

BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR CONSTRUCTING YOUR CV

Your CV is the first impression a future employer has of you. As one of your key sales tools, it presents an overview of **what you have done** in the past and implies **what you can do for a potential employer in the future**.

When you post your CV on a company's online site, on a job board or on the "Employment" platforms, it is quite possible that an indexing robot (ATS | Applicant Tracking System) will check your CV, depending on the keywords that the recruiter has entered in the search filter and those that match the job offers

On the CRN you have access to the Abintegro CV360 tool which scores your CV against more than 50 checks that commonly trips up an ATS. You might also want to use jobscan.co <https://www.jobscan.co/> to see how these are working in your CV.

If your CV is not adapted for ATS (with the right words, the correct formatting, appropriate typeface, etc) and for recruiters (with the right summary, a proposal targeted on the needs of the position for which you are applying), without knowing it, you significantly reduce your chances of getting an interview!

You must write your CV to be successfully read by ATS while not losing sight of the fact that a human recruiter will read your CV also. So, write for both!

It is, therefore, advised that you update or produce your CV to a format that works with an ATS.

FORMATTING

For visual appeal, we suggest using one font style throughout your CV to give it a clean and professional look. Use a standard typeface, such as Arial or Calibri, with a font size of 10 or 11 (Sans Serif fonts).

Avoid italics, underlining, shading, tables, columns and colour. These have the potential to skew your content when scanned.

Regarding format and layout, we suggested a margin of 2.5 cm, with content left-aligned.

As most hiring managers and recruiters scan CVs (generally 10-20 seconds on average), we recommend keeping your CV to 2 pages, exceptions may be IT/Healthcare/Academia/Pharma/CVs. 3-pages may also be acceptable for executives with rich experience or academic, research and scholarly professionals. 2 pages is most common, but recruiters and Talent Acquisition teams are readily accepting 3 pages if all content is relevant.

The CV presents the last 10-12 years of recent and relevant experience. Remove all detail for experience more than 15 years ago. You can add other relevant experience with no reference to dates for fundamental information earlier than that in the section: "Additional Relevant Experience"

We recommend:

- Avoid personal pronouns on your CV (i.e., I, me, our, etc.).
- Minimise abbreviations - spell out the first time with the acronym in brackets if appropriate, i.e., Profit and Loss (P&L), unless widely known to all reviewers of the CV.
- £, €, #, % - are acceptable, as is technical jargon and acronyms such as C++, HTML.
- Limit the use of superscripts/subscripts. (e.g., 1st) or (i.e., etc.).
- Minimise symbols on your CV as Applicant Tracking Systems may misread. (& = and).
- Remove brackets where possible from the CV. Sometimes it can be seen as supplementary, less important information. If it needs including, work it into the CV effectively.

Make your CV simple, remember ATS does not always read the graphic, design, or creative CVs. The best format for the ATS is the reverse chronological CV. You will find our ATS-compatible CV templates on the CRN <https://crn.lhh.com/> → Popular links → Branding Specialists - Your CV Review, and also at the end of this document.

The content needs to flow from left to right without lines and sections.

As you may have gathered, automated CV management systems search for keywords. Keywords are simple words or phrases that describe your skills, technical skills, education, experience, achievements, knowledge, and interpersonal skills that match the profile you are seeking.

So, whilst the CV compatible with ATS may look plain, it has a better chance of gaining you an interview!

PARTS OF CV - ALL CVS SHOULD CONTAIN CERTAIN VITAL INFORMATION

1. Heading, left or centred

- FIRSTNAME LASTNAME
- Telephone Number | Professional Email Address (e.g., firstname.lastname@gmail.com) | Customised LinkedIn URL
- Address: City / Zip Code (It is recommended to remove specific street address).
- It is not usual to include a photo.
- The email address and LinkedIn URL should be hyperlinks

Your first name, last name, phone number, and e-mail address are sufficient to keep a clean and uncluttered look. Specifying the words "phone" or "e-mail" or using icons is unnecessary.

