



Top Tips For Preparing Your CV

Until your interview, you are only as good as your CV and/or telephone manner. This means your CV and covering letter are crucial. They are essential tools in most job searches. Like any marketing document a CV should help you sell yourself.

What Should Your CV Include?

Preparation

Thinking about your **skills, qualifications and experience**. What are your unique selling points and strengths?

If you are replying to a specific job advertisement, review what key words and tasks were used in the ad. Which of these words applies to you? Use these words in your CV.

General Tips and Helpful Hints:

Remember that you want your CV to be read and responded to. Include just enough information to stimulate interest, but not so much that you bore the reader. Three pages maximum are preferred. Every word must contribute to the overall message – so keep it brief and make sure that the contents are relevant to the job you are now looking for – not your last one.

Never hand write a CV, always get it typed up. Have it handy so send out on e-mail

Ensure your CV is well structured; this gives the impression that you are thinking logically and makes it easier to review. A CV that is hard to read is often put aside and forgotten. When writing remember that self-opinion is best avoided. Aim to include someone else's opinion (e.g. from last appraisal), facts or even evidence

Pay close attention to reply instructions in advertisements (e.g. spelling of the contact's name and address) and job application reference numbers

TOP TIP!

Have someone check your spelling and grammar. Making mistakes on your CV can mean being eliminated from the recruitment process

Layout of CV

Personal Details

This should contain your personal details - name, address, contact telephone numbers, e-mail address - what is the best way to get in touch with you

Profile

A brief general overview of your skills, experience, and main strengths. List any achievements and include key skills you gained from your work and/or qualifications

Education

Start with the most recent first. State clearly what professional qualifications and education you have. Remember to include course and CPD you have gained through employment.

Remember you may be asked to produce these certificates for certain types of work so have them to hand for interviews.

If you have an extensive employment history then do not be too detailed about your school education. Simply state how many GCSE's or O Levels you have with grades, you do not need to list each topic separately.

Employment

Here you should highlight your employment history in the last five years as the main area. Present this in reverse chronological order (i.e. **last job first**). Make sure your dates are accurate!

If you have only worked for one company, break it down with an entry for each position or project dealt with. For each position or project held describe the work undertaken, duties and responsibilities. Use bullet points rather than long sentences. Don't waffle! - you can always give more detail at interview

If you have extensive experience then your early career can be described in less detail especially if it is not relevant to what you are looking for now.

Do not include salary details

Do include achievements, not just tasks. If you can, quantify them in sales, financial or production terms

Account for gaps – travelling or taking time off is acceptable, you don't need to hide or ignore it

Don't use humour on your CV, a prospective employer might not find the same things funny that you do

Most employers and agencies will require you to account for 10 years worth of employment history so make sure you go back at least that far. If you have been in full time education for part of this then make sure this is included as part of your 10 years accountability

Hobbies & Interests

In the last 2-3 years, it has become increasingly important to employers what you do with your spare time. It can help demonstrate your passion for certain activities and often be relevant to the work you are applying for, but avoid listing anything too controversial!

Include all voluntary, charity or external posts you have done e.g. school governor

References

It is generally recommended that two referees be provided – including the referee's name, official title, address, telephone number and e-mail address. A professional reference is always preferable than a personal one so try to provide these wherever possible.

Remember to write on your CV – 'do not contact references without prior permission' as you don't want your referees to be overwhelmed with forms to complete unless necessary.

The Covering Letter

CV's are seldom used alone; they should always be introduced by a letter or telephone call. The letter should earn readership for the CV. Always state clearly which post you are applying for and quote any reference numbers as required.

A good letter should be used to pick up points which modesty or space prevented you putting in the CV (i.e. to highlight your key strengths relevant to that job). Keep it relevant to the job you have applied for.

TOP TIP!

Always keep your CV up to date. Using an out of date CV or hand-writing extra jobs or more information on your CV looks lazy at best and will be detrimental to your application.