

CV Complete Guide

This leaflet can help you write a winning CV. It covers:

- tips for successful CV writing
- examples of typical CV styles
- some guidelines on layout and the all important 'Do's and Don'ts' to keep in mind

A curriculum vitae (CV) is a brief summary of your achievements and skills and is sent to recruiters when applying for jobs, training places and, occasionally, courses of study.

There is no such thing as the perfect CV! There are no set rules about CV writing and the structure and format can vary significantly depending on the purpose. We will look at the two main styles, chronological and skills based, but will also touch on academic and creative CVs and CVs for part-time work.

- Two sides of A4 are currently considered the right length for the first two styles. Academic CVs can be longer whilst part-time CVs may be shorter. All CVs should be targeted and include details of relevant skills and attributes you have, your education and any work experience, with dates, interests and achievements. Some employers may also ask for details of referees.
- Keep the CV concise, clear and well presented - make sure the spelling and grammar are correct.
- Your CV must be very positive and make a strong case to the reader. It is a piece of personal marketing, your means of 'selling yourself', and needs to be more than just an account of what you have done!
- Remember, in most cases, it will be the first impression that the recruiter will have of you - so make it count as an employer may only read your CV for as little as 10 seconds!

How to put together your CV

Start by writing down what you have been doing, perhaps beginning with your degree. Then write down details of jobs, voluntary work, and external interests and so on. Write as much detail as you can - rough notes will be fine to begin with. This body of information will form an 'Evidence Bank' that you can draw on for any subsequent CV or application that you might write.

You can then start to target your CV. Refer to the Job Description and Person Specification to see what the employer requires and then pick out the most important and relevant evidence relating to the sorts of opportunities for which you are applying. Some employers electronically scan CVs and applications to check for Key Words so you should use terminology which is relevant to the vacancy. A well-organised Evidence Bank will help you find any relevant evidence.

Tip

You must target your CV. This means, for example, if you are a History student seeking a graduate opportunity in retail, you need to state in your CV any aspects of your course, work experience, part-time jobs and so on, that demonstrate the skills demanded by retail employers. Remember - the focus of your CV should be what you are offering the employer with regards to the requirements of the job.

CV layout

What your CV looks like is as important as what it says, so it is essential to think about the layout.

The mark of a good CV is one that can be scanned quickly but will still enable the reader to pick up all of the main points and be impressed by what they see!

Tip

You can start your CV with a brief profile or objective - just a few lines, highlighting key information that will be of interest to the reader. Think of it as being like a newspaper headline or a 'sound bite,' designed to capture interest at the start! If you choose to do this, you must do it well as this will be the first item on your CV to be seen by the recruiter.

Keep in mind the following points when considering layout:

- When recording events, write them in reverse chronological order, with the most recent first.
- Make sure that your most impressive details are on the first page - this could be your skills, work experience, degree and other achievements.
- Use clear sections with headings and maybe sub-headings, that can be easily followed.
- Use small spaces between main sections. This reduces density of text and is easier to read.
- It is favourable to write in the first person – but avoiding pronouns such as 'I', 'me', 'my', 'we', 'us' etc.
- Use short phrases - bullet points are good. Avoid too much text.
- Use bold to denote new sections rather than underlining.
- Avoid italics and font types that may be difficult to read. Fonts like Arial or Verdana (11 or 12pt) are good.
- Allocate more space to important items - your degree perhaps, or a relevant placement.
- Avoid using tables, graphs, charts and so on, unless they are really important or have been specifically asked for. They can be difficult to manipulate and take up too much space.
- There is usually no need to include photographs in your CV.
- Contact details at the top of the CV should be brief and printed across the top to save space. Double-check to make sure you have made no mistakes.
- Try to include action verbs that convey a positive attitude. Show an employer what you can do and to highlight your achievements. Action verbs make employers take notice!

Examples of action verbs include:

Achieved	Adapted	Arranged	Clarified	Communicated	Composed
Co-ordinated	Created	Developed	Delegated	Directed	Drafted
Edited	Enhanced	Established	Explained	Facilitated	Generated
Hosted	Incorporated	Improved	Influenced	Initiated	Interpreted
Managed	Maintained	Negotiated	Remodelled	Replaced	Restored

For more examples see our Action Verbs guide available on our website www.port.ac.uk/careers

Using the above ideas, typical phrases could go something like:

“Responsibility for interpreting company guidelines on health and safety; this provided opportunities to gain experience in problem solving, drafting advice, communicating information and negotiating with department managers.”

or

“Summer placement included work on co-ordinating marketing campaigns and adapting web content to increase sales.”

