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'Grass is Greener' eBooks

How to Create the Perfect CV



What personal details should be on my CV?

It may seem an obvious thing to say, but the 'Personal Details' section of your CV is your first opportunity to introduce yourself to a potential employer.

Get the basics wrong at this stage and you can wave goodbye to the chances of getting an interview.

Your name

Write your name in a larger font than the rest of your CV to make it stand out, after all your CV is a marketing tool used to market YOU Ltd. Middle names are optional, but don't be tempted with Frank 'The Tank' Ricard.

Marital status and family

You don't have to include details about your marital status or information about whether you have a family or not. However, if you think your status will make your application become more attractive. For example being single might make unsociable working hours more feasible.

Date of birth

You may include your birth date if you wish. However, it is no longer necessary since the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 made age discrimination illegal in the recruitment process.

Nationality

With the exception of governmental positions, which may require this information, your nationality should be omitted. The Race Relations Act 1976 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, or nationality (including citizenship, ethnicity or national origin).

As long as you are either a native to the country in which you are applying or can provide a suitable working visa, there is no need to tell them where you are from.

Contact details

Simple logic applies here – don't include your work contact details. Use your own personal email address or create a new account specifically for your job search, especially if your current email address is something like foxybabe@webaddress.com.

Be sure to add the phone number that will make it easier for potential recruiters or agencies to contact you, most likely your mobile phone.

Other information

If the job you're after requires you to drive then you will probably want to assure them about your clean driving license.

If you are going for a web design role, you may want to direct them to a website you have created. Whatever you decide to include, just be sure it helps, not hinders your application.

CV Templates

If you're having problems starting your CV we've put together a range of templates that will show you how to lay out your skills and experience to impress employers. [Take a look here.](#)

What should be included in my personal statement?

Your CV is designed to do one thing and one thing only: to get you an interview. Yet the average recruiter will only spend between 20 to 30 seconds glancing at your CV which means that you need to make an impression quickly and sell yourself.

Your personal statement is your first opportunity to do just that. It is perhaps the single most important part of your CV. Get it wrong and your chances of being invited to interview are drastically reduced.

Its aim is to highlight your professional attributes and goals, emphasising why they should continue reading the rest of your CV. Aim to use no more than 50 words, making each sentence a key selling point.

Unfortunately, too many people follow the tradition of using stock phrases and 'key' words that they think will help them stand out from the crowd. Many phrases are tired and clichéd and don't; have the impact employers need.

Phrases such as “*Looking for a challenging opportunity...*” should be avoided because they're only focused on 'me, me, me'. Employers want to know what you will do for them. How will you help their business? It should be clear from the job description what they need you to do, so tell them straight that you can help them do it.

It is important that your statement doesn't simply tell a potential new employer what you have done or what you would like to do and why you are applying for the advertised position.

Advertising agencies use language that explains the benefits that you, as consumer, will have if you purchase their product.

Similarly, a list of unquantifiable skills such as 'team player' or 'good communicator' don't actually tell the reader anything about why you're the right person for the job. Link these to a tangible skill wherever possible such as *"Use my excellent communication skills to attract and retain high profile clients."*

Here are some examples of evocative personal statements that will grab the employer's attention.

"As an experienced Senior Advertising Sales Executive my networking abilities could help your company achieve its goals. Active and potential clients will be impressed with innovative product presentations and the meticulous management of their million-pound accounts, allowing long-lasting relationships to be formed."

"If you're seeking a Network Technician to improve the reliability and development of your company's server, my experience in design, implementation and maintenance will prove invaluable. Troubleshooting and support come as second nature, meaning fewer and less frequent connectivity issues for your large-scale network."

Take a look at your personal statement and read it out loud to yourself. Imagine it was a television advert - would you buy the product?

What skills should I include on my CV?

Your CV is designed to do one thing: to get you an interview with a prospective employer. That means that every section of your CV must contain information of most value - and relevance - to the advertised position.

Your 'Skills' section is arguably the most important part of your CV to employers.

Hiring managers want to know what's in it for them. What will you bring to their company? Therefore, you need to sell yourself and demonstrate your skills and show how you are going to be a positive addition to their workforce.

Before you rush to compile a list of all the things that you are capable of doing, take some time to understand what skills are important for the specific job that you are applying for.

If you are unclear about what skills the job requires because the job advert gives little information, then search similar job titles on Monster and note what those positions are looking for.

Further Reading

- [How should my CV look if I'm changing career?](#)
- [What phrases should I avoid on my CV?](#)

There are three key skills types:

- **Transferable** - skills learnt in one field of work that can easily be adapted to a different field.
- **Job-related** - skills of qualifications that are directly relevant to a specific job.
- **Adaptive** - skills that are difficult to substantiate because they cannot be proven by experience but by personality traits.

