Guidelines for an Effective Curriculum Vitae (CV) / Resume

Why a well-written CV can help you find your ideal job?

- In an employer's eyes, your CV is a representation of who you are, what you can do for him/her and a way of communicating with him/her as to why you are a better candidate than some one else.

- In the absence of actually meeting with you in person, the employer uses the CV to decide who he/she should call for the interview – a crucial step towards getting a job.

- A poorly written CV does not portray a good impression of you on the potential employer.

- There are many common mistakes which many job seekers make without realizing the negative impact they may create – which can make a difference between whether you get the job or would some would else who can communicate better with the employer through a well-written CV.

What should be in the CV and how should it be organized?

There are several sections that are common to any CV; then there are a few optional sections for more experienced professionals, executives or those seeking jobs in special fields such as Academia and Research.

At minimum, each CV should include the following sections.

- Header or identifier
- Objective
- Experience or Work History
- Education
- Achievements and affiliations *(optional for recent graduates or those with little or no experience)*

The sections listed above are in the right order except in the case of fresh graduates or those with little or no experience – where Education should be listed before the Experience or Work History.

Other option sections can include

- Skills summary or Professional Summary or Career Highlights
- References
- Personal Information (if absolutely required)

CV - Do's and Don'ts

- **Do**

    o Use bulleted style text to make the resume easy to read

    o Use bold face or capitals for headings only

    o Keep text lines under 74 characters long

    o Include your contact information (phone number, email address as well as home address. If you have a mobile phone, include that number as well.

    o Write the information about each job in order of importance; list your jobs in reverse chronological order – starting with the last (or current) job first.

    o Poof read carefully; have some one else proof read as well. Misspellings and typos will leave your CV in the trash basket.

    o Use active (not passive) words that show your leadership and teamwork qualities. Passive words such as - "worked" or ""Followed" or "Responsible for" or "Responsibilities included" - convey a negative image or portrays some who is simply following orders or doing a duty. In today's world, employers are seeking those who are willing to take charge, be independent decision makers and lead others – not followers.

        ▪ Following examples of active verbs to use while describing your accomplishments or job descriptions may be helpful:

Accomplished	Achieved	Advised	Analyzed	Assessed
Attained	Authorized	Implemented	Improved	Increased
Influenced	Initiated	Collaborated	Communicated	Conducted
Identified	Implemented	Improved	Increased	Initiated
Integrated	Launched	Performed	Planned	Presented
Prevented	Prioritized	Produced	Provided	Upgraded
Completed	Led	Maintained	Managed	Maximized
Modified	Monitored	Negotiated	Organized	Originated
Oversaw	Programmed	Projected	Proposed	Qualified
Recommended	Streamlined	Suggested	Summarized	Supervised
Contributed	Coordinated	Created	Defined	Designed
Developed	Delivered	Demonstrated	Directed	Validated
Documented	Enhanced	Ensured	Established	Evaluated
Facilitated	Focused	Guided	Represented	Simplified

    o Make your resume of reasonable length; don't make it a story to be read. Be concise and to the point.

- For fresh graduates, one page is optimal, page and a half should be max, however, if the second page is less than half, make an attempt to condense to one page, if at all possible.

- For experienced professionals, stay within 2 pages, if possible, but no more than 3 pages in unusual cases such as academic or research positions, where listing of patents, research and publications, would be critical to list.

- **Don't**

  o Use fancy type styles (italics, underlines, shadows, reverse – white letters on black) in your CV. Use of scanners by employers is very common; the scanners cannot read fancy styles and as a result, your CV may end up in trash or not be considered

    - Use Helvetica, Optima, New Century School book and Courier

  o Use font sizes larger than 16 points any where in the CV

  o Type of font that is too light or thin

  o Use two column format, that makes your CV look like a news paper or newsletter

  o Make the text fully justified, let all text be left justified

  o Use Hyphenated words

  o Include vertical or horizontal lines, graphics, images or boxes – again, scanners can't see them and the resulting scan may be unreadable or erroneous

  o Send poor quality copies. If possible, use original laser printed CVs

  o Make hand written information in the CV; every thing should be printed

  o Use font that is too dark; only use white or light color paper

  o Try to save on paper by printing double sided CV – single side printing only

  o Use resume templates and wizards, if possible; they make your CV look like every one else's. However, do not go overboard and make so corny that it is in bad taste or does not have a professional look and feel.

  o Avoid the use of personal pronouns (I, my, me) in a resume – as much as possible.

  o Include information that is either incorrect or misrepresentation of facts; always be honest.

