Your Comprehensive CV Development Guide

When it comes to job hunting, your CV is paramount. Get it right, and you'll have an interview in no time, but get it wrong, and you may face rejection after rejection. Every CV is different as you want to show why your set of skills makes you suitable for the position you're applying for at that moment, but all follow a similar structure.

This guide will show you how to write a great CV that's ready for 2020 and beyond.

So what is a CV?

Your CV, short for curriculum vitae, is a personal marketing document used to sell yourself to prospective employers. It should tell them about you, your professional history and your skills, abilities and achievements. Ultimately, it should highlight why you're the best person for the job.

A CV is required when applying for a job. In addition to your CV, employers may also require a cover letter and a completed application form.

Preparing your CV

- A perfect CV is a well-structured, easy to read presentation of your education, employment and experience presented to provide a positive, holistic picture of you for an employer to assess your suitability for the job they are recruiting to.

- It should be designed to convince a potential employer to invite you to an interview.

- The employer is looking for evidence of experience, success and achievements presented in a way that responds to the employer's current needs.

- Remember your CV is not your biography but your employment goals for the future. A common mistake with CVs is just to provide a summary of everything you've ever done before with no shaping and structuring of information relevant to the job you want.

The Purpose of the CV is to get you an INTERVIEW

Did you know?

- ✓ CVs sent by job hunters to prospective employers where there is no specific position available and using a standard, non-tailored format have only an 8% record of success.

- ✓ In a pile of several hundred CVs, an employer may spend as little as 8 seconds per applicant before short-listing for interview.

- ✓ A pile of 50 CVs may be whittled down by reading each one for around 30 seconds.

- ✓ So you could have between 8 and 30 seconds to make a positive impression.

- ✓ Busy employers short-list on the basis of the quality and clarity of the presented information rather than on the inherent qualities of the candidate. That means that often well qualified candidates are often not considered for positions due to poor CVs.

- ✓ By developing well focused CVs, candidates will greatly increase their chances of being interviewed and getting a job offer.

- ✓ You must make your CV interesting to others and make the strongest representative of yourself aligned to the job you are applying for.

Your CV should include the following:

- ✓ Personal details with your full name, address, telephone and email
- ✓ Personal profile that is a short "selling" statement about you but use the opportunity to align yourself to the job you are applying for.
- ✓ Employment record with employers, dates and job titles
- ✓ Responsibilities highlighting your skills and strengths relating to the job you are applying for and use examples to demonstrate
- ✓ Achievements showing the results you have contributed towards
- ✓ Education history along with any qualifications
- ✓ Training that you have completed, internal and external
- ✓ Interests with a brief explanation of what you enjoy outside of work

Always remember:

- ➤ The purpose of a CV is to get an interview
- ➤ Recruiters will only look at your CV briefly, so please ensure that it is concise and emphasises relevant and recent information

Some CV don'ts:

- ➤ Don't include pictures
- ➤ Don't put your CV in fancy binders or folders
- ➤ Don't list sex, weight, height, health or other personal irrelevancies
- ➤ Don't include personal circumstances (marital status, children, personal issues etc)
- ➤ Don't include addresses of prior employers
- ➤ Don't include salary information
- ➤ Don't use brightly coloured paper

Personal profile

A personal profile, also known as a personal statement, career objective and professional profile, is one of the most important aspects of your CV. It's a short paragraph that sits just underneath your name and contact details giving prospective employers an overview of who you are and what you're all about.

You should tailor your profile to every job you apply for, highlighting specific qualities that match you to the role. Aim to keep your personal statement short and sweet, and no longer than a few sentences.

To make the most of this section, you should try to address the following:

1. Who are you?
2. What can you offer the company?
3. What are your career goals?

Identify your Key Skills and Achievements

If you're writing a functional CV, or have some abilities you want to show off to the employer immediately, insert a key skills section underneath your personal profile. You should aim to detail four to five abilities at most.

