

How to Write a CV in English – Video

In this lesson, you can learn how to write a CV or resume in English.

If you're wondering, 'CV' and 'resume' have the same meaning. The word 'CV' is more common in the UK, while 'resume' is more common in the USA.

Although some people say that there's a difference, in everyday speech, a CV and a resume are the same thing: you write a summary of your employment history, your education and your skills in order to apply for a job.

In this video lesson, you'll see how to write CV in English that is clear and effective. We'll share some useful language tips to make your CV clearer.

1. How to Write a Personal Profile

(<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/write-a-letter.webp>)

Your personal profile is a short introduction to you, your key skills and your career goals. It generally goes at the top of your CV, under your contact information. Not all CVs include a personal profile, but many do. Many people we've spoken to find it the most difficult part to write. So, if you need a personal profile, what should you include? Aim to write four to five sentences. In the first sentence, introduce yourself. For example:

I recently graduated from the University of Toronto in International Affairs with a 3.8 GPA, and I am seeking employment in the NGO sector.

I am a web development professional looking to move into a senior role in an established company.

I am a cardiology nurse with over ten years' experience in Spain; I am now looking for a position in the UK.

Here, you can see language which you could adapt to your situation:

I recently graduated from _____.

I am a _____ professional looking to move into a _____ role.

I am a _____ with over _____ years' experience.

Take a few seconds: how could you use these sentences to talk about yourself? Pause the video if you want more time to think about it! Generally, you should write your personal profile in full sentences in the first person (<https://www.grammarly.com/blog/first-second-and-third-person/>). You can write in the third person, but this can sound impersonal; it's simpler to write in the first person, using 'I'. After your introduction, write one to three sentences about the skills you will bring to the job you're applying for. Be specific and focus on facts. Avoid using clichés (<https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-cliche-1689852>) like 'team player', 'good communicator' or 'passionate'. These are overused in job applications; try to show your good qualities by giving specific examples instead. Let's look at some examples here:

During my degree, I did a six-month internship at a Toronto-based charity, and also volunteered for two local charitable organisations. This has given me an understanding of NGO work in both smaller and larger organisations, as well as the desire to learn more about the field.

Over the last fifteen years, I have honed my technical skills by working on a wide range of projects, both working individually and in large teams. Recently, I have developed my managerial abilities by working as a team leader for my current employer.

Since I started working as a ward nurse, I have pursued every opportunity to learn and develop my skills; consequently, I have been working as a specialised cardiology nurse for the past five years.

Because your personal profile should be short, it's useful to organise your ideas using time references, like 'during', 'over the last ... years', 'recently', or 'since...'. Learn more phrases with this lesson on how to talk about time in English (<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/talk-about-time>).

If you're writing in the first person, this also helps you to avoid repetitive sentence structures. It doesn't sound good if every sentence you write starts with 'I'. End your personal profile with a sentence summarising your career goals. For example:

I hope to build on my prior experience and make a meaningful contribution by working in an international NGO.

Having worked mostly for start-ups and smaller firms, I would now like to challenge myself by managing projects and teams in a larger company.

My short-term goal is to work in an English-speaking environment, with a view to moving into a training/teaching role in the medium term.

And you've finished! The exact order of sections on a CV can vary. However, in many cases, you'll put your work history at the top, after your personal profile.

Let's see more ways to help you learn how to write a CV in English and focus on how you can write about your employment history on your CV.

2. How to Write About Your Employment History

(<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/work-together.webp>)

In this section of your CV, you should list the companies you've worked for, the dates you worked there, your responsibilities and any significant achievements. For example, you might write:

Customer service supervisor, Juice-It, September 2016 to January 2019.

Main responsibilities: responding to customer queries and complaints, creating and implementing surveys to gather customer feedback, organising training sessions for other staff members.

Often, you won't write in full sentences to talk about your responsibilities and achievements. Instead, you'll write lists, or possibly bulleted lists. There are two possible styles you can use, and you should choose one. One way is to write sentence fragments starting with an -ing verb. You saw this in the example just now. The other common possibility is to write sentence fragments starting with a past simple verb. So, for example, a full sentence about your work experience might be:

I designed training programs for other staff members.

You could make this a fragment with an -ing verb, as in:

Designing training programs for other staff members.

