

CV Guidance

A CV has one objective – to get you an interview. Think of it as a ‘marketing/sales brochure’ detailing your professional career history, key achievements and experience you have to offer.

Some people confuse the expression ‘career history’ with ‘autobiography’ and believe you have to write reams about yourself. Not so! If you can confine your CV to one of two pages the selectors will be very pleased. Even if you have had a rich and varied career it is possible to compress our achievements to one or two pages without missing significant details.

Presentation and content need close attention – your CV needs to capture the attention of the selector.

How do you set about putting together a CV? It is vital to set aside plenty of time for the task. A CV is not the kind of document that you can produce in a matter of minutes.

Step 1

List all the jobs (including volunteer roles!) you have done – leave plenty of spaces between.

Step 2

After every job/role, list the responsibilities you had and the achievements you made. Achievements are key to the CV, interview and ultimately the job offer. Your ability to show what you have done and what you can do for a prospective employer determines their interest in giving you the job over someone else.

Think about your achievements in practical terms. If you were not in your job what would happen? What were the achievements on your performance review form? When have you had specific involvement with group achievements to achieve a goal or objective?

‘F A B’

This is another way of looking at your achievements and is a very simple process for getting them down on paper.

F stands for ‘Feature’

A stands for ‘Analysis’

B stands for ‘Benefit’

F for ‘Feature’

List all the things you have actually done in your job. All those successes, all those times when you thought ‘I really did a good job there’. These are the highlights of your job, the FEATURE.

A for ‘Analysis’

Next you need to ANALYSE the feature. How big was it, who was involved, what were the savings to the company/organisation? Ask yourself 'Is there a way I can get a number attached to the feature – a quantity, a percentage, anything that can be measured?'

B for 'Benefit'

This comes straight from the sales technique that people don't buy features, they buy benefits. Ask yourself 'So what was gained as a result of this achievement?'

Step 3

List all your spare activities. If you have been a treasurer or secretary to a local club or society, involved with the Student Union, or anything of this nature, the skills you used in these roles could well be relevant to the job you are interested in.

Step 4

List all your educational achievements, as well as courses you have been on more recently. By now you should have assembled an impressive amount of information – if not try brainstorming with a friend, manager or colleague.

Step 5

This task is potentially the most challenging – take a hard look at all the information you have put down on paper and categorise them in terms of their significance to the job you are interested in. This will help you justify what information should be included in your CV which demonstrates your skills and shed light on your abilities.

These key qualities will help you make sure your CV is

Interesting – It should be positive, interesting and relevant with information presented in short punchy sentences. Make sure the words used are value for money. It should not be wordy, dull, and full of jargon or a re-write of your job description.

Informative – It must be presented with achievements, skills and experience, avoiding clutter and non essential information.

Well presented – the visual layout is very important. How you present yourself on paper reflects on you and first impressions count for a great deal. It should be easy on the eye, use plenty of space, bullet points, indentations and numerical figures where appropriate.

Professional – It must reflect you as a clear thinking individual with an appropriate mix of skills, experience and personal attributes.

Positive – Put more emphasis on achievements rather than duties. Include strong action words (see Action Word list below). Avoid including anything that may be regarded as negative.

Short – Clear and concise, no longer than two sides showing the best of your highlights that you want to get across.

Factual – It must be accurate and specific. Achievements should be quantified.

What to put in your CV

Your CV could be broken down in to the following areas:

Personal details – this could include your current role/university year/business unit, contact numbers, etc

Personal summary – this is the first opportunity to sell yourself. This summary of no longer than 50 words can be described as your sales slogan giving an overview of the skills and experience you have to offer.

Career history - begin with your most recent role and show either the name of the department or branch. Give the dates from and to and the full job title/role title. This information may act as a sub heading under which you can list your responsibilities and achievements using short concise statement for each.

Training, education and professional development – you should outline your qualifications and any relevant training you have had. Additionally you should mention past and ongoing development. You should be selective when compiling this section, particularly if you have qualifications or have attended numerous courses.

Outside interests – when outlining interests and hobbies do not list more than three or four but do include and involvement with clubs and societies if you hold a responsible role.

Editing your CV

The next stage is to draft, redraft and edit your CV until you have the best possible wording to describe your experiences and achievements. Always use strong, positive words and phrases in preference to those that are less dynamic. Refer to the Action Word List at the end of this document.

Make sure your CV is no longer that two pages – you may have to do some pruning. Emphasise your responsibilities and achievements in your most recent roles and summarise the roles you did some time ago.

Hot tips

- Your CV will not get you a job. It's the first opportunity to make a favourable impression when applying for a new position.
- Your CV is your personal sales document.
- Draft it and re-draft it until you are happy with it.
- Test it on friends, colleagues, mentors – get their feedback!
- Remember to check for spelling and grammar!

A good CV not only has to read well; it has to look good – it needs to be typed and clearly set out. It is important that you are happy with your CV. You need to feel comfortable with it and confident that it gives a true reflection of your abilities, skills and competencies.

Action Word List

<p>Advertising and Promotion Accounted for Convinced Generated Improved Influenced Launched Marketed Persuaded Promoted Recommended Secured Sold</p>	<p>Creativity Arranged Conceived Created Designed Developed Devised Enabled Enhanced Formulated Innovated Invested Originated Packaged Reshaped Resolved Solved Structured</p>	<p>Management Administered Attained Conducted Contracted Controlled Coordinated Directed Enacted Exceeded Executed Expended Headed Implemented Incorporated Initiated Instituted Maintained Managed Obtained Organised Performed Reproduced Reduced Repositioned Retained Revised Strengthened Supervised</p>
<p>Communications Approved Counselling Demonstrated Disseminated Edited Facilitated Interviewed Moderated Participated Presented Presided Served as Wrote</p>	<p>Negotiations Assured Closed Determined Evaluated Investigated Mediated Negotiated Proposed sorted</p>	<p>Public Relations and HR Advised Balanced Collaborated Consulted Counselling Employed Facilitated Grouped Guided Handled Hired Integrated Monitored Motivated Recruited Sponsored</p>

		Strengthened
Research and Analysis Automated Classified Determined Developed Differentiated Equated Experimented Investigated Related Searched Solved Synthesised Theorised	Resourcefulness Accomplished Awarded Corrected Diverted Eliminated Identified Improved Pioneered Rectified Solved Strengthened Surpassed	Technique and Authority Analysed Arranged Catalogued Compared Compiled Completed Computed Decreased Distributed Examined Expended Generated Improvised Increased Indexed Leveraged Redesigned Reorganised Restructured Reviewed Scheduled Single-handedly Synthesised Systematised Verified