

CV Writing Tips

Introduction

Your Curriculum Vitae is your opportunity to impress a potential employer with your skill set and experience. When applying for employment, your CV creates an impression about your professionalism, intelligence, and attention to detail, and is your one chance to communicate any key achievements and professional attributes. While you may earn the opportunity to portray yourself further at interview stage, first impressions count enormously – and these are given by the presentation and content of this very important document.

Studies have shown that a recruitment manager may spend only up to 15 seconds deciding whether to accept or reject a candidate based on the CV. And while each employment opportunity may generate an average of between 100 – 300 applications, only around 4 – 12 of these will make it to interview stage. As these figures show, the way your CV is written and the details it contains is of huge importance.

This document will assist you in writing the best CV possible. With information on writing your career objective, how to use headings and titles effectively, and what to exclude from your CV, this document is incredibly useful as a step-by-step guide to writing your CV from scratch, but also as a checklist to ensure you have covered any necessary points.

Take your time

In order to make your CV as impressive and detailed as possible, you will need to take sufficient time. Remembering all of your experience and key achievements is a difficult task in itself – you may not be able to remember everything all in one sitting. Taking a couple of days to note everything and perfect your CV is crucial to making the best impression possible.

Tip 1:

Make your qualities stand out

When prospective employers first glance at your CV, you want them to be able to immediately recognise your main qualities. There are various ways to do this:

- ▶ Write a short objective, personal statement or profile, which details your key professional attributes. A few sentences which can be quickly read will suffice, as long as your desirable traits are outlined.
- ▶ Type all skilled job titles in a bold face in order to attract attention.

Take a few moments to look at your CV after completing these steps and ask yourself whether your opening statements and occupation titles draw enough attention.

The following factors may need to be given some attention:

- ▶ Job titles – are they relevant?
- ▶ The layout – what information do the eyes first focus on?
- ▶ The use of font type and size – is the text easy to read?
- ▶ The use of bullet points – is the information clear?

As mentioned in the Introduction, when an employer first views your CV, it is the first few seconds which really count towards making an impression, so ensure you take time to perfect the beginning of your CV in particular.

Tip 2:

Using job titles to your advantage

It is important that you pay some attention to how you word your job titles. Whether in a positive or negative light, your titles will project yourself and your previous duties to an employer. While employers are not essentially concerned with job titles, the duties that accompany them are paramount, so it is essential your job titles are worded in such a way that they accurately reflect the role. Should you feel that a job title does not project a strong image of your experience, using Skill Headings may be the best option.

Skill Headings represent a collection of experiences across different jobs on account of which you have acquired the particular core skill in question. Examples of skill headings include transport management, site management, warehouse management, fleet liaison, technical support, administrative support, project administration etc. Note the difference between skill headings and job titles.

Tip 3:

The benefits of your skills

Although a CV is written in order to promote your skills and professional demeanour, the main message you want to communicate is how your skills will benefit the business. You need to provide examples of the results your skills have brought about, and what you believe the results would be of being recruited into the position in question.

By writing an achievements-orientated CV, the fruits of your skills should be very apparent. If your finished CV does not highlight the professional successes you have brought to previous employers, you should work to ensure it does.

Tip 4:

Writing a Career Objective

It is highly recommended that you begin your CV with a Career Objective. A Career Objective gives an employer / recruiter a large amount of information very quickly. An example of a Career Objective would be: **«Seeking a management position utilising training and team leadership experience»**

By using a Career Objective you will achieve the following:

- ▶ The employer will know exactly what position you are qualified for. This statement tells the employer what you want to do next in your career, and also gives a stronger view of your character: knowing where you are in your career and what you want to achieve next shows you have ambition.
- ▶ You immediately inform the first person who reads your CV (which might not necessarily be the person ultimately responsible for hiring) where it needs to be sent. Without this opening statement you might be leaving it to the judgement of the secretary or clerk as to where your CV should be sent.
- ▶ You have given the reader a lead in how to interpret the remainder of the information on your CV. By making this career objective at the beginning, you are making it clear that everything on the CV is written to strengthen and support the ultimate career objective.