Or, you could make a fragment with a past simple verb, as in:

Designed training programs for other staff members.

Of course, you can write in full sentences if you want! However, it's more common to use one of these two styles on a CV in English. Just remember: don't mix styles. If you're writing in fragments starting with an -ing verb, then all of your bullet points should be in the same style. Also, when describing your responsibilities in a role, try to use active, specific vocabulary. For example, instead of 'Making promotional materials in print and digital formats', say '**Creating** promotional materials' or '**Designing** promotional materials'. Using a more specific verb is better where possible, so it's better to use 'create' than a more general verb like 'make'. Instead of 'Worked with customer data to suggest alternative strategies for sales team members,' say '**Analysed** customer data in order to **devise more effective** strategies for sales team members'.

Next, let's add one more vital section to your CV in English.

3. How to Write About Your Education

(https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/shutterstock_83821315-opt.webp)

On most CVs, education either goes at the top, after the personal profile, or after the work experience section. Here, you list the institution, qualification, grades and dates. For example:

University of Warwick, 2015 to 2018, BSc in chemical engineering, two one.

Do you know what 'two-one' means? University grades for UK degrees are given in classes: first class, upper second class, second class, and so on. 'Two one' means an upper second class degree, which is the second highest grade. On a CV, you can write BSc in chemical engineering, or you might write it without the preposition.

BSc in chemical engineering, two one.

BSc chemical engineering, two one.

This might be all you need, but you might also add modules you studied, projects you worked on, or the title of your thesis or dissertation. Here, the simplest way to add this information is to use a colon to introduce a list, like this:

Modules studied: chemical reactor design, distillation and absorption, process synthesis, ...

You could also use this to list exams you took at school; for example:

A-Levels: geography, English literature, politics, economics.

Do you know what A-levels (<https://successatschool.org/advice/details/546/what-are-a-levels>) are? They're the exams you take at the end of secondary school in the UK. Usually, people take three or four subjects. Depending on where you are in your career, you might not need a lot of details about your education. If you've been working in your field for many years and have lots of relevant achievements, then you probably don't need to go into details about your high school exam results.

At this point, you have the most important parts of your CV. Let's talk about one more point in how to write a CV in English. There's one more section you might add.

4. Writing About Skills and Hobbies

(<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/computer-problems.webp>)

At the end of your CV, you might list relevant skills, such as other languages which you speak, certificates, or software you can use. You might also list your hobbies (<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/free-time-and-hobbies>) and interests. Should you add your hobbies and interests to your CV? Some people say

yes, others say no. We don't know—this lesson is about how to write a CV in English. Here, you can keep this simple; introduce a list using a colon, like this:

Proficient with: Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign, MS Office, QuickBooks.

You can show different levels of skill by using different adjectives like ‘proficient’, ‘familiar’, or ‘competent’. ‘Proficient’ suggests a higher level of skill; ‘competent’ suggests a medium degree, while ‘familiar’ suggests a more basic level of skill. You can use these adjectives with the preposition ‘with’ plus a noun; for example: ‘proficient with AutoCAD’, ‘competent with WordPress’, or ‘familiar with a range of common double-entry bookkeeping applications.’ You can also use some adjectives like this plus ‘at’ plus an -ing verb. For example:

Competent at building and styling web pages using HTML and CSS.

Skilled at using a range of Adobe Creative Suite applications for graphic or print design.

With languages, you can use a similar format; introduce a list using a colon

(<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/colons-semicolons>), like this:

Languages spoken: Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese.

If you want to add additional information to something, add it in parentheses, like this.

Languages spoken: Arabic (fluent), Spanish (intermediate), Portuguese (basic).

As before, you’re not writing in full sentences here. That means you can be flexible with the structure; for example, you don’t need to add ‘and’ between the last two items on your list. However, you should still pay attention to grammar and structure, because it’s important to be consistent. Finally, you can add your hobbies and interests if you want. For example:

Hobbies and interests: surfing, DIY, arts and crafts.

At this point, your CV should be close to complete. Don’t forget to proof read carefully before you send it! In most situations, recruiters won’t spend long the first time they look at your CV. Even small things, like spelling mistakes, can mean your CV gets thrown out. So, take the time to check everything.

Thanks for watching this lesson from Oxford Online English!