

Your CV is the first impression of you a prospective employer gets. It might also be the last.

At the very least, a good CV will ensure you promote yourself to your best advantage and help secure interviews. A bad CV will guarantee that you rarely see the inside of many interview rooms.

A WINNING CV

It is common for initial CV screening to be conducted by someone other than the hiring manager. Your CV needs to get your abilities across clearly without being long winded.

Recruitment firms and larger organisations generally use optical recognition technology, which scans your CV to identify the salient points. These systems are fallible and in our own experience, while we use optical recognition, each resume is subsequently reviewed directly by a consultant. Not everyone does the same, so put time and thought into preparing your CV.

i) Put information into reverse chronological order. Your most recent experience is in most cases the most relevant experience to the position for which you are now applying. It is where you wish the reader to spend most time. For similar reasons your education should be placed in reverse order.

ii) Write a short leading paragraph at the beginning. A well-worded summary creates initial high impact. Avoid excessive use of flowery language, which will only reduce the interest of the reader and the CV's credibility.

iii) Write the paragraph in the first person, not the third. Focus on your key skills and competencies only. If you have difficulty in articulating this, read the list of works in the next column and see what thoughts come to mind.

ABILITY ACCURATE ACHIEVE ADAPT AMBITION
ASSERTIVE APTITUDE ATTITUDE ACCOMPLISH
ATTRIBUTE COMPETITIVE CONFIDENT CONTROL
CONSISTENT CREATIVE CREDIT DECISIVE DELIVER
DELEGATE DIRECT DIVERSIFY DRIVING EFFECTIVE
EXCEED ESTABLISH ENTHUSIASTIC ELIMINATE
FLEXIBLE INFLUENCE IMPACT IMPLEMENT LOGICAL
MOTIVATE MANAGE NEGOTIATE OPPORTUNITY
ORGANISE OBJECTIVE PERSISTENT PERSUASIVE
PLANNING QUALITY RELIABLE RESPONSIBLE
STRUCTURE STRENGTH SUPERVISE SUCCEED
SYSTEMATIC TENACITY THOROUGH

iv) Keep it single-sided, no matter how much experience you may have, your CV should be no more than two to three pages long and should be single-sided.

v) Use bullet points wherever possible. Try not to use more than 3-4 lines of text at one time as it makes your CV harder to read. Use words that highlight your specific skills and experience. This is important to get right, as key-word searching using optical recognition is general practice for most large firms. The process can influence whether you are considered as suitable for a position.

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vi) Make sure there is enough white space, let your CV "breathe" visually. Don't try to squeeze everything onto one page.

vii) Don't over format your CV, underlines and italics can be used to draw the eye to important information. But it will defeat the purpose if your entire CV is filled with these features. Use them sparingly and don't use borders or coloured paper.

viii) Make your relevant strengths stand out for each position to which you apply. Outline your skills, responsibilities and achievements, most relevant to the job, keeping information concise and to the point. List all of the software applications you can genuinely use, along with the telephony or IT hardware that you have experience of.

ix) Don't lie. Ever. Fudging dates or hiding jobs and periods of unemployment are some of the biggest mistakes you can make. However innocent the omission is, when it comes to light - as it invariably does - your prospective employer can only assume that you have something to hide.

x) Talk "I", not "we", give specific, quantifiable examples of your own experience wherever possible. Use "I" statements when focusing on specific areas of responsibility you hold. "I prepare quarterly management accounts", for example.

xi) Make it your own. There are countless examples of CV's available for reference. Nonetheless, your's should not be a mere replica of others you have

seen. Instead, make your CV work hard for you by designing it to fit your personal circumstances. It is important to tailor your CV towards each application and of course to ensure it has no spelling or grammatical errors. Ask someone to review it for you who has a good eye for detail if you are not sure yourself.

Do not rely on spell checks in word processing applications. They do not pick out incorrect words, spelt correctly. As a general rule, putting in a "reason for leaving" each job is not necessary, however, you must explain any gaps in career history or dates that do not match up.

