

## **Putting together a Curriculum Vitae**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Curriculum Vitae will not get you a job. It is the interview which provides you with that opportunity. But a good CV will:-

- Influence whether or not you are granted an interview
- Help you focus on your strengths and achievements
- Provide prospective employers with a clear statement of what you have to offer
- Give you an outline script to develop a clear interview strategy

There are many opinions on how a CV should be written. In our view there are no absolute answers but there are definitely 'good practice' pointers which you should take account of.

## **HINTS ON GOOD CV WRITING**

### **Do**

- Clearly state contact details including home and business telephone numbers (if appropriate).
- Include qualifications and educational background - highest level attained first. No need to list all examinations. Also include memberships of Professional Institutions, CIPD status etc.
- Use capital letters, bold printing or different fonts to highlight different sections. Do not use overly fancy fonts. Leave 'white space' around each item - this makes it easier to read. Avoid underlining.
- Make sure the CV is well set out and readable.
- Use a point system or bullet points wherever possible instead of writing a 'story'.
- Use action verbs, e.g. accomplished, created, instigated, negotiated. Express achievements clearly and concisely.
- In the Employment History section, make sure you describe your most recent job first and then go backwards chronologically. Allow success in each job to come out.
- Aim to make the CV no longer than two to three pages; interest from the reader may diminish after two pages.
- Languages: if competent indicate level and whether written and/or oral.
- Computer Literacy: state skills clearly.
- Training Courses: include those which have provided you with new skills or informed you of important professional developments.
- Check the CV very carefully for spelling, grammar, punctuation or typographical errors. Do not just rely on spellcheck.
- Always send a covering letter with your CV, ensuring that it has been amended and is relevant to the role you are applying for.

### **Do Not**

- Write “Curriculum Vitae” as a heading - everyone knows what it is.
- Use "I" - or keep its use to a minimum.
- Use slang.
- Include details on religion or political affiliation.
- Include salary on your CV - keep this for your covering letter.
- Automatically include reasons for leaving – consider whether it is relevant.
- Include personal views about your role, job or industry.
- Attach photos (unless specifically asked for).
- Detail every single training course you have attended.
- Use jargon or letter abbreviations.

## **PUTTING IT DOWN ON PAPER**

You could start by pulling together a list of personal, educational and work experiences including:-

- An outline of experience to date and how this might be of value to prospective clients/organisations.
- Achievements and benefits you have brought to employers.
- Educational qualifications.
- Training undertaken.

It is from this that you can then start to produce your own CV in your own style.

## **Different CV Formats**

There are two main formats you can use when writing a CV:

- The Chronological CV Format

This is the most common style of CV and is particularly appropriate where the CV is being used to obtain an interview for a job similar to previous ones. An example layout is attached.

- The Functional Format

For those looking to change direction in their career or wanting to emphasise the range of competencies accumulated perhaps with one/two employers over a long period of time, such a format may be more appropriate. This is also useful for Interim professionals who have gained experience with many different organisations. An example layout is attached.

## **Good Strong Action Words**

Every word counts on your CV. When describing your achievements, therefore, try using strong action words which can convey in one word the potency of your experience and its implications for the future. In the Appendix there is a Thesaurus which may be helpful.

## **Avoid Clichés**

Some words and phrases are dreadfully overused and appear on so many CVs. It is worth remembering that a cliché will make you sound like one of the crowd rather than special or different.

## **Past Employers**

Do not assume the reader will always know who they are or what they do. If a division, unit or subsidiary of a larger enterprise, explain this. Keep these explanations short.

## **A Profile Or Not**

Some people think it is helpful to employers if at the beginning of the CV you provide a succinct profile outlining how you see yourself, your particular strengths, and what you feel you have to offer. Some people claim they hate these profiles. We would suggest that a written profile is optional, but you should have brief descriptive statements in your head to be used when asked about yourself.

A well-written profile may gain the attention of a prospective employer and provide the much-needed encouragement to read on. Try to make it very brief and striking without sounding aggressive or arrogant.

