

# Writing a CV



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Writing a CV

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# Introduction

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Knowing how to create and set out a CV is vital. We are living in an increasingly competitive world and finding a job is a tough thing to do. Even before you get to interview, you will have needed to apply for a job using either an application form or with a CV. It is no longer good enough to send in a standard CV that has not been altered since you left school. Your experience, training and skills are always being added to. To have every chance of getting the job you want, you need to prepare well. This starts with planning and drafting a winning CV.

WRITING A CV will help you to:

- Know how to set out a good CV.
- Learn how to map your skills and experience. (You'll be amazed at all the things you can offer an employer when you start writing it all down!)
- Understand what an employer is looking for when he/she reads your CV. They want to know if you can do the job.
- Write a clear and effective personal profile.
- Be able to target your CV to specific jobs.
- Place information in order of what is most relevant. An employer wants to know if you are a contender for the job quickly. He/she does not want to read through pages and pages of text to see if you are a suitable candidate for an interview.
- Write a covering letter.

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# Section I

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## WHAT IS A CV?

The letters 'CV' stand for the Latin words Curriculum Vitae. 'Curriculum' means a course of study and 'Vitae' means life. So Curriculum Vitae means the study of your life.

Your Curriculum Vitae provides prospective employers with an insight into how suitable you are for a job. It details your personal, educational and work-related experience and skills.

Your CV needs to be updated each time you wish to change jobs. It also needs to be tweaked for each type of job that you apply for. It may be tempting to create a multi-purpose CV, however to enhance your chances of getting to interview you will need to target your CV. This means that you will need to identify what a prospective employer is looking for and then enhance your CV by highlighting:

- Your appropriate skills
- Your relevant experience
- Qualifications gained
- Relevant work based training.

Your CV should be:

- Clear and to the point – prospective employers may have a large number of CVs to go through.
- Two pages unless you have had a vast number of jobs
- Cleanly presented.

You can use your CV:

- When making speculative enquiries
- When you are asked to provide a written application
- As an easy reference when completing application forms
- When talking to employers on the telephone or at careers fairs or recruitment agencies.

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# Section 2 WHAT TO PUT IN AND LEAVE OUT OF A CV

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## What information should be included in a CV?

### Personal details

This includes your name, your contact address and telephone number.

### Personal or skills profile

A personal profile is a short summary of you, your relevant experience and what you would like to get out of your next job.

### Qualifications

This should include the title of the course, e.g. GCSE English and the grade. Qualifications gained outside of school such as for Mentoring, Sign language, English and Maths, etc are just as important as they highlight your willingness to keep learning.

### Training

This can be work-based learning such as learning a new IT package or can also include courses that you have done in the process of outside activities like coaching.

### Employment history

Include the name of the company; the company address; the years that you worked there and then a sentence or some bullet points listing your key duties. Have the job advert in mind when you write these so that you put the most relevant duties first. This should also include voluntary or unpaid work.

### Achievements

This is an optional opportunity for you to list your biggest achievements in recent times and this can be within your day job, such as being employee of the month, or through volunteering work – for example leading 20 scouts up a mountain or having an article published in the staff magazine.

### Interests

This is a very short list of things that you are interested in, such as playing sport or reading history books. It gives the interviewer a more rounded view of who you are but is not essential.

# Things to leave out of your CV

## Any sort of failure

This covers marriages, exams and businesses.

## Very personal information

Weight, height, health, sex, race or marital status, age, National Insurance number or bank account details; These things are irrelevant and could be used in a discriminatory or fraudulent way.

## Mistakes

Incorrect spellings and grammatical errors make you look careless and disorganised. Make sure you proof read your CV carefully and get a friend or family member to proof read it too.

## Lists of all your schools

This isn't necessary or of any interest to the employer. You should, however, include your most recent educational establishment.

## Negative language

Use positive statements and language. Don't say what you can't do or haven't done. If you have gaps in your employment history, find something positive to fill the gap. For example, "Whilst looking after my children, I have completed training / regularly assisted the teaching staff at the school".

## Jargon and abbreviations

Avoid using any language that will not be understood by someone outside your job or organisation.

## Reasons for leaving each job

If they want to know, they can ask you at the interview. Remember to always be positive about moving forward rather than running away.

## Salary information

This may be used to reject your application.

## Photographs

The only people who need to send photographs are models and performers and this is only if asked to do so.

## Excessive wordiness

This is a working, informative document so keep it factual.

### Borders, fancy fonts and graphics

Think carefully about the image you are creating. A fancy font and borders will give out the wrong message. It might make an employer think that you are not serious enough. Also, some fonts are hard to read. Good fonts to use are those such as Ariel, Verdana and Helvetica.

