

A **Curriculum Vitae**, or **CV**, is the summary of your **background, achievements, experience and skills** that you have to offer a prospective employer. It's **essential** that you make it **work for you**.

Your CV is the first step in "marketing" yourself and your ultimate aim must be to create an "interview winning" CV – to get you to the next stage of the recruitment process. Writing an interview winning CV is one of the most important tasks you will have to undertake when job hunting, however putting in the extra time to produce an effective marketing tool will pay dividends.

**Often it's the first chance to show what you have to offer, and serves to promote your potential, so with only a short time to impress a potential employer, what will make your CV stand out?**

### Using the right type of CV

Your CV should not be treated as your autobiography, it's your marketing document, promoting you - a common misconception is that CV's need to be crammed with everything that you have ever done.

It needs to clearly set out your achievements so employers can identify quickly what you could do for them. There's no single "perfect CV" and as such it's a question of what works best in your industry and in your situation.

**Remember the two basic questions that a potential employer will be asking themselves;**

- Can this person fulfil the requirements of the role?
- Will they fit into our organisation?

Make sure when writing your CV, the format and content of your CV ensures that employers can see quickly whether you can and will.

### So which "type" of CV should I use?

CVs generally fall into three basic formats;

#### **Performance or Chronological CVs**

This is the format most commonly used and is relevant if you have a lot of work experience and are looking for a similar job in your current sector. It's based on your career history or work experience.

Listing your current or most recent employment history first, outline job titles and company names, dates of employment, and describe specific responsibilities and duties, you normally provide more in-depth detail on your current and the two or three most recent positions and then simply list the rest.

#### **Skill-based CVs or Functional CVs**

An ideal format if you've had a varied career, if you want to change direction or if your career has been broken by unemployment, ill health or self-employment.

The focus is on your knowledge, transferable skills and competencies rather than your career history or work experience. It emphasises your achievements throughout your career and groups them under headings such as "team skills", "management" and "business development" rather than listing them job by job, with Employment details coming later on in the CV.

Identify the three or four major skill sets you possess and on the first page of your CV write five lines describing them and the achievements they have helped you accomplish, tailoring it to the relevant job advertisement, description or personal specification.

#### **Alternative CVs**

They are most commonly used in creative careers such as writing, design, PR and fashion – and are often supported by a portfolio of work, however senior management roles often require these more in-depth CVs to support an application.

### How long should my CV be?

The length of your CV depends on the job you are applying for and the "norm" in your industry.

One-page CVs are useful to serve as an Executive Summary or at the start of your career; two-page CVs are more common with the most relevant information appearing on the first page; with longer CVs tending to be used in IT, specialist or project management roles where there is a need to detail projects, clients or technology or academic roles which need to list papers, publications and research.

**Jobseeker Guide**  
**Create an Interview Winning CV**

**Preparing your CV**

There are two main stages to go through when construction an "Interview Winning" CV; firstly collating the facts and evidence to be included and secondly, drafting and editing.

**Collating the Facts:** List your past experiences and achievements both in your career and personal life, this will help you to identify where your strengths lie. More often than not you will detail more than you will use in your CV, however everything that you note down will be useful, for example your personal achievements may not be included in your CV but may help during the interview process.

**Drafting and Editing:** Drafting, redrafting and editing of your list is time consuming, however it is an essential part of the process to give you the best possible phrases to describe your experiences and achievements and target your marketing message.

**Developing your Marketing Message to stand Out from the Crowd!**

Your CV may be one of hundred's on someone's desk, standardised CV templates such as PC formats may help you structure your information, but if you are going to increase your chance of an interview, your CV needs to stand out from everyone else's.

**Understand the "audience":** When drafting and editing your CV it is important to understand what your potential employer is looking for in terms of how you can benefit their organisation. You are the one who is "selling" they are the ones who are "buying", so make sure you have researched the company and obtained as much information about the role as you can, and present yourself as the solution. **Remember - the two questions they are asking themselves and answer them.**

**Target your CV:** Your CV is a living document and you'll need to adapt it to specific employers or roles, especially if you are looking at a number of career options, employers can easily spot a general purpose CV that isn't specific to their vacancy. Mould your CV to their requirements and highlight where you match their needs, bringing out the added value you could bring to their organisation.

**Create a good impression:** Don't underestimate the importance of the "look" of your CV. You need to make your CV as easy to read and interesting as possible. Use an uncluttered layout using a simple type face (e.g. Times New Roman or Arial) with plenty of white space and wide margins, don't reduce the sizes to fit more on, if you need another page, use one. Print on one side of paper and number the pages if there are two or more.

**Be Concise:** Avoid jargon, however don't assume an employer will know your duties merely from a job title, which can vary from organisation to organisation. Cut out any unnecessary information or detail that doesn't reflect what the employer is looking for.

**Be selective:** Be objective and emphasise the skills and experience for the role that you are applying for and how your skills are transferable, ensure that you have tailored your CV and covering letter for each role.

**Follow layout best practice for constructing your CV**

- Use basic fonts (e.g. Times New Roman or Arial), 10-12 body text, 16 point maximum for headings
- No capitals, especially on internet CV's where capitals are seen as SHOUTING
- Use bold for headings rather than underlining or capitals
- Use bullets or bold text to highlight items
- Never underestimate the importance of positive language, avoid negatives at all costs
- Don't refer to yourself as "I" or by name. Just use verbs and nouns on their own (e.g. "increased sales by £50K" or "Major achievements include...")
- Use the past tense to describe your career ("Led a team of...") but the present tense for your transferable skills and competencies ("Offers experience...")
- Quantify outcomes in numbers, not words ("Retained 100% of staff...") It's quicker to read or scan.
- Always check the spelling and grammar, and that you have used the correct dictionary on your word processor (not the American version)

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