

How to write a good CV

Dos and Don'ts

A good curriculum vitae - or CV - is essential when applying for any job? It is usually a prospective employer's first glance at you and first impressions are so important. As there are so often a vast amount of applications for each individual job, most people only take a few seconds to look over a CV before making the decision to put you on the 'yes' pile or 'no' pile. Even a simple spelling mistake could be the deciding issue and is quoted as the quickest way of getting a rejection - so attention to detail is extremely important.

A CV is a short list of facts about you and your work history, achievements, skills, qualifications and experience. A good CV is essential when looking for work and so you must spend time getting it right and sell yourself to an employer.

There is no perfect template, however, we suggest there are some basic rules on how a CV should be written and the information that should be included.

Dos

- a CV should be neat, typed and error free.
- it should be in reverse chronological order i.e. most recent job and qualifications first.
- it should also be short, usually no more than 2/3 sides of A4.
- it should be positive and make a good impression, highlighting achievements and strengths. Emphasise the relevant skills and experience you have gained with previous jobs i.e. skills in dealing with customers or communication skills whatever is relevant to the job you are applying for.

The basic format for a CV includes:

- **Personal details** - name, address, phone number, email address and possibly any professional social media presence. Try and make your email address sensible to ensure you make the right impression - 'partygirl' may give potential employers the wrong idea! Laws on discrimination mean that you don't need to put your age or date of birth on your CV.

- **Career history** - start with your most recent job first and always put the dates you started and left. Temporary or voluntary jobs should be included only if appropriate
- **Personal profile** - This is a short statement at the beginning of your CV to sell yourself – your skills, experience and personal qualities. You could include positive words such as “competent”, “adaptable”, and “conscientious”. Tailor the statement to the requirements of each job that you apply for, so that you make it clear to the employer that you’re right for the job.
- **Achievements** - mention things you did well in previous jobs but only if they are relevant to the job you are applying for. Employers will be more interested in what you have done recently.
- **Qualifications and training** from previous jobs, with the most recent first
- **Interests** - especially if the skills or teamwork concerned are relevant for the job. Your interests should imply that you are active and outgoing - try and avoid including activities that make you appear boring!

Don'ts

- don't assume that one CV will fit all applications - it needs to be a very targeted document for the role you are applying for. Do some research so you understand what employers are looking for
- you do not need to give details like NI number or place of birth. You also only need to give your nationality if you are not British.
- you do not need to include references/referees on your CV - these will be requested if employers are interested to find out more about you if they are considering offering you a job
- Don't leave gaps in your CV - if you were out of work or had a career break for any reason make it positive and think about any skills you learnt in this time. If the job you're applying for is different from what you've done in the past, explain why you're interested in the new type of work.

Remember your CV will be a window into your life so follow the simple dos and don'ts above. Put yourself in a prospective employer's shoes and think "would I employ me"! If the answer is yes then you've written a good CV!

If you need further help or advice with CV writing contact MRA on our contact us page.