How to write a CV….

What is a CV?

Loosely translated as *'the course of my life'*, a Curriculum Vitae or CV is a concise document which summarises an individual's experience, achievements, character and unique skills. Not to be confused with an autobiography, a CV should be 1-2 pages long and is really a snapshot of your academic and professional life. It's basically your very own personal marketing document, used to sell yourself to prospective employers!

What should be included?

The structure and content of your CV is flexible, depending on the role you're applying for, but there are some sections employers expect to see, no matter what…
The essentials:
- Contact Details
- Personal Profile
- Key skills
- Employment History (if you have one!)
- Education
- Achievements
- Hobbies / Interests
- References

1. Contact Details

It may seem obvious but, positioned at the top of the CV, should appear your full **name**, **email address** and a **contact number** (can be mobile, home or both). Note: no need to put the title 'CV' or 'Curriculum Vitae'- that's a waste of valuable selling space!
Including your full address is preferable, but not essential. Some people are reluctant to share personal information but, you should at least have the town/city you live in as, depending on the employer, some may require a candidate to have a permanent address or will need to know your location in relation to where the role is based.
You may include a link to your LinkedIn profile in this section too (only if it's up to date), but do not be tempted to add a link to Facebook, Instagram or attach a photo - keep it professional!

2. Personal Profile

Perhaps the most important part of your CV, this is the introduction to your CV and yourself! It's your autobiographical book blurb or the glossy cover of your personal marketing brochure.
Every time you apply for a new position, you should look closely at this section and make sure it is relevant to the role you're applying for. If not, tweak it! Applying for a job in retail? - Tell them about your excellent customer service focus…Looking at an administrative role?- Highlight your organisational skills and attention to detail.
This section should be no longer than 5-6 sentences, so no waffling! If you lose their interest here, you may be lost forever in the 'no' pile.

3. Key skills

It's been claimed that you've got 6 seconds to make an impression so, somewhere near the top of your CV, it's often a good idea to include skills that will immediately appeal to your

potential employer. These can be bullet points. It's best to include a mixture of soft and hard skills to demonstrate your people/social/communication skills and character as well as your technical skills. If you're starting out and feel your technical skills are somewhat lacking, work on your soft skills to show your potential.

Unsure what to write? Think about it as the difference between who you are and what you can do (that can be taught). Here are some examples:

Soft skills	*Technical skills*
Teamwork	Data analytics
Interpersonal	Social media
Flexibility	Marketing
Communication	Programming
Problem-solving	Project management
Time management	Statistics
Positive attitude	
Strong work ethic	
Highly motivated	

Remember, many skills can be gained and demonstrated through your experiences in education, hobbies and/or voluntary work. They don't necessarily require a work history to prove you have them! Think outside the box a little... Known as the best at organising the end of year party? That'll be down to your organisational skills, marketing and, no doubt, social media know-how! Got a 100% attendance/registration record? Shout about it! It tells me you're a healthy, motivated individual with a strong work ethic, you have good time management and can be relied on to turn up to work!! Do you fund your expensive taste in trainers through a lucrative Ebay 'empire'? You have great marketing skills!

4. Employment History

Include your work experience (if you have any) in reverse chronological order, starting with the most recent first. Hopefully your most recent role is the most relevant to your future employer.

Keep it simple for the recruiter and layout your experience in this manner:

Job title and duration of position held (e.g. Project Co-ordinator - Jan 2017 – Oct 2019)
Name of Company
List of your key responsibilities and achievements…. But keep it **concise** and **relevant** to the role you're applying for!

5. Education

This is the opportunity to list your grades and certifications! Like your employment history, list your educational achievements in reverse chronological order. Keep it relevant and do not feel like it is necessary to include every single course/grade.

Are you unsure what to write because you still haven't finished your course? No need to worry, you can also put your predicted results!

6. Achievements

You may feel like as a student it is a little too early to list achievements on a CV, but this is certainly not the case.

Think back to anything you have achieved or participated in at school...Were you selected to be the captain of the rugby/football/netball team? Are you a Prefect, head teacher's

ambassador, a student mentor or on the student council? Have you done something amazing for charity? These achievements can tell an employer a lot about your commitment, passion, team and leadership skills.

7. Hobbies

Mentioning your interests allows your personality to shine through. Try to avoid clichés like 'reading' (unless you're applying for a job in the library and, if you are applying for a journalism role or something similar, then highlight your passion in creative writing). While you should be completely honest about your skills, when it comes to hobbies, there are some things you may strategically choose to leave off a CV!... However true it may be, it's best not to put: 'socialising' or spending 'all-nighters on FIFA' (even if you've "completed it"!) and find other ways to get across your gregarious nature and IT/computing skills! If you are still struggling to decide what are the best hobbies to put on a CV then check out this list below...
- Sports
- Volunteering
- Learning a new skill in your spare time (e.g. coding, sign language)
- Blog writing
- Travelling

8. References

References are people nominated as referees who are happy to testify about your character, attributes and verify anything you may have mentioned on your application.
We know they'll give a glowing reference but unfortunately, you can't cite your mum, best friend, Grandad etc as a reference contact. However, here are some more suitable examples to put on your CV:
- Teacher
- Colleague
- Supervisor
- Former employer
- Tutor
- Sports coach/manager

If in doubt you can simply write 'references available upon request'.

Dos

Keep your CV to 2 A4 pages

Use a clear font type like Calibri, font size 10-12, with bold headings and clear margins around the page (around 2.5cm). Comic sans will not get you taken seriously!

Tailor your CV to the job advert – pull out keywords and include these in your personal profile and skillset list

Let your personality shine through – if you have little or no work experience, use the space to say more about your achievements in school or skills gained through hobbies and personal interests

Don'ts

Don't include a photo- while its 'the done thing' in other countries, this is not common practice in the UK. That said, if you're applying for a job internationally, it's worth doing your homework to check if the company require one!

Don't include your age, date of birth or marital status… these are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, therefore against the law for employers to ask about this. So, don't include them on your CV!

Keep it relevant! Unless you're in the medical profession (which requires a list of all jobs since training) or involved in a number of different projects for the IT industry, most employers do not need to see details of every job you've ever done.

Keep it real! If any information on your CV is embellished, exaggerated or false you will find it impossible to back this up at interview and end up looking untrustworthy or having to tell more lies…

Don't use *fancy fonts* – *you don't want employers to waste valuable time deciphering lettering….*

Don't forget to cheque for spilling errors or poor grammar. You don't want that to be the thing what makes you stand out from the crowd. Oh, and don't rely on spellcheck-It won't highlight actual words (like cheque or spilling) or notice if you claim to speak French and Spinach!

Don't use technical jargon or vocabulary that you don't fully understand. If you use words or phrases in the wrong context it will make lack of experience appear more obvious.