

CV Writing

What is a CV?

A CV (curriculum vitae) allows you to summarise your education, skills and experience, selling yourself to employers.

In the USA and Canada it's known as a résumé, and tends to be a more concise document.

How long should a CV be?

A standard CV in the UK should be no longer than two sides of A4.

Only include the main facts; if your CV is just one page, that's fine, as employers only want to read relevant information. Some medical or **academic CVs** may be longer depending on your experience.

What to include in a CV

- **Contact details** - Include your full name, home address, mobile number and email address. You do not need to include your date of birth or a photograph unless you're applying for an acting or modelling job.
- **Profile** - Placed at the beginning of the CV, a profile is a concise statement that highlights your key attributes or reasons for deciding to work in a particular field. Pick out a few relevant achievements and skills, while clearly articulating your career aims. It must focus on the sector you're applying to, as your cover letter will be job-specific. You should keep it short and snappy - 100 words is the perfect length.
- **Education** - List and date all previous education, including professional qualifications, placing the most recent first.
- **Work experience** - List your experience in reverse chronological order, making sure that anything you mention is relevant to the job you're applying for. If you have plenty of relevant work experience, this section should come before education.
- **Skills and achievements** - This is where you talk about the foreign languages you speak and the IT packages you can competently use. Whatever you list should be relevant to the job and not over-exaggerated, as you'll need to back up your claims at interview. If you have got lots of relevant experience you should do a **skills-based CV**.
- **Interests** - Simply writing 'socialising, going to the cinema and reading' isn't going to catch the attention of the recruiter. However, when relevant to the job, your interests can provide a more rounded picture of you and give you something to talk about at interview. Examples include writing your own blog if you want to be a journalist, or being part of a drama group if you're looking to get into sales.

- **References** - You don't need to provide the names of references at this stage. You also don't need to say 'references available upon request' as most employers would assume this to be the case.

For more help and advice on what to include in a CV take a look at our [example CVs](#).

CV format

- Avoid fonts such as Comic Sans. Instead, choose something more professional such as size-10 Arial.
- List everything in reverse chronological order so the recruiter sees your most impressive and recent achievements first.
- Keep it concise and easy to read by using clear spacing and bullet points. This type of CV layout allows employers to skim your CV and quickly pick out the important information.
- If you're posting your CV, go with white A4 paper. Only print on one side and don't fold your CV - you don't want it to arrive creased.

How to write a good CV

1. Use active verbs wherever possible. For example, you could include words like 'created', 'analysed' and 'devised' to present yourself as a person who shows initiative.
2. There should be no spelling or grammar mistakes in your CV. Use a spell checker and enlist a second pair of eyes to check over it.
3. Avoid using generic phrases such as 'team player', 'hardworking' and 'multitasker'. Instead, provide real-life examples that demonstrate all of these skills.
4. Take a look at the company's website, local press and the job advert to make sure that your CV is targeted to the role and employer.
5. Decide whether the chronological, skills-based or academic CV is right for you. For more information, take a look at [example CVs](#).
6. Don't put the term 'curriculum vitae' at the top of the page.
7. Provide a professional-sounding email address.
8. Never lie or exaggerate on your CV or job application. Not only will you demonstrate your dishonesty to a potential employer, but there can be serious consequences too. For example, altering your degree grade from a 2:2 to a 2:1 is classed as degree fraud and can result in a prison sentence.
9. If you're posting your CV online don't include your home address, as you could be targeted by fraudsters.
10. You should always include a cover letter unless the employer states otherwise. It will enable you to personalise your application to the job. You can draw attention to a particular part of your CV, disclose a disability or clarify gaps in your work history. Find out how to write a persuasive [cover letter](#).