



PREPARING YOUR CV

Your Curriculum Vitae (CV) is the most important document that you will use in your job search, so it is vital you compile it correctly. Make sure it is clear, concise, relevant and sells you to your potential employer. Your CV will not assure you the position, but it gives you the opportunity to stand out and ultimately secure the first interview.

Due to the importance it holds, spending time now, thinking about and composing your CV will prove to be a wise investment for your future career.

Attention to detail

Like any piece of promotional literature, your CV needs to have great impact and content. When your potential employer reads it, your CV should capture their imagination in the first 20 seconds – selling you and your services. It must leave them in no doubt that they will benefit from hiring you.

As an agency, we have hundreds of CVs to look through for each vacancy and only a couple of hours in which to make an initial selection. It is very important that we can make that decision quickly.

The visual layout is of great importance. If your CV is difficult to read and information hard to find, an employer will move on to another CV. Use appropriate headings, section breaks and lots of 'white' spacing, in order to lead the reader effortlessly through the document.

Content

Exactly what will go into your CV will obviously vary from person to person. The most important thing to do is to compose it for the job-type for which you are applying, giving your strongest selling point first. This could mean that you will have more than one CV - each tailored for specific industries or positions.

You should be confident in and positive about your abilities, so make your achievements known if they are relevant to the potential employer. In doing so, however, remember to keep it as objective as possible and don't go into too much detail. This is reserved for the interview.

What to omit...

- Photographs: Let your potential employer get his first impression from you in person.
- Failure: Reasons for failing exams, marriage and business, for example, should be left out.
- Borders, patterns and graphics: A CV is a business document, not a comic one. Keeping it professional is essential.
- Links to your own website: This is too much information for the employer and unnecessary.

Layout and Headings

The order in which you place your headings can vary depending on your experience or the job type. A guideline would be to lay it out from the point of view of the reader, not the author. In other words, 'how can I make this easy for someone to read?' Make sure you call all of the following sections:

Personal details – This should include your name, address and contact numbers and must always be the first thing to appear on your CV.

Profile – This is a chance for you to sell yourself, but do not oversell. Keep the profile factual and objective. It should consist of a few sentences introducing yourself, your background and your current situation.

Major Achievements – This is your chance to let the employer know that you are successful, but remember to keep it factual and to the point. This section should include achievements, such as targets reached, record sales periods, examples and use of initiative. Only list 3 – 4 examples.

Employment History – This is a list of your previous employers. Concentrate on your experience in the last few years as this is of most importance to the employer. Start with your most recent/current role. Make sure you include the job title, description, dates of employment and, within the most recent roles, highlight the purpose, responsibilities and results achieved relevant to the job you want. Account for any gaps in your employment history, but don't go into depth. If the employer wishes to know more they will ask at interview. If your previous experience has been minimal, concentrate mainly on your qualifications and education.

Professional Qualifications – If applicable, include a brief listing of the relevant professional training you have received and accomplished. This section may also detail the professional organisations to which you hold membership.

Training Courses – Provide a list of the relevant training courses you have attended and when.

Education and Skills – The significance of this section will be dependent on your level of experience. Employers will, in general, be more interested in what you have achieved since you left the classroom, so it is normally sufficient to give a list of qualifications and/or a list of key skills.