

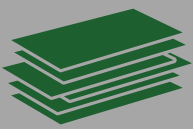
Writing a shortlist worthy CV

There's been much written over the years about how to create a winning CV. Formatting trends come and go as well as the methods used to apply for jobs, but the one thing that remains constant is the time you have to grab the reader's attention...30-40 seconds; a minute max.

Technology now plays a huge part in recruitment. Gone are the days when a hiring manager had a stack of CVs land on their desk and the most eye-catching would get reviewed first. Many are now being read on mobile devices, so crafting a clean and simple-to-navigate CV is essential.

The sole purpose of your resume is to get you past that first screen and invited to an interview. Think of your CV as valuable real estate - the space on each page is expensive so choose your content wisely.

SIZE MATTERS



What is the right length for a CV? Current thinking is around 2-4 pages, any more risks losing the reader's interest, and any less provides insufficient detail. Use your judgement, the longer your career the more pages you need.

Your current/recent roles should have the most detail. As you move back in your career the amount of information you choose to include should reduce. If your career spans 15 + years, only write a one-two line description for the early roles. This will save much-needed space.

If you've worked in a delivery environment or are a seasoned contractor, show a sample of projects that align with the role requirements. It's not necessary to list every engagement.

WHAT TO INCLUDE



Your mobile, email and where you live (City) if you've relocated or it's not clear from your roles.

State if you are currently employed under a working visa. Some companies can not offer sponsorship so it's best to be upfront.

A brief summary is your introduction. Decisions to continue reading are made within these few lines. A well-structured paragraph providing an overview of relevant skills will grab attention. If it is poorly written, provides little insight or is full of grammatical/ spelling errors it can result in early rejection.

A list of certifications and technical skills is a must. As a rule, only include them if they are current and relevant to your chosen discipline.

Show extended career gaps - don't fudge dates.

WHAT NOT TO INCLUDE



A headshot. No one is hired on their looks (unless you are a model) and it wastes valuable space. Removing a photo reduces any possibility of 'unconscious bias' hiring decisions.

Dates of education, full address or marital/ family status. These add no value and again can lead to unconscious bias in decision making.

The standard corporate blurb for every role. If it's a little-known company, a few lines about size, geographical spread and industry coverage are sufficient. You are not marketing your past employers; the CV is meant to promote you!

Referee's contact details (unless specifically requested) or write a variation of "references available on request". You will be asked to supply these at the appropriate time.

YOUR CV IS NOT A POSITION DESCRIPTION



A small number of bullet points can be useful to highlight a few key details but don't fall into the trap of listing every activity. Lots of bullet points or large chunks of text can be offputting and the reader doesn't need to know EVERY single daily task you perform.

Highlight the most important elements of each role. If you've performed similar roles for multiple companies, avoid repeating the same text. Try to show other aspects of the roles or some variety in your wording at least.

Be creative, limit the number of times you start a sentence with "Experience in/ Excellent knowledge in...."

TELL A STORY



Put yourself in the shoes of the hiring manager, and talk in the language they will understand. The reader needs to start imagining you in their team/ company and where you can solve their problems.

Dig deep and think back over your career. Try to include "achievements" - instances where your actions (or behaviours) have caused positive outcomes: identified a fault with systems/ software, created cost savings, won repeat business, introduced process automation or mentored junior team members etc.

These situations will often form the basis of discussion topics during the interview so make sure you know all the details and the facts are correct.



A key skill often sought by hiring managers is "the ability to convey a message through clear and concise communications" and your CV is the first chance you've got to demonstrate this skill. Use language that's comfortable to you and carefully select the information to include. If not commercially sensitive, try to provide specific details. Struggling to reduce your summary and not compromise on quality - feed into ChatGPT and specify a word count.

Urban myth - Applicant Tracking Systems can reject candidates without human intervention. This isn't true. They are tools used by Recruiters / Talent Acquisition teams to help automate workflow. The quality of the content in your CV is what gets your application rejected....

THE "SO WHAT?" PRINCIPLE

For every statement written in your CV, ask yourself **so what?**



Demonstrate commercial awareness. How have you added value previously and try to draw comparisons to the reader's environment. Start with active verbs, numerically measure what you accomplished, provide a baseline for comparison, and detail what you did to achieve your goal.

Great project management skills - so what? "Managed a failing \$1.5m project with stakeholder disengagement. Built trust quickly, and implemented a framework to turn around the project. Delivered on time and budget. The customer was very happy and signed another \$2m contract".

Which candidate would you rather have on your team?

FORMATTING IS KEY

Overly 'busy' formatting including graphics, different fonts and multiple boxes/ columns can be distracting and quite difficult to navigate. Keep a natural flow to the order.



Have separate headings for each employer with dates (month & year) of tenure followed by the related projects or roles. Reading your career history as one long list whilst trying to decipher which role relates to what company is difficult. Don't make the reader guess or need to cross reference - this can lead to early rejection.

Think about your colour choice. What does your CV look like when printed in grayscale? Certain colours will wash out so choose accent colours with caution. If in doubt stick to monochrome, to avoid key details being obscured.

THE SMALL THINGS MATTER

Have you been with the same company for years and moved internally? That's great! Promotion demonstrates personal growth and the ability to handle change. Only display the dates of total employment rather than tenure in each role. Multiple dates and roles, at a glance, can be misinterpreted as "job hopping" if not made clear and lots of dates can look messy.



Always check spelling and grammar. Have you used the past tense in all your previous roles? Is your punctuation and capitalisation consistent, and have you used the same-sized font throughout?

These easily correctable errors are often overlooked and if the field of applicants is strong, your "attention to detail" (or perceived lack of) may be a deciding factor in whether you are shortlisted.

A FEW FINAL POINTS.....

You've nailed the wording, simplified the formatting and sliced 3 pages off the length. You're ready to send, well not quite...



Once you've completed all your amendments, open and read the document on your phone. Be critical, how well does it read/ appear on a small screen? (Hiring Managers will often review CVs on their phones)

Always reduce the content, not the font size. It won't fool anyone and it's just harder to read.

Agencies typically ask for a Word version of your CV so it can be "agency-branded" before sending it to their clients. Don't make it easy for Recruiters to dismiss your application because you've sent a PDF and it then requires manual reformatting to fit into their template. With plenty of applications, and tight deadlines it could end up in the "too hard basket" (rejected).



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