



A guide to CV structure and layout

We have talked about some good font choices and suggested a good font size. We would recommend simple white pages with limited tables, outlines, ghosted images and shadow. Keep it simple and clear. The CV doesn't need to be completely void of character or personality but perhaps when you are done ask a professional colleague that has recruited people to critique your masterpiece.

NOTE: The first page is like a menu. If the reader likes what they see on the 1st page then they will be more inclined to read the 2nd and 3rd pages where more detail may be provided.

The first page should include;

- Name, Contact Details and Personal Information
- Profile / Summary
- Achievements
- Key Skills and Qualifications
- Employment Summary (optional)

Page 2 and 3 should include:

- Detailed Employment History
- Hobbies / Interests
- Additional Information

Contact Details:

Start of the CV with your full name and don't forget your contact details. Its usual to include your postal address, telephone numbers and email address. Some people chose not to provide their address. That is fine as most people converse via email these days. Other contact details include: Skype ID, LinkedIn profile link, etc.

Personal information:

Some people chose to provide details on Date or Birth, Marital Status, Gender, Nationality, Ethnicity, Driving Licenses, Disabilities, Religion, Political persuasion and sometimes even their Spouse and Dependants.

There is no obligation to provide this kind of information but be mindful that some employees will want to capture some of this information usually due to the requirements of the role or "right to work" in the geographical.

Provide what is necessary to the role (e.g. if it's a job that involves driving then maybe mention the appropriate licence.)

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Profile / Summary:

This is an important part of the CV and quite often left out. Think of it this way; if somebody met you at a networking event and asked who you were and what you did then this may be that opening pitch. This is a brief chance to showcase you and your experiences in a short and insightful paragraph. Its worth getting this right. Think about offering information like:

- Your key character attributes
- Professional background and experience
- What you bring to a prospective employer
- Your goals and ambitions (check alignment of course)

This is your “elevator pitch” and your chance to entice the reader to read on. Make it powerful!

Achievements:

Another aspect of many candidate’s CVs that can be sadly forgotten. Highlighting a selection of your most relevant achievements (professional and personal) are a wonderful way of letting the reader know more about you, what you have actually done and what you might actually bring to their business!

If your role is about saving businesses money, then give some holistic examples with real cost savings. If you are a Project Manager then showcase some real examples of projects you have delivered and the outcomes.

Keep to a few lines or “bullets” but keep the reader keen!

Key Skills, Professional Qualifications and Education:

Keep the key skills section to a brief table, section of bullets or lines that illustrate your most relevant and expert skills that relate to your chosen role. It’s sometimes useful to quantify experiences and skills where appropriate (e.g. Years of experience of “X” skill etc.)

Don’t feel you need to list everything and be aware that an interviewer may ask you to substantiate or demonstrate anything you put on a CV. Be fair and honest to yourself here.

Perhaps follow up with a list of some recent or relevant professional qualifications and training you have undertaken. You can always provide an appendix to compliment your CV if you need to.



Education

Most employers are interested in your highest level of achievement, so unless you are a school leaver there's no need to include your school qualifications. Be sure to highlight...

- Qualification type – Masters, Degree, HNC/D, A-Level etc (with grades)
- Subject studied and the name of the academic institute.
- Mention the length of the course and when you completed it.

It's important for recent graduates and junior professionals to provide more detail about their university courses and higher education. Perhaps provide a summary of the key most relevant modules completed, also projects (group and individual) with a brief description including your input, achievements and outcomes. Without much industry experience this is your best chance to showcase how you have applied your knowledge. Don't sell yourself short with 2 lines of text to summaries your 4 years of study!

NOTE: Relevant Internships, Summer Placements and Part time work should be described in an appropriate timeline. Don't waste space describing irrelevant roles (e.g. engineering graduates don't need to spend half a page describing their role in the local pub.)

Career Summary (optional):

Sometimes it's useful to provide a clear bulleted list of industrial employment. Reverse chronological is the most useful. Provide company names and the months and years of employment. Gaps can be and should be explained in the more detailed career history.

A note on employment gaps – Unexplained gaps and unexplained short employments (e.g. less than 2 years) often cause doubt in the reader's mind. Disperse this doubt with confident and factual but brief explanations.

Career History (detailed):

We said already that the first page is like a menu. It should capture the readers interest enough to want to find out more. It is within these next two pages that the reader can be impressed by a more detailed, but still concise, explanation of your work history.

Remember to highlight aspects of your work that are most relevant to the role which you are applying for. Avoid internal company jargon and job titles that have no meaning beyond the work place.

The Order:

Reverse chronological work history is best as the reader wants to know what you have been doing most recently. If they are convinced by the most recent employment, then why read on? Don't make them work hard for the information.



Title, Dates and Gaps:

Each employment / work history should be clear and defined with Job Title, Employer and dates of employment (months and years) and refer to our guide on “Career Summary” for an explanation on gaps.

Don't assume the reader will know exactly what your company does, or what the division you worked in was responsible for or the types of products or services offered were. Explain this briefly to help the reader understand the relevance of your employment. Perhaps include a weblink to the company to help the reader.

What did you do?

Don't paste in your full job description. Instead try this:

- Briefly outline the responsibilities of your job role
- Describe what you were involved with, the tasks performed, how you did them, the tools / skills used and other relevant tasks and responsibilities
- Also mention what you achieved and the outcomes of your time with the employer and how this benefited the business

NOTE: Employers look for “Return on Investment” or ROI with hiring new employees. What will you bring to their company and how will they benefit? At interview you can find out how being with the company will benefit you and what you will get for your invested time!

Remember, use more space for the most recent and relevant roles. Avoid jargon but at the same time don't forget to make it an interesting, factual and insightful read.

Hobbies and Interests

A lot of companies really value candidates who have hobbies outside of work, especially those that relate to the business you want to work for. For example – Engineering companies may want to hear that you fix cars, bikes, tractors, computers or attend the latest trade shows or work with schools to promote young talent into the trade.

Think about your real interests and hobbies and mention them. These can be great ice-breakers and interview and you will be surprised at how many people value common interests, social activities and hobbies in the work place.

This is also a great place for mentioning sporting achievements, charity work and other such activities that help lift your personality and character from the page.

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Additional Information:

If you have space and there is a need then perhaps save this space, or provide an appendix, to offer information about Referees (which don't always need to be provided until latter stages of the recruitment process), perhaps Publications, Awards, Technical Papers or Testimonials.

The finished document:

Now you need to check and proof read your CV for spelling mistakes and grammatical errors and don't rely on your PC's automatic spellchecker. Perhaps print out your CV to see how it looks on the page. What would you think if it was handed to you? Read it thoroughly and ask someone else for their feedback, preferably somebody that has been involved with recruiting people before and has enjoyed the pleasure of reading many CVs.

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