

CV Preparation

Your CV is an essential career document needed to represent yourself effectively in the job market. A good CV will considerably boost your chances of getting a face-to-face interview by highlighting relevant skills, experience and value to a potential employer.

Each CV is as individual as the jobseeker it belongs to. However, by following some basic principles you will be able to present the information in a clear, concise and persuasive way.

You may need to put together more than one CV if you intend to apply for different types of job in different sectors. This will enable you to emphasise the particular achievements, skills, experience and personal qualities that a particular employer is looking for. It is usually possible to tell what an employer is looking for from the job advertisement or job description - alternatively, you may need to research the role and the company yourself to ensure that your CV has the right focus.

CONTENT

An employer will expect to find information covering the following areas.

Personal details - include your name, address, phone numbers and email address. You may wish to add details of your nationality, birth date, marital status, children and driving licence, but these are secondary and could be left till the end of your CV.

Summary – your first chance to make a good impression – this opening paragraph should encourage the reader to continue reading your CV. It should clearly detail what you do, a summary of your experience and any particular achievements during your working career. Details on your working habits are useful i.e. dedicated, good motivator, team player etc and what sort of position you are looking for. Basically.... A summary of why someone should employ you.

Work experience - list the most recent experience first, continuing in reverse chronological order. Make sure you put the date, the company name and your job title. Describe your work experience in short sentences using straightforward, positive language. As well as describing the job, what the company do and your responsibilities highlight any general abilities you were required to demonstrate as well as any notable achievements during your employment.

Education - list brief details of qualifications - GCSEs, A-levels, degree - along with grades attained. Applicants looking for their first job since school, college or university can include their education information above their work experience.

Skills - include specific skills such as IT skills or languages.

References - it is usual to provide the names and contact details of two referees, one of which should be your most recent employer. Graduates and school leavers with limited work experience can nominate college lecturers, teachers or managers during work experience. Be sure to tell your referees of this in advance.

Hobbies - including details of your interests away from the workplace is optional. By adding details of specific hobbies, you are giving an employer a more rounded picture of your personal qualities, but don't overdo it. Let's face it - if your skills and experience haven't already convinced a recruiter to offer you an interview, they won't change their mind by learning you enjoy golf or cinema.

PRESENTATION

Ensuring your CV is well presented is as important as including all the relevant information. Most employers see hundreds of CVs and yours may get less than a minute of their time.

Your CV should look clear and tidy with all the information easy to find. Although it is tempting to make your CV stand out by using, for example, coloured paper or an arty layout, it is best to stick to black print on good quality white paper. Most employers will expect to find the information under clear headings highlighted in bold or capitals, such as **WORK EXPERIENCE** or **EDUCATION**. Try and avoid the use of boxes, italics, underlines etc, all of these will make your CV look too busy and distract from the contents. Use clear dates and timeframes, and structure information to make it easy for employers to find their way through your history.

Do:

- Use a confident tone and positive language.
- Concentrate on your achievements, not your responsibilities. This means listing things you have done - such as products launched, sales increased, and awards won - not rewriting your job description. Quote supporting figures whenever possible.
- Make your most relevant experience and skills prominent to encourage the employer to read on.
- Keep to the point and concentrate on the quality of your achievements, not the quantity.

- List other skills that could raise you above the competition such as languages, driving licence, IT skills.
- Be ruthless with yourself and keep it to a maximum of three pages. Only very senior, experienced, executives have CVs which merit covering more than this.
- Check thoroughly for correct spelling and grammar - spotting errors is a quick and easy way for recruiters to weed out weaker candidates when faced with a mountain of CVs to read.
- Get a second opinion.
- Include examples of your work, if appropriate.

Don't:

- Leave any gaps in your work record - employers may assume the worst, for example that you were sacked.
- Lie - many employers can check CV details for accuracy, including educational qualifications, places of study and the veracity of job references.
- Include a photo unless you know the employer wants one.
- Fax it without sending a copy in the post as well.
- Use elaborate fonts, or colours - keep it simple and clear.
- Forget it's just a tool for getting you an interview. The CV will not land you the job alone, the rest is up to you.

And finally, don't forget to supercharge your resume.

Renew Often

Nothing is worse than seeing an out of date CV, or having to have a conversation that begins with 'oh I don't work there any more'. Your CV should contain as much up to date information as possible, including projects you are currently working on. You should consider updating your details at least once a month.

Maximise Your Keywords

One of the best ways to increase the number of hits your resume receives is to include an abundance of industry keywords. Do some research on keywords that might be used to find someone with your talents. Search jobs to get an idea of what credentials hiring

managers value. Then look for places in your resume where you could incorporate these keywords. The Skills section is a great place to include keywords that don't appear elsewhere in the document.

Target your Resume

Prepare more than one CV so you can keep a suitable version ready for different roles you may be applying for. And if you want to be more specific make sure you have a sentence in your opening summary that can be adapted to make your CV relevant to the position you are applying for in.

If you need any further help compiling your CV, Miller McKenzie can offer a CV layout document which is already formatted and ready for typing in the relevant information.