

Preparing your CV - need some help?

Until your interview, you are only as good as your CV and/or telephone manner. This means your CV and covering letter are crucial. They are essential tools in most job searches. Like any marketing document a CV should help you 'sell yourself'.

WHAT SHOULD YOUR CV INCLUDE?

Preparation

Thinking about your skills, qualifications and experience. What are your unique selling points and strengths?

If you are replying to a specific job advertisement, review what key words and tasks were used in the ad. Which of these words applies to you? Use these words in your CV.

Helpful Hints

- Remember that you want your CV to be read and responded to. Include just enough information to stimulate interest, but not so much that you bore the reader. Three pages maximum are preferred. Every word must contribute to the overall message – so keep it brief and make sure that the contents are relevant to the job you are now looking for – not your last one.
- Never hand write a CV, always get it typed up.
- Ensure your CV is well structured; this gives the impression that you are thinking logically and makes it easier to review. A CV that is hard to read is often put aside and forgotten. When writing remember that self-opinion is best avoided. Aim to include someone else's opinion (e.g. from last appraisal), facts or even evidence.
- Pay close attention to reply instructions in advertisements (e.g. spelling of the contact's name and address).
- Have someone check your spelling and grammar. Use quality white or cream paper, never coloured, as it does not photocopy well.

Layout of CV

Personal Details

This should contain your personal details (name, address, contact telephone numbers, e-mail etc) and a brief general overview of your skills and experience. If you are seeking locum or contract work do not forget to include availability and preferred locations.

Education

State clearly what professional qualifications and education you have. If you have an extensive employment history do not be too detailed about your school education. Simply state how many GCSE's or O Levels you have with grades, you do not need to list each topic separately.

Employment

- Here you should highlight your employment history in the last five years as the main area. Present this in reverse chronological order (i.e. last job first).
Make sure your dates are accurate!
- If you have only worked for one company, break it down with an entry for each position or project dealt with. For each position or project held describe the work undertaken, duties and responsibilities. Use bullet points rather than long sentences. Don't waffle! - you can always give more detail at interview.
- If you have extensive experience then your early career can be described in less detail especially if it is not relevant to what you are looking for now.
- Do not include salary details.
- Do include achievements, not just tasks. If you can, quantify them.
- Account for gaps – travelling or taking time off is acceptable, you don't need to hide or ignore it.
- Don't use humour on your CV, a prospective employer might have a different sense of humour to you!.

Hobbies

List your hobbies and interests in no more than three lines if they are relevant. Any voluntary, charity or external posts you have done e.g. school governor are worth including. Avoid listing anything too controversial. Try and make your interests sound well-rounded not just in one area

References

It is recommended that two referees be given – including the referees' official titles, addresses and telephone numbers.

The Covering Letter

CV's are seldom used alone; they should always be introduced by a letter or telephone call. The letter should earn readership for the CV.

A good letter should be used to pick up points which modesty or space prevented you putting in the CV (i.e. to highlight your key strengths relevant to that job). An introduction letter can save you from having to rewrite the CV each time you want to target your application to a specific advertisement or sector.

Always keep your CV up to date. Using an out of date CV or hand-writing extra jobs or more information on your CV looks lazy and will be detrimental to your application.