Although it is tempting to make your CV stand out by using, for example, coloured paper or an arty layout, it is best to stick to black print on good quality white paper. Most employers will expect to find the information under clear headings highlighted in bold or capitals, such as WORK EXPERIENCE or EDUCATION. Put dates on the left-hand side and indent information to make it easy for employers to find their way through your history.

### **Do:**

- Use a confident tone and positive language
- Concentrate on your achievements not your responsibilities. This means listing things, you have done - such as products launched, sales increase, awards won - not rewriting your job description. Quote figures whenever possible
- Make your most relevant experience and skills prominent to encourage the employer to read on
- Keep it to the point and concentrate on the quality of your achievements, not the quantity
- List other skills that could raise you above the competition such as languages, driving licence, IT skills
- Be ruthless with yourself and keep it to a maximum of two pages. Only very senior, experienced, executives have more
- Check thoroughly for correct spelling and grammar - spotting errors is a quick and easy way of weeding out weaker candidates when faced with a mountain of CVs to read
- Get a second opinion from someone you trust
- Include examples of your work, if appropriate
- Use good quality paper - white is usually best

### **Don't:**

- Leave any gaps in your work record - employers may assume the worst, for example that you were sacked
- Lie - many employers use information service companies or sophisticated new software to check CV details for accuracy, including educational qualifications, places of study and the veracity of job references
- List all the one-day training courses you have ever been on
- Include a photo unless you know the employer wants one
- Fax it without sending a copy in the post as well
- Use elaborate fonts, or colours – keep it simple
- Forget it's just a tool for getting you an interview.  
The CV will not land you the job alone, the rest is up to you.