

HOW TO CREATE THE PERFECT CV



POSITIVE CAREER ADVICE

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive job market, it's more important than ever that your CV speaks directly to the hiring manager. It needs to make an excellent first impression and in doing so, whet the appetite of a prospective employer enough to want to meet you.

By following this step-by-step guide, you will create a CV that showcases your achievements, skills and career intentions, encouraging more interviews to help you secure the right job with the right employer.

This guide will cover:

- Vital Preparation
- Essential things you need to know
- CV Structure
- The importance of tailoring your CV



VITAL PREPARATION

Your CV is one of the most critical marketing documents you will ever write and with most employers taking just 6-10 seconds to review your CV initially, it's essential that the content, structure and layout quickly grabs the attention of the hiring manager.

It may have been a while since you last updated your CV, especially if looking for a new job hasn't been a priority until now. Don't worry. You're not alone. However, your CV will likely need a complete makeover as employer's expectations have changed drastically over the last few years.

With the world of work rapidly evolving due to advances in technology and automation, there's more to getting hired now than just qualifications and previous experience.

A CV needs to represent who you are, what you stand for, and what you want professionally, this calls for you to look inward and to ask yourself some questions. While this can feel like a daunting prospect, it is a vitally important exercise to complete to avoid applying for entirely the wrong roles which will undoubtedly affect your confidence and your self-esteem.

One of the most common mistakes people make is to launch themselves straight onto the Internet and start applying for jobs without really knowing which position they seek.

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VITAL PREPARATION

To ensure that you have a targeted approach to your job search, it's essential to understand what's important to you.

Spend some time answering the following questions and keep writing until you have responded to them all.

- Which responsibilities have you most enjoyed /least enjoyed in previous roles? and why?
- Where and when have you delivered your best work?
- What are your greatest achievements (career/academic/extra-curricular)?
- What business problems have you been instrumental in solving?
- Who has been your best leader and why?
- What are your minimum requirements (Salary/Benefits/Location/Size of company)?
- What do you want from your career?
- What skills do you want to develop and what experiences do you want to gain (next 1-5 years)?
- What type of organisational culture have you previously thrived in? Why?

Don't be afraid to ask someone you know who will help you with their opinion too.

Think about what your previous employer said to you in your last appraisal and feedback that you have received from colleagues, customers or suppliers. Putting yourself in the shoes of others will help you considerably with this exercise.

Also, don't just think about what you do at work. Think about the things you do outside of work too. So often, people miss transferable skills and strengths which we develop from achievements in our hobbies and interests.

Once you have completed this exercise, you will have more clarity on your:

- Your areas of specialism
- The skills and strengths that define you
- Your accomplishments (career, educational and extra-curricular)
- What drives you (your values and purpose)

Preparing well will help you to exclude information that is unnecessary on your CV and help you to speak more simply to your target employer, answering their most vital question, "why should I hire you?"



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ESSENTIAL TO KNOW

Be Concise and Relevant

A CV should be focused, which often means two pages in length. In some cases, a three-page CV is appropriate for more senior-level executives who have more content to add.

Including experience from over 15 years ago is often outdated, unless your experience is relevant to the role you are applying for or related to the company you are approaching.

A CV is a summary document; therefore, it should not tell the reader everything about your career. Job seekers often make this mistake.

CV's that look like a manuscript can be incredibly off-putting, and there will be a high likelihood that it won't receive much viewing time.

The Importance of Keywords

Whether you are responding to a job advertisement online or posting your CV onto a job board, ensure that you include keywords within your CV.

When responding to an online vacancy, mirror the keywords used within the job advertisement within your CV and repeat them throughout (be careful not to repeat them excessively).

If you are posting your CV onto a job board, research relevant keywords appropriate to the career you are seeking and again, filter relevant keywords throughout your CV.

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By doing this, you will not only help to make your CV more relatable to the hiring manager, but you will also be ensuring that your CV is easy to find.

Applicant Tracking Systems - A separate CV? (THIS IS A MUST READ)

Applicant Tracking Systems or (ATS) are used by organisations to help progress job applicants through the hiring process.

There are lots of myths and misconceptions surrounding ATS's, so I would encourage you to read my [guide](#) which will help you understand them better and support you to present the best version of yourself on-line to a prospective employer.

Avoid Cliché's

Job seekers often overuse clichés in their CV's. So, avoid words like hard-working, enthusiastic, passionate and driven. These are unsearchable words and take up valuable space on a CV and add no value to your application.

Instead, prove your capabilities by providing examples of your achievements and skills.

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ESSENTIAL TO KNOW

Make it easy for the Hiring Manager

How you structure your CV to draw the reader to your significant achievements first is critical.

Order your career history in reverse chronological order demonstrating your employment background (job titles, companies, dates, critical areas of duties and achievements)—most recent to past.

It may seem like an unnecessary comment to make, but so many CV's highlight their earlier career history first. If a hiring manager is only taking 6-10 seconds to review a CV, they will miss your most vital relevant and recent experience.

Also, avoid including a picture on your CV. It can make your CV look outdated. Only add a photo if it is essential legally.