Tip

Try using an action verb as a leading word to your sentence/bullet points, this will help to make your writing more direct. Also, do not send out a generic CV every time. You need to amend your content or format to suit each job - this again, is how you target!

The following examples on the next few pages provide some practical illustrations of how a CV can look. There are several CV examples on our website so please take a look

www.port.ac.uk/careers

Chronological CV

This is a very popular style. It has been around for a very long time and employers are used to seeing this style of CV. It is very easy to put together and its main emphasis lies in promoting your skills and achievements to the reader through the events of your recent history (for example, your degree or a summer internship). It can be especially useful if your degree or work experience relates closely to the jobs for which you are applying.

Skills-based CV

Skills-based styles of CV, as the name suggests, stress on the first page important technical and transferable or interpersonal skills that you may have acquired and demonstrated in various contexts. It can be useful if you have a lot of work experience and is especially good if you want to draw attention to important skills. Create some skill headings on the first page and then choose a few examples of activities you have completed which demonstrate those skills.

Academic CV

An academic style of curriculum vitae can be used if you are applying for specialised types of post, after a higher degree such as a doctorate. In this style of CV, you will need to include more about the research you have completed, conferences attended, special skills you have acquired (specific software, for example) academic prizes, any papers you may have written (or to which you have contributed) and poster presentations.

Part-time CV

The degree you are studying is unlikely to be relevant for the part-time opportunities you are applying for. Therefore, it will be useful to focus on the skills you are developing through studying in general and any skills developed from previous experience, and as a result you may want to consider using a skills-based CV layout.

To ensure that your CV is targeting the job, it will be helpful to identify the skills the employer is looking for. Part-time vacancies may not always have a full job description so you may need to find a generic job description for that kind of role. Examples of this can be found at:

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/advice/planning/jobfamily>. It can also be helpful to include your availability in your profile especially if the employer has specified shift requirements.

Creative CV

If you have studied an art and design subject and are applying for a creative post, you may want to consider producing a CV that demonstrates your creativity. We suggest that you visit Purple Door and look at the 'Creative CV Guide' which provides many examples of creative styles in various areas of the industry such as graphic design, architecture, illustration, photography and fashion design. Creative CVs have examples of your own images within the text of the CV and can distinguish your creative talent from those of competitors. The images used need to be your own work.

Tip

You do not always have to produce a creative CV for a creative job. If you can reference a blog or website that gives you an online presence that an employer can visit to view examples of your work, this could suffice and a non-creative format CV can be used.

Finally some “Dos and Don’ts” to help when writing and adapting your CV

Do

- Target your CV to a particular employer.
- Allocate more space to issues that matter - your skills, your work experience, your degree.
- Present your CV well - neat, clear, correct spelling and grammar.
- Keep to 2 sides of A4 paper (unless instructed otherwise).
- Use short phrases - bullet points might help.
- Use action verbs to make a positive impression.
- Use the CV checklist available in Purple Door or in the “Download Zone” on our website to make sure you have all the relevant information on your CV.

Don’t

- Leave long gaps in your list of activities (such as work or education) - employers will wonder about significant periods of unexplained time.
- Use italics or elaborate fonts that are hard to read.
- Use too many words.
- Send out the same CV every time you apply for a job - remember you need to target for a particular employer, job or industry.

Disability disclosure

The decision whether to disclose a disability to an employer is often a personal one and may be based on a number of factors such as the nature of the disability and the demands of the role being applied for. If necessary, speak with a Careers Adviser or contact the employer direct before submitting the CV to discuss any support that may be required during the selection process or in the role itself. If disclosing disabilities, always do so in a very positive manner, explaining any assistance that may be needed.

Further help

Please visit The Careers and Employability Centre if you need assistance with the completion of your CV. The Careers and Employability Service website has some useful information and a video tutorial which offers a step by step guide on writing a CV:

www.port.ac.uk/careersandrecruitment/careersadvice/cvsandinterviews/cvs

You can also find some very useful information on CV writing on the Prospects website:

www.prospects.ac.uk

Disclaimer: Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this publication at the time of printing. However, this information could be subject to change. Updated January 2018.

Accessibility: If the information in this document is required in a different format, please contact us for assistance. Careers and Employability Service, 28 Guildhall Walk, T: **02392 842684**, W: www.port.ac.uk/careers

Example of a Chronological CV

Amanda Mason

23 Rough Common Road, Hertfordshire, SG15 7BK

mason@yahoo.com.uk

01234 111222

Second year History undergraduate with experience of freelance editing and proof reading, experience of producing writing for a range of local and national publications, seeking a work experience placement in newspaper Journalism.

