

Preparing your Curriculum Vitae (CV)

A CV is a self-marketing document. Properties of good marketing include:

- Eyecatching
- Well laid out
- Colourful
- Believable
- Interesting
- Factual
- Matches the market
- Brief
- Sells the benefits
- Easy to read
- Relevant
- Original
- Individual

Visual Impact

First impressions are vital. No matter how good your career history and skills match the needs of a potential employer, your approach could fail if you make it difficult for the reader to absorb relevant information, or simply fail to catch the eye.

If you are to become a 'marketable product' then you need to invest in yourself: use good quality, white or cream A4 paper. Reinforce the message of quality by produce your CV using an attractive, clean type face that has been laser printed. If you are emailing your CV, avoid Graphics, too many colours or a particularly flamboyant layout, consultants will want to see the facts re your current and previous roles in a logical layout detailing your responsibilities and achievements.

As your message must register quickly, make the reader's task as easy as possible. Ensure that your copy is well spaced out, with standard margins, and that key information is **boldly highlighted**.

It is often recommended that the ideal CV be confined to 2 sheets of A4 and whereas this has merit, it is not always necessarily appropriate. For some occupations, for example, it may be necessary to include lengthy detail, eg research papers, technical credits, etc. These are best placed in separate Appendices, which can be used as needed.

We suggest that you use as much paper as it takes to do yourself justice, without losing sight of the fact that you cannot afford to bore the reader anything more than 4 pages, and you really need to consider what is relevant to the specific role you are applying for

Content and Expression

The purpose of your CV is to generate interviews. Having made a good visual impact, you still have the task of convincing the reader that you are worth meeting. Whether you convey the detail of your CV in prose or point format is a matter of personal choice and style, but it is vital that you use words that describe an active and successful career to date. The words you use will allow the reader, sometimes subconsciously, to judge your personality and gauge how impactful you might be if you joined his/her company.

When preparing your CV, ask yourself the question, "What does the reader need to know?". Firstly, the reader does not want to be overwhelmed with unnecessary facts and figures.

Your career background must emphasise achievements, expertise and responsibilities. Quantify these wherever possible to give a clear understanding of your past levels of authority and achievement. Avoid statements such as 'limited experience of...' or 'quite knowledgeable.' Remain concise and positive.

Your CV must be an individual document and stereotyped phrases and format should be avoided. However, the following suggestions and layout meet current conventions and allow the reader to identify core information quickly.

The sections outlined below may be interchangeable to suit individual circumstances. For example, those with a thin employment record may wish to place Education and Training above Career Background.

Similarly, personal details (other than name, address and telephone number) may be positioned at the beginning or end of the CV.

SECTION 1 – Personal Details

Basic information only, including name, address and telephone numbers.

SECTION 2 – Profile

A difficult section to construct: a Profile is an optional element of a CV, but one that we recommend. It represents the Headline of your personal advertisement and gives the reader a concise overview of your skills, experience and aptitudes. For those with a limited career background, future aspirations may also be included.

SECTION 3 – Career Background/Employment History

Set out in reverse chronological order (ie most recent first), the last 10 years at most of your employment history. Unless you are considering a complete career change, emphasis should be placed on your current or last position as this is what your reader is likely to be most interested in. This section should emphasize and quantify key responsibilities and levels of authority, and can be set out either in block paragraphs or point form. Main achievements in each of your appointments should also be included.

SECTION 4 – Education and Training/Qualifications

Do not overload this section with lists of dates, schools and colleges, etc. Simply state what is relevant to the status of the job you are seeking. You should not confine yourself to secondary and further education: include any specialist training undertaken which may be apt to your next appointment, together with membership of professional bodies.

SECTION 5 – Interests

Again, include interests which are relevant, or might serve as a comfortable topic of discussion at interview. The area of leisure pursuits is often given inadequate attention by candidates. If expressed properly, they can be used to demonstrate valuable qualities of, for example, leadership, fitness or intellectual capability.

SECTION 6 – Optional Personal Details

Age, marital status, children, etc, are all details you may wish to include in your CV. However, you may feel that these are not relevant to your application, in which case they may be omitted.

Describing your Role

Use sharp words to describe what you have done, for example

Instead of

- Duties included the supervision of staff
- Responsible for departmental budget.
- Operated computer equipment
- Responsible for production in workshop

Try

- Successfully supervised and led a team of x staff.
- Personally controlled a budget of £...
- Trained on a variety of PC software, including...
- Increased unit output by 50%, utilising existing resources