



Your Guide to...

CV Writing

CV writing

This leaflet can help you write a winning CV, it will cover:

- tips for successful CV writing
- examples of typical CV styles
- some guidelines on layout and the all important 'Do's and Don'ts' to keep in mind

A Curriculum Vitae (CV) is a brief summary of your achievements and skills and is sent to recruiters when applying for jobs, training places and, occasionally, courses of study.

There is no such thing as the perfect CV! There are no set rules about CV writing and the structure and format can vary significantly depending on the purpose. We will look at the three main styles, chronological, skills based and academic. Two sides of A4 is currently considered the right length for the first two styles. Academic CVs can be longer. All CVs should include details of relevant skills and attributes you have, your education and any work experience (with dates), interests and achievements, together with details of referees (people who can provide a reference, if required.)

Keep the CV concise, clear and well presented - make sure the spelling is correct.

Your CV must be very positive and make a strong case to the reader. It is a piece of personal marketing, your means of 'selling yourself' and needs to be more than just an account of what you have done!

Remember, in almost all cases, it will be the first impression that the recruiter will have of you - so make it count as an employer will only read your CV for a few moments!

Tip

You must target your CV. This means, for example, if you are a History student seeking a graduate opportunity in retail, you need to state in your CV any aspects of your course, work experience, part-time jobs and so on, that demonstrate the skills demanded by retail employers.

How to put together your CV

Start by writing down what you have been doing, perhaps beginning with your degree. Then write down details of jobs, voluntary work, external interests and so on. Write as much detail as you can – rough notes will be fine to begin with.

Then begin to pick out the most important items and those that may be of relevance to the sorts of opportunities for which you are applying – this is how you start to target your CV. There are some notes below on general layout and some examples of typical formats of curriculum vitae. You can use these as a guide and adapt them to your own preferred style.

CV layout

What your CV looks like is as important as what it says and it is essential to think about the layout.

The mark of a good CV is one that can be scanned quickly but will still enable the reader to pick up all of the main points and be impressed by what they see! Remember, recruiters won't spend long reading an application form or CV so your CV needs to look interesting and persuasive.

Tip

You can start your CV with a brief profile or objective – just a few lines, highlighting key information that will be of interest to the reader. Think of it as being like a newspaper headline or a 'sound bite,' designed to capture interest at the start! However, you don't have to put one in if you are not inclined to do so.

Keep in mind the following points when considering layout

- When recording events, write them in reverse chronological order;
- Make sure that your most impressive details are on the first page – this could be your skills, work experience, degree, other achievements and so on;
- Use clear sections with headings (and maybe sub headings) that can be easily followed;
- Use small spaces between main sections. This reduces density of text and is easier to read;
- Use short phrases – bullet points are good. Avoid too much text;
- Use bold to denote new sections rather than underlining;
- Avoid italics and font types that may be difficult to read. Fonts like Arial or Verdana (11 or 12) are good;
- Allocate more space to important items – your degree perhaps, or a relevant placement;
- Avoid using tables, graphs, charts and so on, unless they are really important or have been specifically asked for. They can be difficult to manipulate and take up too much space;
- There is usually no need to include photographs in your CV.
- Contact details at the top of the CV should be brief and printed across the top to save space.
- Try to include action Verbs which convey a positive attitude. Show an employer what you can do! Action verbs make employers take notice!

Examples can include words such as:

Achieved - Adapted - Arranged - Clarified - Communicated - Composed - Co-ordinated

Created - Developed - Delegated - Directed - Drafted - Edited - Enhanced

Established - Explained - Facilitated - Generated - Hosted - Incorporated - Improved

Influenced - Initiated - Interpreted - Managed - Maintained - Negotiated - Remodelled

Replaced - Restored - Solved

(For more examples visit our **Download Zone** at www.port.ac.uk/careers)

Using the above ideas, typical phrases could go something like:

“Responsibility for interpreting company guidelines on health and safety; this provided opportunities to gain experience in problem solving, drafting advice, communicating information and negotiating with department managers”

or

“Summer placement included work on co-ordinating marketing campaigns and adapting web content to increase sales.”

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Tip

Remember - There is no such thing as the perfect CV! So gather and synthesise the different opinions that you may hear or read about and use these to create a CV that works for you. Do not send out a generic CV every time. You need to amend your content/format to suit each job – this again, is how you target!

What types of CV are there?

The following examples on the next few pages provide some practical illustrations of how a CV can look.

Tip

Avoid using templates or sending out the same copy of your CV to each employer.

Chronological CV:

This is a very popular style. It has been around for a very long time and employers are used to seeing this style of CV. It is very easy to put together and its main emphasis lies in promoting your skills and achievements to the reader through the events of your recent history (e.g. your degree or a summer internship.) It can be especially useful if your degree or work experience relates closely to the jobs for which you are applying.