### Poor quality photocopies

Your CV needs to be read easily. Poor quality photocopying suggests that you are not paying attention to detail. Where possible use good quality original prints.

### Writing in the third person about yourself (he, she or using your name)

Your CV is about you and written by you. It should be written in the first person (I).

### Names and Addresses of referees

You should not include names, addresses, emails or phone numbers. You can simply write 'References are available on request'.

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# Section 3

## STYLE – HOW SHOULD THE CV LOOK?

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The way you present your CV is as important as the information you provide within it. An employer may have a great many CVs to get through and might not have the time to read each from beginning to end. Your CV will need to gain attention on the first page. Each section should have clear headings so that information is easy to find.

A good order for presenting your information is:

- Personal details
- Personal profile
- Relevant experience or key skills
- Qualifications
- Work history

Your personal details, profile, experience and qualifications should be on the first page.

Tip

If you have quite a few qualifications you could have the heading 'Qualifications' in its own right. However, if you have lots of training and experience and very few accredited qualifications you could link this information together under one heading for example:

Qualifications and Training  
or  
Qualifications and Experience

GCSE English Language Grade B  
Level \_ Numeracy NOCN  
Accredited First Aid Certificate  
Early Years Experience  
Parenting Course

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# Section 4 WRITING YOUR CV

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Three basics to remember before you begin:

- This is your chance to tell people how wonderful you are – don't be shy!
- Employers really want your CV to be the one that ticks all the boxes – match your skills to their needs.
- Always apply for jobs that you really want and are really interested in – this will shine through.

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## Writing a Personal Profile

Let's be honest, reading through a pile of CVs probably isn't the most exciting thing an employer is going to do! You need to make your profile as relevant to the job as you can. A personal profile is your chance to show why you would be the best applicant for the job. If you give your profile some careful thought and tweak it to suit the type of jobs you apply for, your profile will make you sound well organised and a good communicator.

A personal profile covers three areas:

1. General experience – start off with an opening sentence, "With over 5 years experience of working in customer-facing roles..."
2. Key skills – now list some relevant skills.
  - Excellent communication skills
  - Work well in a team
  - Supervision of three staff
  - Identifying where I can improve service.
3. Your future – perhaps you want a 'challenge' or to 'develop your career'.

Now you have this outline you can draft a personal profile. For example:

*With over five years of experience working in customer facing roles, I have developed excellent communication skills. As a proactive member of the team, I am able to identify where improvements to the service can be made and discuss ideas at team meetings. I have responsibility for training new members of staff in all aspects of customer service. I am looking to build on my experience and would welcome the challenge of working in a large department store.*

# Activity 1

## Who are you?

Being able to sell yourself to prospective employers relies on how well you can accurately describe yourself. Look through the following list of attributes and choose at least ten of these that you believe really reflect you.

Feel free to add other words that you think are more apt and then test them out afterwards by asking friends and family if they think it's a true reflection.

Accountable	Energetic	Friendly	Motivated
Ambitious	Assertive	Attentive to details	Productive
Authentic	Proactive	Conscientious	Reliable
Caring	Self-reliant	Independent	Willing
Consistent	Contributes	Cooperates	Stable
Courageous	Creative	Compassionate	Strategic
Customer focused	Calm	Candid	Supportive
Facilitator	Practical	Thoughtful	Responsible
Flexible	Analytical	Happy	Resourceful
Generous	Punctual	Committed	Effective
Honest	Capable	Efficient	Strong
Inquiring	Loyal	Spontaneous	Completer
Visionary	Versatile	Confident	Decisive
Tenacious	Courteous	Self-aware	Attentive
Enthusiastic	Imaginative	Quick learner	Competitive

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# Activity 2

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To build up a range of sentences for your CV, write a sentence about yourself and how you work using these useful words.

## Good reasons to employ you

*You will find definitions to  
some of these words  
on page 21.*

Liaise

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Challenge

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Proactive

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Team player

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Successful

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Professional

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Organised

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Experienced

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Initiative

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Effective

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Responsible

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Good communication skills

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Motivated

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# Activity 3

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## Your next role

What are you looking for in your next role? For instance do you want to:

- Manage staff
- Use a specific IT package
- Deal with customers
- Work in an administration role
- Take on more responsibility
- Expand and build on your current experience.

Make yourself a list of three things that you would like to experience within your next role and then you can use them within your personal profile as and when relevant.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

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# Activity 4

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## Skills mapping

In order to write a good profile, you will need to jot down all your skills and areas of experience. Don't just think of work-based skills such as IT or effective writing. Think of all the things you are able to do, for example, driving a car or able to plan and organise events. Any voluntary work or community involvement that you do can be a great asset on a CV.

