

What makes a good CV?

A CV is a very personal document and as a result the most important thing is that it reflects you, your personality and your achievements.

Having said that, there are some tips that everyone can follow to make sure that it presents you in a professional light:

Structure

Length – keep your CV as short as you possibly can, whilst ensuring that all the relevant information is contained. If senior executives can get their CV down to two pages then so can you. You can increase the margin width and reduce the font size to pack more in – however with each piece of information ask yourself why you have included it and what you think it will add to a potential employer's impression of you.

Chronology – make sure that all the dates tally. If you have been travelling mark the dates clearly. Don't leave unexplained gaps, as people will assume the worst.

Look and feel – your CV needs to be easy to read so use a font that looks professional. Use bullet points and tables to make the text neat and aligned.

Grammar and Spelling – careless mistakes here will create a very poor impression, especially if you have highlighted attention to detail as a key strength. Always spell check your CV and ask other people to read it through for you.

Content

Work experience – start with your most recent experience, as that is what employers want to see first. Try to focus on measurable results rather than tasks as this provides good evidence of your ability to add value in the workplace. Don't assume that the company that you have worked for will be known a future employer – if it isn't a FTSE 250 company provide a short statement of the type of work the company does.

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Extra curricular activities – list the activities that will really impress an employer. Focus on those that are most recent, rather than those that took place 5 years ago. Do expand on activities that may be relevant to the role and ensure that you highlight those aspects of your experience that would be most transferable to the workplace.

Photographs – these are becoming increasingly common on CVs. Our personal view is that they don't add anything, as most reputable employers screen on experience alone. If you do want to include a photograph, make sure that you look professional.

Personal statements – these are optional and very much a matter of personal taste. If you are going to write a personal statement make sure that it is short, relevant to the job for which you are applying and doesn't read as though you have copied it straight out of a "How to Write Your CV" guide.

Tailoring – it is worth spending half an hour tailoring your CV for each role that you are applying for. This allows you to use valuable space for relevant information.

Contact details – provide a mobile number if you have one, as well as a home number. Use a personal email address rather than your university one as this will expire once you graduate. Remember that your CV may stay on file for a period of time so if your contact details change you won't hear about great opportunities.

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