

Writing an Effective CV

A CV has a fairly standard layout that incorporates small variations, but the core is a clear and concise structure including, **personal details**, **personal profile**, **qualifications**, **professional experience** and **achievements** and **general skills**.

Personal Details

Keep this simple. You need your **name**, **address** and **contact details**. Make sure these details are up to date and regularly checked. If you have one, add your LinkedIn profile address to this section. It is not advisable to include any equal opportunities information such as your date of birth, marital status or nationality.

Personal Profile

This is your first chance to make an impression on a potential employer, to make yourself stand out from the crowd and grab their attention. This is not your life story. You are looking to include succinct details about your key skills, experience, achievements and strengths.

For example:

“A highly skilled Clinic Manager with over ten years experience gained, managing teams varying from 5 to 20 members. Well-developed inter-personal and man management skills have contributed to success in implementing new processes that resulted in improved efficiencies and service levels.”

Professional Experience & Achievements

Working backwards in time from your most recent role, use a bullet point format to lay out your experience. Each role must start with your job title, company name and the dates (including month and year) in which you worked for the company.

If you have worked for one company for a number of years and progressed in a number of roles during this time, then it is essential that you detail the company and your entire length of service at the start. Then list each separate role and its responsibilities, including the timescale spent in each role in brackets next to the job title. Do not include the company name each time, as at first glance this may appear that you have moved jobs too frequently when what you actually have done is shown good progression.

If you do have career gaps, detail what you were doing during this time; were you on maternity leave or raising a family? If you were made redundant and have been seeking a job, stipulate redundancy as your reason for leaving and make it clear you have been proactively seeking new roles since. Particularly if you have been doing contract or interim work, make sure you include this along with the job title to make it very visible these were short-term roles and you don't hop from job to job.

In each role keep the format simple, so we recommend listing your responsibilities under one heading and achievements under another. When describing your responsibilities, do not use first person narrative:

- “I managed a team of therapist in a busy clinic.”
- “I provided training and support to team members.”

This can lead to the description becoming rather verbose and vague and it ends up a list of “I did this, I did that”. Instead use the third person narrative and be specific:

- “Responsible for the provision of training and day to day management of a team of 6 therapists in a busy London clinic”

It is beneficial to look at your role from the perspective of a job specification and approach the description in this manner, not scrimping on the use of industry terminology and “buzz words”. Be specific in the types of products used etc.

If your career is more sales focused, or the more senior the roles you occupy, the more important achievements become. In this instance, include a section underneath your responsibilities detailing your achievements in the role. Employers want to see where you have made an impact in a business, implemented or improved processes and generally exceeded expectations.

However, a word of caution when considering your achievements; ensure they are relevant to the role that you are applying for and can be substantiated.

Qualifications

As a qualified professional, employers are firstly looking for evidence of your qualification, so list these in chronological order of achievement. If you are actively studying towards a qualification, please ensure you include this with the month you are due to complete your studies.

If you have additional qualifications from other industries, such as Prince2 for example, make sure you include them as long as they are relevant to the role that you are applying for.

Employers will also want to know whether you are degree educated and if so, the degree title, class and which university you attended. A-level qualifications are useful to list, along with the grades achieved, however GCSE’s or equivalent secondary qualifications are not necessary. If you do wish to include them, we would suggest they are not listed individually but the total number and grades as in A – C. It can be helpful to stipulate English and Maths if you are early on in your career.

Hobbies & General Skills

The inclusion of a hobbies and interests section can be a very contentious topic. Many recruitment consultancies will recommend they are omitted, along with equal opportunities information. Including them can risk alienating a potential employer and may cast a bad light on your application. Those areas deemed lower risk are activities that are team orientated or altruistic such as charity work (as long as the information is accurate), but if in doubt either speak with your recruitment consultant or leave them out.

How Long Is Too Long?

Many people will argue that a CV shouldn't be more than two pages long but for those with many years experience, how do you fit it all in? Firstly, don't be too concerned with extending the length to three or even four pages if necessary. We strongly advise against falling into the trap of putting detail against your most recent role and simply listing dates and job titles for the rest. As a minimum, ensure you have detailed information against your previous three to five roles, dependant on your circumstances.

To avoid repetition, if you have had a number of roles with similar we recommend you list fewer but different areas of responsibility for each role stipulating the products you have worked with and the sizes of teams you may have managed. Do not copy and paste either from your job description as this is very obvious, or previous roles they need to demonstrate differences and preferably progression. Importantly, don't forget; employers are not interested in your weekend job for Marks and Spencer when you were in your teens, only roles that demonstrate up to fifteen years of experience.

Tailoring

In this market, a one-size fits all approach is not appropriate, especially for more senior roles. This doesn't mean however that you have to rewrite a CV for every new application, nor does it mean that the information provided is less accurate. Rather it is designed to focus on specific skill sets that are relevant to the role for which you are applying. Have two or three CV's that are tailored specifically for the areas that you want to pursue, highlighting the relevant skills.

The key things to keep in mind are firstly relevance; place yourself in the shoes of the hiring manager – what would you want to see from an applicant?

Lastly, proof, proof, proof! Spelling mistakes and grammatical errors can have a hugely negative impact; so ask someone to cast a fresh pair of eyes over the finished product to see if they can pick out any errors. This is your professional identity; as such it should sell your skills and experience to the full.