

Writing a CV



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What is a CV?

A CV is a curriculum vitae – it describes your life and work to help you get a job.

Using your CV.

- **Speculative letters.** When you write to employers asking them to consider you for future jobs. If you send your CV too, they may keep your key information on file.
- **Job applications.** Some employers ask for a CV when you apply for a job. Some other employers only want an application form - it is easier to complete from information in your CV.
- **On-line and other forms.** Again, a CV means all the information is ready to complete the forms.

Writing your own CV saves money rather than using organisations that charge you for one.

More information.

We have used our years of experience to write this guide. But much information about CVs is similar. You can get more ideas from:

http://www.prospects.ac.uk/what_do_graduates_do_employers.htm

<http://www.totaljobs.com/careers-advice/cvs-and-applications/application-form-questions-one>









<http://www.londoncareers.net/features/smp/smp06112007.htm>

<https://nextstep.direct.gov.uk/gettingajob/cvsandcoveringletters/createacv/dialogs/Pages/CreateaCVHelp.aspx#about>



Information needed for all CVs.

Every CV should include the basic information shown in the table below (first column). You can choose to add all or some from the second column to make your CV stronger.

Must include:	Choose to include:
 Your name and full contact details.	
	 Key achievements. Choose to include examples that are going to impress the employer.
	 Personal summary. Choose to include a description of you as a person, your work background, skills and achievements, career ambitions. Just a few lines long – the headline to grab the employer’s interest with more information later.
 Life and work information. Include previous employers, dates and jobs held.	 Choose the style you prefer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Skills and Experience” style, or the • “History” style.
 Qualifications. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with your highest qualifications. • Include where you got the qualification (school, college name etc), the date it was awarded and, where appropriate, the grade. • Work qualifications/courses can be included. • You can miss out those that are old or are overtaken by higher qualifications if you are getting short of space. 	
	 Personal/additional information. “Reading” does not add a great deal. But you may have some relevant skills, experiences or achievements that you have not managed to fit in anywhere else. You might include having a driving licence or being able to speak another language. Use to explain any gaps in work if necessary.
	 References. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideally include two references, preferably one who has known you in a work situation. • Include names, how you know them (e.g. line manager, leader of voluntary organisation) plus their contact details.

Two CV styles for life and work information.

There are lots of different ways of setting out this information in your CV. Most people use the “history” style, but if you have gaps in your work history, you might find that the “skills and experience” style suits you better.

Work for Yourself programme. If you have spent time developing a business idea and/or become self-employed and run your business, this can be included in either your “history” or “skills and experience” CV. You can describe skills that you have used: market research, business planning, marketing and more plus what you achieved. Even coming to a decision not to start a business can show that you did research, analysed the business prospects and made an evidence-based judgement.

“History” style.

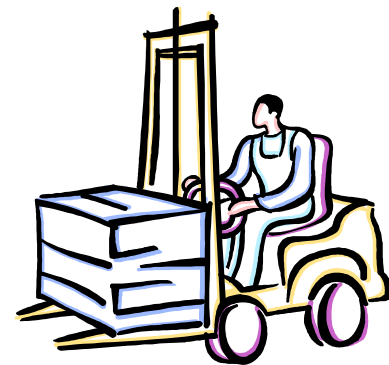
This style is useful to show:

- How your career has progressed.
- That you have worked in similar jobs.
- Who you have worked for in the past.

There is a shortened example on page 7.

Start with your most recent employer and work backwards. You should include:

- Name of employer.
- Dates employed.
- Job(s) – you may have had more than one.
- Responsibilities, skills used and achievements in each job:
 - Keep responsibilities short.
 - Write more about skills used and achievements.
 - Try to show how what you did in that job matches the new one.



If space is too tight to include every job, focus on the last 5 years and summarise the rest. If a previous job was very similar to the new job, make sure you show this.

Temporary and voluntary work should also be included where they help.

Avoid unexplained gaps. Time spent travelling, caring for others and recovering from ill-health can still add to your CV if you describe what you learned and achieved.

“Skills and experience” style.

This style is useful if you:

- Have had gaps in your work history.
- Want a new type of work.
- Have done lots of different jobs.
- Have important skills and experience from a job some time ago.

There is a shortened example on page 9.



Here is a list of the skills and experience that most employers want.

