

Writing Your C.V.

Your C.V. is your marketing document. It has 3 purposes:

- Its primary objective is to get you interviews, in which case it may be accompanied by a covering letter, which should complement, but not duplicate, your C.V..
- It may also act as a framework for interviews, and so the content of your C.V. must be consistent with your personal presentation.
- Ultimately your C.V. is a positive reminder for the people who've interviewed you.

Presentation

No matter how well your skills and experience match the needs of a potential employer, your C.V. needs to catch the eye and make it easy for the reader to absorb relevant information.

When sending a hard copy of your C.V. **use good quality A4 paper** – preferably white or cream so that it can be easily photocopied. Reinforce your quality message by using an **attractive type face** and a **quality printer** - the use of cheap dot matrix printers is always obvious and will undermine the impression you are trying to create.

In today's electronic world, you should also consider **how your C.V. will appear on-screen**; we suggest using Verdana as your type-face, which is the font used by many websites as it's the easiest one to read on screen. In addition, make sure you keep it large enough (at least 10pt) to be read without squinting!

Your message needs to be noticed quickly (within those first 30 seconds!) so make it as easy as possible for the reader. Make the font a reasonable size (at least 10pt), well spaced out with wide margins and make sure that key information is in bold or underlined.

It is often recommended that the ideal C.V. is no longer than 2 pages of A4. However, your first draft should be as long as it needs to be to do yourself justice, always remembering that you cannot afford to bore the reader and you only have 30 seconds to grab their attention. If your draft is longer than 2 pages, then you need to consider whether you have gone in to too much detail.

- Make it easy to read
- Keep it simple and concise - ideally no more than two pages

Content & Style

The purpose of your C.V. is to generate interviews. Making a good first visual impression will increase the time spent reading your C.V., which is when it must convince the reader that you are worth meeting.

Most people prefer to see the detail of your C.V. in bullet points, but this is a matter of personal style; however, make sure you use words that suggest an active and successful career to date. Do not use limiting statements such as "a little experience of" or "quite knowledgeable" – focus on the areas you are confident about, and stay concise and positive.

It is quite common for C.V.s to begin as a rewrite of previous job descriptions, with all their jargon and detailed tasks - ask yourself what a prospective employer wants and needs to know, and emphasise your achievements, skills and experience. Where possible, quantify your accomplishments and responsibilities to give a clear sense of your achievements.

Employers rarely pay much attention to C.V.s that are cluttered with unnecessary facts that make it hard to distinguish your experience and achievements. We will ask you for information such as your National Insurance number, the names of referees etc. when you register, and discuss issues such as salary and your reasons for leaving previous employers at your interview.

Layout

Your C.V. needs to reflect your personality and approach – it should be an individual document and so stereotyped phrases should be avoided. However, the following suggestions and layout meet most expectations and will make it easier for key information to be identified quickly.

Section 1: Contact Details

Basic information including name, address, telephone number, mobile number, email address

Section 2: Profile

Conventional wisdom says that a strong summary profile attracts attention and summarises who you are and what you're offering. However, many people simply ignore it! This is because most profiles consist of a string of qualitative adjectives, most of which are motherhood statements to which everyone can lay claim.

However, although this is usually the hardest part of your C.V. to write, we suggest you consider including one because it represents the headlines of your personal advertisement. Make sure it gives an overview of your skills and experience, and keep it short, sharp and experience-related, rather than descriptive and flowery.

Section 3: Career Background/Employment History

Detail the jobs you have held in reverse chronological order, with most emphasis on your current or most recent positions. That is what a potential employer will be particularly interested in. If any of your job titles were peculiar to your company or industry, express them in terms that are recognisable to the "real world".

This section should emphasise, and if possible quantify, key responsibilities and your main achievements in each role:

- Use short sentences and bullet-points; if required, you can give more details at interview
- Account for gaps in your work history – if you took a year out travelling, you should not hide or ignore it as any prospective employer is sure to notice the gap and ask about it
- What difference have you made in your previous jobs? – highlight any positive changes you made with practical examples
- If you can, include factual, statistical information, but make sure you can back it up

If several appointments have been held at similar levels in a relatively short space of time, it is important not to be perceived as "job jumper". The problem can be overcome by incorporating several positions into one paragraph e.g.

2001-04 OFFICE MANAGER

During this period, Office Management positions were held with several companies on short-term contracts, including *list most impressive/relevant companies. Follow with a summary of your responsibilities and achievements over the period.*

Section 4: Education and Training /Qualifications

Do not overload this section with lists of dates, schools and colleges, etc. Simply list your highest school qualifications e.g. 3 A Levels and any further education. Don't forget to include any specialist training, including in-house training undertaken with previous employers.

Section 5: Interests

Keep this section brief, only including information that says something about you as a person and about which you would be comfortable having a discussion at interview. However, don't forget that leisure interests can often be used to demonstrate positive qualities such as leadership, fitness, or the ability to get along with a wide variety of people.

This section should also include your personal details such as age, marital status and number of children.

The Final Check

The only way to judge your C.V. is by whether or not it does the job it was designed for and leads to an interview. Check your C.V. carefully - the check list should help – and remember, your C.V. is the first impression potential employers will have of you, so it's worth taking the time to get it right.

Presentation

- Is it easy to read?
- Will it photocopy easily?
- Is it on good quality paper?
- It is on A4?
- Do the margins have sufficient space for potential interviewer comments?
- Is it kept to 2 pages?

Style

- Are your tenses, spelling & grammar correct?
- Is it free from jargon?
- Are all the words used in their most simple form?
- Is there a logical flow to the document?
- Are your jobs and education/qualifications in reverse chronological order?

Content

- Is it focused on your achievements?
- Are you using active verbs?
- Is it structured in your favour? (For example, do you really want to tell them you are an unqualified 25 year old before they read about your success as an Executive P.A.?)
- Does it emphasise any special skills?
- Does it include any relevant achievements outside work?
- Are there any unaccounted-for gaps which could concern an interviewer?
- Have you used positive adjectives to emphasise your achievements or skills?
- Do the page “breaks” make the reader want to turn the page?

Remember

There are no golden rules for getting your CV perfect – but it is your personal advertisement and should reflect **you** and the image **you** wish to project!