Face your Barriers to being Hired

Everyone has barriers to being hired. Whether that's:

- Gaps in employment
- A job that was a mistake
- A jumpy career history
- A very long stint with one employer

If you have 'gaps in employment', show them on your CV. A hiring manager will spot them anyway. Think about what you learned during that time and find a way of showcasing your capabilities.

If you had 'a job that was a mistake', and many people do, don't miss it out (unless it was very brief). Instead show humility and describe why it wasn't right for you and what you learned from the experience. Never bad-mouth a past employer though.

If you have 'a jumpy career history', there are often good reasons why people move on or have undertaken temporary work for an extended time. Consider what new skills you learned.

If you have had 'a very long stint with one employer', show how your career has evolved. Perhaps you had different roles (show each role as you would if you had moved from one employer to another). Demonstrate how you have adapted to change and highlight this in your achievements.



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CV STRUCTURE

First Page

We know that we need to grab the attention of the Hiring Manager quickly, so the first page of your CV is vital.

If we look at the headline or as many people, refer to it, a Personal Profile, this section often contains too much unnecessary information and is usually littered with buzzwords and unsearchable clichés.

Instead, tailor your opening statement to who you are, the value you offer and your career goals. This can be tricky to create so refer to this [guide](#) to help you.

The next section should be 'Key Career Achievements'. In this section, it is vitally important to be as specific as you can. Demonstrating how you have excelled during your career, which, in turn, shows the value you can bring to a prospective employer. Use numbers and data where possible to prove your achievements and reference the year of the success to help the hiring manager join the dots.



Following this, there should be a section for your 'Key Competencies'. Tailoring them to the role that you are applying for will be essential. So ensure you look at the advert for the role you are applying for and mirror the language that's used in your CV to be more attention grabbing and relevant. This will also help you with getting past the automated sifting processes with Applicant Tracking Systems referred to earlier.

Next, create a summary grid showing your 'Career History' to date so that a prospective employer can review your career history quickly.

If you have recently attended University or College or completed qualifications or training courses which are relevant to the role you are applying for, you may wish to show these on your first page. However, if you attended an education establishment a while ago and it is less relevant to the role you are applying for, it may be better placed on the second page in a section just before your interests.

Second Page

Your second page of your CV is for you to elaborate on your career history now that you have enticed the hiring manager to want to read more. Be careful that it doesn't look like a shopping list of duties or a 'cut and paste' of your job description. Instead, demonstrate your capabilities and showcase your achievements.

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CV STRUCTURE

Second Page

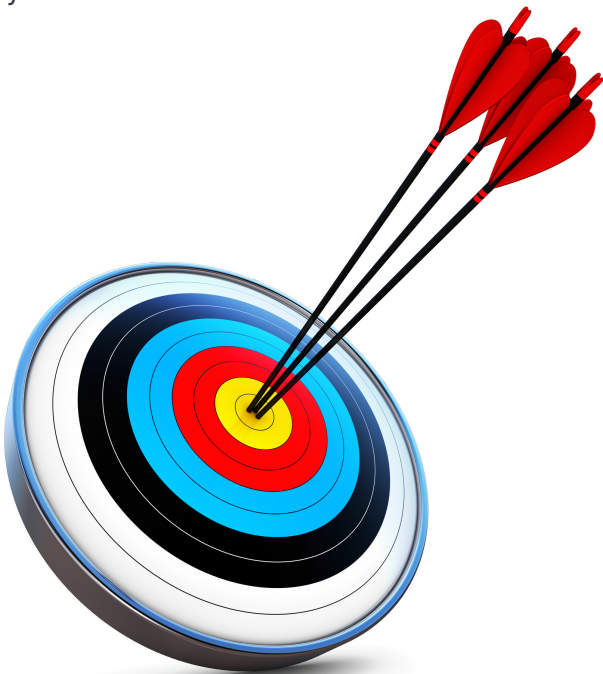
You don't need to go into war and peace, just show the 'relevant' skills and capabilities that you have and where you will add value through evidencing your achievements. Your interview is the time when you can elaborate and go into more detail.

Don't forget to add your Interests at the end of your CV. It's amazing how many hidden transferable skills are missed from extra-curriculum activities.

TAILORING YOUR CV

Employers want to know that you are a good fit, not just with your skills and experience but also personality.

Treat your CV as a working document and view it as a template that you will need to tweak for each company and role that you apply for.



In addition to adjusting keywords, you will also need to address any key points the company is looking for and potentially shift the order of importance of achievements and skills within your CV.

Most importantly, your CV should represent your experience in such a way that it supports your career goals. For example, if you are looking to remain in a customer service position your CV will 'paint the picture' of a well-qualified customer service executive, which is exactly who you are. Conversely, if your goal is to transition into a management role, your CV will describe how you may have trained and mentored others, taken on additional responsibilities, covered management in periods of absence, etc.

A CV WITH THE 'WOW' FACTOR!

Creating a CV with the 'WOW' factor takes time and thought. It's not an easy process, so resist the temptation to rush it.

Appreciating this can be tricky, especially when financial pressures are at play.

The investment you make to get your CV right at the beginning of your job search will increase your confidence, create the right mindset, give you pride in what you've achieved and will secure you more interview opportunities.