EDUCATION

2014 – 2017

University of Portsmouth BA Hons History

Degree focussed on studying modern European and American history and included subjects such as: Politics and Culture of 19th Century Russia; The Rise of the United States since 1880; The Concept and Art of Warfare in Europe and North America 1800 – 2000; Empire in crisis – the Soviet Union and its collapse; The Legacy of the Second World War – reconstruction and reconciliation since 1945.

This course combined theoretical study and project work, developing transferable skills in:

- presenting strong written arguments by selecting and communicating findings in a structured, coherent and persuasive manner for example, for presentations to students
- conducting research using different tools and sources such as news archive material and government records
- working independently, setting own deadlines and managing workloads effectively for example for projects on media relations and history of broadcasting
- conducting reflective thinking and research, especially in relation to final dissertation
- working in teams, with groups of five to ten fellow students to manage course projects on the history of news reporting in Europe

2007 – 2014

Hertford Collegiate School, Portsmouth

- A-levels including Art (B), English Literature (B), History (C) and General Studies (B)
- AS level in French (C)
- 10 GCSEs grades A*–C, including Maths, English and Science
- Governor's prize for outstanding academic achievement

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

May 15 – Present

President / founder member and Publisher University Comedy Society

- Launched a project to produce a brand-new campus publication in the shape of an alternative student magazine
- Implemented new club, Comedy Time, to support the project, which raised over £400 from sponsorship deals with local businesses to fund first and future editions
- Sourced and organised access to publishing facilities
- Researched and arranged platform for publicity and distribution
- Regularly commission articles and write editorial for the publication
- Illustrated material for initial launch publication and continue to illustrate subsequent editions

TIP: Target your CV to match your skills to the requirements of the job specification.

TIP: Your profile is an introduction to your CV and should only be 2-3 lines long. You should cover; who you are, what you have experience in and what you're looking for, try to use job title the company uses.

TIP: You don't need to mention all your modules just the ones that are relevant to the job you are applying for.

TIP: Mention the skills gained on your course including any IT packages you can use. Remember to say how you gained the skill. E.g. Team work skills gained from undertaking group projects.

TIP: No need to mention all your GCSE's, just sum them up mentioning Maths, English, Science and any other subject that may be relevant to the job you're applying for.

TIP: Split work experience into two categories if you can; Relevant Work Experience and Other Work Experience. It does not matter if it was part time, full time, paid or voluntary. Make sure your relevant experience is on the first page.

Feb 14 - May 14 **Writer for charity newspaper**

- This role involved writing a series of articles on the subject of sponsorship
- Responsibility for advising the fundraisers on circulation strategy
- Assumed an active role in the production of the newspaper, including membership of the editorial team of five people

Feb 13 - Mar 13 **Campaign co-ordinator for Mock Election**

- Took charge of campaigning for the mock GREEN party
- Conceived and designed various posters, implemented a publicity campaign
- Co-founder and writer for sixth form History magazine
- Set up a magazine along with a team of five other students
- Negotiated and received a budget of £200 to cover magazine overheads
- Injected creativity into the design process
- Wrote the front page article for the first issue and sought out various other contributors
- Distributed the magazine, utilising various forms of publicity

OTHER EXPERIENCE

Feb 15 – present **Bartender**
University of Portsmouth Students' Union

- Working in a team of five staff to provide efficient bar and food service in a busy work environment
- Liaising with kitchen staff, external suppliers and sponsors of events
- Managing financial records and ensuring safe storage of cash of up to £5,000
- Using leadership and management skills to co-ordinate and deliver training for new staff on service techniques and safety legislation

May 14 – present **Administrative Assistant**
Hertford Collegiate Enterprises Ltd

- This is an ongoing vacation job which involves:
- Establishing and managing booking database for company community sports centre
- Managing software updates and training staff
- Regularly setting up and serving silver service for weddings, assuring good professional standards and impeccable personal presentation

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 2014 Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce Prize for creative writing

HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

- Enjoy drawing and painting, particularly landscapes
- An active member of UKC's Mountaineering Club, taking part in events and trips over the past year
- Cycle as a means of transport around Portsmouth, and swim frequently

REFERENCES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

TIP: Always put your most recent work first. Try to avoid personal pronouns, don't write I did this or that, and use bullet points; it makes it easier for an employer to read.

TIP: In your other work experience, focus on the skills you gained from your jobs rather than what you did i.e. instead of "I cleaned glasses or served drinks at the bar", you could write developed time management skills from working shift patterns.

