How to Write a CV

First impressions count, especially when applying for jobs. Making your curriculum vitae (CV) stand out (in the right way) is really important.

What Is a CV?

A CV is a document which can be used when applying for a job. Sometimes, a CV is sent to a potential employer even when there is no vacancy advertised. They can keep the CV on file, in case something suitable arises. A CV should include a summary of your education, skills and experience in order to demonstrate your abilities and qualities to potential employers. A CV tends to be concise and doesn't follow a set format.

How Long Should a CV Be?

A standard CV shouldn't be longer than two sides of A4. Depending on your experience, it may be that your CV only takes up one page – that's okay.

What Do I Include in a CV?

- **Personal Details/Contact Details**

  Include your full name, home address, mobile number and email address. (If you're posting your CV online, don't include your home address, as you could be targeted by fraudsters). You don't necessarily need to include your date of birth and you should not include a photograph unless the application specifically requests one. Make sure that your email address is suitable and appropriate for your potential employers!

- **Personal Profile/Personal Statement**

  A personal profile is a short personal statement, usually at the beginning of your CV, which highlights your key skills and attributes. Think about how you can make this section relevant to the job you are applying for. If you don't have much experience, think about expressing some of your career aims (if appropriate). You should aim to write around 100 words so keep it concise.

- **Education and Qualifications**

  This is where you should list and date all your educational qualifications in chronological order (with the most recent first). If you haven't had your results yet, then use your predicted grades but make sure that this is clear to the potential employer.

- **Employment/Work Experience**

  List any work experience or employment in this section, with the most recent first. This can include a short paragraph describing any skills, duties or responsibilities which are relevant to the job you're applying for.

- **Skills and Achievements**

   Here is where you should include any skills or achievements which you feel are relevant. However, it's important that you explain how these particular skills and achievements would help you in the job you're applying for. Don't exaggerate your abilities, as you'll need to back up anything you say in an interview.

- **Interests and Activities**

   Although things like socialising, reading or playing computer games may genuinely interest you, they aren't necessarily going to catch an employer's eye. However, relevant interests can provide a better idea of who you are, as well as giving you something to talk about at interview. For example, include writing your own blog if you want to be a journalist. Remember – you must be able to back up anything you put on your CV in an interview.

- **References**

   You don't need to provide the names of referees at this stage. You also don't need to say 'references available upon request' as most employers would assume this to be the case.

Writing Your CV

There are no set formats for what a CV should look like. However, consider the following tips when writing a CV.

- Use your name as the title – you don't need to put the 'Curriculum Vitae' at the top of the page.

- Don't lie or exaggerate on your CV!

- Choose a professional and clear font, such as Arial or Times New Roman.

- Use a font size between 10 and 12 to make sure that potential employers can read your CV.

- Make sure that all fonts and font sizes are consistent throughout your CV.

- Subheadings are a great way to break up your CV. Think about making the subheadings slightly larger, for example, in a font size of 14 or 16 as well as making them **bold** to make them stand out.

- List everything in reverse chronological order so the potential employer can see your most recent work experience and qualifications first.

- If you're posting your CV, print it on white A4 paper and only print on one side. Use an A4 envelope to avoid folding your CV so it doesn't arrive creased.

- Use active verbs such as 'created' or 'devised' to demonstrate how you can use your initiative.

- Use a spell checker to check for errors. Double-check your use of grammar as well, for example, make sure you have used the correct punctuation and the correct 'your/you're', 'their/there' etc. You might also want to get someone else to read your CV to check over the document.

- Try to avoid using generic phrases such as 'team-player'.

- When describing your skills, it is best to provide real-life examples that demonstrate those skills.

- Where possible, tailor your CV to the job and company you're applying to. For example, look at the company's website to see if you can make your statement specific to the role and employer.