Your name should be big and bold in font size 16 / 18, and if you have a professional membership required by the roles you are applying for, you should put this after your name, e.g., James Jones MCIPD.

You will want to consider a "generic" e-mail (your initials, name, etc.), making it more professional.

Be sure the message of your voicemail is professional and check your messages regularly.

You don't need to put your full address; town or city is sufficient.

If you have a LinkedIn profile, we suggest customising your URL and including it with your contact information. To customise from the LinkedIn:

Profile Page / 'Edit Public Profile & URL / click on pencil icon in top right-hand corner to edit URL

- . Suggestion: linkedin.com/in/dansmith

2. Headline - Job title

If you are applying for a specific role, it can be useful for the recruiter to instantly see your relevant experience and fit with the role. In this case, we recommend that you highlight your brand/area of expertise as a heading that defines your specific focus and provides clarity to the reader by indicating the job title and the sector(s)/industry(s) you are targeting. This title should be the one most commonly used in the sector you are targeting. It should match the title of the ad if you are responding to an ad.

However, if being used on more of a speculative basis and is being posted on job boards, you may want to consider removing the headline title. This reduces the chance of being pigeonholed and avoids you from being overlooked for another opportunity you hadn't considered before.

3. Summary Statement

The summary statement follows your job title. It must be dynamic and short! It should consist of a 4-to-5-line paragraph differentiating you from the competition. The statement needs to reflect a high-level overview of your experience, areas of expertise, technical or professional skills, personal qualities, and any distinctions. This statement can be up to 6-7 lines for executives who need a more in-depth overview of their experience. The Summary can (and should!) be customised and include the keywords that match what your target market desires and are related to your objective, showing an employer that you have the skills and experience required for the position and drawing them into the rest of your CV. Look at and analyse the job you are targeting and identify the keywords. The recruiter must find the "Pre-required / Typical profile" elements of the job advert in this part of the CV.

How to start writing a strong summary?

- Start with a strong competency or characteristic that represents you, such as (Innovative, Strategic, Dedicated, Customer-oriented, Conscientious, Accomplished).
- This should be followed by your occupation (administrative professional, sales leader, etc.) and what you have experience in (with experience in....)
- Add your key skills and strengths relevant to the target job.
- Use short formulas rather than complete sentences, a direct and dynamic style has more impact.
- Begin sentences with action verbs – Led, Steered, Reviewed, Completed.

What do I include in my summary?

As you write your summary, consider these questions:

- What you are and your relevant background.
- Your unique blend of skills and strengths and how you use them.
- What you can deliver/contribute to the target company/sector.
- What have you focused on professionally that's relevant?
- What occupations, industries, and environments do you have experience in?
- What are you most skilled in? (For example, project management, business development, financial analysis, customer service)
- What is your work style? How have supervisors and colleagues described you?
- Do you have managerial or leadership experience? Leading global or virtual teams?
- What skills are required for the position you seek?

What should I avoid in my summary?

- Avoid using personal pronouns such as "I, my, we and our"
- Avoid overdoing "soft" skills like "personable" and "energetic"; this is too subjective for a recruiter.
- Avoid results-oriented, responsible for, duties include or long lists of skills within the context.
- Minimise abbreviations, spelling them out the first time with the acronym in brackets, if necessary, for example Human Resources (HR).

You need to hook the reader in with a summary statement to get them excited about your capabilities and experience, which need to match the role(s) you are applying for so that they read on.

Here is an example:

"An outstanding Marketing Manager with considerable corporate experience working with cosmetic brands including Espa, Clinique and Clarins. (What you are and relevant background).

"Significant people management experience leading teams across multiple geographies in Pan European roles. (Unique blend of skills)".

"Delivered brand strategies across key market segments, resulting in 10% growth in new markets. (What you can contribute to the target company/sector)".

Sometimes it helps to write this section after you have written the rest of the CV as you will know yourself, your skills, strengths and achievements then, which can make it easier.

