

Tips for Writing a Curriculum Vitae (CV)/ Resumé

Language Department

Prof. Dr. Stephanie Swartz-Janat Makan



WIRTSCHAFT
FH MAINZ
UNIVERSITY OF
APPLIED SCIENCES

Writing a CV - “There is no single perfect CV”

This may lead to conflicting advice but it also leaves you with the freedom to decide how to best present your strengths and experiences in the most effective way. It is vital to remember that you should use your CV to convey the information that you wish to give an employer and not be confined to a restrictive format or to a collection of headings.

In essence a CV is a marketing document which presents your skills, achievements and experience in such a way that it will generate interest and may be used to set the agenda for a positive interview. Maximum impact is therefore paramount. Research shows that recruiters spend just 90 seconds reading your CV so good presentation content is equally important.

When might you use a CV?

- To reply to advertised jobs. Do not send a CV however if an employer specifically requests an application form.
- To make speculative applications e.g. to look for unadvertised opportunities or freelance work.
- To contact recruitment agencies, though they may have a preferred format.

A CV should:

- Say more about your recent experience than your early life.
- Be tailored to target specific jobs or organisations.

How should you organise a CV?

- It should be word-processed onto good quality paper in a clear typeface.
- In the UK CVs should be no more than two pages long.
- make use of **bold**, underlining, *italics* and blocks of text to achieve a clear layout, but avoid making it over-fancy,
- A font size of 10-12 is recommended to make it clear and easy to read.
- If sending it electronically make sure the font is one that is commonly used.
- Your present education and work experience should be in reverse chronological order i.e. most recent first.

- It should emphasise relevant skills, achievements and experience.
- Use descriptive language. Do not make lists.
- Use action verbs e.g. produced, achieved, established, implemented etc.
- When completed it needs to be thoroughly checked for appropriateness and accuracy.
- Ensure that there are no spelling, grammar and typing errors. Do not rely entirely on the spell checker! Show your CV to a tutor, friend or careers counsellor.

Note: It is not common in Anglo-American curriculum vitae/resumés to include a photograph unless explicitly asked for.

Identification of Skills

Employers recruiting staff will have analysed the skills required to do the job. The key skills required are often identified in job advertisements, job descriptions, person specifications or in graduate recruitment brochures or web sites. It is essential to be aware of these key skills before writing your CV.

Prior to compiling your CV you need to identify the skills that you have developed, both within and outside the education system that could be relevant to the type of work that you are seeking.

A simple way to identify your skills is to list your education, work experience (full-time and part-time) and your other activities, e.g., interests, significant events in your life, etc... and from this list draw out the skills you obtained, for example:

- presenting a paper to course colleagues may illustrate communication skills,
- acting as course representative may indicate negotiating and organisational skills,
- working in a pub or shop may indicate the ability to communicate with tact and diplomacy.

Be positive, but be truthful. Recruiters will need back-up evidence of skills, not just a bland, “I am good at...” statement.

Two examples of Curriculum Vitae follow. These examples are aimed at people with differing backgrounds and offer different ways of conveying information. It is important that you develop a format which best achieves your objectives.

NOTE: Never be tempted to copy another person’s CV and be careful with the use of CV templates – it is best to find a format, style and message which suits your own purposes.

Sample CVs

SAMPLE ONE – The Traditional Chronological CV

This CV is likely to be of most use if you have progressed through the education system without significant gaps. It is also useful to start with this approach and then adapt and develop it afterwards to suit you and your desired audience. It is the most traditional style used in the UK.

Begin with your personal details.

Essential:

All contact details i.e. full name, email, website, term time address, home address and telephone / mobile number.

The main point of this section is to provide the employer with an immediate point of contact – this must be clear and unambiguous.

Optional:

Date of birth

Nationality (indicate if you need a work permit)

PERSONAL PROFILE / CAREER AIMS

This is optional and is a short statement of 3-4 lines, summarising your key attributes and suitability for the job. It should communicate what is special or unique about you, to help you stand out from the crowd. The rest of your CV must contain considerable evidence to back up any assertions. Avoid using general and meaningless phrases such as “I am a self-started motivated team player”.

EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

***2005-2008* University of Brighton Course Title (expected grade)**

Start with the most recent experience of education, as this will usually be most relevant to the employer. Include course title, subject studied, outline of course and dissertation topic if this seems relevant. Also include any special project which may be of interest and give an indication of the skills you have acquired, e.g. working in a team on projects, using communication skills in seminars etc.

1998-2005

List advanced level study and grades.
List GCSEs / NVQs gained.
(Do not list those attempted and failed)

WORK/PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE / EMPLOYMENT

This section should include paid and voluntary work, full-time and part-time, sandwich placements and vacation jobs. Again, start with your most recent work experiences, highlight those details of your work experience which best illustrate to the employer your capability to do the job. If your experience is unrelated, demonstrate the common areas and your transferable skills.

2006

Conference Assistant, Brighton and Hove City Council.

Six months sandwich placement, evaluating conference facilities in East Sussex. Analysing data, liaising with conference organisers, preparing reports.

2003 - 2006

Voluntary Worker, Brighton Museum, part-time.

Cataloguing, filing, routine enquiries, assistance in mounting exhibitions.

2004

Sales Assistant, Miss Selfridge, part-time.

Dealing with public, cash handling, display of stock.

2004

Playgroup Assistant, Tumbletots . Three months.

Devising games and activities for 2 to 4 year olds, organising groups of children, administering finance of playgroup activities.