Details on each CV sections

Header or Identifier

This should be at the top of the first page of the CV and should include your name, postal address, phone number, email address and fax number (if you have one).

Abdullah Zyxw   xyz@yahoo.com
123 ABC Rd., Karachi, Pakistan   *Tel: 1234567 Mobile:0300*
1234567

<div style="text-align:center">

or

</div>

<div style="text-align:center">

Abdullah Zyxw

123 ABC Rd., Karachi, Pakistan

Tel: 1234567 Mobile:0300 1234567

xyz@yahoo.com

</div>

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Objective

- Writing an objective statement is important.

- Employers get too many resumes and they do not spend more than 20-30 seconds to scan each resume.

- Including an objective shows the employer at a glance what you want to do, what you're good at or how you can benefit him.

- Objective should be brief – no more than a sentence or two

- The objective can be as simple as the job title you want to be considered for *(make sure to change it for each job you apply for)* or your employment goals. It can also be more broader to include statement on how you will provide value add to the employer.

- If you are responding to an advertised position, use the position description in relative context of your objective, but DO NOT use the exact wording from the advertisement nor say something here that you do not have or do not know about. Remember - Honesty is the best policy.

Examples

1. To obtain a position where I can maximize my financial skills and experience in a growth oriented environment.

2. To contribute to your company's growth and success through the use of leadership and people skills.

Skills Summary

- Include skills related to the position / career field that you are applying for i.e. computer skills, language skills.

- Experienced professionals: List key skills here in bullet form or in a table format (make sure table lines/boundary lines do not show in print preview or when printing)

- New graduates: Skip this section

Example

• Business Development	• Project Management	• Field activities
• Feasibility Studies	• Sales	• Administrative/Office skills
• Marketing	• Teaching	• Data analysis
• Web design/development	• Contract Negotiations	• Professional Training
• Financial audits	• Programming C++, Java	• Consulting

If you do not want to write Key skills summary, an alternative could be:

Career Highlights or Professional Profile

This is a customized section of your resume that lists key achievements; skills, traits, and experience relevant to the position for which you are applying can serve dual purposes. It highlights your relevant experience and lets the prospective employer know that you have taken the time to create a resume that shows how you are qualified for the job.

Example:

Results-oriented, high-energy, hands-on professional, with a successful record of accomplishments in financial support in private and government sectors. Experience in audits, budgets, payrolls, tax filings, compliance, and plans/controls with focus on providing high quality service to the organization. Major strengths include strong leadership, excellent communication skills, competent, strong team player, attention to detail, dutiful respect for compliance in all regulated environment and supervisory skills. Thorough knowledge of current accounting and finance practices and a clear vision to accomplish the company goals. Computer and Internet literate.

Experience or Work History

This section of your resume includes your work history. List the companies you worked for, dates of employment, the positions you held and a bulleted list of responsibilities and achievements in the following order.

> Company #1
>
> Job Title #1
> City, State
> Dates Worked
>
> Responsibilities / Achievements
>
> Company #2
>
> Job Title #2
> City, State
> Dates Worked
>
> Responsibilities / Achievements
>
> Company # 3
>
> ……..
>
> …….
>
> ………
>
> ………

Note: If you have worked for one company for several years holding a variety of positions, then list the job title first, followed by company name, otherwise, it will look repetitious to have the same company listed in each line item at the beginning of each job.