Skills/Competencies section (optional, but encouraged)

Including a separate section beneath your summary highlighting your key skills is a great way to demonstrate your proficiencies and make your CV stand out when scanned in a keyword search. This should consist of a bulleted list of approximately 6 to 12 industry skills which match the job description. We recommend including key skills/competencies, highlighting those based on networking feedback and job postings. Ensure you have included those most important to your target audience, differentiating you from other candidates.

- Skills are "what you do" as opposed to strengths which are "who you are". For example, "Communication" is not a skill, but "Stakeholder Management" is. Ensure this section focusses on the skill – i.e., the quantifiable output of the target job.

Technical CVs (IT/Engineers) – Technical Skills (or Technical Expertise) section should be showcased below the Summary.

- Include technical skills below the summary statement and a skills/core competencies list as appropriate to the desired role.
- Include, as appropriate, Hardware / Software / Operating Systems.
- Include recent/current technology only (can include “legacy systems” if the target company is known to use them).

4. Experience (include 10 years of relevant/detailed chronology)

Company and Company Profile

You can include this profile if the reader will gain value from knowing where you have worked previously, because it is relevant to the target job, so this is optional. If including, generally, a 1-2 sentence “Company Profile” is sufficient on your CV, as we encourage you to focus the audience on your results. You might want to include some information about the Company, what it does and the size and scale of the operation.

Dates

We suggest placing dates on the right aligned side of your CV, only include months if short tenure and recent, years only for the rest. (Note: some industries do not object to both month and year). Only use a hyphen (-) between dates; do not use ‘to’.

Most recent position title / Position title

Most commonly used, a 1-2 sentence “job overview” sets the scene for the reader about your job purpose. Let your target audience know what you were accountable for in each position. Briefly include the scale and scope of the role (e.g., budget, team size, reporting to). Follow with 6 examples of what you have achieved in the role underneath.

Summarise information selected from your job description, special assignments, and general duties that a potential employer might find of interest.

Accomplishments – solid round – left-aligned

One of the best ways to get noticed and gain an advantage over the competition is to develop accomplishments that include, where possible, the quantifiable business results that you achieved for the companies you’ve worked for.

You need to emphasise the accomplishments and results you have delivered, which start to set you apart and distinguish you from other candidates. They tell the reader what you could do for them and provide the evidence that you can deliver the skills they require.

Start bullets with action-orientated past tense verbs – you can find a list of action verbs at the end of the guide.

For example:

- Coordinated, resolved and responded to 300-500 consumer letters in a 5-day turnaround. Applied a high level of quick thinking and organisation, to achieve KPI’s. As a result, measurably improved customer satisfaction.
- Prepared and presented training on a new computer system for 28 people. Accounted for different learning needs, ensured robust follow up to reinforce learning and saved £51,000 annually.
- Implemented policy and procedure for auditing reports. Applied a high level of industry knowledge and ensured compliance with key regulator. Increased accuracy rate from 65% to 90% over a 12-month period.

Bullets which start with results are impactful, for example:

- Reduced operating expenses by 49%. Implemented tighter expense controls, negotiated better insurance rates and made more effective use of external consultants.
- Increased accounting efficiency by 25% over 6 months. Implemented a new software system for expedited billing.

Consider:

- What skills/competencies did you use to ...?
- What was the ultimate result or goal? Remember results don’t have to be ground-breaking. Just ensure you can quantify or qualify why you did something and that there was ultimately some kind of benefit.
- In other words, why is this important to include on your CV?

Also, accomplishments should end with a period (.).

Within each of your positions, it’s a good idea to rank your bullet points (accomplishments) in order of relevancy and interest, drawing the reader’s attention to your CV.

Quantifying or qualifying the things you say are critical to give the CV more impact!

Why do you need accomplishment statements on your CV?

Accomplishment statements are important as they demonstrate the measurable and quantitative/qualitative impact you had on an organisation, distinguishing you from other people with similar qualifications. It also creates an opportunity for hiring managers to ask questions on subjects in which you know a great deal of information.

