

How to write a CV

Seven steps to a great CV

- 1 Identify the skills and experience that the employer is looking for. They are the criteria against which your CV will be assessed, and should be listed on the job description, website or job advert. If you cannot find them, ask the recruiter.
- 2 Think of examples – from your work, volunteering, study, interests, travel or home life – that prove you have these job requirements. Try to choose examples that show you using the skills in a way which is similar to how they would be used in the role.
- 3 Decide which sections you need in your CV, then decide on section titles and order. Refer to page 2, 3 and 4 for guidelines on format.
- 4 Incorporate your examples into the most relevant section/s of your CV. Make sure you have provided evidence for every job requirement. You will find tips on how to word your examples on page 2.
- 5 Triple check ALL spelling and grammar and ask someone else to check this too. Many employers will regard even one error as an indication of poor motivation for the job, and reject you on that basis.
- 6 Run through our Checklist on page 4.
- 7 Write a covering letter to accompany your CV, referring to guidelines in our Covering Letter Helpsheet.

A CV isn't a list of everything you have ever done; it is a **marketing document**.

It should focus on those skills and experiences most relevant to your target employer. Your mission is to ensure that, after a 20 second scan, the employer can pick out evidence that you have exactly the skills and experience they are looking for.

Tips for wording your examples

Imagine you are a recruiter seeking a student strong at teamwork. Below is an excerpt from the CVs of Candidate A and B. Who would you choose?

Candidate A: "Demonstrated strong teamworking skills during stock-taking at STL Retail."

Candidate B: "Teamwork – supported team of four to achieve full stock-take of STL Retail in 16 hours by: arriving early to receive briefing on behalf of team; taking on extra tasks for a colleague who had to go home sick; and organising night out to keep us motivated."

The second example is more persuasive. You can achieve this by:

- Placing the skill word at the start to make it easy for the employer to pick out after a quick scan;
- Allocating maximum space to *how* you applied this skill;
- Using Action Words (below) to convey achievement and impact;
- Adding quantifiables (e.g. numbers, timescales) to make your examples more concrete;
- Including a tangible outcome (in this case a completed stock-take) or testimony (e.g. grade, increased responsibility or hours) to prove the impact of your contribution.

Action words

Using action words in your CV and covering letter will help you to convey achievement, ability and impact. You will find some examples of these opposite. Ask your Careers team for a fuller list.

NB. Passive terms such as "I had to", "I was involved in/required to" have the opposite effect, so avoid using these.

achieved
analysed
budgeted
co-ordinated

created
demonstrated
designed
developed

evaluated
improved
increased
initiated

led
liaised
managed
organised

negotiated
planned
prepared

prioritised
produced
researched

Guidelines on format

Your CV is *your* document. In the UK, there are no official rules on format.

The CV example shown on the facing page has been tailored to the role in the job advert opposite. It will give you some ideas about how to use format to demonstrate you are a suitable candidate. However, if a different approach better highlights the experience and skills your target employer is looking for, try it!

In particular, if you are following an academic career path or applying for a job outside the UK, alternative CV formats are likely to be more appropriate. This may also be the case if you are changing your career. Please find guidelines for other formats in the How to Write a CV book at www.careers.lon.ac.uk/output/Page67.asp

Example job advert

Part-time Marketing Assistant

In 2009 Frog Marketing helped over one hundred clients grow their brand through creative communication of values to the consumer. Want to join us?

We're looking for someone who's into marketing and building brands. To support our client projects you'll have to be organised and a good communicator and problem-solver. Excellent client service is essential, and we'll be asking you to write creative content for our website, so you'll need some experience of this.

*Sound like you? Send your **CV** and a **covering letter** by 15 Sept to b.coan@frog.co.uk*

CV Example

Jo Sharma

41 Great Queen Street, E1 8QP

Mobile: 07797 345621 Email: jo.sharma@yahoo.co.uk

PROFILE

Interest in marketing and branding – increased membership of my University Geography Society by 20% by building its brand through Facebook and events

Client service – invited to train new staff in client service at Curry's Wapping after exceeding sales targets two months in a row

Organisation skills – assisted with running of football summer school for 20 children in summer 2008

EDUCATION

2009 - 2012 **BA Geography, King George University, London**

My degree focuses on Human Geography and includes research, group work, project work and independent study.

