

How to get started - writing a Curriculum Vitae (CV)...

Perhaps you haven't applied for a job in a long-time, or just want to update and refresh your CV by starting from scratch – either way, here is a simple, straightforward guide to assembling the essential building blocks of a well-structured and presentable CV.

Structure and Style

Setting out a clear, logical sequence of useful information for potential employers is essential. The information in your CV will provide employers with a good insight into who you are and what you might bring to their team.

There are lots of formats on the internet, almost too many. Professional network sites such as LinkedIn also have a particular layout and prompts for useful information you might include. If you're feeling a little overwhelmed or aren't sure which format to use, we have listed a suggested layout below.

Personal Summary

This is a short introductory paragraph to open-up your CV. It tells people a bit about yourself, which is important as first impressions count. We recommend that you aim for around 50 - 100 words.

Always tailor this section to the job you are applying for. You may want to describe your personal qualities and strengths, offer a summary of your career history and experience, describe something you're passionate or interested in, and then conclude with what you're looking for in your career.

Try to be as original as possible so that you stand out. Some of the commonly used words or phrases within healthcare CVs are:

Compassionate, Caring, Professional, Hard-working, Excellent communication skills, Works well individually and as part of a team

These are all great descriptors, but if you use them, try and make them sound meaningful by giving context or examples, and making it personal to *you* wherever possible. For example,

"Hardworking individual who gives 100% at all times / always sees all tasks through to completion / takes great pride in going the extra mile for both patients and colleagues."

"Confident and decisive / self-motivated and disciplined when working individually, but equally thrives within a team environment by offering support and motivation to colleagues at all times / recognising and respecting the skills and strengths of others."

Key Skills and achievements

Next, bullet point 4 - 6 of your key skills and/or achievements. This could include management skills, clinical skills, competencies, interpersonal skills, notable achievements, qualifications or experience.

You should always tailor this section carefully, thinking about what would be the most relevant, most impressive or most useful to your prospective employer. Studying the relevant job advert, *job description*, *person specification* and the *values* of the organisation will give you vital clues about what the employer is looking for.

Including a section like this works really well, as you're effectively using it to grab the employer's attention early on, highlighting the things that will be the most desirable to them, and therefore making yourself look like the best match.

Sometimes it may be necessary to draw the employer's attention to a previous non-healthcare role, non-work related achievement, or experience from a role you did a long time ago. For example, if you're applying for a team leader post, and previously worked as a manager within the retail industry, this would be very relevant, so you may choose to emphasise it within this section.

Employment and experience

Starting with the most recent, detail your employment history, including job title, name of employer and relevant dates. You can then include some bullet points for each to showcase your duties, responsibilities, skills, knowledge and achievements. (If you ever feel stuck, it can help you read over your old job descriptions or search for similar ones on the internet)

When listing your duties and responsibilities for each job, it's impossible to list everything, so again, prioritise the most relevant, useful or impressive. You should be prepared to tweak this section every time you prepare a CV for a different job to make yourself look like the best match possible.

You don't have to list your entire employment history, but take care not to leave any gaps as these will be picked up. As a general rule, you may want to aim to cover the last ten years, however it depends on personal choice and the circumstances so use your judgement. If you have got a lot of experience, you might find it helpful to summarise your older jobs and experience with a sentence or short paragraph. For example... "*Prior to 2008: Held a variety of different roles within within surgical, A&E and elderly medicine wards, acquiring skills such as ...*"

Education and Qualifications

Starting with the most recent, list your qualifications, including dates and the educational institute or awarding body and grades if applicable. If you have done a lesser known qualification or an international qualification, you may want to explain briefly what the qualification entailed, or list an equivalent qualification in brackets for comparison. If you've been working for a long time, you don't have to list your school qualifications, so omit or summarise (*5 O Levels including Maths and English*) if you're stuck for space.

Professional Training and Activities

Here you can list training, short courses, workshops, or study days you've attended, articles published, volunteering, or membership of professional organisations or networks.

You don't have to list absolutely everything. Prioritise the most recent and the most relevant. You can summarise to save space if needed. E.g. *"Prior to 2014, have attended over 20 study days in areas such as catheter care, IV therapy, leading a team, dealing with complaints and...."*

Additional information

If you have space, write a sentence about your interests or hobbies. Don't be afraid to be original and if possible, try and avoid commonly used terms like *"socialising"* and, *"spending time with my family."*

You may choose to include information about whether you speak other languages, voluntary work, any IT skills, or anything else you think your prospective employer might be interested in knowing.

You only need to include details about your driving license if you're applying for a job where it's actually needed as part of your role. (E.g. community nurse, regional manager, etc.)

Contact Details and References

You will need to include your contact details – a phone number you're happy for employers to use to speak to you about the role and perhaps an email address.

If you have space, consider listing a referee or two with their contact details. If you're not going to list any referees, it's probably better to omit this section altogether to save space.

Checklist

- Length - Ideally no more than 2 sides of A4
- Layout - Clear, logical, flows nicely, easy to read
- Presentation - Organised, neat, uncluttered, professional
- Tailor - Make it relevant to the job you're applying for
- Review - Use spell-check and get at least 2 other people to proof read it (reading backwards can help spot errors)
- Action words - Try to use 'action' words, to bring your CV to life. Attention-grabbing terms like 'identified', 'created,' or 'initiated,' really demonstrate to an employer that you are able to put your skills into practice.

Below are some examples of **Action** words and **Personal Qualities** you might choose to use in your CV, assuming they help to describe you accurately.

As you write your CV, think about the words you are using and how – if asked – you might demonstrate or describe an example.

Action Words

Advocated, Assessed, Coordinated, Centralised,
Championed, Created, Demonstrated, Developed,
Established, Evaluated, Fulfilled, Identified,
Implemented, Initiated, Introduced, Managed,
Negotiated, Organised, Trained, Recognised,
Redesigned, Represented, Streamlined, Supervised

Personal qualities

Ambitious, Analytical, Approachable, Articulate,
Assertive, Calm, Confident, Conscientious, Creative,
Dedicated, Detail orientated, Determined, Diligent,
Diplomatic, Dynamic, Efficient, Energetic, Enthusiastic,
Flexible, Friendly, Hardworking, Influential, Innovative
Loyal, Methodical, Motivated, Organised, Passionate,
Positive, Practical, Proactive, Problem Solver,
Professional, Quick Thinking, Reliable, Resilient,
Resourceful, Role-model, Strategic, Solution focussed,
Supportive, Trustworthy, Warm