How do you create an accomplishment statement?

Ideally, an accomplishment statement achieves 3 things:

- What did you do?
- How did you do it?
- What was the result?

It might be useful to use the SOAR technique to develop accomplishment stories.

An excellent guide for developing accomplishment stories that showcases your skills is called SOAR. Your SOAR stories put your accomplishments in a business context that an employer can understand.



Situation	Describe the Situation
Obstacles	Describe the Obstacles you faced
Action	Describe the Actions you took
Result	Describe the results you helped obtain and the benefits to your employer

It's Not Just What You Did, But How Well You Did It!

To create an accomplishment from a SOAR story, define the action(s) and the result(s) in one concise statement, quantifying/qualifying the result wherever possible.

- Each accomplishment should begin with a strong action verb in the past tense.
- Accomplishment statements can include specific metrics, such as %, £, €, or numbers, however there may be outcomes that might include examples like "empowering others", "getting great feedback" or "retaining utmost confidentiality with a confidential situation".
- Accomplishments don't necessarily have to be ground breaking – as long as you can attach a result or a benefit to the example, that is fine!
- You will want more accomplishments for your most recent roles (approximately 6) and fewer as you go backwards in your work history.

Achievements are not responsibility statements: At the end of each "bullet point", ask yourself the following question: So, what does this statement mean?

Example

- "Implemented an interactive after-sales service." If you are asking the question "So, what?" it means that the statement is missing information about the result or benefit.

Example with the "what" explained:

- "Implemented an interactive after-sales service. Increased the resolution rate of technical problems from 20 to 60%. Reduced the number of telephone calls by 300 calls per day and operating costs decreased by €10,000." In this example, you no longer ask the question, "so what?" instead, you have measurable, quantifiable information.

More Examples:

- Implemented improved equipment reliability programs and operator development. Analysed existing function and processes, worked collaboratively with manufacturing team to quickly effect changes and as a result reduced cycle time by 22%.
- Implemented an induction and monitoring process for new starters to train them in quality and risks associated with driving forklift trucks. Led to a reduction in the number of work-related accidents, which culminated in zero accidents over the last 3-year period. Additionally reduced non-compliance (across IFS/HACCP standards).

- Optimised internal processes, implemented an HRIS. Created a "recruitment kit" for managers, which led to a 25% increase in the number of satisfied employees.
- Developed an action list for the organisation of room cleaning. Reduced more than 70% of customer complaints related to the state of the rooms and re-established favourable professional links between the floor staff and the reception.

If you are new to the concept of accomplishment statements, begin by asking yourself some key questions that can help remind you of the value you provided to your employer.

- Did I meet or surpass standards for speed or accuracy?
- Did I consistently meet deadlines for key reports? (What might have happened if the reports were late?)
- Did I call attention to an unproductive procedure? Did I suggest a solution?
- Did I improve customer service or support the sales effort?
- Did I put in a lot of overtime to finish a key project on time?
- Did I mention the need for, or create a new report, manual, or procedure?
- Did I receive any awards or letters of commendation?
- Did I help keep an account by handling a demanding customer?
- Did I solve a problem or take charge of an emergency?
- Did I show leadership in a challenging situation?
- What did I do to help others reach their goals?
- How was my performance measured? How did I know I did a good job?
- When did I influence my work's direction, efficiency, or productivity?
- When was I involved in a team effort that produced a specific result?
- How did I increase sales, reduce costs, and save time or money?
- Did I discover a need, fill it, or bring it to management's attention?
- Did I achieve a goal by taking the initiative and/or following instructions?
- What was something I created or built or an idea I developed?

Additional Relevant Experience (beyond 10-15 years)

5. CVs generally showcase relevant work experience within the past 10-15 years. This is all based on its relevancy to your target audience. Typically, dedicate more detail to your most recent positions and less to your older roles.
Education

Summarise your education in reverse chronological order, including your highest degree and university name. Omit graduation dates/dates attended unless recently graduated (i.e., within the last 5 years). You need not include 'A' level and GCSEs, however, if this is your only education, include functional passes – Maths/English/Business Studies. Do not include anything irrelevant to the target job.