Year 1 modules included Environment, Ethics & Society and Urban Identity.

- *Focus on ethics and the consumer* – interest in this area developed through Year 1 project on the developing role of Corporate Social Responsibility in businesses (grade A achieved)
- *Problem-solving* – managed the analysis and interpretation of complex data using SPSS statistical package

2002 - 2009 **Hart Secondary School, Poole**

A Levels: Geography (A), Business Studies (B), Biology (B)

AS Level: Psychology (B)

10 GCSEs including Mathematics (A*) and English (B)

MARKETING EXPERIENCE

Sept 2009 - present **Marketing Officer, University Geography Society**

Responsible for ensuring society is promoted across both King George university campuses

- *Interest in branding* – proactively built brand of Geography Society through two new events and a Facebook page resulting in a 20% increase in membership
- *Writing creative web content* – set up and maintain Society Facebook site www.facebook.com/kggeogsoc which now has 330 active users

You do not have to include a profile. Jo has used hers to emphasise some of her most relevant experience. If you do include one, keep it brief and achievement focused (see p.2).

For most students and graduates, 'Education' comes before your work history. However if you have a lot of relevant industry experience, you might choose to swap these two sections.

Highlight the components of your degree most relevant to the job.

Add in tangible outcomes or testimonies (see p.2) wherever possible.

Minimise space taken up by school as this is now less relevant than university.

If you don't have experience in the field, just group all of your experience together under a header such as "Work Experience" or "Work History".

Unpaid work experience can be as valuable as paid. What matters to employers is the skills you are developing in the role.

These examples are persuasive. Read tips on p.2 for how to achieve this effect.

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

Sept 2009 - present **P/t Sales Assistant, Curry's, Wapping, London**

Responsibilities include handling financial transactions, advising customers, dealing with complaints and ordering products.

- *Client service* – exceeded sales target in June and July by actively listening and responding quickly to needs of client and staying up-to-date with product knowledge. Offered increased hours and now invited to train new staff.
- *Communication* – received positive feedback from client after negotiating with external supplier to speed up late delivery

Summer 2008 **Volunteer, local childrens' football team, Wapping, London**

Responsible for admin support in lead-up to two-week summer school

- *Organisation skills* – booked pitches and communicated details to parents before and during summer school. Made all arrangements for final day match in which all 20 children took part.

OTHER SKILLS

IT: Intermediate level Word, Excel, Access and Powerpoint

Languages: Conversational German

LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Music: I go to gigs regularly with friends and play guitar.

Travel: Independent travel around Italy this summer and planning a trip to Bolivia in 2011.

REFEREES

Ms. Jennifer Kol
Personal Tutor
Geography Department
King George University
Gant Lane
London E2 3JR

Mr. Malcolm Jolnisch
Line Manager
Curry's
Bolner Road
Wapping
London E1 6FN

Jo Sharma CV - Page 2

Start with the most recent activity and work backwards.

Show initiative and you can turn your part-time job from something you 'just' do to evidence of skills valuable to future employers.

This experience only lasted two weeks, but is still a useful showcase for one of the skills the employer is seeking.

Evidence has now been provided for all six of the job requirements, so this candidate has a real chance of getting an interview.

You don't have to include this, but some employers like to know what you get up to in your spare time. Keep it brief!

If your travel has been challenging, you may be able to use it as a source of evidence for your skills.

Ask your referees before you list their details. If you are not able to disclose names, you can state "References available upon request."

Finished?

CV Checklist

- ✓ Look at your CV as if you were the recruiter. After a quick scan, can you pick out evidence of each of the job requirements?
- ✓ Is your CV two pages in length? (Some UK employers request a one-page CV, and academic CVs can be longer, but most UK CVs are two pages in length.)
- ✓ To ensure your CV is easy to read, is there about the same amount of text on both pages, and have you avoided large chunks of text?
- ✓ Have you used formatting tools (e.g. bold, italics, capitals and spacing) consistently?
- ✓ Have you asked your Careers team for feedback on your CV and covering letter? (Please take a list of job requirements with you.)