Without a Career Objective:

- ▶ The employer will have to figure out what you are qualified for by deciphering the remainder of your CV. Since time is of the essence, where seconds are essential, then you do not want to let the employer or hiring manager think negatively.

Tip 5:
Formulating a Career Objective

Your Career Objective should be short, concise and straight to the point. At a maximum, two or three sentences should be adequate to communicate your aims successfully. Importantly, your statement should include two pieces of information: The position you are seeking and what skills you possess that qualify you for this position. Phrases such as, “Seeking advancement in career,” or “Looking to develop my skills in...” etc. are best not used in your objective, as they do not give an employer much information. Instead, try to give factual information in your statement, such as in the example below:

“Seeking a Warehouse Management position utilising my six years experience in Logistics, inventory control, people management and retail operations of over £5 million per annum. “

This type of objective is strong and impressive, which is exactly how the opening lines of your CV should be.

Tip 6:
Keywords

The Internet has provided countless opportunities for both candidates and clients alike. Amongst them, the technological age has advanced enough to allow clients to search for potential candidates by using specific keywords found in CV's. For example, an employer can search an entire database of several thousand candidates who might be suitable for an upcoming vacancy just by inputting a certain qualification, job title, or other relevant string into a search field. This is a very quick, simple, but effective way of finding suitable candidates.

Bearing this in mind, it is therefore important to include as many relevant keywords as possible within the body of your CV. This is something which should be given careful time and consideration when perfecting your CV.

Tip 7:
Information to exclude

Your CV contains information which should, in theory, attract an employer. It is a document detailing your positive attributes, your credible professional history, your skill set and achievements. It should not, in that case, contain any information which may be considered off-putting to an employer. While it is highly important to always be honest with a prospective employer, your CV should make you look as desirable as possible. Any difficult information to be divulged can be done so in person when your CV has already earned you some deserved credibility.

Therefore, there are certain things that should not be detailed on your CV:

▶ **Salary**

By inputting a figure on your CV which could be considered either too high or too low, you may be ruled-out as a potential candidate for a particular position. If you do have to input a salary requirement, writing simply 'negotiable' is adequate.

▶ **Reason for leaving a job**

Stating your reasons for leaving previous employment is a waste of the valuable space on your CV. Your CV is to sell yourself, not to disclose undesired information. If this information is required, it can probably be discussed at interview stage.

▶ **Abbreviations**

As previously stated, your CV is your space to promote yourself. By using abbreviations, you jeopardise your professionalism and even risk confusing the reader of the CV. Although in some areas abbreviations are accepted, such as in recognised qualifications, it is best to use words correctly and fully in order to ensure there is no confusion.

▶ **Referees and written testimonials**

Employers use CV's as a way to find suitable candidates. They invite for interview those whom they find interesting. References and other evidence of your skills and character are not needed at this stage and are again a waste of your valuable CV space.

▶ **Age, race, religion and sexual orientation**

Legislation prohibits discrimination on these grounds. As such, it is unnecessary to include these details as none would effect or contribute to your success in a professional field.

▶ **Photographs**

These are totally unnecessary and do not provide anything meaningful to your CV.

Tip 8:

Miscellaneous tips

- ▶ An opening profile is very useful in bringing immediate attention to a summary of your skills and what you have to offer. As recruiters have lots of applications and little time, you need to ensure that they can remember you, just by glancing at your CV. For this reason, a carefully prepared opening profile statement can prove very beneficial.
- ▶ It is important to focus on transferable skills, or what are known as 'soft skills', such as management, communication, problem solving, etc. You should demonstrate such qualities with your experience. Secondly, you should speak about each of your job roles from the angle of the skills you utilised or developed in that role, illustrating the skills with examples, and with as many achievements as possible.
- ▶ When entering your job history, education or projects, work in reverse chronological order. The employer will want to see your most recent job experiences and determine if that makes you a suitable candidate.
- ▶ The use of active verbs and positive language allows you to put your experience across with more impact. Also, where there are significant numbers involved such as personnel in departments, or annual budgets, or items of sale, then it is useful to mention the specific figures, as this helps to quantify your ability and experience.