

CV Dos & Don'ts

Statistics show that recruiters spend an average of 30 seconds glancing at your CV. This is your first chance to impress so it's important you produce a winning document.

Do...

- Keep it to 2/3 pages in length maximum.
- Write it in a clear font – Arial or Times New Roman in a size no less than 10 point and no more than 12 point.
- Structure your CV into the following sections:

Personal Details

Full name, address and contact details. Include details of nationality/visa status if appropriate.

Personal Statement

In no more than 50 words, this is a great opportunity to highlight your goals and sell yourself in a nutshell to potential employers. It's a useful headline to attract attention, explain the benefits of someone employing you and is particularly effective if you are lean on employment experience or if you are changing direction completely. Make it bold, succinct and appropriate to the position you are applying for by highlighting 2 or 3 of your key attributes. Avoid waffle, stock phrases or clichés like "hands on" or "team player" and "looking for a challenging opportunity" which focuses too much on you and not what you can offer an employer. How will you help their business?

e.g. "5 years office management experience demonstrating excellent communication skills, meticulous attention to detail and innovative problem solving".

Education

IF YOU LEFT FULL TIME EDUCATION OVER 5 YEARS AGO SWAP THIS SECTION WITH THE EMPLOYMENT SECTION.

Start with the most recent first and work backwards chronologically.

List the name of the Institution, dates of attendance, degree type, and grade obtained or expected grade, subject and any subsidiary subjects.

Mention any industrial placements/sandwich years.

If you left school more than 5 years ago don't list individual subjects and grades, just include a summary.

List any professional training courses with brief details.

Skills

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List your IT skills, programmes you've used that are relevant and level of proficiency.

Languages

List any languages and your level of fluency.

Employment History

Start with the most recent first and work backwards chronologically.

List the name of the organisation, dates of employment and your position.

Bullet point a list of your main tasks and areas of responsibility, skills required and achievements made.

Include your Reasons for Leaving if you have any long gaps.

Achievements and Positions of Responsibility

This section is useful if you are lean on experience. Use it to demonstrate achievements out of work which you are proud of.

Work Experience

Again, this is useful if you are lean on experience.

Interests

This is an important section. Many prospective employers like to look at this section first as it gives them a flavour for your personality so make this section interesting without being too wacky with a (brief) synopsis of your hobbies.

References

If you have several years work experience please provide 2 referee details from ex employers. If you are a University/College/School leaver with little or no employment experience it is appropriate to have 1 academic reference from a tutor/teacher and 1 personal reference from someone who holds a position of responsibility within the community (e.g. Doctor, Lawyer, Justice of the Peace) – someone who knows you well and can vouch for your good character!

Don't...

- Overuse bold, italics, underlining, shading, boxes or use design or graphics features.
- Mention anything you are not prepared to talk about at length at the interview. Selling yourself is one thing, lying is another.
- Talk at length about decisions you have made for sentimental and personal reasons – keep the CV as factual as possible. There will be time to discuss these points at interview.

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- Mention your present salary or expectations. Again, this will be discussed at interview.
- Forget about the image you are portraying on social networking sites. Some candidates have unknowingly done themselves out of a job by not taking into account that one in 5 employers use networking sites to check up on applicants. A quarter decided not to hire someone because of what they found online.
- Refer to yourself in the third person.
- Forget to spell & grammar check – many prospective employers will refuse to interview a candidate if their CV has spelling mistakes. Get a friend to look over your CV for that second pair of eyes!