

HOW TO WRITE A GOOD CV

Making Your CV Work for You:

Until your interview, you are only as good as your paperwork and perhaps telephone manner.

This makes your CV and covering letter crucial. They are essential tools in most job searches. Like any marketing document, a CV should help you sell yourself.

Preparation:

Think about your skills, competencies, qualifications and experience. What are your unique selling points and strengths? Think in terms of what you have achieved.

If you are replying to a specific job advertisement, review what key words and tasks were used in the advertisement. Which of these words applies to you? Use these words in your CV.

Helpful Hints:

Remember that you want your CV to be read and responded to. Include enough information to stimulate interest, but not so much that you bore the reader. If you provide small, digestible pieces of information you stand a better chance of having your CV read. Three pages maximum is preferred, but keeping it to one page is even better! Every word must contribute to the overall message - so keep it brief and ensure that the content is relevant to the job you are applying for.

Ensure that your CV is well structured and well laid out; this gives the impression that you think logically and makes it easier to review. Remember - a CV that is hard to read is often put aside and forgotten. When writing the CV, remember that self-opinion is best avoided. Aim to include factual information or objective evidence and remember to focus on the benefits of your achievements.

Pay close attention to reply instructions in advertisements (e.g. spelling of a contact's name). Always have someone else on hand to check your spelling and grammar. Nothing can ruin your chances of getting a job faster than easily preventable mistakes. Avoid coloured paper or fancy fonts, if you plan to fax or e-mail your CV, you'll get a much better result with clean fonts and a simple lay-out.

The First Page:

This should contain your personal details, your home address and contact details located right at the top, followed by a brief summary of educational credentials and qualifications. An overview statement should be included covering your strengths in the relevant area, skills and experience, and the type of position sought.

Pages Two/Three:

Here you should highlight your employment history. Present this in reverse chronological order, (i.e. last job first). If you have only worked for one company, break it down with an entry for each position or project dealt with. For each position held, briefly describe responsibilities and work undertaken.

Do include achievements, not just regular tasks, if possible, quantify them in sales, financial or production terms.

Each professional position that you've had must include at least one statement of accomplishment. For your current and recent positions, you may want to have several bulleted items under the job that list your most significant experiences.

List your hobbies and interests in no more than three lines, and only if they are relevant to the position in question. Any voluntary or charity work or external posts you hold are worth including. Always include any languages, courses or training you may have done, or any professional memberships.

It is recommended that two referees be given at a later date - including the referees' official titles, addresses and telephone numbers.

What Not to Include in Your CV

You may have spent years building up the necessary skills and qualifications to come across as the perfect applicant for your dream job. Don't go and blow it all now by including any of these fatal mistakes on your CV!

Jargon and Fluff

Avoid using acronyms and jargon when writing your CV. Employers will lose concentration if they have to stop and work out the meaning of every acronym on your CV. Also avoid unnecessary fluff – keep it clear, to the point and back up any lofty statements with hard facts.

Comedy email addresses

An inappropriate email address like sillybilly@hotmail.com will mark you out as unprofessional. If you don't have a professional-sounding email address then set one up before you start applying for jobs, especially if you are posting an online CV!

Irrelevant information

When compiling your CV, don't include irrelevant information and make sure anything you do include can be interpreted as a positive attribute for the job. List your most relevant and transferable skills on the first page and keep the document under two pages long.

Fancy paper

Your CV should be recognised for the quality of information it contains. The way to do this is with a clear CV template, not with fancy fonts, coloured paper or complex layouts. Use plain white paper, and print on one side of the page only.

Too much personal information

You don't need to include your marital status, age, place of birth or gender on your CV. These could lead to identity fraud. Unless any of these are demonstrably relevant to the position, the employer doesn't need to know.

Long, convoluted sentences

Use short, snappy sentences that grab the reader's attention and portray you as someone who gets things done. You don't want to lose the attention of your audience. Use bulleted lists for skills and achievements and use an online CV template with clearly marked-out sections to make it easy for the reader to follow.

Un-truths

Common as it is, exaggerating achievements on your CV or making them up from scratch is one of the best ways to get blacklisted by an employer. If you do make it through to the first interview, only to be discovered as a fraudster, you're unlikely to get a second chance.

Negative thinking

Avoid including anything negative in your CV. Don't be tempted to give 'reasons' why your career in a certain position did not progress as you would have wished and don't include 'reasons for leaving'. Negative-sounding words are also out – don't say 'problem', for example, say 'challenge' instead.

Criticism of previous employers

Always remember that you are posting your CV to an employer. Don't criticise your previous employers or the way they run their business or there is a good possibility that the reader will view this as disloyalty.

Repetition

We all have words that we prefer to use, but be sure that you haven't repeatedly used the same word or phrase through the CV, or you will appear unimaginative.

Referring to yourself in the first or third person

Do not start sentences with either 'I', 'he' / 'she', or your own name. It is best to leave out all of these and use a report-writing style instead.

Mistakes

One of the most common error is spelling mistakes. Remember to spell-check and proof read your CV several times, and find someone else to check through it. It is easy to miss grammatical and spelling mistakes on the first read-through. In the hands of an employer, just one mistake could label you as careless and lacking attention to detail.

Source – Recruitment & Employment Confederation