



Giving your CV impact

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Giving your CV impact

We receive large numbers of CVs and we're often asked for feedback on "how they look". Typically CVs fall into two broad categories - easy to read and hard to read. The Curriculum Vitae - literally a record of life - is one of the most important documents that you will ever have to write, so take the time you need to get it right.

What does your CV say about you?

It's really intended to be a taster to get you through the door. Your CV is an indicator of your career path and of the decisions that you've taken; it shows us what you're particularly proud of when you describe your achievements; it demonstrates what you think of yourself; it's your representation of you.

"Your CV shows us what you're particularly proud of... it is your representation of you"

Spelling mistakes demonstrate to the reader that you haven't bothered to check your work - not a good start. Ask someone else to proof-read and criticise. If your CV is poorly laid out it suggests poor planning. If it is set out in an illogical sequence it implies that the author is confused. Different type faces and sizes suggest indecision and so on.

Getting your CV right

So what is right? CVs are completely individual and should give a flavour of the personality of the author. Short of the unforgivable mistakes we have identified above, there really is no right or wrong.

The CVs which we find the easiest to digest flow along these lines:

Length:

Try to convey what you want on two or three pages of A4. Remember that your covering letter can fill in some of the detail. If it helps, use bullet points and short sentences, but make sure you read and re-read your CV a couple of hours after your first attempt so that you can be sure you haven't cut out too much.

Salary details:

If an advertisement asks for salary and benefits then provide them either in the CV or covering note - it's really frustrating when a specific request is made for details and they are not supplied and we have to ask again.

Headline:

Like a National paper you must make an initial impact. We respond well to CVs which head the page with your name and then provide a short summary of a few lines about you and what makes you so employable - your headline - a major marketing piece of your CV.

Contact Details:

These details should be at the beginning of your CV so that we can easily find easily where to reach. Include all contact points – email, mobile phone, home number, home address.

Date of Birth:

It is traditional in the UK to include it but it's by no means essential.

Photo:

Not usually necessary in the UK.

Languages:

Include any languages you speak other than English, and it's useful to know what proficiency you have.

Driving licence:

Include if you have one, and indicate whether it's full and whether you have any points.

Employment Summary:

This is really useful to get a feel for your career progression. It should take the form of a list of job titles, employers and dates, starting with most recent and working backwards. Don't leave any gaps and don't start half way through your career.

Employment details:

If the company is not well known explain its size and what it does in one or two lines. Add your title and responsibilities and main achievements - quantify wherever possible. Make it as impressive as you can but don't lie. Highlight strengths and use positive "action" words and be as succinct as you can. Do not just list the job description. We want to know what you achieved.

Education:

Either at the beginning or end of the document. Include all institutions and dates, with the grades and subjects for degrees and A' levels and just the number of O' levels.

Interests:

This is the only section where we can find out what makes you tick outside of work, so use it to give us a more complete picture of yourself.

Referees:

Not necessary at this stage unless you wish to include them, in which case we won't approach them

without your explicit consent.

Format:

Most CVs are submitted electronically and we'd much prefer to receive CVs in this way as it makes handling them much more straightforward. Once you have written the CV do print it out to check that it looks right, and try to prevent a stray word falling onto the next page which is otherwise completely blank.

A few final points

Remember, you are trying to impress the reader with your CV. It is your marketing document and the gateway to an interview if you get it right. Give the document to a few people to test it out and do change it. Keep it up to date and from time to time have a total re-write to keep it fresh. If you ask for feedback during an interview and you're given some useful pointers, don't forget to apply them!