

How to prepare your CV

Your CV needs to do three things:

- Detail your experience
- Create a good first impression
- Get you an interview

Presentation

- Never handwrite your CV
- Double check all dates and qualifications
- Make it easy to read by using bullets, tabs and bold text
- Check for spelling and grammar - use a dictionary, not just the spell-check on your computer
- Choose an easy-to-read font like Arial, Verdana or Times New Roman
- Print on good quality, white A4 paper

Your personal details

Don't forget to include the following information:

- Name, address and contact phone numbers (home, mobile)
- Nationality, and visa details if applicable
- Email address

Education

Start with the most recent and work backwards. Remember to include all your qualifications, with grades and dates. If you have a lot of work experience, the education section doesn't need to be quite so detailed - for example, simply state how many GCSEs you have rather than list all the subjects and grades.

Professional qualifications and skills

List all your professional qualifications and any relevant courses you have attended. It's also a good idea to state your knowledge of IT systems, as well as any foreign languages you speak and your level of fluency.

Employment history

Start with your current or most recent job. Include your job title and briefly describe your responsibilities, duties and main achievements. State the name of the firm and outline any areas of specialisation. If you have extensive experience, keep your earlier jobs brief - it's your most recent experience the interviewer will be most interested in.

If you've taken time out - for example to travel or to bring up children - include this. Interviewers don't like to see gaps. If you've temped for a long time, or have changed jobs frequently, you should explain why.

Interests and hobbies

These tell an interviewer what you are like, so they are an important element of your CV. Try to be specific, so rather than simply saying 'music', include that you sing in your local choir. An interviewer may well ask you questions on your interests, so don't make things up!

References

The references you provide should cover the last five years. However, you don't have to include them on your CV, it's fine to say: 'References available on request'.

Tailoring your CV for each interview

If you can match your skills and experience to the employer's needs, your chances of securing an interview will be improved.

Your CV is your personal advertisement so it needs to promote your strengths and aptitudes and demonstrate the benefits you can bring to a firm. That means tailoring your CV to a specific position wherever possible. It means finding out as much as you can about the firm and the requirements of the role. Ask yourself:

- What are they looking for?
- What key elements did they ask for in the job description?
- How specifically are you suited for this particular role and organisation?

Always be honest and accurate in your information. Often a prospective employer will use your CV as the basis of your interview and for references.