Often you will find it easier to write such a profile once you have written the first draft of your CV. Certainly any exercises you have completed which have highlighted your strengths or your Unique Selling Points may well give you an idea on how to write your profile.

Consider these examples.

- A results-driven HR professional, with broad-based financial services and commercial experience. Key areas of expertise are Resourcing, Management Development and Organisational Change. An engaging leader with a natural and fluent communication and influencing style.
- An HR Manager with wide ranging generalist experience operating at senior management level within a fast paced and challenging business area. Able to work on own initiative and as part of a team. Proven leadership skills involving managing, developing and motivating teams to achieve their objectives. Excellent analytical, problem solving and computer skills.

Prepare a profile in the style that suits you. Facts not opinions will reveal your strengths. Avoid a string of adjectives that cannot be evaluated.

## **Selling Yourself**

Include in your CV those strong achievements and the key experience which could be really useful to a prospective employer. Think about providing information which show you fit the key competencies that hiring organisations desire and show your competitive advantage.

Look through your achievements and your experience and identify those which are particularly relevant, which give you a competitive edge over others and which illustrate the contribution you can make in the future. For instance "reduced spend in recruitment" says little whereas "reduced spend in recruitment by £50,000 representing a 25% saving" says far more.

Use interesting language rather than stereotyped jargon, words that will catch the eye and therefore the interest of the reader.

## **Interests/Activities**

These are optional for inclusion. If you are including them, remember the following:

- do not claim a hobby or interest that is untrue
- avoid contentious interests
- think about the reader's reaction
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## **The 'So What?' Test**

Look carefully at all the achievements and experiences you have listed. Ask yourself the question "So what?" to each of these. Ask yourself whether you have made clear the benefit brought to the organisation by the achievement you have stated. Make sure that each of the points you have made is actually worth making.

Your CV may receive less than 30 seconds of attention at first glance if it is a speculative application.

When you have refined your first draft and applied the "So What?" tests of benefits then re-write your curriculum vitae incorporating the changes. By now you should be much more certain of the thrust of your application and have a sharp focus on what it is that you have to offer.

The second draft is probably a good time to show your curriculum vitae to someone whose judgement you respect. They are often in the best position to spot spelling and grammatical errors and may even notice some key aspects of your work that you have missed. Most of all they will recognise if your CV accurately reflects you. Listen to their opinions and any professional advice available. HRi would be happy to act as a sounding board. In the light of these comments, prepare your third draft. This will be nearer to the finished article, but always be prepared to make changes. A good curriculum vitae is always flexible and must be adapted to suit the varying needs of the market place.

## SUMMARY

The main guidelines for preparing your curriculum vitae are as follows: -

- Reflect yourself positively throughout the CV.
- Find a sharp and positive way to describe you and what you have to offer.
- Focus on achievements and skills.
- Quantify the benefits your achievements brought to the organisation. Use action words to describe positive achievements.
- Never include statements that cannot be substantiated at interview.
- Keep sentences short and to the point.
- Provide a clear layout with attention to detail.
- A CV must be reader friendly, easily understood and pleasing to the eye.
- Avoid jargon and non-standard abbreviations.
- Do not use clichés - recognise the over-used words found in so many CVs.
- Make sure everything is relevant and avoid clutter.
- Address what the prospective employer wants. Think of their needs not yours.
- When replying to a specific job advertisement or to a particular company, ensure your CV reflects your knowledge and awareness of the needs of the post/company. Always make sure you send a covering letter with your CV.

