

**Curriculum Vitae; Latin – The Course of My Life**

Your CV is the first bit of information that a recruitment agency, recruitment consultant or prospective employer sees about you, so it must be presented in the right way.

There are some dos and don'ts when it comes to your CV and there are some blatant myths as well! This guide is designed to point you in the right direction and help you to present a concise, accurate and informative document that is designed with one purpose in mind, getting you the interview.

**Myth number one; Your CV should be no more than two pages.**

Utter rubbish!

Remember that your CV is the course of your life so far. You don't need to write War and Peace but missing out information that a recruiter or prospective employer might need is not going to help you secure an interview.

Similarly, if you have just graduated or have one or two years commercial experience then a 5 page CV might be excessive.

Common sense should prevail here but generally speaking you should look at giving detailed information on your last two to three roles and summarising the rest if you are seeking a permanent role. Contractors should detail perhaps five projects / 2-3 years work and summarise the rest.

**Myth number two; Fifty per cent of CV's get thrown in the bin without being read.**

Not strictly true. Your CV has about one half to two thirds of the first page to grab the reader's attention, if it doesn't, there's a good chance that the reader will move on the next candidate.

**So how do you produce an attention grabbing CV?****Firstly, let's cover the basics.**

Choose a font that is easy to read and stick to it. You can emphasise sections by using **bold** and / or underlined text or by using slight changes in the font size but don't use different fonts. Avoid using non-standard fonts that might display differently when your document is opened by the recipient. Definitely avoid the use of "fun" fonts such as *Comic Sans* and the like. Contrary to popular belief, it's not comical and it shows a lack of sincerity in a professional document.

Try not to use large table sections in your CV. Many recruiters present your CV to a client with a header sheet or their own logo's etc and tables can look untidy if they are not presented exactly as you designed them. The trick is to avoid the situation altogether by

- using bullet points

To emphasise certain points and separate sections of your CV with highlighted headers as mentioned above.

**The top of the first page should have your personal details**

Include your address and contact details. Also include here details such as driving licence, marital status and date of birth if you choose.

**Next, write a personal statement.**

This should be a concise (5-10 lines max) summary of your experience and your goals for your next position. Recruitment Consultants, our HR counterparts and hiring managers read lots of CV's on a daily basis so try to avoid clichéd terms but be honest.

**Now put in a summary of your key skills and qualifications.**

Use bullet points and formatting to create mini sections and list the skills, technologies, qualifications and accreditations you have. Do not put a detailed education summary here, just your qualifications.

This section is designed to draw the CV reader's attention because they will inevitably be looking for four or five key words. It needs to be clean, well formatted and concise so that the reader can see what they are looking for at a glance.

So by this stage of looking at your CV, the reader has seen who you are, a little bit of what you are about and hopefully that you have the skills they are looking for. Now it's time to show them how you have used the skills you have and gained your experience.

**Your work experience.**

Start this section with your most recent / current role and make sure you include the following details for each job:

- The month and year that you started and finished
- The company name and general location
- Your job title

You should always start a role description with a concise overview of the company and what they actually do. Never assume that people have heard of the companies you have worked for.

Next summarise your role, the skills used and experiences gained. For example, if you have worked in an IT Support role highlight the numbers of users / sites supported, technologies used and perhaps a few key achievements.

- Again, use bullet points and formatting to highlight information and break it up into bite sized chunks.

Keep in mind that you don't need to go into too much detail about roles which are not relevant to the one to which you are applying. If there are any breaks in your career, briefly state why there was a break rather than forcing a recruiter or interviewer to ask.

**Now it's time for your education summary.**

Again, start with the most recent first, list your university / school and the dates attended followed by the qualifications gained. If you are degree educated, indicate the class of degree you achieved. After formal education, list any training courses and other accreditations that you might have.

**Lastly, you should have a short section about you as a person**

Include your likes, hobbies and interests. Avoid stock statements that employers have seen a million times before (apparently everybody goes to the gym!) and give them something that you can talk about in an interview.

**Myth number three; this is your opportunity to have a little fun and show your personality**

Wrong. Your CV is a professional document, start to finish. Don't ruin your hard work at this stage by making a flippant comment that the reader might not appreciate. Always remember, your CV is the key to securing the interview. That is when you can let your personality shine through.

## **Some more things to avoid**

**Email address:**

If your email address was [ilovebeer@hotmail.com](mailto:ilovebeer@hotmail.com) when you were a teenager, consider changing it. Remember always that your CV is a professional document and this needs to be reflected in every aspect of the document.

**Grammar and spelling:**

Spell check is not a new thing but it's surprising how many CV's we see with simple spelling mistakes, make sure you use it. Likewise, make sure that you use "your" (possessive) and "you're" (the abbreviated form of you are) in the correct way. Their, there and they're are also commonly misused, and we have seen candidates rejected for this type of error.

**Photos and logos on your CV:**

Unless you're (see how I did that) a super model or a bronzed Adonis we don't recommend the use of personal photos in your CV. It's sad to say that a photo can result in a judgement call being made before the CV is read. Many people use logos in their CV to highlight companies they have worked for or accreditations they have obtained. Whilst visually these look good, they can mess with the formatting of the CV. Some logos also come with an embedded URL which might result in your CV being filtered out as spam.

**Submitting your CV as a PDF:**

Most recruitment agencies today use a CRM solution which will read your CV and create a profile on the system using parsing technology. If your CV is in PDF format it is more difficult for the parsing software to read meaning some details could be missed. Also, most agencies will add a cover sheet to the CV before sending it to a client and it's true to say that over 90% of agencies use MS Word to do this. Whenever possible, please submit your CV in MS Word format.

### **Listing every technical skill in the book:**

Remember that a recruiter or prospective employer is looking for certain skills. You should only list skills on your CV which reflect your “stand alone” ability. Be honest when you list your skills and ask yourself a question “if I had to do that without any support, could I do it?” If the answer is no, don’t list it as a skill on your CV. Nothing puts an interviewer off faster than realising that a CV is a work of fiction.

### **Some things you should definitely do:**

#### **Check your social media:**

These days, most people use social media such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook and your prospective employer is no different. Before you start your job search you should take a careful look at the content of these sites and consider how it might effect somebody’s perception of you.

For example, we all like to have a drink and a few laughs with our friends but if your Facebook page is full of pictures of you three sheets to the wind, what impression will that give a potential employer?

For LinkedIn, a few simple tricks will help. Make sure that your professional history on LinkedIn matches that of your CV. Join some discussion groups which are relevant to your work and contribute to them. Make sure that your LinkedIn profile is as complete as possible because a potential employer will judge you on how much effort you have put in to this.

#### **Tailor your CV:**

It’s important to make sure that you send a relevant CV for each position you apply for. We’re not suggesting that you should make stuff up but there’s nothing wrong with highlighting certain skills and experiences relevant to the role. For example, if you are senior developer applying for a team lead role, make sure that the person who reads your CV understands your experience of team management, project management and methodology.

#### **References:**

At the end of your CV, always include a line which states that references are available on request. We suggest that you do not include specific contact details for referees as you might inadvertently contravene the Data Protection Act. Giving the indication that you are happy for recruiters or prospective employers to take references implies that you are sincere and have nothing to hide.