

CV Guidance

There isn't one set way of writing a CV. In fact, if you asked 10 recruiters what they like and dislike you would probably get many different answers.

However, there are some key principles and best practices which should generally be followed.

In most cases, the recruiter will quickly scan your CV and decide if they want to read on. Hence it is vital to grab their attention quickly.

A good CV is not a list of responsibilities and duties which reads like a job description. It should show your strengths and achievements, which can be transferred to a new position.

Collating Your Information

Pulling together your information under headings will enable you to develop your CV. A key question to keep asking yourself "is this relevant to the needs of the recruiter/employer: Does it provide evidence of your competence and does it add value?"

Experience and Skills

1. Employment history, with dates, names of organisation, position – in reverse chronological order
2. An outline of your experience and responsibilities.
3. Skills acquired.
4. Your significant achievements and results you gained.

Education & Qualifications

Decide the emphasis these should have on your CV. You may have acquired a qualification a very long time ago and it is not relevant to the role you are applying for.

You may wish to emphasise relevant qualifications early in your CV and just provide a basic summary of less important qualifications on page 2.

Training Courses

Ensure that you show recruiters your interest in continuous learning by providing details of courses you have attended, where you acquired relevant key skills.

Membership of Professional Institutions

Memberships which required study, competence assessment or accreditation are more significant than ones which were acquired by paying a membership fee.

Interests

In addition to hobbies & general interests, include positions of responsibility such as being a school governor or a voluntary role within a charity organisation. Also include specific requirements of the role such as having a clean driving license.

Structuring Your CV

Personal Statement/Profile

Most CVs have a Personal Statement/Profile after the initial contact details. I would recommend that you leave writing your personal statement until the end. Once you have written the rest of your CV, you will have more source of information on which to draw.

The purpose of the statement is to grab the reader's attention and encourage them to read on. It is important to keep it brief, 150-200, words is recommended. You need to sell 'you' as an asset to a future employer, but avoid sounding arrogant.

I usually write a CV in the 'first' person because it's about you. You don't have to start every sentence with 'I'. For example, you could start by saying: As a highly motivated customer service advisor, within the retail sector, I have a proven track record of..... Or when writing your key responsibilities and achievements you could write: Managed many large and small projects, always staying within budget.

You could break your Personal Statement into 3 sections:

1. **Who you are** – Your function/role/sector/experience
2. **What you can bring to the role** – skills, personal qualities, a key achievement, awards. Ensure this section reflects the job requirements i.e. how are your skills/qualities transferrable?
3. **Your career aim** – what are you looking for in terms of your next challenge?

Example Personal Statement:

A professional and highly effective Trainer, skilled in delivering cost-effective solutions which have met business objectives and resulted in a high return on investment. Having enjoyed a very successful career in training & coaching roles within Financial Services, I have demonstrated an exceptional ability to effectively identify training needs, and successfully design and deliver innovative and thought-provoking programmes, which enthuse all level of employees to perform at an optimum level.

Achievements have included 'National Trainer of the year' 2015, in addition to receiving several company awards for the development of programmes which have extensively improved individual and team performance.

Currently looking to secure a Training Management position within a new sector, where I can bring immediate value and develop my skillset further.

Writing Achievements

Your achievements show a future employer your successes by providing measurable evidence. They demonstrate the benefits and contributions you can bring to a company.

Achievements support the qualities and strengths that you outline in your Personal Statements.

I would recommend using bullet points for each achievement. In most cases, I would generally write more achievements for most recent roles and limit the achievements for older roles to one or two.

An example structure for writing an Achievement Statement:

Challenge: The circumstance which surrounded the achievement e.g. was the achievement linked to: improving customer satisfaction, exceeding sales, developing a new process to reduce costs etc?

Actions: What you did, including skills used e.g. Designed and delivered a new customer care programme to 100 customer service advisors Or Successfully managed the introduction of a new sales process and presented the scheme to the Leadership Team.

Results: The impact of your actions i.e. measurable results, standards and benefits e.g. Resulting in a 20% reduction in training costs OR resulting in the company being recognised as 'the No1 customer service provider in the UK'.