TIP: In additional information you can include any prizes, driving licence information or anything else you have not mentioned in the above sections that may be relevant to the job. If you don't have anything further to add you can remove this section.

TIP: Your hobbies can be another place to sell your skills, e.g. playing five aside football has developed teamwork and communication skills. But be careful and think about how the employer will view you.

TIP: References take up room on your CV with someone's personal details so state that they are available on request to save space.

TIP: Make sure your CV is only 2 pages!

Example of a two page skills-based CV (little or no work experience)

Latisha Granger

Flat 8C, 26 Blithe Place, Notting Hill, London W12 4UB

Telephone: 01234 567891

Mobile: 07712 123456

Email: latisha.granger@nogmail.com

A recent Product Design and Innovation graduate (with IMechE accreditation) who has knowledge of fundamental product and industrial design topics as well as strong communication, teamwork, research and analytical skills. Seeking an entry level graduate position with a design and manufacturing company.

Relevant Education

2013 – 2016

University of Portsmouth

2:2 BSc (Hons) Product Design and Innovation

(Course accredited by IMechE for Incorporated Engineer Status)

2010 – 2013

Witney College of Technology, Science and Design

3 A levels: Science (A), English (A) and Mathematics (C)

Employers only get a few seconds to initially look at your CV. Therefore carefully consider your structure, style and subject matter, and you should aim to make your front page a 'power page'.

Skills and Abilities

Product Design Skills and Knowledge:

Use specific examples of how you have developed your abilities. (You could also refer to field trips or site visits.)

- Gained a thorough understanding of product design (as a concept, creation and development of ideas) as well as computer aided product design through units such as 'Technology Concepts', 'Illustration Techniques', 'Computer Aided Product Analysis, Illustration and Visualisation' and 'Research Methods for Product Designers' studied at university.
- Experience using software packages such as AutoCAD, Inventor, SolidWorks and Photoshop as well as generating sample designs using computer-aided design (CAD), card models, sketches or hard prototypes as part of degree course.

Project and Time Management:

- Experience researching, sourcing and critically examining information or evidence analytically to assist in the construction of coherent arguments and judgment; for example, in final year of university studies, wrote a 10,000 word dissertation on the topic of '*Enabling Design Services and Support in Small and Medium Sized Enterprises*'.
- During university, gained the capacity to utilize time-management skills to set own deadlines and manage workloads effectively; ensuring the successful completion of assignments on time and to the highest possible standard.

Communication:

- Able to communicate complex information to individuals and groups, make presentations and respond to questions in both educational and workplace settings. Skills developed through degree programme and a charity fundraising experience for Great Ormond Street Hospital.
- Liaised with manufacturers during the production quotation and manufacturing phases of final year live project (at university).

Quantify your information - use of 'three years' implies a good level of experience and stability.

Leadership:

- For three years (2012-2015), was responsible for coordinating the work of two netball captains as well as the planning and management of training activities for over twenty netball players (aged from 16 to 50 years of age).
- Set up a regular meetings and training sessions within the local community to encourage and inspire new and current netball players (within the local authority) to engage in the sport.

Teamwork:

- Successfully integrated into group activities set by Technology Department and degree programme at the University of Portsmouth. For example, supported three 'open evenings' with eight other students which focused on promoting the notable works of final year students.
- Worked with ten team members to coordinate the process of raising and collecting monetary contributions for the Great Ormond Street Hospital 'Dance-a-thon' charity event.

Innovation and Creativity:

- While planning and organising the team's execution of fundraising activities for Great Ormond Street Hospital in 2016, took the initiative to design promotional materials to further the fundraising campaign.

IT literacy:

- Competent user of Microsoft PowerPoint, Word, Outlook and Dreamweaver applications.

Other Qualifications and Information

- 8 GCSEs including 'A's in Maths and Science (Carterton High School: 2005-2010).
- Awarded 'Top Student Award' in 2014. This was achieved for attaining the highest grades (within the student body of degree course) in the first year of studies.
- Raised £1,500 as part of a 24 hour 'dance-a-thon' fundraising event for Great Ormond Street Hospital in November 2016.
- Qualified First Aider. Completed St John's Ambulance three day first aid training course in December 2016.
- Possess a full clean driving licence.
- Mother tongue English. Basic understanding of French and Spanish languages.

Hobbies and Interests

- Enjoy keeping up to date with current affairs, news and trends in the design and manufacturing industry. Regularly read online resources such as 'dezeen' and 'Redshift'.
- Regularly play netball and passionate about fundraising for charity.

References

Available upon request