

CV Advice for Graduates

Before you begin

Your CV is the first thing an employer will judge you on, so make sure it showcases all your relevant skills and experience in the clearest and best possible way. Begin by assembling the facts and chronologically listing the information you need to include in your CV. You won't get it perfect the first time but you can improve and add to your CV over time.

You may not be aware that many recruiters and employers use automated systems to search for and screen CVs these days. Therefore, you need to ensure that your CV includes as many keywords as possible which are relevant to the role/industry you want to work in. For example, if you're looking for a job in Sales, ensure that related keywords such as "account management", "negotiation" and "relationship building" are included somewhere in your CV.

Read through the person specification and job description for the role you're applying for. Then make sure you tailor your CV so it covers all the relevant points. This is really important as the recruiter will think you're not serious about the role unless you take the time to do this.

Personal Summary

This is your chance to grab the recruiter's initial attention, so this section should consist of short sentences totalling three or four lines and be around 60-70 words. This should highlight key aspects of your CV such as your key skills, job roles and achievements and should briefly outline the type of job you want and, more importantly, explain WHY you think you'd be suited to this kind of work.

Avoid using generic adjectives to describe yourself, such as 'hardworking', 'enthusiastic' or 'confident'. You may be these things, but so are all the other people who are applying. Tell the recruiter what makes YOU different to all the others!

Please don't write in the third person! Always use 'I' and 'me' when talking about yourself.

Personal Details

Keep this section simple. Simply give your:

Name

Postal address

Daytime telephone number (a mobile number is best as you never know when you might get a call!)

A professional looking email address

Employment History

List all work experience (both paid and unpaid) and voluntary work in reverse chronological order, beginning with your last position.

Provide brief details of the companies you've worked for i.e. the name and type of business.

State the dates of employment and include details of your key responsibilities and - more importantly - key achievements within the role.

Ensure the details are factual and relevant to the specific role for which you're applying as employers want concise information that sells your skills to them.

Education

In reverse chronological order (most recent first) you should list:

Any professional qualifications achieved or training courses attended, including any you're currently studying

Your university, course & degree gained (if applicable)

Your secondary and further education including vocational qualifications, A-Levels, GCSEs and the grades you obtained

Additional Skills

List all the systems and software you can use confidently or have used previously i.e. Word; Excel; Photoshop; etc. State your level in each honestly i.e. Beginner, Intermediate or Advanced.

List any foreign languages you know along with your proficiency at each as either Basic, Conversational or Fluent.

References

When you do secure an offer of employment from a business, they will want to speak with people who know you in a professional capacity and can vouch for your skills and experience as well as give an account of the kind of person you are. These people are called referees and are usually previous employers, colleagues or teachers/lecturers.

It is up to you whether you include referee's details in your CV or you prefer not to disclose them at this stage. If you do decide to include them, make sure you check with the people you've selected that they're happy for you to list their contact details and add in each referee's:

Name

Company

Position and relationship to you i.e. 'previous Line Manager'.

Postal address

Telephone number

Email address

Final Considerations

Make your CV look professional: create it in MS Word and focus on clear, consistent formatting.

Don't have unexplained gaps! If you've been travelling or previously unemployed - include the details. Time out is often a good discussion point at interview.

Be concise: your CV should ideally be no more than 2 pages.

Short paragraphs and bullet points make the CV easy to read