

Top 10 Tips on Writing a Successful CV

One of the most important things you will need to own when you are applying for a new job is a good, solid CV. This will be the first impression an employer will receive of you and might just be your way of securing that all important interview. Putting together a successful CV is easy once you know how as it is simply a case of highlighting your skills and experience and fitting them concisely into one document.

Figure out the Basics First

Everybody approaches their own CV in a different way and the great thing is there is no right or wrong way about it; however, there are some important sections you should cover. It is common to include your: personal details and contact information, education and qualifications, current and previous work history, or experience; personal achievements and skills, hobbies, and interests. These sections are vital and cover the things employers want to know.

Presentation is Key

If you want your CV to be successful it is extremely important to consider the presentation of your document. The layout should always be clean and well-structured. One thing you can consider is the 'CV Hotspot' – the upper middle area of the first page is where the recruiter's eye will naturally fall so make sure to include your most important information in this spot!

Keep it Short and Sweet

Recruiters don't want to read pages and pages of information so the best CVs are concise and will make every point necessary without waffling. Employers will receive dozens of CV's for every vacancy so it is highly unlikely they will want to read every single one cover to cover. Most employers will make a judgement about a CV after reading a couple of sections, so stick to a maximum of two to three pages. If your CV can tick the right boxes in a couple of pages you will have a better chance of being invited to an interview.

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Tailor Your CV

It is very important to understand the job description of the position you are applying for so that you can tailor your CV accordingly and highlight all the relevant skills and experience you have for the role. For example, if you are applying for a position in sales, make sure you clearly highlight any previous sales experience and any appropriate skills you might have. On the other hand, if you are applying to a sales role don't put too much emphasis on warehouse work you did years ago. The information isn't relevant enough to have any impact on your application and it would be wasting valuable space on your CV.

Spell it Out

When you are writing your CV, you can never allow for any assumptions. So, if the job you are applying for mentions that you need skills in a particular IT package make sure you highlight that you have experience using it on your CV. The recruiter won't assume that you have experience using the package if you haven't mentioned it on your CV, and they certainly won't contact each of the applicants individually to check.

Make the Most of Your Skills

An important part of your CV in the 'Skills' section. Under this section don't forget to use your key skills that will make you stand out from the crowd to your advantage. It might be worth taking some time writing down all the possible skills you have gained from your experiences and then condensing them down to the most relevant and important ones. Possible skills could include communication skills, IT skills, problem solving, leadership skills or even speaking a foreign language.

Make the Most of Your Interests

The 'Interests' section on a CV is a great way to show off skills that you have gained and that employers look for. You can use it to indicate any positions of responsibility you may have had or to give examples of when you have worked in a team or used your own initiative. You could include things such as being a member of or running a society at University or you started a weekend league football team that became a success. The interests you include should show how fascinating, skilled, and diverse you are as an individual and they should allow you to engage with the interviewer

on a personal level. Your CV shouldn't mention interests that may indicate you are lacking in people skills for example, watching TV or playing computer games.

Make the Most of Your Experience

The way in which you word your work history and experience section can make a huge difference to your CV. To make your CV stand out from the crowd use assertive and positive language and words such as 'developed', 'achieved' or 'organised'. Relating the skills, you have learnt to the job role you are applying for is essential as it clearly shows that you are the right fit for the position. Really highlight the valuable skills and experience you have gained from past roles, even if it was just working as a waitress.

References

It was mentioned before that you want to keep your CV short and sweet so taking up half a page to detail referee contact information uses up some of your valuable space. Although it is important to have reliable and professional references to back up your applications you do not need to give employers their details until they request the information. Most potential employers won't seek a reference until they've met you at least once so you will have ample opportunity to pass on the correct contact details then.

Including a simple sentence along the lines of "*Professional References are available on request*" is more than enough at the bottom of a CV.

Keep Your CV Up to Date

It is extremely important to review your CV on a regular basis and update any new skills or experience that might be missing. For example, you may have undertaken a temporary position or recently finished a new project, so make sure they all go on there. Potential employers are put off by out of date information or large gaps in employment, so they like to see which candidates are going the extra mile to boost their own skills and experience. Remember, the potential employer only has your CV to go from so if you state you haven't been in work for 6 months then this is what they will think.