What Employers Want:

Self-reliance.	Working alone, willingness to learn, taking the initiative, planning, networking, organising your work.
People skills.	Working in a team, customer service, being diplomatic.
Leadership.	Taking charge of others, inspiring and managing them, organising their work.
Communications.	Talking, phone skills, presentations, writing, e-mailing.
Motivation.	Setting goals, achieving targets, ambition and commitment.
Policy and procedure.	Complying with Health & Safety plus other requirements, processes etc. so that work runs smoothly.
Flexibility.	Adapting to change, making changes, helping others to do so.
Decision making.	Making judgements on the facts, thinking about risks, making a decision and being able to back it up.
Problem solving.	Seeing a problem in the first place, identifying solutions and then resolving the problem.
Creativity.	Seeing a situation, service or product and working out how it can be improved, and then taking steps to make it happen.
General employment skills.	Specialist, occupational, technical skills and qualifications, computer skills and more.

Match your life and work experience to the headings.

You are trying to show how each heading applies to you by using examples from your life and work:

- Under “People skills”, you would include any good examples of working alongside other people such as customer service in a shop, working in a team in an office and getting on with new people in the Parent Teacher Association.
- But, for each of these examples, remember that you need to include the skills you used and your achievements in each role. So the first example could become “Excellent retail customer service skills: many of my regular dress shop customers asked for me by name as they valued my friendly, honest and diplomatic advice”.
- One job will probably give examples that fit several headings. So working in the shop also covered Policies and procedures: “Responsible for retail stocktaking which needed careful matching of ledgers with clothing labels so that new orders were always made on time and I could answer customers’ questions” - and more.



Now you can choose about six of the headings for which you have the best examples and include them in your CV.

Add the facts about your previous work. List your previous employers, dates and jobs. If you have included non-work examples under the headings, give those details too.

Changing this CV for a specific job. Most job vacancies include the skills and experience (or competences) wanted in the person specification. You can change your headings to use the same words as the person specification.

- For example, if they want “Adaptable to change”, just use these words instead of “Flexibility” and your examples will still work.
- If the person specification says that some skills and experience are Essential, don’t just ignore any gaps in your CV. You might say that you want to learn and develop this skill.
- If the person specification says that some skills and experience are Desirable, make sure you include any that you have (and don’t worry if you don’t have them all).

Key tips.

- **Keep it short.** Anything over 2 pages may be ignored.
- **Keep it looking simple.**
 - Standard fonts (no smaller than 10 point);
 - Eye-catching layout with bold headings, spaces between sections, bullet points, tables;
 - Check your spelling and punctuation;
 - Print on white paper.



- **Style.** People have different styles of writing so their CVs will differ too.
 - If space is too tight to write “proper” sentences, use more of a note form.
 - Avoid abbreviations unless they are well known to everyone.
 - Use business language and active words, for example: manage, operate, deliver, etc.

- **Avoid lists of jobs.** Saying what skills you used is better than just the job title. For example:
“Accounts clerk using SAGE to manage finances and EXCEL spreadsheets for monthly reports.”

- **Focus on what you have achieved.** Job duties and responsibilities say lots about the job but nothing about you. It's more powerful to say what you achieved especially when it saved your employer time or money. For example:
 - An accounts clerk might have achieved "All accounts were accurate and presented on time gaining praise from the Head of Accounting"; or
 - An engineer might have achieved "Production quotas were always met, with the lowest numbers for faults and waste".
- **Personal details.** You decide if you include anything about ill-health or disability – sometimes it can show your achievement in overcoming difficulties. You don't have to include information about your age, date of birth, marital status, family circumstances etc.
- **Getting references.** It's your choice whether to include two referees. Most employers will want references so it can help to identify them early.
- **Be positive but honest.** A CV is to put you in the best light and sell you to an employer. But be accurate and honest as an interview is not the place to get caught out.
- **Test your CV.** Ask referees, friends or family what they think. They may have some more ideas.



What do you think of our examples?

There are shortened examples of each CV style on the next pages. Do they work?

- Do they give you a good impression of these two imaginary people?
- Which parts of their CVs might impress an employer and why?
- Could you do better?
- Can you write something along the same lines about yourself?



“History” style CV example (shortened).

Jane Brown
1 High Street, Smaltown, Westshire AB1 2CD
jane.brown@e-mail.co.uk
Telephone: 01234 67890 Mobile: 07896 65432

Key achievements.

- Promoted to Director’s PA in recognition of my attention to detail and expertise in running accounting packages.
- Counselling over 100 victims of criminal offences to improve their recovery.

Personal Summary.

- Exceptionally organised PA and administrator who is versatile in operating wide range of IT packages and presenting information analysis.
- Experienced in managing and safe-guarding highly sensitive commercial and personal information.
- Good advocacy skills from voluntary work and Parent Teacher activities.

Employment history.

Victim support (2005 - present) - Counsellor.

