



TIPS ON WRITING AN EFFECTIVE CV

Consider your CV to be the entry ticket that gets you in the door for a potential job interview. It can take an employer just seven seconds to save or reject a job applicant's CV. Naturally, in your CV you will create the right impression of yourself and demonstrate that you have the right attributes to perform the role you are applying for. Your CV will be effective if it matches the requirements of the job and grabs the hiring manager's attention at first glance by being concise, clear and convincing. To ensure your CV will get read and to make it successfully stand out from others there are a few principles you can follow. We have summarised them here and they hopefully get your CV on the interview pile.

Follow the basics – While there is no one size-fits-all solution for the perfect CV, it should always be clearly formatted, short enough for a recruiter to scan quickly and follow a basic structure. Lay the information on your CV out in a logical order, with sufficient spacing and clear section headings. Ensure that line spacing is consistent across the document. Choose a clear, professional font to ensure that your CV can be easily read. Use the same font across the document. Never reduce the font size to fit more in, rather trim down on the words. For a guide on font size, use 10 to 12 point for body text and a maximum 16 point for headings.

Keep it short and use bullet points – The general rule is, try and condense the information on your CV to two pages and move any narrative or additional information into a cover letter. Bullets are extremely useful in CVs as they allow you to present the information succinctly and make the document look tidy and orderly.

Important elements of the CV structure (in recommended order):

1. **Contact information** – This may sound obvious but surprisingly some candidates forget to include this vital piece of information. So make sure you clearly present name, email, contact phone number and address at the top of your CV. You might also provide your LinkedIn profile link. You do not have to include your DOB, gender or nationality.
2. **Profile** – The only narrative on your CV should be this paragraph at the start of the CV. This should be 5-6 lines describing who you are and what your main professional attributes are. Treat it as a sales pitch, showing what you have on offer. This is what a potential employer reads first about you and where you can stand out. This should be phrased in 3rd person, and try and use snappy and catchy keywords, such as "reliable, hard-working, adaptable, innovative, an outstanding communicator, dependable, with integrity, excellent interpersonal skills" etc.
3. **Relevant skills summary** to the job in question – These can be laid out in bullet point format and will give the recruiter a quick glimpse of your skill set. Refer to the job ad and the required skills mentioned there. Here you also include computer skills, relevant software packages you have worked on and language skills.





4. **Employment History** – Present this in reverse chronological order. Give each role a job title and include start and finish dates (including month), company name and optionally a very brief description of what the company does. List relevant responsibilities, achievements, duties and skills in each of your roles. The guide is to include approx. 8-10 bullet points on the most recent job, then reduce the number of bullet points in each previous employment (perhaps 7-5-3 or similar). Describe the scope of your job and the value you added in each role rather than giving a full job description. Provide concrete quantifiable evidence of your achievements. Use the past tense to describe your career (“Led a team of...”), do not use “I”. Explain any significant career gaps.
5. **Education and Training** – Start with the highest qualification you have achieved and then list the others in reverse chronological order. Keep the information concise by listing the qualification obtained, year of completion, the institution’s name and perhaps a one-line summary. Include any other relevant training courses you have undertaken. A continuous training trail shows a candidate's appetite for learning.
6. **Interests/Hobbies** – This is optional but gives the CV a personal touch; keep it short
7. **References** – Include details of two references, ideally former employers who you directly reported to. You can also state “Available upon Request” and provide names once you have progressed in the process.

Check your grammar and spelling – Ensure there are no typos or grammar mistakes in the document. Hiring managers might discard your CV immediately if they spot spelling or grammar mistakes. There is too much competition out there to be careless.

Keep your CV updated – Your CV is a living and breathing document and should grow and evolve as you do. If you have a new skill or qualification, you change jobs or you start applying for roles that are completely different to where your current CV is angled, you need to update it. Always adapt your CV to the role you are applying for by using key words from the job description.

Layout – Which layout template should you go for? In short, this is a matter of individual taste. Try and match your CV layout somewhat to the job you are applying for. If you are in a creative business line and PR and Comms, you can have a bit of fun with the layout and colour scheme. There are plenty of layout suggestions and CV builders on the web. Canva is an option for designing your CV with plenty of templates to choose from but as mentioned at the outset, it is down to personal taste, there is no right or wrong. Some layouts include a placeholder for your profile pic. While the inclusion of your profile pic is not mandatory here it can add a personal touch, however, ensure that the photo looks professional.

Once your CV is complete don't forget to write a matching cover letter. Check out our previous blog on how to write an effective cover letter.

