

## The Good CV Guide

Your Curriculum Vitae (CV) can make the difference between getting invited to interview or not. A good, well-written CV is your opportunity to stand out from the crowd and market yourself as an ideal candidate.

CVs are traditionally used in the first stage of the recruitment process to select applicants for interview. Employers will look at your CV to see if there is a close enough fit between your skills and experience and the requirements of the role.

### Essential information

There are certain details you should include on your CV:

- **Personal details.** Include your name and contact information only, especially your email address, as this is the preferred method of contact for many employers.
- **Work history.** List your work experience starting with the most recent. Include the job title, organisation worked for, dates employed, responsibilities, achievements and experience gained.
- **Education and qualifications.** Start with the most recent and state the name of the school/college/university and the qualifications gained. You may not need to outline in detail your GCSEs/O levels/Highers (or equivalent exams). You can group these together, for example, 9 GCSEs. However, if the role requires certain subjects, you should highlight your qualification in these. Remember also to include any skills-based qualifications and courses you have completed.
- **Skills.** Include the skills relevant for the job, e.g. languages or computing skills, noting evidence of using them.
- **Hobbies/interests.** Mention your hobbies if you feel they add value and say something relevant about you. For example, an interest in making things shows you are creative.

### Tips for writing your CV

- **Tailor the content** to each and every position you apply for. Find out more about the skills and competencies the position you are applying for requires. Demonstrate you have these by providing evidence of where you have used them in the past.
- **Don't overcomplicate** your CV with too much information. CVs are meant to give a taster of what you can offer and leave the potential employer wanting to find out more. The detail can be discussed in an interview.
- **Market yourself.** Highlight your main achievements in your career and personal life to date. Focus on the most significant and recent events and make sure you have a good range that highlights different skills/strengths.
- When you are writing about your strengths and achievements, think '**so what?**'. Don't just list what you have done, but explain the skills and personal qualities you brought to the situation, and what you learnt.
- **Be relevant.** Only include the information relevant for the role. Employers won't spend time wading through reams of information to find what they are looking for.
- Make sure the **writing** is easy to read, clear and engaging. Use a style and tone that is personal to you, but do so subtly. Be positive, direct and personal. Use 'I' statements and keep your sentences short.
- Carefully consider the **language** you use. Try to avoid clichés, such as, 'I work well both individually and in a team'. These become statements that employers just ignore.
- Think about the **layout**. The employer will scan your CV first and only read in more detail if something catches their interest. Headings, bullets and the subtle use of bold font or italics are useful for catching the interest of the reader.
- **Be concise.** Your CV should be no longer than two pages. But, don't squash information in. There should still be plenty of white space.
- **References.** You are not required to put references on your CV. Often you will be asked to provide references once the job offer has been made. If the job advert states a request for references, you can include these on either your CV or covering letter.
- **Don't lie!** Reference and qualification checks will uncover the obvious lies and you can easily be caught out in an interview. If you have to lie to get a job, are you really suited to the role?
- Get a second pair of eyes to critically **review** what you have written.

### Covering letters

A CV should always be sent with a tailored covering letter. If your covering letter is of poor quality, potential employers may dismiss your application without even reading your CV.

Your covering letter is where you should make your sales pitch. It should encourage employees to read on and persuade them that you are worth an interview. Here are some points for you to consider:

- Make sure you address the letter to the right person. If the job advert doesn't give details, phone the organisation and ask for advice.
- Stick to one side of A4. Write in a business style using three to four paragraphs.
- Don't just repeat what is in your CV. You should aim to give readers an overview of your ability and potential, and the reasons why you are interested in the job.
- Format:
  1. Introduce yourself.
  2. State the job you are applying for and where you saw it advertised.
  3. Explain why you are interested in the job and their organisation. Always research the organisation so you can include some specific information about why you are interested in working for them specifically.
  4. Outline what makes you perfect for the job. What is it about your unique blend of knowledge, skills and experience that makes you ideal?
  5. Conclude the letter positively. For example, 'I look forward to discussing my application further with you' or 'I look forward to hearing from you shortly'.

### **Related Items**

### **Related Resources**

- [Writing a Successful CV](#)