## Candidate Name

### Personal Profile

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*Aim to keep this to a paragraph (four or five lines). This will be almost the first thing a client reads about you. Typically candidates use the profile to summarise their strengths/personal characteristics/professional qualification/key skills/aspirations. You can tailor your comments according to the type of role you are seeking.*

### Career History

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Job Title: Imaginary Company Limited	Dates
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*Use the suggested outline below for your most recent and/or relevant jobs - summarise all other temporary, part time, pre-graduation or non relevant jobs. Try to demonstrate career progression and avoid leaving gaps in the chronological sequence.*

*Write a short paragraph outlining what the company does, approximate size or no's of employees supported and any other relevant company info that puts in context the role that you carried out*

### Key Responsibilities or Key Achievements

*Use bullet points to outline the major responsibilities or key achievements, using active words such as initiated, developed, improved. Try to avoid "responsible for" without elaborating on exactly the level or nature of responsibility. If possible include successful achievements or outcomes*

**Repeat this style for all positions that are relevant to the role you are seeking, or at least the last two/three roles you have held.**

## Career Summary

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*Use this summary style for previous or non relevant jobs)*

<b>Job Title:</b> Imaginary Company Limited	Dates
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**Give a couple of lines to summarise the job**

## Education

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**University Name**

Dates attended

**Degree and result**

Details of any final year project or dissertation

**College Name**

Dates attended

**A-Levels:** Names of subjects only

**School Name**

Dates attended

Number of GCSE or O levels

## Ongoing Career Development or Courses

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**College/Company Name**

Date attended

**Title of course**

Summary of course or type of development/study and knowledge/skills acquired

Include level of CIPD membership as appropriate

## Interests (*optional*)

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Also include whether a car driver, whether licence clean and any other relevant info

## Personal Details

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**Address:**

**Telephone:**

**e-mail:**

## EXAMPLE OF FUNCTIONAL CV FORMAT

**Name**  
**Address**  
**Telephone No**

### **PROFILE**

(Optional) A brief summary of your unique experience and what you have to offer.

### **CAREER SUMMARY**

List in reverse chronological order the company, job title and dates. Do not expand.

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### **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

Choose five areas of practice which relate to the job/role you are trying to acquire. Make these into sub-headings e.g. Resourcing, Performance Management, Reward etc.

List your achievements stating your objective and the outcome or benefit under the appropriate sub-heading. You may wish to start this by saying "At XYZ Company developed new etc. Where possible quantify the outcomes.

List the most recent experiences/assignments first.

### **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

CIPD status

### **TRAINING**

Highlight most recent and relevant.

### **COMPUTER LITERACY**

Include software and level of proficiency.

## **EDUCATION & QUALIFICATIONS**

Reverse chronological order

Name of school/college/university and dates

Itemise 'A' or GCSE/'O' level subjects only if relevant

## **PERSONAL DETAILS**

Date of birth (optional)

Marital status (optional)

Nationality (optional)

Interests (optional)

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1

### THESAURUS

<b>ARRANGED PLANNED</b>	<b>BEGAN STARTED</b>	<b>CHANGED ALTERED</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTED</b>
administered	built	altered	conducted
arranged	conceived	changed	demonstrated
assembled	constructed	combined	effected
centralised	created	converted	enacted
compiled	devised	diversified	enforced
composed	established	modernised	executed
co-ordinated	founded	modified	formed
deployed	generated	re-arranged	formulated
designed	initiated	re-deployed	implemented
developed	inspired	re-designed	negotiated
dismantled	installed	re-directed	operated
engineered	instigated	re-organised	performed
mounted	instituted	replaced	presented
organised	introduced	re-structured	processed
planned	invented	shaped	produced
positioned	launched	simplified	provided
prepared	originated	streamlined	represented
programmed	piloted	tightened	serviced
proposed	pioneered	transferred	undertook
scheduled	rejuvenated	transformed	utilised
structured	renewed	unified	
	set up	united	
	started	vitalised	

<b>IMPROVED</b>	<b>INCREASED MADE BIGGER</b>	<b>LESSEned MADE SMALLER</b>	<b>MAINTAINED</b>
corrected	accelerated	decreased	consolidated
enhanced	augmented	halved	
improved	broadened	lessened	
optimised	doubled	lightened	
rectified	enlarged	lowered	
refined	exceeded	minimised	
remedied	expanded	mitigated	
repaired	expedited	reduced	
rescued	extended	shortened	
resolved	heightened	trimmed	
restored	increased		

<b>IMPROVED</b>	<b>INCREASED MADE BIGGER</b>
revised	lengthened
revived	maximised
re-vitalised	strengthened
revolutionised	surpassed
saved	tripled
solved	widened
transformed	
unravelling	

