



*cv writing advice

Prepared by Prospectus

If you're planning a career move or applying for a new job, your CV is your chance to make a good first impression on prospective employers. This document provides you with some hints, guidance and advice on preparing your CV. There are no 'rules' when it comes to CV writing, and these are only suggestions – but it's well worth taking the time to make sure your CV really works for you. It may make all the difference to your employment prospects.

What not to do

First of all, let's look at some examples of what to avoid when you're putting your CV together. Even the strongest candidate for a post can be badly let down by a badly formatted or written CV, so it's essential to make sure you steer clear of these common errors:

- Poor spelling, punctuation and grammar – make sure you run a full spellcheck on your CV before sending it to employers, or better still ask a friend to proofread it.
- Overusing 'flashy' graphics, exclamation marks, italics, and bright colours.
- Rather than making your CV stand out, these will make it seem unprofessional. The same applies to including pictures of yourself – employers are interested in what you can do, not what you look like.
- Make sure you don't list your jobs in chronological order, with your current position last.
- Avoid making vague or subjective statements without evidence to back them up. (For example: 'I'm a great person to work with.' Great in what way? According to who?)
- Similarly, avoid irrelevant or overly personal details.
- Don't put your educational qualifications in front of your employment history. Don't forget to include dates or locations.
- Above all, don't exaggerate or fabricate information.

What to do

- Keep your CV 1 – 2 pages in length.
- Include a short profile exemplifying what you have done and what you are looking to do next.
- Use bullet points to keep it clear and concise.
- Highlight any relevant key achievements in each of your roles

Choosing the right content for your CV

One of the first hurdles to face when you're compiling your CV is knowing exactly what information to include, particularly if you've worked in several different jobs.

The best way around this is to put together a 'master copy' of your CV that includes absolutely everything – all the jobs you've ever worked, your education and qualifications, positions of responsibility you've held, and transferable skills (backed up with evidence). You can then start to put together different versions of your CV, tailored to suit the specific role you're applying for.

Tailoring your CV for different jobs

Rather than sending the same CV to different employers, tailoring your CV for every new job you apply to will show that you've taken the time to understand what the role in question is about. If you're making a career change, make sure you emphasise your transferable skills. It might be tempting to include everything for every role you apply for, but bear in mind that you've got to make a strong impression in a very short space of time – an ideal length is between 1 and 2 pages long.

Using the right kind of language

Think about achieving the right tone – again, this is something that you can adapt depending on the specific job you're applying for. On the whole, though, you should aim to sound professional and clear, but not overly formal. If you need to refer to yourself,

use the first person ('I achieved...') rather than the third person (referring to yourself by your name). Focus on facts and figures as much as you can, rather than broad statements, and try to avoid 'buzz words', technical jargon or abbreviations.

In the same way, try and be as specific as possible about terms you may take for granted – for example, your job title. 'Office Manager' can mean a huge number of different things, and cover a wide range of different duties, so it's worth breaking down exactly what the job involved in a series of brief bullet points.

Be honest

Be careful you don't overstep the line between promoting your achievements and exaggerating them, let alone fabricating information. It's important to be completely honest about even apparently minor issues, like your salary or your exact job title – if a prospective employer finds out the truth, then the consequences will massively outweigh any benefit you might get from being economical with the truth.

Make sure all dates are accurate (to the month if possible), and account for any significant gaps in your employment history.

Presentation

Make sure you put the most relevant information at the very start of your CV (after your contact details). Your current or most recent job should be listed first, followed by your previous employment history (working backwards in time).

When listing your key skills, make sure you list the most relevant areas first.

Sample CV template (with examples)

Name

Personal details

(do not include date of birth, nationality or marital status)

Personal profile

(one paragraph summarising your qualifications, experience and skills, as well as the kind of organisation / role you are looking for)

Education and achievements

(list each item separately, in the following format)

- Qualification name and grade
- Date(s) qualification achieved
- Any relevant other experience or skills (e.g. voluntary positions, IT skills)

Employment history

(list each role separately, in the following format)

- Organisation name
- Date(s) you worked there
- Job title
- Brief outline of the organisation (one sentence)
- Brief overview of your role
- Outline of relevant duties (4-5 bullet points)

Contact Us

Prospectus Ltd

20-22 Stukeley Street

London, WC2B 5LR

020 7691 1925

www.prospect-us.co.uk