Clearly, transferable and job-related skills are the most desirable to include in your CV. Be sure to include the ones that will help you stand out. Here is a list of skills that are particularly popular with employers:

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Initiative
- Problem solving
- Flexibility
- Computer skills
- Technical skills

If you know a particular programming language, put it down. If you have basic understanding of French, the reader wants to know. You can't be expected to know the specifics of the particular bespoke accounting system they use, but by demonstrating the broad range of things you do know, you're giving the impression that you're a good learner who can retain information.

How should I list my previous jobs on my CV?

Employers spend more time looking at your employment history than any other part of your CV. Consequently, this section needs to quickly convince a potential employer of your suitability to the advertised role and effectively market you for your current career goals.

But, there are different formats of CV that can be used to communicate your employment history and the type that is most suitable depends on what stage your career is at:

Chronological CV

If you're applying for a position that is similar to the one that you already have and can show a track record of gradually advancing your career, this CV is ideal.

Include the dates that you worked with each employer (e.g. March 2007 to May 2009) in addition to the company name, location, your full job title, responsibilities and achievements. List each position in reverse order starting with your current or most recent position.

Functional CV

This format is recommended for those who have been out of the workforce for a prolonged period of time or those seeking to change careers. It focuses on the experience and skills you have that are relevant to the job you are applying for instead of employment dates.

Replace the traditional company, job title and date information with the name of the most important skills and experience that you have developed through paid employment, voluntary work or general life experience.

This method ensures all of the information regarding your experience and skills looks recent, and keeps an employer's attention on your attributes.

You will also need to briefly list the positions you have held and dates, but you don't need to go into any great detail.

Combination CV

Redundancy and job-hopping have become more commonplace yet brief employment dates will still signal red flags for potential employers and could harm your chance of securing the job that you want.

Counter this by 'dividing and combining' your employment history.

Put your various roles into batches and work out which have given you the certain skills that make you suitable for the job you're applying for. Put the company names and dates at the top of each group and list below the various achievements you have made and experience gained below.

Wherever possible, include measurable results for your work. For example, "Significantly increased revenues and grew client base by 40%".

Further Reading

- [What makes a good CV design and layout?](#)
- [What are the common CV design mistakes?](#)
- [How can I make my CV more effective?](#)

Where should I include my qualifications on my CV?

Everything that appears on your CV is designed to appeal to the needs of your potential employer and to answer the question “What do you offer that other applicants don't?”

Where you include the Education section on your CV is dependent on how well it enhances your application and, regardless of whether you have a lack or abundance of qualifications, the following tips will enable you put you on a level playing field to compete with your fellow job seekers.

Positioning

If your educational background is your strongest selling point and can help you to stand out from the crowd, then you will probably want your Education section to appear straight after your Personal Statement.

This is especially the case if you're a recent graduate, if you graduated from a highly regarded university and obtained excellent academic results. However, if your work experience is stronger than your education, it is advisable to the 'Education' section features after your 'Employment History'.

What to include

Keeping your target audience and the job you are applying for in mind, look to expand on any areas of your education that will aid your application.

However, be careful not to include too much information. Unlike your work experience, which needs to be quantified with various achievements, your education can be summarised with the grade you achieved.

Many employers will still insist that applicants have certain qualifications such as a university degree but, many others will consider experience, skills and professional expertise as more valuable. Never be tempted to embellish your qualifications, employers can easily find out if you're lying.

Tailor your CV

Each job is different and, as a result, each CV should be tailored to meet the requirements of that job. You need to understand what information will be of most value to a potential employer and select only relevant educational content.

In general, your education history should be listed in reverse chronological order starting with your most recent education. Include dates, the name of the establishment you attended and place name.

Summarise, don't list, your GCSEs. Example:

“10 GCSEs grades A-C including English and Mathematics”

Essentially you want to make your 'Education' section clear, uncluttered and appealing, covering the three key questions that employers want answered: What do you know? What have you done before? Can you do it for me?

Further Reading

- [How do I complete application forms?](#)
- [How do I include my gap year on my CV?](#)

How can I tailor my CV to an audience?

For many job seekers, it's not uncommon to find 20 or so positions you'd like to apply for when conducting an online job search.

It may sound like a time consuming process, but making the effort to tailor your CV to suit the requirements of each particular job that you are applying for can greatly increase your chances of securing an interview. The following are the main areas of your CV that should be adapted to meet the exact requirements.

Personal Statement

You have read the requirements of the advertised position and understand what qualities the recruiter is looking for in a candidate. Sum up your unique selling points and, in a brief sentence, state your accomplishments and how these will help you succeed in the job you are applying for.

Employment History

If you are applying for a managerial position but have never previously worked as manager, emphasise that your previous roles involved considerable responsibility and decision-making duties such as delegation, chairing meetings, training staff, etc.

If a separate role is more of a sideways step, you may want to focus more on innovative ways you have achieved success in the role to show your competency.

