

Seminar 2:

CV Writing

1 What to leave out

Professional CVs

- The heading 'Curriculum Vitae'
- Photographs
- Your date of birth
- Your driving licence status or number
- Personal information: marital/relationship status, children, religious affiliations, race, passport number, credit status
- Nationality?
- Primary or secondary school education?
- Older job history
- Lifestyle information e.g., 'smoker', 'teetotaler'
- Referees.

Academic CVs

- The heading 'Curriculum Vitae'
- Photographs
- Your date of birth
- Personal information (as above)
- Nationality?
- Primary or secondary school education?
- Irrelevant work experience or training courses

2 'CV speak': How to write CV English

Professional and academic CVs

i. Omit the first person 'I', 'me', 'myself' and articles (a/the):

'I am a confident communicator and I have learnt how to deliver information in a range of formats and styles to suit the audience. I have taught myself how to make management presentations and do verbal briefings. Also I have an eye for detail and I have experience of both editing and proofreading copy.'

'Confident communicator able to deliver information in range of formats to suit audience, whether management presentations or verbal briefings. Strong eye for detail with experience of both editing and proofreading copy.' (Rogers, 2011: 78).

ii. **Avoid uncertain or moderate expressions like: quite, rather, about, nearly, almost, somewhat.**

iii. **Cut out simple verbs such as have/had, got, was:**

‘I have 2 years of experience with Year 1 intake from a catchment area of severe social deprivation and this has given me broad and deep experience of how to deal with difficult classroom behaviour.’

‘Two years experience with Year 1 intake from catchment area of severe social deprivation. Broad and deep experience of successfully handling difficult classroom behaviour.’ (Rogers, 2011: 78).

iv. **Use the active voice, *not* the passive voice:**

‘Scientific papers were published in peer-reviewed journals in order to support the research programme.’

‘Published scientific papers in peer-reviewed journals to support research programme.’

v. When describing your achievements use words that suggest responsibility, creativity, change and leadership:

analysed; conducted; delivered; directed, developed, facilitated, guided, improved, increased, influenced, integrated, led, managed, modernised, negotiated, organised, pioneered, produced, reduced, resolved, streamlined, trained.

vi. Use numbers to quantify your experience and achievements:

Biochemist and Group Leader with six years experience leading own team

Managed division of 40 staff

Increased donations from £15k to £32k within one year

Reduced sickness and absence by 50% in 2 years

Improved exam results with 25% increase in students gaining A grades.

3 Opening and closing sections

i. The profile paragraph

Against

- Challenging to get right – either too self-praising or too boring/obvious
E.g., Dynamic, brilliant, results-driven... or
Professional, enthusiastic, degree-qualified, loyal
- Potentially repetitive (same info in cover letter?).

For

- Allows you to create an instantly positive first impression
- Shows the employer you have read the job description carefully and have the skills and qualities they are looking for
- Forces you to think about your strengths and match these to the role.

How to write a profile:

- Open by **describing yourself using the job title** in the advertisement
E.g., You – journalist on medical magazine – advertised post ‘medical education writer’. So you start ‘medical education writer with 4 years experience’
- If you don’t have an exact match use keywords associated with the job, e.g. ...
You: postdoctoral sociology researcher working on social inequality
Advertised post: ‘Social research associate: social exclusion
Describe yourself as: ‘Postdoctoral Social Researcher on social deprivation, five years experience’
- **Add context** (what have you done in your most recent role?), e.g. ...
‘Five years of research experience in the field, resulting in a grant, publications in [prestigious journal] *Social Research* and media interest’
- **Give evidence of problem solving**, e.g.,
‘Developed innovative quantitative model measuring social deprivation and poverty in consultation with leading charities and two government departments.’
- List here any skills, qualities or experience listed in the job description which you possess.
- Between 35-70 words long (Rogers, 2011: 101-3).

Leading social researcher on social deprivation. Five years of research experience in field, resulting in grant, publications in *Social Research* and coverage in national media. Developed innovative quantitative model measuring social deprivation in consultation with leading charities and two government departments.

ii. Career Objective

A short paragraph stating your career aims, including the role and industry you wish to work in.

Media Studies graduate (2:1) looking for first role in arts administration where my passion for performance arts and organising abilities can be put to good use'. (Rogers, 2011:106).

Key points:

- Useful when you don't have previous experience of the job you are applying for, or if you're a graduate/post graduate applying for the first job in your chosen field.
- If your experience is a good but not perfect fit you can combine the profile and career objective together as follows:

Profile and objective

Energetic graduate with excellent people and customer skills, calm in a crisis, fluent French, conversational Italian; food, wine and service skills; 3 years of diverse experience. Now seeks first managerial role in the hospitality industry, UK or Europe.

<http://www.koganpage.com/editions/great-answers-to-tough-cv-problems/9780749462802>

iii. Personal interests paragraph (professional CVs only)

Arguments for and against

- Providing unnecessary personal information might expose you to judgement, discrimination; but...
- Personal interests show you as a whole human being, rather than just a work robot;
- Including those interests that relate to the role can help your application.

‘My family and friends, cooking, reading, sports, travel, films.’

Key points:

- Be specific: ‘French cooking, crime thrillers, figure skating, independent travel, romantic comedies’
- Don’t be afraid to stand out – if you have an unusual hobby mention it, e.g., ‘Member of the UK Wolf Conservation Trust and enjoy taking them for walks.’ (Rogers, 2011: 108).

4 CV Formats

Academic CVs

First check with the university to which you are applying: what CV format do they advise their students to use for academic applications?

If no such guidance exists from that university, I suggest the following format:

- Name and contact details
- (Optional) a profile or career objective stating your most impressive academic achievements (e.g., scholarships/awards/prizes/grants, publication in prestigious journals etc.), research interests and any relevant research/teaching/professional experience.
- Education (highest, most recent qualifications first)
- Research experience (as above, note also the achievements heading in Laura Neill's CV)
- Teaching experience
- Relevant professional experience (e.g., experience working in university administration)
- Publications (use a clear academic references format)
- Conference papers given
- Courses (if relevant)
- Membership of societies and associations
- Referees.

Professional CVs

i. The traditional chronological CV:

- 1 Profile
- 2 Name and contact details
- 3 Career history and achievements (most recent first, more detail for most recent jobs)
- 4 Qualifications
- 5 Training and development
- 6 Personal interests.

For and against:

- Can show career development, persistence and hard work
- Too much time in one role/organisation?
- Not enough work experience?
- Too many different jobs?
- Gaps in your work record?

ii. The skills-based CV

If you are planning to change careers or want a job you don't have direct experience of then a skills-based CV might be best.

This takes more time because you need to:

- research the employer/role to find out what they want
- look at your own range of skills and experience. Decide if you have the necessary *transferable skills*
- If so, emphasise these skills in the following format.

- 1 Profile/Career objective (emphasising your transferable skills)
- 2 Name and contact details
- 3 Skills and qualities (5) – use bullet points to list those skills you possess that are key to the job.
- 4 Experience and achievements (less detailed but focused more on those roles where you have demonstrated transferable skills)
- 5 Qualifications
- 6 Training and development (if relevant)
- 7 Personal interests.

**iii. Postgraduate with little work experience:
Matthew Freeman**

**Deadlines for CV and covering letters: Monday
14/04/2014**

References

Rogers, Jenny, *Great Answers to Tough CV Questions: CV secrets from a top career coach*. KoganPage 2011.