

Writing a CV and covering letter

CV Writing Tips

A CV is a short list of facts about you and your skills, achievements and career history.

Employers see hundreds of CVs on a day-to-day basis, so grabbing their attention and ensuring your CV stands out for the right reasons is vital. It's important that you are able to produce a CV and accompanying cover letter which highlights how your skills and experience meet the needs of the role you are applying for. This will determine how far you progress in the recruitment process.

A well-constructed CV is a great way to market and promote yourself to prospective employers. It can open doors to an interview and the possibility of a job.

The purpose of a CV is to:

- Promote your strengths and what you have to offer in relation to the role you are applying for;
- Set you apart from other candidates by promoting your uniqueness;
- Secure you an interview.

What to include in your CV:

- Your name, email address and contact number.
- Personal profile - a short summary of your key strengths and achievements.

This is a short statement at the beginning of your CV detailing your key strengths i.e. your skills, experience and personal attributes that set you apart from other candidates. Tailor the statement to the requirements of each job that you apply for, so that you make it clear to the employer that you're the right person for the job. You should avoid using pronouns such as 'I' and 'my'. Use no more than 25-40 words.

- Career summary:
 - Current job title with date employment commenced/ended,
 - Previous job titles with date employment commenced/ended (in date order),
 - Gaps and what you have been doing during this time.
- Training you have completed or are undertaking where this is relevant to the role.
- Education & qualifications.
- Interests/hobbies (relevant to the skills and attributes required for the role).

CV Writing Hints & Tips:

- Make sure you understand the role you are applying for and what the organisation requires. Use the job description, person specification and the internet to research the requirements. The person specification is a profile of the personal skills, qualifications, abilities and experiences employers will be seeking evidence of.
- It is important to tailor your CV to the most important requirements of the role and organisation you are applying for - it is unlikely that one CV version will fit all jobs.
- Include skills and achievements from your personal life which are relevant to the job too.
- If you have had several roles in a short amount of time it can be useful to include one line to explain why you have moved roles often.
- Often people don't know how far to go back with their career history. It is important to include the skills and experience you have in relation to the role you are applying for. Those jobs you did over 10 years ago are still important but you don't need to provide as much detail in comparison to roles you have been doing in recent years.

Tips to Structure Your CV:

- Keep it brief - remember less is more so aim for 1 - 2 pages.
- Keep the presentation simple and the layout clear.
- Use a Arial or Times New Roman font.
- Use font size 10 – 12.
- Most relevant and recent information should be first - you need to get your key messages across quickly and strongly at the beginning of your CV.
- Don't include non-essential information - e.g. marital status, age, number of children, primary/secondary schools attended etc.
- Check for accuracy - ensure there are no spelling or grammatical errors.
- REMEMBER to keep a copy to help you with your preparation for interview knowing which CV you have submitted for which job.

Information you do not need to include in your CV:

- References - you can state that references can be provided upon request so that you can ensure the most up to date reference details will be provided to the organisation who have requested them.
- Photographs - are not required to be provided on your CV.
- Health details.

- Any negative information in relation to past employers/organisations you have worked for.

Some organisations may also request a cover letter to be submitted along with your CV application. This can either be attached along with your CV, or incorporated within your CV, providing an introduction to you and your experience to the employer. The cover letter should be kept brief but should highlight your key achievements, why you are applying for the role and how you can demonstrate the skills and experience required (briefly!).

Completing Application Forms

Some organisations will require you to complete an application form to apply for a job rather than providing your CV. Application forms are designed to provide organisations with all of the information they need, in a consistent format and also to allow you to provide specific examples of how you meet the requirements of the role. Apply the same principal you would if you were preparing your CV:

- Make sure you understand the role you are applying for and what the organisation requires. Use the job description, person specification and internet to find out as much detail as possible
- Ensure you focus on your key skills and achievements in relation to the criteria and requirements for the role.
- Focus on what you are able to bring to the role/organisation and your unique selling points.
- Include relevant transferable skills and achievements from previous roles or achievements that are relevant to the job.
- Ensure you provide specific examples detailing your skills and experience and that these relate to the application form questions.

In addition;

- You may wish to complete the application form questions offline first and then transfer your answers to the application form when you are ready to submit it. This will allow you time to review and amend your answers before submitting them.
- Complete ALL of the relevant boxes, provide ALL of the required information and in the correct format e.g. job history and titles, dates, reasons for leaving etc.
- **DO NOT** write 'refer to CV' as a substitute for answering questions in the application form properly unless there is an option for you to submit a CV in addition to your application form.
- Check your application form for errors, i.e. layout, grammar and spelling - you may find it helpful to let someone you know to do this for you.

- Remember, application forms are legally binding and give employers the right of disciplinary action in the future if false statements are made. It is important that all information is correct and all questions are answered honestly.
- Keep a copy of your application form to help you with your preparation for interview.