6. Professional Development and Training

This section can be separate or if included as part of your education use the heading: "Education/Training and Professional Development"

Here we can keep the information short and relevant: list qualifications achieved) – highest level first.

Dates are less relevant to include.

Include any training received that is relevant to the target job. Remember, training also need not necessarily be recognised or academic as it is the skill the reader is interested in.

7. Other Categories

If relevant to your target job, list languages, licenses, certifications, military experience, technical skills, IT skills, and the titles of publications or papers you have written. Include memberships and offices held in professional associations, boards, and community activities that support the position you are targeting.

For languages, please include any languages that you speak and are proficient in, e.g., Dutch (native), English (fluent), German (fluent), French (intermediate), and Spanish (basic). Apply also the internationally recognised levels in Europe, use the CEFR guidelines.

- A-Levels: Basic User: A1 beginners, A2 elementary
- B-Levels: Independent User: B1 Intermediate, B2 Upper-Intermediate
- C-Levels: Proficient User: C1 Advanced, C2 Proficiency. e.g., German: Fluent, level C2.

Technical Skills – include IT job-related skills detailed in the job description, where applicable. where relevant. Recruiters conduct searches including these keywords/skills, so it is beneficial to showcase them.

CVs tend not to include Microsoft applications as they are deemed a standard knowledge required in today's world of work. Be guided by advert content - if specifically requested, include.

Do not include references from your CV, as they are not necessary at this stage. If you haven't done so, this is an excellent time to get your reference list up-to-date and have it ready when requested.

Interests are optional to include on the CV. If you include them, keep them brief and interesting and be prepared to discuss them. Detail 2 or 3 if they complement the target job.

PAST TENSE ACTION VERBS

absorbed	dealt with	identified	observed	set up
achieved	decided	illustrated	obtained	shipped
acted	defined	implemented	opened	showed
added	delivered	improved	operated	simplified
administered	demonstrated	improvised	organised	sold
advised	designed	increased	outlined	solved
analysed	determined	influenced	overhauled	sorted
applied	developed	informed	oversaw	staffed
appraised	diagnosed	initiated	packed	standardised
approved	directed	innovated	patrolled	started
arranged	discovered	inspected	persuaded	strengthened
assembled	distributed	installed	photocopied	studied
assisted	diverted	instituted	picked out	supervised
attended	duplicated	instructed	planned	supplied
automated	edited	integrated	positioned	supported
balanced	encouraged	interpreted	posted	systematised
bought	enlisted	interviewed	prepared	tabulated
budgeted	ensured	introduced	qualified	tailored
built	equipped	invented	questioned	taught
carried	established	invested	raised	tended
centralised	evaluated	investigated	read	totalled
changed	expanded	judged	realised	tracked
checked	expedited	launched	received	trained
clarified	experimented	learned	recognised	transacted
cleaned	extracted	lectured	recorded	transferred
coached	facilitated	led	recruited	translated
collaborated	fed	leveraged	reduced	transported
collated	finalised	liquidated	refined	treated
compared	financed	listed	related	uncovered
compiled	folded	located	reorganised	undertook
completed	fostered	logged	reported	unified
composed	found	lowered	represented	updated

computed	founded	maintained	researched	upgraded
conceived	furnished	managed	responded	utilised
condensed	generated	measured	restored	verbalised
controlled	governed	merged	restricted	verified
converted	guaranteed	minimised	retrieved	weighed
conveyed	guided	modernised	revamped	withstood
coordinated	handled	modified	reviewed	worked
corrected	headed	motivated	revised	wrote
corresponded	helped	negotiated	selected	
counselled	hired	notified	served	
created	hypothesised	numbered	served	

TIPS AND TECHNIQUES FOR HANDLING SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Single employer

If you have had only one employer but have had a series of job titles within that organisation, highlight the years within each position. Detail the last 10 years with the employer in detail, then summarise up to a maximum of 15 years. You can then add a statement under the last role like “Further career history at Company X available on request”

Many short-term positions

If you have had many short-term employers and positions with those employers, emphasise only the dates with each employer (not the position). This will give the impression of more stable employment and you have the chance at interview to handle any potential objections when face to face.