Skills

Presumably most of the roles you're after will have a similar set of skills, but that doesn't mean you should leave this section alone. Think how easy it would be for a recruiter to see that you're suitable if the skills you demonstrate are in the same order that have on their job description.

Hobbies and Interests

Most job advertisements stipulate certain personality traits required for positions, so identify what they are and see how your hobbies can relate to the requirements.

If you are applying for a senior position, then the fact that you captained your football team and ran training sessions will demonstrate your leadership and organisational ability. If you are seeking a position as a designer, then make reference to the exhibitions that you attend or are actively involved in and the designers that you admire.

If you want to position yourself as one of the strongest candidates for the job, it is worth doing your homework on the company that you are applying to. Their job advert will provide you with a glimpse of what the company is like, but you can find valuable information on their corporate website that will help you to understand what they may be looking for in a job applicant.

Further Reading

- [What are the alternative CV options?](#)
- [What hobbies and interests should I include on my CV?](#)

What are the classic CV mistakes to avoid?

It's deceptively easy to make mistakes on your CV and exceptionally difficult to repair the damage once an employer gets it.

Prevention is critical, so here are the most common pitfalls, and how you can avoid them.

- **Spelling and grammar** - Poor writing shows a lack of care which no Manager will want in their team. Never trust a computer's spell checker and get someone else to read through your CV to spot errors that you may have overlooked.
- **Writing lots, but saying nothing** - Use bullet points rather than long sentences; employers aren't looking for you to explain everything you've ever done.
- **No tailoring** – Do not use a one-size-fits-all CV to apply for lots of vacancies, each employer is looking for a CV and cover letter that applies to their role you should make small adaptations to your CV to matches their requirements.
- **Highlighting duties instead of achievements** - try to show responsibilities that you actually achieved whilst in your last role. Not all roles have Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) that are quantifiable but give percentage increases wherever possible.

- **Breaking the 2-page rule** - 2 pages of A4 is more than enough room to persuade your potential employer that you're worth contacting for an interview. Use lots of white space to make it easy to read, make all your sections stand out clearly.
- **Leaving out information** - Whether it's by choice or just forgetfulness, some people leave previous jobs off their CV meaning a gap in employment. Even if you weren't working, there may have been transferable skills you picked up that will help your chances.
- **Using clichés** - “Good communicator”, “Works well in a team” – without any hard evidence of these you might as well write “Blah, blah, blah”.
- **Being vague** - Give them something specific that focuses on their company's needs as well as your own. Example "I'm looking for a challenging entry-level Marketing position that allows me to contribute my skills and experience to fundraising for a Charity."
- **Poor design** - Unless you're going for a design role, layout should always be second stage to the content of your CV. Use one font styles and size with Black and white text.
- **Incorrect personal details** - Not getting any calls despite your perfect CV? There may be a very simple reason for that – you've written down the wrong phone number or email address check the.com isn't a .co.uk, be sure to use a professional email address rather than a funny address.

How can I keep my CV up-to-date?

How often have you tried to put together a CV and had difficulty remembering the details of previous jobs? It's not just the dates of employment that you'll forget – tasks, projects and courses you were involved with are easily overlooked.

As you develop in your career, it's too easy to fall into the trap of simply adding your most recent job to your CV without considering how your experiences in past jobs may attract potential employers.

Always be aware of what employers are looking for. For example, if you previously worked as an office junior, you weren't just “doing the filing”; you were “contributing to the day-to-day efficiency of the company”.

You might have added significantly to your people skills, where previously your CV was more angled towards your qualifications. As your experience develops, it's important to ensure that the balance of your CV presents the best reflection of the person you are now.

Be willing to hack away old information from your CV. As a general rule, if something is not actively adding value to your CV, it's almost certainly diminishing its impact.

If you're quite far into your career and think it's too late to get back the memories of things you did, try to get in touch with old managers to see if their recollection is any better than yours.

How to get on the radar of potential employers

Just because you're comfortable where you are doesn't mean you shouldn't be ready to start job seeking at a moment notice. It's unfortunate, but sometimes things happen that are out of our control.

Once you're happy with how your CV looks and how relevant it is to your current situation, post it on job websites and send it to companies or organisations you'd like to work for on a speculative basis.

When you post your CV on Monster, you're automatically shifted to the top of the list so companies searching for someone with your skills will be able to find you easily. You can block certain companies from seeing your details so you can be assured your current employer won't stumble across your CV.

You never know when it's going to hit the desk at just the right time, and it never hurts to show a company you are interested in them. The more creative and proactive you are in getting your CV out there, the better your chance of catching your next employer's eye.

What Next?

Once you're taken all this advice on board and made your CV sparkle, [upload your CV to Monster](#) to put it in front of thousands of employers.



'Grass is Greener' eBooks

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