- List in reverse chronological order (starting with the most current job first), all the jobs & positions you have held to date. Here is how each position should be described:
  - o Start with the company you worked for on the left side of the page followed by position title. On the right side of the page, type the month/year (from xx/xx to yy/yy). All these entries should be in bold lettering.
  - o After leaving one line space, you may want to write (in 2-3 lines), what your company does (or did when you were employed) so the potential employer has the overall context. Be sure to list any numbers, if/where possible (revenues, leader in the market place, key products and/or services).
  - o Skip another line and describe (in no more than 2 lines, what your responsibilities were) in the order of priority or importance.
  - o Then list few accomplishments in bullet form, showing what you did for the employer; be bold, yet truthful. List any numbers (grew business by xx%, reduced error/defect rate by 1/3rd, finished project ahead of time and 10% under budget, etc.), again in the order of priority or importance.
- Do not show unnecessary gaps or discontinuities in jobs time line. However, if there is a legitimate gap (for example - you were unemployed for some time), then it is permissible to do so, however, be ready to explain during the interview process, if this question is posed to you

- In the job description and accomplishment section, do use key words – "managed 7 software engineers" instead of "responsible for IT department". Use industry jargon words that are easy to search by computers than general or vague statements

- Do not use acronyms that are used specifically by your company and are not industry standards. It will be difficult for others to understand; write out the whole word or phrase. There is nothing more annoying to an employer to read a bunch of unknown acronyms that he/she has no idea what they mean. The exception to this rule is well known common standard acronyms, such as C++, IEEE, COBOL, FORTRAN, etc.

  - Summarize the job description, but expand/concentrate on your accomplishments. Quantify the accomplishments, if possible. For example, increased revenue by 15%, reduced defects by 1/3rd, managed 7 software development engineers, etc.

XYZ Company, <u>Senior Engineer/Strategist</u>
1987 – 1993

Manufacturing of printed circuit cards is a significant business for XYZ. The company is always demanding continuous business process improvements, efficiency and cost reductions. I identified areas for cost/performance improvement, implemented solutions, identified organizational skill deficiencies, designed, developed, and implemented training solutions to address skills gaps the organization.

- Coordinated key projects like ISO Certification, Activity Based Costing, TQM, Chemical Safety training.

- Designed and implemented a profit sharing model based on business performance and productivity improvement.

- Led a corporate wide job restructuring and training initiative to develop and implement a strategy for enhancing and balancing organizational skills against specific business needs and objectives. This program was implemented worldwide resulting in up to 25% productivity gains at some locations, impacting 25,000+ employees. This effort was recognized in the form of a special award from xxxxxxx..

Education

- In the education section, again list the degrees in reverse chronological order (last degree first); include the degree (M.S., B.Sc., etc) followed by the specialization of subject, then the name of the college, university or institution. Also include the city/state of university and the year you graduated. If you are a recent graduate, include your grades, distinctions and rank (if it is in your favor).

Example:

- M.S. in xxxxxxx, University of xxxxxxxx, 1985
- B.S. in xxxxxxx, University of xxxx, 1981
- Diploma in xxxxxxx, 1983

Achievements and Professional Affiliations

- List any memberships in professional organizations, any significant achievements related to your business or profession. This can also include any distinctions and awards you may have received

Example:

- Member, IEEE (Institute of Electrical & Electronic Engineers)
- Board member and Vice President of xxxxxxxx
- Over xx hours training in Management Practices, Project Management, and Consulting
- Five Awards for xxxxxxxx

References

- Include references only if required by the employer. space in the CV is premium – typically references come in play in later stages (after the interview). Do not use the standard phrase "References available upon request"; it is a given and does not mean any thing or add value to your CV.

- If you must include references, make sure to use the references who can speak positively about your professional work. Include their full names, Job titles, Work address, phone number and email, and relationship to you

- Make sure that you take permission from each referee to use his/her name (before sending the CV).

- Make sure to send a copy of your CV to each referee, so if they are contacted, they will be able to talk about you intelligently, and with confidence.

- If you have any written recommendations, do not send them along with the CV, unless you are a fresh college graduate. They can be used in later stages of the process.

Personal

- If you must include personal information, only give out minimum required information – typically age, marital status, gender, and health (simply say good or excellent health). Do not include your height, weight, place of birth, salary information, hobbies or political affiliations.