Skills based CV:

Skills based styles of CV, as the name suggests, stress important technical and transferable/interpersonal skills on the first page that you may have acquired and demonstrated in various contexts. It can be useful if you have a lot of work experience and is especially good if you want to draw attention to important skills.

Create some skill headings on the first page and then choose a few examples of activities you have completed which demonstrate those skills. On the next page you can see an example of a skills based CV.

Academic CV:

An academic style of curriculum vitae can be used if you are applying for specialised types of post, after a higher degree such as a doctorate. In this style of CV, you will need to include more about the research you have completed, conferences attended, special skills you have acquired (specific software, for example) academic prizes, any papers you may have written or to which you have contributed and poster presentations.

For an example of an Academic style CV please go to: www.port.ac.uk/careers (then click on Download Zone on the menu)

Creative CV:

If you have studied an art and design subject and are applying for a creative post you may want to consider producing a CV that demonstrates your creativity. We suggest that you come in to the Careers Centre in Purple Door and look at the 'Creative CV Guide' which provides many examples of creative styles in various areas of the industry such as graphic design, architecture, illustration, photography and fashion design. Creative CVs have examples of your own images within the text of the CV and can distinguish your creative talent from those of competitors.

Tip

You do not always have to produce a creative CV for a creative job. If you can reference a blog or a website that gives you an online presence and an employer can visit to view examples of your work, this could suffice and a non-creative format CV can be used.

For examples of CVs related to Law, Business, Technology, Science and Creative subjects visit the 'download zone' of our website: www.port.ac.uk/careers

Example of a Chronological CV

AMANDA MASON

Rough Common Road
Hertfordshire
SG15 7BK

Tel: (02392) 123456
Mobile: 01234 111222

e-mail: mason@yahoo.com.uk

Second year History undergraduate with experience of free lance editing and proof reading, experience of producing writing for a range of local and national publications, seeking a work experience placement in newspaper Journalism.

EDUCATION

2006 - 09 BA (Hons.) History, University of Portsmouth

Degree has focussed on modern European and American history and included subjects such as: Politics and Culture of 19th Century Russia; The Rise of the United States since 1880; The Concept and Art of Warfare in Europe and North America 1800 – 2000; Empire in crisis – the Soviet Union and its collapse; The Legacy of the Second World War – reconstruction and reconciliation since 1945.

This course has enabled me to develop abilities to:

- present strong written arguments by selecting and communicating findings in a structured, coherent and persuasive manner;
- conduct research using different tools and sources;
- work independently, setting my own deadlines and managing workloads;
- Capacity for reflective thinking and research, especially in relation to final dissertation
- Team collaboration and leadership from participation in a series of course projects with groups of five to ten fellow students;

2001 - 2008 Hertford Collegiate School, Portsmouth

- 3 A-levels including Art (B), English Literature (B), History (C) and General Studies (B)
- AS level in French (C)
- 10 GCSEs (grades A* - C) including Maths, English and French
- Governor's prize for outstanding academic achievement

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

May 2009 - present President/founder member and Publisher for The University Comedy Society

- Launched a project to produce a brand-new campus publication in the shape of an alternative student magazine;
- Implemented new club, Comedy Time, to support the project, which raised over £400 from sponsorship deals with local businesses to fund first and future editions;
- Sourced and organised access to publishing facilities;
- Researched and arranged platform for publicity and distribution;
- Regularly commission articles and write editorial for the publication;
- Illustrated material for initial launch publication and continue to illustrate subsequent editions;

Feb - May 2009 Writer for charity newspaper

- This role involved writing a series of articles on the subject of sponsorship;
- Responsibility for advising the fundraisers on circulation strategy;
- Assumed an active role in the production of the newspaper, including membership of the editorial team of five people;

Feb-Mar 2008 Campaign co-ordinator for Mock Election

- Took charge of campaigning for the mock GREEN party;
- Conceived and designed various posters, implemented a publicity campaign
- Dec 2005 Co-founder and writer for sixth form History magazine;
- Set up a magazine along with a team of 5 other students;
- Negotiated and received a budget of £200 to cover magazine overheads;
- Injected creativity into the design process;
- Wrote the front page article for the first issue and sought out various other contributors
- Distributed the magazine, utilising various forms of publicity;

OTHER EXPERIENCE**Feb 2009 - present Bartender, University of Portsmouth Students' Union**

- Working in a team of five staff to provide efficient bar and food service in a busy work environment;
- Liaising with kitchen staff, external suppliers and sponsors of events;
- Managing financial records and ensuring safe storage of cash of up to £5,000;
- Using leadership and management skills to co-ordinate and deliver training for new staff on service techniques and safety legislation;

May 2008 - present Administrative Assistant, Hertford Collegiate Enterprises Ltd

- This is an ongoing vacation job which involves:
- establishing and managing booking database for company community sports centre;
- Managing software updates and training staff;
- Regularly set up and serve silver service for weddings, assuring good professional standards and impeccable personal presentation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

2009 Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce Prize for creative writing

HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

- Drawing and Painting.
- An active member of UKC's Mountaineering Club, taking part in events and trips over the past year.
- Cycle as a means of transport around Portsmouth, and swim frequently.