<b>MANAGED CONTROLLED</b>	<b>OBTAINED USED</b>	<b>PREVENTED ENDED</b>	<b>RESEARCHED STUDIED</b>
controlled	accrued	anticipated	analysed
directed	accumulated	averted	appraised
headed	acquired	avoided	assessed
instructed	bought	completed	audited
led	captured	diverted	calculated
managed	collected	eliminated	checked
ordered	employed	ended	collated
piloted	hired	eradicated	defined
presided	interviewed	evaded	discovered
regulated	obtained	finished	estimated
steered	purchased	forestalled	evaluated
superintended	recruited	halted	examined
supervised	retained	liquidated	highlighted
taught	secured	prevented	identified
trained	utilised	rejected	inspected
		stemmed	investigated
		stopped	monitored
		terminated	probed
			proved
			researched
			reviewed
			revised
			studied
			surveyed
			tested
			traced
			uncovered
			verified

<b>SUCCEEDED ACHIEVED</b>	<b>SUGGESTED ADVISED</b>	<b>URGED</b>	<b>WROTE</b>
accomplished	advised	encouraged	documented
achieved	approved	inspired	drafted
attained	counselled	motivated	edited
completed	forecast	spurred	interpreted
ensured	guided	stimulated	outlined
negotiated	judged	taught	publicised
overcame	liaised	trained	published
saved	prescribed	urged	re-vamped
secured	promoted		revised
succeeded	proposed		translated
surpassed	recommended		wrote
traded	selected		
won	specified		
	suggested		

## STRONG ACTION WORDS

accelerated	devised	instituted	published	suggested
accomplished	directed	instructed	purchased	supervised
accrued	discovered	interpreted	rearranged	supported
accumulated	dismantled	invented	recommended	surpassed
achieved	diversified	investigated	recruited	surveyed
acquired	diverted	judged	rectified	taught
administered	documented	launched	redesigned	tested
advised	doubled	led	redirected	tightened
altered	drafted	lengthened	reduced	traced
analysed	edited	lessened	refined	traded
anticipated	effected	liaised	regulated	transferred
appointed	eliminated	lightened	reinforced	transformed
appraised	employed	liquidated	rejuvenated	translated
approved	enacted	lowered	related	travelled
arranged	encouraged	maintained	remedied	trimmed
assembled	ended	managed	repaired	tripled
assessed	enforced	marketed	replaced	uncovered
attained	engineered	maximised	represented	undertook
audited	enhanced	minimised	resolved	unified
augmented	enlarged	mitigated	restored	united
averted	ensured	modernised	restructured	unravelling
avoided	eradicated	modified	retained	urged
bought	established	monitored	revamped	utilised
broadened	estimated	motivated	reviewed	verified
budgeted	evaded	mounted	revised	visited
built	evaluated	negotiated	revitalised	vitalised
calculated	exceeded	obtained	revived	widened
captured	executed	operated	revolutionised	won
centralised	expanded	optimised	saved	wrote
changed	expedited	ordered	scheduled	
checked	extended	organised	secured	
collated	extracted	originated	selected	
collected	finished	outlined	serviced	
combined	forecast	overcame	set up	
compiled	forestalled	performed	settled	
completed	formed	piloted	shaped	
composed	formulated	pioneered	shortened	
conceived	founded	planned	simplified	
conducted	generated	positioned	sold	
consolidated	guided	prepared	solved	
constructed	halved	prescribed	specified	
controlled	headed	presented	spurred	
converted	heightened	presided	stabilised	
co-ordinated	highlighted	prevented	staffed	
corrected	hired	probed	standardised	
counselled	identified	processed	started	
created	implemented	procured	stemmed	
decreased	improved	produced	stimulated	
defined	increased	programmed	stopped	
demonstrated	initiated	promoted	streamlined	
designed	inspected	proposed	strengthened	
despatched	inspired	proved	structured	
determined	installed	provided	studied	
developed	instigated	publicised	succeeded	