Shown below are some examples of skills that you may have used either at work or at home

People Based Skills	Practical Skills
Explaining things to people	Diagnosing faults and testing equipment
Dealing with complaints or enquiries	Using a keyboard
Organizing People	Using IT- Word processing, databases, spreadsheets and internet
Putting people at ease	Using hand tools
Talking and listening to people	Operating powered equipment
Selling, persuading, negotiating	Maintaining equipment or machinery
Motivating others	Being creative/artistic
Being supportive to people	Mending and repairing equipment
Managing, supervising or leading	Using a telephone
Working effectively in a team	Training or tutoring precision and speed

Thinking Skills	Numerical, Data, Information Skills
Coming up with new ideas	Keeping accurate records
Evaluating different ideas	Making accurate measurements
Thinking of improvements	Using numbers accurately
Planning ahead and setting goals	Working out costs and budgeting
Developing other people's ideas	Checking information for accuracy
Sizing up a situation quickly	Writing letters, memos and reports
Deciding between different situations	Extracting information from reports, books courses of action or manuals
Developing projects and ideas	Organising paperwork systems
Problem solving	Providing information verbally or in writing
Continuous Improvement	Researching information

Hobbies and interests

If you feel that your CV is lacking, you can boost your document by inserting a hobbies and interests section at the end. This can help to show how well you fit into the company or the industry. For example, if you're applying for an environmental job, why not include that you have a big interest in climate change activity?

References

Like including an address on your CV, adding your referees to the end of your CV is no longer standardised. You can include a line that reads 'references available on request', but if you don't have room, it's acceptable to remove it altogether.

Formatting and spacing guidelines

If you're unsure of how to format your CV, it's worth downloading a few CV templates to familiarise yourself. After all, formatting and spacing your CV is equally as important as the content.

Here are some formatting and spacing tips to bear in mind:

Length: The standard length of a CV in the UK is two pages. However, one size doesn't fit all, and so for some professionals, one or three pages may be more appropriate.

Headings: Each section must be introduced by a big, bold heading to ensure an easy read.

Font type: Most employers will receive your CV in a digital format, so choose a clear font like Calibri or Arial. You can use a different font type for your headings, but keep it professional and easy-to-read too.

Font size and page margins: The body of your CV should be between 10 and 12 point font, and your headings between 14 and 18 points. Keep your page margins around 2.5cm, but never reduce them to less than 1.27cm or your CV will appear cluttered and hard to read. White space ensures clarity and professionalism.

Proofreading and consistency: Your formatting must be consistent throughout your CV to keep it looking slick. Don't spoil your polished look by including typos and inaccuracies; proofread like a pro to capture every mistake.

Tailoring, keywords and Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS): The most dispiriting aspect of job-hunting for many people is the stream of standardised rejection emails. These often appear arbitrary, as if no one has actually bothered reading your CV. That's probably because they haven't. In fact, Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS), or 'Resume Robots' as they're disparagingly called, now reject up to 75% of CVs before they even get to a human.

You will need to keep a generic copy of your CV to act as your base, but if you're applying for a job, it must be tailored to the role you are applying for by using key words linked to the job you are applying for. Not only will this show employers why you're a match and get you shortlisted, but it will also help your application beat the ATS robots too.

Saving the file: It's likely you'll send your CV via email or through a job board like CV-Library. Save your CV as a .pdf file to ensure recruiters can open it on any device. A .pdf will also maintain formatting, so you can be sure that employers will see your CV as you intended.

What not to include:

There are a variety of details that you shouldn't include on your CV. Here are a few of the common ones:

A headshot: In many countries, it's common practice to include a photo of yourself on your CV. But the UK is not one of them.

Age and date of birth: The only dates that should be on your CV are from employment and your qualifications. Your age doesn't affect your ability to do the job, and it's illegal for employers to ask about age under the Equality Act 2010.

Marital status: Like your age, your marital status and dependents don't affect your ability to do your job. These details are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, and it's against the law for employers to ask about them, so don't include them on your CV.

Next steps

Get your CV right from the outset, and you may well find a job more quickly. Your CV is your chance to make a great first impression and secure yourself an interview, so follow this 2020 guide and then upload your CV to apply for your next job. We wish you the very best of luck but with careful planning, you shouldn't need any luck!