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

Detail other relevant skills you possess, e.g. IT literacy, language fluency or the ability to drive.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND INTERESTS

Employers may look at your other activities in order to assess the personal qualities that they seek.

Include: sports; music, drama and other cultural activities; membership of clubs and societies and any positions of responsibility; independent travel.

Avoid offering a bland list; show how you developed qualities that the employer will value. Do not be tempted to invent an activity or interest – the interviewer might be an expert on it!

REFERENCES

The first should be your course leader or tutor. The second referee should preferably be someone for whom you have worked, or failing that, someone who knows you well in a personal capacity. This should not be a relative of yours.

Give names, professional title (if appropriate), addresses, telephone numbers and email. You must check with the person concerned that they are happy to act as a referee before putting their name forward. It is a good idea to send a copy of your CV to your referees to keep them informed.

Targeted speculative applications (unsolicited applications) for jobs and work placements

As it stands, this previous CV gives only the basic facts. If you want to sound more persuasive you will need to tailor your CV. This is essential if you are applying speculatively or are looking for a placement opportunity. To create an effective CV you will need to identify the employer's needs (what they are looking for) and clearly communicate how you can meet these needs.

You should:

- ‘Speak their language’ – use the careers centre for information, review their website or obtain company brochures to find out what employers in your field expect.
- If you are responding to an advertised job – analyse their advertisement and job specification and subtly reflect this back to them.
- ‘Get an insiders view’ – if you can speak to someone within the company. This will provide evidence that you are pro-active and motivated and provide unique information as to what is required.
- Provide proof that you can do the job - identify your skills, achievements and experiences and match these to demonstrate that you have a clear knowledge of what the position involves.
- Stand out from the competition – identify your ‘unique selling point/s’ and position your key messages for maximum impact on the page
- Use all networking opportunities to gain constructive feedback on your CV with experts in the field.
- Only ever send ‘tailored’ CVs aimed at a specific position or company – mass-produced or not accurately targeted CVs are likely to go straight in the bin.

SAMPLE TWO – The Targeted CV

The following CV shows an understanding of the vacancy or potential vacancy (if you are applying speculatively) and an awareness of the needs of the prospective employer. It is tailored to show that the applicant has the relevant skills and experience. This format can be powerful and is particularly useful if you have substantial and varied experience of life and work.

Jo Mahal

12 Pavilion Drive, Brighton, BN2 4AA

Tel: 01273 325778 Mob: 0777 8886677

Email: j.mahal@hotmail.com

PERSONAL PROFILE

Highly motivated humanities graduate with placement experience in magazine reporting and submitting. Ability to write sharp copy on a wide variety of subjects. I am an effective communicator who is confident and quick to learn.

RELEVANT SKILLS PROFILE

Journalism

- Confident researching and writing articles covering a wide range of subjects. I have had articles published in 'Yachting World' and our student magazine 'Blog'.
- Work effectively under pressure to meet submission deadlines

Communication

- I interviewed students and landlords for an article on student accommodation in Brighton for our student magazine
- Able to use my own initiative and enjoy motivating team members to meet shared goals. I was recently promoted to team leader at Aquasports
- Experienced in giving presentations. I recently delivered a presentation on the 'Fauve Landscape' which was highly acclaimed.

Mac and PC literacy

- Advanced: QuarkXpress, Word, Power Point
- Intermediate: Photoshop, Illustrator, Dreamweaver.
- Basic: Project, Excel.

EDUCATION / QUALIFICATIONS

University of Brighton (2005 – 2008) BA (Hons) Humanities -

Expected Class: 2:1

An inspiring and rewarding degree which addressed problems of political and social change with the practical skills of research, critical analysis and creative problem solving.

Main subjects, particularly enjoyed and excelled in: Historical / Philosophical Inquiry, Modern World Studies, Critical traditions in Western Thought, Self & Society, Politics of Ideology / Human Nature. My dissertation was concerned with *'The growth of reality TV shows. Why are they so popular?'* I used both qualitative and quantitative research techniques and worked to a deadline.

Poole College

2005 'A' Levels: English C, History C, Psychology D

2003 8 GCSEs (A-C) including English, Maths.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Blog, University of Brighton February 2006 – to date

Our student magazine. Regular contributor and active member of editorial team.

Yachting World, London March 2007 - Work placement

Monthly Magazine- I produced content and original ideas for the structure of the Yachting World website www.yachtingworldnow.co.uk.

EMPLOYMENT

WH Smith, Brighton Oct 2005 – present

Sales Assistant. This included cash handling, dealing with customers and working under pressure. I learnt the value of effective team work.

Aquasports, Bournemouth June-Sept 2005

Retail assistant/Team Leader. Aquasports is a retail and hire shop supplying watersports equipment to clubs and individuals.

Responsibilities included training new staff, dealing with customers and stock control.

ACTIVITIES / INTERESTS

Watersports – Secretary of the Watersports Society at University. I organised a range of events and encouraging new members.

Cooking – I am a good cook and regularly hold dinner parties for friends and family.

REFERENCES

Dr. G. Smith (*Personal Tutor*)

University of Brighton Bournemouth

Brighton BN1 1GA BO6 9JT

g.smith@brighton.ac.uk adamadams@btinternet.co.uk

(01273) 654321 (01309) 443334

Mr. Andrew Scott

Manager

Aquasports Retail Company

3225 Quayside Road

Bournemouth, UK