Content Tips

- Grab attention in the upper third of your CV. Make sure you tell the reader: What you have done, your relevant qualifications and skills and the benefits you offer.
- Be honest- make sure you can verify everything you have written
- Be brief – Short sentences and paragraphs.
- Use the left-hand margin for emphasising job titles and right- hand margin for dates
- Do not mix 'First' person and 'Third' person. If you have chosen to write your CV in first person then stick to it, throughout your CV.
- Avoid abbreviations and jargon, which will not be understood by the reader.
- Use strong 'Action Verbs'.
- Keep the look simple, using bold type for headers and bullets for structure.
- Generally, keep your CV to a maximum of 2 pages.

Common CV Mistakes To Avoid

1. Not tailoring your CV to the Job requirements, you are applying for

If your CV doesn't include the skills and knowledge that the employer is looking for, you won't be shortlisted.

Find out exactly what they are looking for, then make sure that you include those requirements on your CV.

2. Big chunks of text.

Large, unbroken paragraphs of text are a nightmare for the reader. Break the information up into short paragraphs and bullet points. This way they will be able to skim read your CV and easily spot the information that they are looking for.

3. Not giving a high-level summary of your roles

When writing your job roles, don't jump into the details of your responsibilities without setting the scene first. Start each role with a brief summary of what your employer does and how your work contributes to the organisation.

4. Fancy Fonts

A CV should be easy for recruiters and employers to read.

Fancy fonts may add a bit of elegance to your CV, but they make your CV difficult to read, Use simple fonts such as Arial or Tahoma.

5. Not providing enough detail in your current role.

Your current, or most recent job role, is one of the most important factors in your CV.

When writing your CV, spend time writing your latest role description and avoid writing too much detail on roles you did a long time ago.

6. Inconsistent Fonts

A CV looks messy if you use different fonts throughout your CV.

Use one font throughout. You can use a larger font size for headings.

7. Word Repetition

Avoid excessively using the same words in a short space as it shows a lack of creativity.

8. CV too long

CV which are 5 or 6 pages won't be read. Generally, try to keep your CV to a maximum of 2 pages.

9. Writing your roles in the wrong order.

Your roles should be listed in reverse chronological order which means you start with your current/most recent role and work backwards.

10. Sending your CV as a pdf

PDFs are not editable. Recruiters sometimes need to edit your CV before sending it to an employer, so avoid this. Stick to Microsoft word.

An example CV Structure is included on the next page; however, the sections are interchangeable to suit your circumstances.

EXAMPLE CV STRUCTURE

SECTION 1: Contact Details

NAME

Address _____ Tel/Mobile _____ Email _____ LinkedIn ID _____

SECTION 2: Personal Statement/Profile

150-200 words – refer to Personal Statement guide above.

Refer to the Qualities and Skills guide, also available on the resources section.

If you have won and external or company awards – you may include them here e.g. Can you describe yourself as an award-winner?

SECTION 3: Areas of expertise

Outline key skills which you have acquired which are relevant to the role – bullet point for a clear structure.

SECTION 4: Key Achievements

Pick out your top 3 achievements which you are proud of.

State what you did and results you achieved. Also state which company you worked for at the time of the achievement.

SECTION 4: Employment History

Include Company/Job Title/Function/ _____ Dates from-to _____

Main Responsibilities (Header)

- Outline main responsibilities – bullet point

Main achievements (Header) – bullet point.

- Do not duplicate achievements you have already mentioned in the earlier achievements section.

Refer to the 'Action Verbs' guide to help you write your achievements and avoid repetition.

Do not give a full description of achievements etc beyond 10 years – Any earlier employment can be summarised.

SECTION 5: Education/Qualifications/Training

Include the most recent and relevant first. Check the job specification for the role, in order to identify relevancy.

There is no need to list all school grades. A future employer is interested in what qualifications/training you have completed in the workplace – so focus on these.

You can state school qualification in one line e.g. 8 GCSEs inc Maths and English.

SECTION 6: Professional Memberships (If Relevant)

SECTION 7: Interests/Optional Personal Details

Include interests which add value. Also check job specification for requirements such as clean driving license, which can be included here.

Reference names are optional. You may wish to state references can be provided upon request