I have manned the phone line as a voluntary counsellor providing advice and practical and emotional support for over 100 victims of crime, often acting as their advocate in discussions with other organisations. I learned the range of help available and produced a short leaflet summary for clients.

ABC Manufacturing (2000 - 2005) - Accounts clerk - promoted to Director’s PA 2002.

Member of accounts team responsible for all customer invoicing, I identified high value over due payments and took action to recover the debts. Using the SAGE accounting package, I was able to present accurate forecasts for Director meetings using PowerPoint. This helped the company create future plans and strategies to improve turnover. Promoted to PA, I was responsible for the Director’s appointments, correspondence and all personnel cost forecasts. The forecasts included the company’s pension liabilities and my analysis supported a change in policy and contributions.

Smaltown Solicitors (1995 - 2000) - Copy typist and filing clerk.

I was responsible for ensuring that legal documents and correspondence were produced accurately and to time. I created an improved filing system that allowed clients and their billing to be better cross-referenced, identifying the most profitable areas of the business. Managed filing system efficiently so that papers were correctly controlled and easily found.

Other temporary agency work (1994 – 1995).

Qualifications.

Company training course	2002	Basic First Aid.
Newtown college	2001	EXCEL and SAGE certificates.
Smalltown College	1994	Secretarial & basic accounting certificate NVQ Level 2.
Smalltown School	1993	GCSEs in English and French (Grade B) plus Mathematics and Science (Grade C).

Personal Information. Current driving licence. Active member of local Parent Teacher Association and managed accounting for uniform sales over three years so that donations to school prize fund increased annually.

References.

James Smith (former line manager)
ABC Manufacturing,
12 Old Street,
Smalltown,
Westshire
AB6 2DE
jsmith@ABC.co.uk
01234 987654.

Jenny Scott (head teacher)
Smalltown School,
West Road,
Smalltown,
Westshire
AB7 9FE.

“Skills and experience” style CV example (shortened).

John Brown
1 High Street, Smaltown, Westshire AB1 2CD
John.brown@e-mail.co.uk
Telephone: 01234 67890 Mobile: 07896 54321

Key achievements.

- Created new tooling process adopted by employer 2005.
- Managed trophy-winning amateur football club 2001-04.
- Metal work Apprentice of the Year 1995.

Personal Summary.

- Highly motivated specialist metal worker who uses initiative to achieve increased productivity.
- Has led team of co-workers in learning new production techniques.
- Contributes to local community sporting activities.

Skills and experience.

- **Self-reliance.** Using metal work tutors from local college and other contacts, researched an alternative production method for the company’s main component manufacturing and developed short-cuts that kept quality but reduced time and costs. I presented my ideas to the company and, after a trial period, they adopted my new process.
- **Leadership.** Responsible for welding team quality control so set standards and monitored production – reduced errors and wastage by 10% by using new checking process. Responsible for new apprentices: all trainees achieved their qualifications and number staying on with the company increased. Manager of local football team, introduced new training regime that improved team fitness resulting in winning amateur league trophy in 2003.
- **Team working.** Working on metal fabrication production line required work to be finished on time and to standard matching other team members – by all understanding what was required and working together, we increased productivity and reduced waste. Member of employee consultative group that negotiated for improved catering on site. Founder member of local football team responsible for obtaining donation of new strip to improve team spirit/identity.
- **Motivation.** Progressed from basic metal working and sheet cutting by gaining new skills, undertaking additional training. Developed organisational skills to become effective team leader. Maintained skills through hobby work while recovering from injury.
- **Employment Skills.** Highly experienced in metal fabrication working with aluminium, steel and iron to create parts for all types of vehicles and machinery. Specialist in precision welding. Hobby work making wrought iron furniture and garden pieces. Basic IT skills (production records, time-keeping, e-mails and Word documents).

Employment history.

ABC Manufacturing.	2000-2005	Fabricator and promoted to welding team leader 2002.
Smalltown Metal Sheet Ltd.	1995-2000	Sheet cutter and fabricator.

Qualifications.

Newtown College.	2001	Welding certificate.
DEF Driving School.	1999	Fork lift truck licence.
Smalltown College	1994	Metal working NVQ Level 3.
Smalltown School.	1993	GCSEs in English and French (Grade B) plus Mathematics and Science (Grade C)

Personal Information.

- Current driving licence.
- Keeping fit as member of amateur football team.
- Managing household while recovering from injury.

References.

James Smith (former line manager)
ABC Manufacturing,
12 Old Street,
Smalltown,
Westshire
AB6 2DE
jsmith@ABC.co.uk
01234 987654.

Jack Scott (captain football team)
34 West Road,
Smalltown,
Westshire
AB7 4DE
01234 765432.