To help build your list, imagine yourself going through a typical day. Think of all the activities you do, how you meet and deal with people, how you care for your family and children, paying bills, etc.

What skills are you using when you work, when you meet people and when dealing with the daily chores?

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Which of those skills are your real strengths, things that people notice?

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# Section 5 THE COVERING LETTER

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A cover letter can introduce your CV. It will give the impression that your CV is a good one and that you are a very good candidate to invite to interview. The aim of the letter is to get your CV noticed.

## **There are two main types of covering letter:**

- A speculative approach: This is when you make a general approach to a company. You will need to consider your relevant skills, experience and achievements in order to target organisations and capture their attention.
- The targeted letter: A company or organisation has advertised that they are looking for people to fill certain posts and have invited prospective employees to send in their CVs. Carefully read the vacancy notice and requirements of the role. Consider how your skills, achievements and experience can demonstrate that you meet the requirements of the job. Be specific and cover these in your letter.

Either way, you will need to send your CV with a covering letter.

## **Your letter needs to tell the employer:**

- Who you are
- The reason you are sending a letter
- The date you are sending the letter
- Quote any job references and/or job title.

## **It should be:**

- Clear and concise
- Laid out formally
- Either typed or legibly handwritten
- On good quality paper – do not use lined paper, note paper or note cards  
(If sending by email, you will also need to keep the correspondence formal.)
- Not be more than one page long. You do not need to write too much as all relevant details will be in your Curriculum Vitae. You do, however, need to give some specific detail about your relevant experience and why you would be suitable for a job. Don't be shy about highlighting your strengths!

# What you should say

- Don't grovel. An employer may think you are desperate and feel uncomfortable about employing you. An example looks like this;

Please give me the job. I really need it right now and I will work really hard for you.

- Don't apologise. Keep everything positive. You need to come across as confident. If you are confident then an employer will have confidence in you.

The way you sign off your letter is very important.

*Yours sincerely* is used when you are writing a letter to someone that you have addressed by name, for example, Dear Mr Smith.

*Yours faithfully* is used when you are writing a letter and you do not have a person's name to use, for example, Dear Sir or Madam.

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## Activity 5

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### Hello, I'm ...

To help you prepare for writing your letters, come up with three introductory lines to tell the reader who you are.

**For example:**

At present, I am working in a similar role for Brakes and Tyres, a car maintenance company. My administrative role has provided me with an excellent background in all aspects of office keeping and I have good written and verbal communication skills.

or

My previous work in London was as a team secretary to partners in the law firm, J D Wills. I am confident that my secretarial skills are appropriate to a banking environment, as much of the work carried out by the partners was with banking clients.

Your introductory lines:

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# Sample speculative covering letter

Mrs Jill Goodwin  
13 Lewes Road  
London  
SE9 3JB

1st March 20XX

Mr J D Evans  
Head of Administration  
RJJ Bank  
15 High Street  
London  
EC89 5JJ

Dear Mr Evans

## **Application – Secretarial Work**

I have recently returned from a year's visit to the USA and am looking for a suitable secretarial opportunity. I have enclosed my CV for your attention and would hope that you find my details of interest.

My previous work in London was as a team secretary to partners in the law firm, J D Wills. I am confident that my secretarial skills are appropriate to a banking environment, as much of the work carried out by the partners was with banking clients.

Owing to my circumstances, I am available immediately and would be delighted to discuss my CV with you should you think this would be helpful.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Jill Godwin, Mrs

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# Sample targeted covering letter

Christopher Martin  
19 Windbourne Rise  
Crayford  
Essex  
CM4 3DL

27th February 20XX

Recruitment Manager  
ABC Printing Company  
Treetown  
Woods  
W00 0DY

Dear Sir/Madam

## **Vacancy JP1422 – Administrator in Human Resources**

I was interested to read your advertisement in the Daily Globe 13 February 2007, for the above position. I have been looking for a similar role in a Human Resource environment to enhance my experience.

At present, I am working in a similar role for Brakes and Tyres, a car maintenance company. My administrative role has provided me with an excellent background in all aspects of office keeping and I have good written and verbal communication skills. I have enclosed my CV and hope that after reading it, you will agree that I have the experience and skills to carry out this role.

One of my duties is to access training programmes for our mechanics. This brings me into regular contact with outside training organisations and our staff. I feel that my role at Brakes and Tyres is similar enough to provide an excellent background in Human Resources.

I do hope you find my CV to be of interest and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Christopher Martin

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# Examples of CVs

## CURRICULUM VITAE

**Sally Jones**

11 Arcadia Drive, Eastown, LE32 4JJ  
01212 311301 / 07122 366111

### **Personal Profile:**

With three years' experience in a customer-focused role, I have developed strong communication skills and a good knowledge of how customer service should be delivered. I have also used my organisational skills during four years of administrative experience and would now like to take on a more challenging role in a fun and customer focused environment.

