

CV Writing Advice

It can sometimes be hard to know where to begin when you're writing your CV and increasingly difficult to stand out from the crowd in a competitive jobs market. Whether you're a new graduate putting together your first CV, or an experienced professional thinking about making a move after many years in a role, follow our guide to creating a strong CV that you can feel confident about. 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.

What details should I include in my CV?

Personal Profile

This is your chance to grab the reader's initial attention, so this section should use short sentences and be around 60 - 70 words. This section should highlight key aspects of your CV such as your key skills, job roles and achievements. You may also use this section to briefly outline your career aims and reasons for seeking a new role.

Personal details

Name

Postal address

Telephone number

Email address

Employment History

List all work experience in reverse chronological order, beginning with your current or last position. Provide brief details of the companies you've worked for i.e. the name and type of business plus turnover.

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

Ensure the detail is factual and quantitative. Future employers want concise and informative information that sells your skills to them.

Education

In reverse chronological order list:

Any professional qualifications achieved, including any you're currently studying

Your university, course & degree gained (if applicable)

Your secondary and further education including A-Levels, GCSEs/O Levels and grades obtained

Additional Skills

Detail all the systems in which you're literate or have used previously i.e. Word; Excel; SAP;

Photoshop; etc. State your proficiency in each honestly.

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

Hobbies and Interests

Listing interests and hobbies provides a more personal profile for employers and helps to present you as a rounded individual.

References

It is up to you whether you include referee's details in your CV or prefer not to disclose them at this stage. If you do decide to include these, detail the following information:

Name

Company

Position and relationship to you i.e. 'previous line manager'

Postal address

Telephone

Email address

Final considerations

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

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

Be concise: your CV should ideally be about 2-3 pages.

Short paragraphs and bullet points look neat and make the CV easy to read

Ensure you add achievements to each role citing tangible benefits they brought to the role.

Common CV Mistakes

Once you've completed the first draft of your new CV, read through the below list and check you haven't made any of these common CV mistakes. You'll be glad you did!

Writing "CV" or "Curriculum Vitae" at the top. This is a waste of space as the employer will understand the purpose of the document.

Adding in details such as age, marital status, religion etc. These are irrelevant to an employer and take up valuable space on your CV. All the employer needs to know is how suited your skills & experiences are you for the job.

Typos! Using your computer's spelling and grammar checker is good practice, but also get a friend or relative to read the CV through as they'll be able to spot things a computer can't.

Only include information which is relevant to the job you're applying for – the employer doesn't want to know your life story!

Don't include a photo on your CV. This is irrelevant and some employers really don't like it!

Don't put your salary information on your CV. A savvy recruiter will be able to estimate from your job title & responsibilities what salary bracket you fall into.

Don't stretch the truth – this will only serve to trip you up further down the job application process. For example, if you state your MS Excel skills are excellent when in truth they're basic and you're presented with an Advanced Excel test at interview, you're going to look pretty silly.

Don't try to use humour in your CV. What people may find funny in person generally doesn't come across well on paper. While humour may make your CV stand out to a recruiter, they'll probably remember you for all the wrong reasons.