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CV Writing Tips

People matter, results count.

What is a CV?

The term 'curriculum vitae', or CV, literally means 'course of life'. In North America, the term 'resume' is often used to refer to a brief document relating to an applicant's skills, experience or qualification to date. However, only include those relevant to the job you are applying to.

Which typeface should I use?

While you may think an unusual typeface will make you stand out, it will more likely put off potential employers. Here are some examples of typefaces that you should use and some that you shouldn't.

Typeface	Use for CV?
Arial	The standard windows 'sans' typeface. Arial is plain and easy to read so is ideal for a CV.
Times New Roman	Times New Roman is the standard windows 'serif' typeface. It's a safe bet and looks a bit more elegant than Arial.
Veranda	Veranda is a common sans typeface and is considered to be more classy than Arial or Times New Roman.
Comic Sans MS	Quirky and fun but inappropriate for a CV.
Monotype Corsiva	A definite no for a CV. It may look stylish but it's difficult to read and could make the employer give up half way through.

Attention to details

- No spelling or grammatical errors – you've had as long as you need to prepare your CV so an employer will expect 'perfection as standard', so be sure not to disappoint

What to include:

Contact details

Keep this brief and to the point and, ideally, include:

- Your name as the title, not 'CV' (employers know what it is), and make it stand out
- Current address - the best place to send an offer letter if successful
- Contact numbers - don't forget to leave a professional voicemail message
- Email address - you may wish to set up a professional one
- You do not need to include marital status, religion, sex, sexual orientation, nationality. If requested, you can include them in your cover letter

Personal profile/statement

Include where space allows, if not include it in your cover letter

- Keep it brief - Ideally three or four lines (or key points)
- State your career aims or key strengths
- Avoid generic phrases, e.g. hard working, motivated, team player
- Qualify your claims; state how you gained the skills your claiming

Education

- State in reverse chronological order – so latest qualification first
- Be brief – you don't need to state what your favourite subject is or name your favourite teacher
- Mention specific grades where requested – show you meet any minimum academic criteria
- If you only need to mention 5 GCSEs you passed don't mention the 3 F grades you got as well

- If what you studied isn't relevant to the role you are applying to, make the link elsewhere on your CV (e.g. your personal statement, work experience, hobbies, etc.)

Experience

- All work experience counts – paid, voluntary or shadowing

- International experience is often a bonus – but don't include your summer holidays

- Focus on achievements not responsibilities – what you actually achieved, not just supposed to!

- Give an indication of skill level – know the difference between beginner, intermediate & expert user of a particular system or package

- Use familiar job titles – e.g. customer services assistant, Sales rep. 'PHP Ninja' will not impress

- Highlight experience relevant to role you are applying to – being great at football may not get you a job in web design

Positions of responsibility, achievements, interests

- Mention things you have taken up outside school/work to show you are a more rounded individual

- Can help the interviewer relate to you – so don't get too creative or you may get caught out!

- Use them to your advantage – so just saying you enjoy socialising or reading won't impress

Referees

- Although they will be checked before you are offered a job, you don't need to include them

- Just say "Available on request."

- Brief them – give them a heads up they might get asked to provide one so they are prepared

Related words

- Include words used in the job description – this will help the employer relate your CV to the job

Layout

- A good tip is to zoom out and see how it lines up. Are your indents level? Your headings clear?

- Make it easy to skim then read – an employer will skim your CV first then, if interested, read it

- Simple black and white will do – don't bother with colour

- No fancy formatting – not only can it make it difficult to read, the file may become corrupted as its opened in different versions of word or via a recruitment system

- No pictures – only add one if you are applying for a job in Hollywood

- Two pages maximum - if you can't fit it into two pages, you haven't tailored it for the role
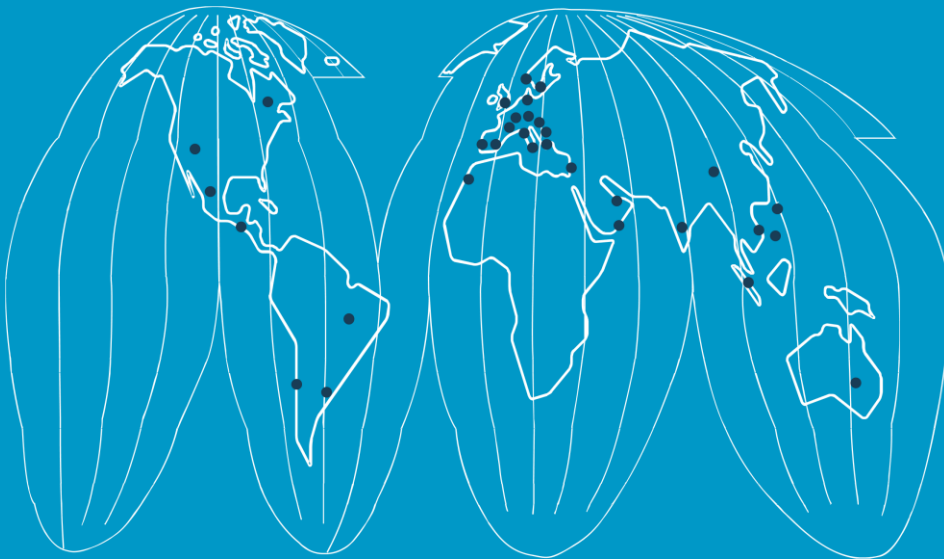
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