### **Key skills:**

- Ability to use a wide range of IT packages including spreadsheets
- Strong interpersonal skills
- Trained to use a switchboard
- Effective writing skills.

### **Education and Qualifications:**

John Hunt of Everest School, Basingstoke, Hants

GCSE English (C) Maths (C) History (B)

Pitman Typing

BSI Sign Language 1

### **Employment History:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Duties</b>
June 05 - Oct 08	Hotel Central London WC1	Working on the reception. Helping customers and answering the phone.
Sept 01 – June 05	Office House	Administrative duties including, diary management, helping customers, switchboard.

### **Interests and Hobbies**

Reading, swimming and meeting with friends.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

### Personal Details

Name: Joseph Smith  
Address: 34 Best Road  
Loughton  
L2 3EE  
Telephone: 04354 888 222

### Personal Profile

I am currently working as a Gym Instructor at a private health club and have built up a large client group which I regularly train. My BTEC in Sports Science has provided me with a sound knowledge of all aspects of physiological awareness and I am able to design personal programmes for my customers. Most recently I was involved in organising a fitness week at the gym. I coordinated all events and managed a small group of staff.

### Key Skills

- Listening to clients, understanding their needs
- Being able to communicate the way forward clearly
- Organising events.

### Education, Qualifications and Training

South Thames College September 1990 – July 1992

BTEC Sports Science July 1992

GCSEs: English (A) Maths (B) Science (C) Geography (B)

### Employment

Job Title	Organisation	Dates
Gym Instructor	Fitness Health Club	March 2002 – present

### Duties

Designing personal plans for customers and showing people how to use the equipment.

# Example of CV for a school leaver

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Joshua Brown  
Crocksheath  
Manchester  
CL21 85G

Tel: 02578 356 822

Email address: Josh@Brown.co.uk

### Profile

I am a hard-working, very capable and resourceful individual with strong people skills who appeals to others through politeness, presenting myself well and with enthusiasm. I would welcome the opportunity to use these skills in a customer-focused environment.

### My Achievements

- In 2007 I entered a poem competition and was one of the top 50 who had their poem published in a book.
- I have had two leading roles in whole school drama productions.
- In my PE GCSE, I have managed to obtain my Survival Swimming certificate.

### Education

Popley Academy, Milton Keynes, 2003 – 2005

Qualifications	Subject	Grade
GCSE	Maths	C
GCSE	English Language	B
GCSE	Chemistry	C
GCSE	Physical Education (PE)	A
GCSE	History	C
GCSE	Business Studies	C

### Interests and Hobbies

My hobbies include sport such as Football and Rugby, socializing with friends and cars, motorbikes, music and dancing.

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# Glossary of words

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<b>Word</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Liaise	When you liaise, you communicate or make contact between people, e.g. liaising between customers and the people in the warehouse.
Challenge	A challenge is something that is difficult and that requires extra effort but that is also stimulating and can lead to personal growth.
Proactive	If you are proactive, you might act in advance to deal with an expected difficulty; you will anticipate events that might occur and deal with them.
Team player	This is someone who works well with other people, thinks about the needs of others and wants the team to succeed rather than just themselves.
Successful	This would refer to you having obtained something you desired or intended. E.g. you might be successful in meeting your sales targets.
Professional	Acting in a way that is appropriate to what you do, showing competence and pride in your work.
Organised	This refers to you being ordered, structured and efficient.
Experienced	This means that you have been doing a particular job or been in a profession for a certain amount of time. You know what you are doing.
Initiative	When you show initiative you bring a fresh approach to something; a new way of dealing with a problem. You would also have the ability to act first or on your own.
Effective	This means that you bring about a result; that what you do has a positive outcome.





Writing a CV is designed to help you to create and write a winning CV and covering letter.

The booklet takes you through what should and should not be included in a CV, writing a personal profile, thinking about the skills and experience you have to offer and how to lay out a CV and covering letter.



Workbase Training is a national specialist organisation for workforce learning and development. These booklets are based on work with over 20,000 employees within 120 organisations since 1980. Workbase is a not-for-profit charitable company, limited by guarantee, and is supported by the Confederation of British Industry and the Trades Union Congress and other unions.

The Campaign for Learning is a national charity seeking to create an appetite for learning in everyone. Its four areas of work are Workplace Learning & Skills, Family Learning, Learning to Learn and influencing policy. It co-ordinates Learning at Work Day and a Family Learning Festival each year. The Campaign is supported by the government, a wide range of businesses, local authorities, voluntary sector organisations and individuals.

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