REFERENCES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Example of a Skills based CV

Elizabeth Bronwyn Jones

23 North Road, Copnor, Portsmouth, PO2 4ER

Mobile: 0774 123456 Email: eaj@notmail.co.uk

PERSONAL PROFILE

Final year Biology undergraduate with industry experience gained from summer internship working for a food production company. Ability to lead projects and contribute to team environments.

Seeking a career in food production.

RELEVANT SKILLS

Technical

- Created computer applications for environmental microbiological trends for control of food laboratory cleanliness, leading to improved factory sanitation;
- Contributed to the development of a new food product for the chilled/frozen market through researching nutritional values of ingredients;
- Developed a quality control software programme to establish correct temperature for heating chilled food products;
- Extensive knowledge of quality control methodology relating to food production processes in a factory setting;
- Analytical ability – analysed data whilst undertaking industry internship relating to manufacturing processes and established an adapted system to streamline process production parameters;

Interpersonal

- Problem solving - made recommendations for Blue Sky Foods for an adapted quality control mechanism to more accurately record production flow resulting in significant financial savings on production costs;
- Communication - able to enthuse others and generate a positive attitude to setting up new procedures. Excellent report writing and presentation skills, evident through summer internship requirements and degree requirements;
- Teamwork – led team projects within degree studies and allocated tasks to team members, ensuring their completion;

RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE

Summer 2009

Laboratory Assistant

Blue Sky Foods Ltd, Stamford, Lincolnshire

- Responsible for maintaining new hygiene control procedures in laboratory conditions
- Ensuring processes and procedures conform to legislation;
- Assisted in the setting up of a product-recall procedure to facilitate product retrieval;
- Reviewing existing policies in order to report to Chief Laboratory Technician on how to improve quality systems;
- Performed shelf-life testing on current range of company products;

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

2007-present - Fresh Produce Assistant
J.Sainsbury plc, Bourne, Lincolnshire

Development of strong customer service skills through:
 Stock control duties, operating tills, replenishing produce, maintaining clean work environment,
 dealing with customer complaints and requests for assistance.

July-August 2008 - Voluntary Support Worker
Swanwick Children's Home, Hampshire

Helping teenagers with emotional difficulties and learning needs in a residential care home setting.
 This involved providing individual support and working on encouraging involvement in team activities.

EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

2008 – 2011 BSc (Hons) Biology (predicted Class 2:1)
University of Portsmouth

Courses include:

- Ecology and Environmental Biology
- Biotechnology and Microbiology
- Biochemistry
- Genomics and Molecular Biology

Degree has developed ability to analyse complex data, write reports, conduct laboratory experiments and prioritise academic commitments to meet strict deadlines

2006-2008 The Broadleaf School, Erinsworth, Derby

'A' Levels in Biology (B), Chemistry (B), German (C)

2004 2006 The Broadleaf School, Erinsworth, Derby

9 GCSEs at grades A-C including Mathematics (A), Double Award Science (AA) and English Language (C)

INTERESTS

Member of the University of Portsmouth Skydiving Club
 Football – play for local Sunday league ladies team, Southern League champions 2009

REFERENCES

Names and addresses of two referees are available on request

Finally.....some ‘Dos and Don’ts’ to help when writing and adapting your CV:

Do

- Target your CV to a particular employer
- Allocate more space to issues that matter – your skills, your work experience, your degree
- Present your CV well – neat, clear, correct spelling
- Keep to 2 sides of A4 paper (unless the CV is for an academic position)
- Use short phrases - bullet points might help
- Use Action Verbs to present a positive impression
- Visit us at Purple Door on CV Wednesday (10am – 4pm) to have your CV checked

Don’t

- Leave long gaps in your list of activities (such as work or education) – employers will wonder about significant periods of unexplained time
- Use elaborate fonts that are hard to read
- Use too many words
- Send out the same CV every time you apply for a job – remember you need to target for a particular employer/job/industry

Disability disclosure:

The decision whether to disclose a disability to an employer is often a personal one and may be based on a number of factors such as the nature of the disability and the demands of the role being applied for. If necessary, speak with a Careers Adviser or contact the employer direct before submitting the form to discuss any support that may be required during the selection process or in the role itself.

Further help:

Visit the resources on our website or visit the Careers Centre at Purple Door if you need assistance with the completion of your CV. You can also find some very useful information on making applications on the Graduate Prospects website: www.prospects.ac.uk.

Disclaimer:

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this publication at the time of printing. However, this information could be subject to change.

Accessibility:

If the information in this document is required in a different format, please contact us for assistance.

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