Self-employment

If you were self-employed, you may wish to give yourself an appropriate job title, e.g., Consultant or Commercial Director. Titles like owner or self-employed do not convey what you did.

Unpaid assignments

If you have had an internship or have done voluntary work relevant to your targeted career path, it is not necessary to include a notation that it was unpaid work unless this itself will be valued. Keep in mind that your CV is a statement of the capabilities, skills, expertise, achievements and ultimately the benefits you can bring to your future employer, wherever or however you obtained them.

Period of inactivity

Be careful not to leave any gaps in your CV; periods of inactivity should be included and briefly explained.

Filename

Do not use special characters in the name of files: The only characters allowed are alphanumeric (basic upper - and lower-case letters and numbers), the hyphen (key of 6), the underscore (key of 8).

The following are not allowed: spaces, accents, tilde, umlaut, cedilla, punctuation, apostrophe, inverted commas, brackets and parentheses, brackets (even friendly), =, +, *, /, & #, %, \$, £.

Non-compliant naming can lead to blockages in delivery and file access (think of attachments that do not open; it is often the fault of the file name).

Good Example: DanSMITH_CV_2022

From Career Resource Network (CRN) <https://crn.lhh.com>, you will find useful e-learning and resources; feel free to use the search engine and enter keywords: CV, accomplishment, SOAR to access great online support.

Live Events are available: Create Accomplishment Stories, Develop Your Brand, LinkedIn 1/2/3 and CV Fundamentals

First name Last name

Telephone Number | Professional E-mail Address | Customised LinkedIn URL

Address: City / Postcode

JOB TITLE

Insert a brief summary (4/5 lines max) of the “professional you”, framed in a way that relates to your brand/areas of expertise. Answer the questions: What have you been doing? What occupation, environment, industry, depth or breadth of experience will engage your target audience? Include the skills you would like to do again, those that are relevant to the companies you are targeting. What are your work style and personal traits? What have you achieved previously that you can detail at a high level here that you are going to provide to your new employer? Include a skills inventory below showcasing additional attributes.

Key skill

Key skill

Key skill

Key skill

Key skill

Key skill

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (include 10 years of relevant/detailed chronology)

Job Title

Year–Year

Company Name

Provide a 1-2 sentence “job overview”, letting your target audience know what you were accountable for in each position held. Include the scale and scope of role (budget, team size, reporting to)

- Accomplishment: a 2–3-line paragraph outlining a key achievement in line with the target job. Begin the achievement with a past tense action verb and focus on the SOAR format. See examples in section 4 above.
- Accomplishment 2
- Accomplishment 3
- Accomplishment 4
- Accomplishment 5
- Accomplishment 6

Job Title

Year–Year

Company Name

Provide a 1-2 sentence “job overview”, letting your target audience know what you were accountable for in each position held.

- Accomplishment 1
- Accomplishment 2
- Accomplishment 3

Job Title

Year–Year

Company Name

Provide a 1-2 sentence “job overview”, letting your target audience know what you were accountable for in each position held.

- Accomplishment 1

Continue with this format for relevant positions

EARLIER CAREER SUMMARY

Job Title, Company Name

Job Title, Company Name

Further career details available on request (no dates or detail for anything older than 10 years. Only include it if it is relevant to the type of employment you are seeking)

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Science, Mechanical Engineering, University/College, City

Qualification, College Name

Qualification, Functional Subject Passes

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Examples might include:

PRINCE2 Project Management

Leadership Development

GDPR

Six Sigma

Additional relevant sections may include

Technical skills

Licenses

Certifications

Titles of publications you have written

Awards

Community/Voluntary Work