

What is a CV?

The term 'Curriculum Vitae', commonly abbreviated to CV, can be literally translated as 'course of life'. Sometimes referred to as a résumé, it's a summary of your career history that is often the first phase in getting yourself noticed by potential employers.

Why CVs are requested?

When employers have a vacancy they need to fill they will put together a person specification; a list of the skills and experience they want the ideal candidate to possess. From this list, the job advert is created, which is where they will ask you to send them your CV.

How closely your CV matches the person specification is the key factor in determining whether they see you as a suitable person to join their company.

Unlike an application form, a CV allows you to decide which information is most relevant to each role you apply for. It needs to be:

- concise
- accurate
- engaging
- thorough

The key word here is concise. It's not a place to list all your achievements and experiences as this would make it long, unwieldy and, in a busy recruitment office, a turn off.

Your personal advertising campaign

Like any advert, you should use your CV as an opportunity to sell. You want to sell your skills, your qualifications, your experience and your ability to do the job.

Advertising is all about attracting attention and appealing to the needs of the buyer so highlight your strengths and achievements to interest of the recruiter.

The skill is in honing your CV to the opening and demonstrating how any experience you have gained can be useful to the company you are applying to. Every time you complete a training course, volunteer or gain new responsibilities you should update your CV.

If you're a recent graduate and can't demonstrate a long career history, you can still list gap year experience, part time work, charity work, internships and association

memberships explaining how the experiences you've gained during these will help you in your future career.

Putting it together

There is no perfect layout format and different people in different situations will need to lay their document out in a different way. Take a look at our [free CV templates](#) for a few ideas.

A CV with clearly headed sections will be appreciated by employers and it will allow them to find the details they're after easily. This means clarity, good spacing and short, sensible blocks of information.

Every CV should include the following sections:

- [Personal details](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Experience](#)

There are additional sections that you could also decide to include

- [Personal statement](#)
- [Skills](#)
- [Hobbies and interests](#)
- [References](#)

All information should be listed in reverse chronological order (i.e. with the most recent at the top), allowing your reader to see what you've done recently, then to continue reading if they think it's relevant to their needs.

It can be a daunting prospect putting together your CV, but it's a lot easier if you remember three key things; Employers want to know how your experiences match their requirements, it's better to go for quality over quantity, and finally, your CV is designed to get you the interview, not the job.