

Writing the perfect CV - Tips

Follow the simple steps laid out in this guide and you'll be well on your way to achieving the perfect CV.

1. Put yourself in the employer's shoes. Before you apply for any role you need to gain an understanding of the type of person the prospective employer is looking for. The more effectively you show a clear match between the skills required and those you possess, the more likely you are to secure an interview.
2. Be honest and factual. Your CV will typically be used to structure the interview and could be the foundation on which the job is built, so providing inaccurate information will only lead to problems further down the line.
3. Make yourself easy to contact, include all of your contact details on all of your pages as you never know if your CV will get split up. Always include your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address.
4. Proofread and proofread again it's critical that each area of your CV is easy to read and allows the key points to stand out. Use a universal font such as Arial or Times New Roman. Always check your CV for spelling and grammar errors, as a mistake could cost you the job.
5. Always include a covering letter or covering email.
6. Introduce yourself with a strong positioning statement that sums up your personal and professional attributes, taking into account the role blue-print. This should act as a focused summary of what you have to offer, so keep it simple and snappy.
7. Concentrate on how your involvement with projects showed return on investment. Think about what your role did your previous employer: Did it improve productivity? Did your role result in cost-efficiency savings?
8. Every statement that you make should focus on your achievements and successes. Try to support each statement with numerical evidence, such as: "reduced downtime by 10%".
9. Your CV should be a living document. To make the most of it you'll probably need to adapt it to specific roles. Employers don't have time to read between the lines, so the more you do to promote your suitability, the greater your chance of success.

10. **Mind your language:** Keep copy concise and jargon-free; Use short sentences and bullet-points - you can expand on these at the interview; Use the past tense to describe your career ('Led a team of...') but the present tense for your transferable skills and competencies ('Offers experience in...'); Quantify outcomes in numbers, not words ('Retained 100% of staff...') as it's quicker to read or scan.
11. **Layout:** Use an uncluttered layout with plenty of white space and wide margins; choose a single, common typeface such as Ariel or Times New Roman; Follow best practice: 10-12 point body text, 16 point maximum for headings. Don't reduce the font size or margins to fit more in. If you need another page, use one; print on one side of the paper only, and number the pages if there are two or more.
12. **Structure:**
 - **Personal information,** Name, address and contact details are a must. You might want to add these details to the header or footer of your CV in case pages go missing.
 - **Work experience,** Employers are usually interested in your most recent jobs, so concentrate on your last two positions – although you might occasionally want to highlight earlier roles if they are relevant to the role you're applying for. Start with your most recent position and work backwards. Provide a job title, start and finish dates, the name of the company and a brief description of what they do. Make sure you explain any significant gaps in your career as, even if you're not working you may have gained valuable transferable skills and experience from other pursuits.
 - **Qualifications,** education, training and development. Usually these come near the end, but if particular qualifications are essential for the job and make you more marketable, put them on the first page after your profile or key skills. Include relevant professional qualifications and academic ones, but don't include 'bought' memberships.
 - **References,** you may want to include the names and contact details of your references on your CV, but there is no obligation. Whether you include them or not, it's wise to have your referees ready and willing to represent you.

Remember – You need to address the employer's two main questions; whether you can do the job and whether you will fit into their organisation. Keep it short, ideally no more than two A4 pages. Your CV is a marketing tool for you. If you follow these simple rules and put all of our tips into practice, you're more likely to impress on the strength of your CV. Good luck!