01 Introduction

A CV is a document to help you apply for jobs. It is a short, clear and compelling summary of your education, employment history and any achievements. It also offers an overview of your skills, strengths, and who you are as a person. A great CV presents the best version of yourself to potential employers - it's your first chance to make an excellent impression! There are no formal rules for creating a CV, but almost every CV includes the same things. Your CV can look however you want, but remember that this is a professional document. The design and written tone should reflect this.

What to include on a CV

Name and contact details

Your CV should include your full name and contact information. Don't forget your address and phone number - some employers will phone rather than email. Ensure your email address gives a good impression of you!

Personal statement

A few sentences which introduce yourself, your skills, and your career goals. Not every CV includes a personal statement, but it is useful if you don't have much work experience.

Education

This is essential. Include all academic qualifications. It is fine to use your predicted grades if you don't have your results yet - just be sure to make sure this is labelled clearly. Include any extra awards and training (e.g. the Arts Award or Duke of Edinburgh).

Employment

List all employment history. It is a great idea to include work experience if you don't have many previous jobs. This section should include your job title, the name of the company, the dates of your employment and the tasks you carried out.

Other

It is a good idea to include a section for other achievements. This could be voluntary work, hobbies, clubs/sports teams (e.g. National Citizen Service, babysitting, drama club). Ensure that you are also describing what skills each item demonstrates.

Skills

Reference your skills and strengths throughout. Use work experience, education, and other sections to share with employers what you are good at. Include specific evidence at all times. You can use coursework, employment responsibilities, and extra-curricular activities as evidence of skills.

Mistakes to avoid

Don't lie

Present the best version of yourself, but tell the truth! Employers always do their research.

Too long

Employers won't spend a lot of time reading your CV, so stick to two pages or less.

Spelling mistakes

Use a spellchecker, but ask a friend to read your CV too.

Too informal

Use the right written tone. Remain professional and use good grammar.

Poor layout

Use clear headings. Ensure formatting is consistent and your CV is easy to read.

Missing details

Don't forget to include details like your address, employment dates and academic grades.

Wrong file format

Save your CV as a PDF. Don't send a document which can be edited by another person.

No evidence/skills

Ensure you are sharing your skills and strengths. Use specific evidence to prove this.

02

Examples

A clear and well-written CV

Maya Arden

> Candidate name stands out. ✓

75 Old Street
Oakley OL2 7TV

Email: mayajames@mailer.com
Phone: 07XXXXXXXXX

> ✓ Contact details included.

> ✓ Professional email address.

Profile

I am a recent college graduate with a flair for creative challenges! I love working with other people on fast-moving projects and thinking outside of the box to solve problems. While studying for my BTEC, I developed an excellent eye for detail because my studies involved lots of research. My coursework included plenty of teamwork, so I have developed strong communication skills. I am seeking rewarding work with a customer-focus. I want to use my creativity to help people.

> ✓ Personal statement is detailed. Skills are backed up with evidence and career goals are included. There is guidance on writing a personal statement in **Section 5**.

Education

City College (2018-2020)

BTEC Level Three Art and Design

> ✓ Clear headings and subheadings. There is a CV style-guide in **Section 3**.

New Street Academy (2013-2018)

Maths **(4)**
English Language **(5)**
English Literature **(5)**
Science **(4)**
Art & Design **(6)**
Geography **(4)**
Business **(A*)**

> ✓ Formatting (e.g. brackets, commas, dashes) is consistent. There is a CV style-guide in **Section 3**.

Experience

The Corner Shop (June-September 2020)

Junior Sales Associate
- Problem-solving and excellent communication dealing with customer queries
- Attention to detail when handling money and reviewing stock
- Worked in a team to stack shelves and unload van

> ✓ Clear links between job description and the skills used. **Section 5** has advice on writing about skills.

New Lane Dental Practice (April 2017)

Administration Assistant (work experience)
- Learnt confidence in answering phones and speaking to the public
- Strong data-processing and computer skills when scheduling appointments
- Quick-thinking and people skills in a fast-paced environment

> ✓ Includes work experience.

Other

- Excellent school attendance record
- Proven commitment as a member of two sports teams
- Volunteer at my local community centre, leading art activities for the elderly
- Planned and produced a talent show at my college. Created a time-plan to stay organised and keep on track. My teacher praised my proactive approach and asked me to repeat the event next year.

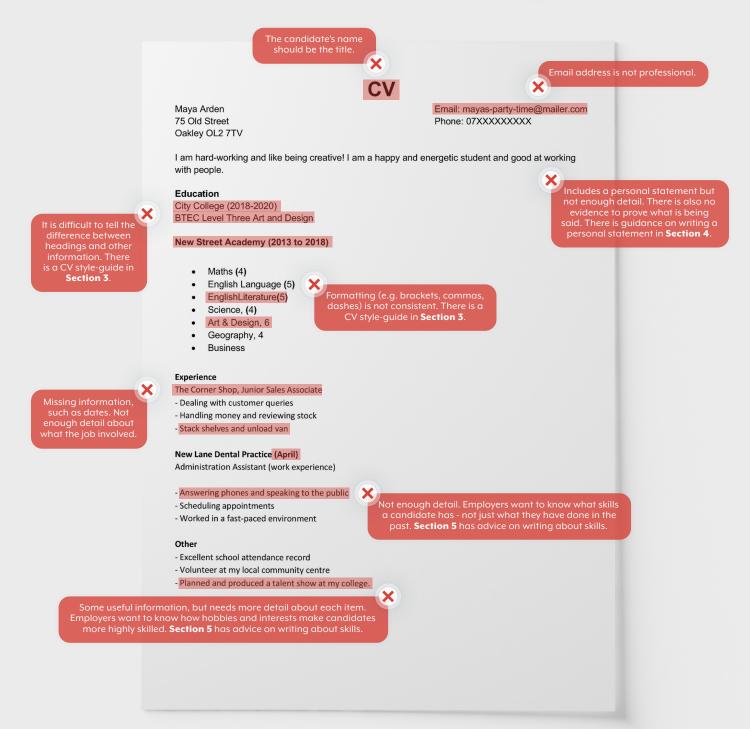> ✓ Extra activities included, with clear links to skills used. Specific details/situations are used as evidence of good work. **Section 5** has advice on writing about skills.

This is a strong start for a CV. The document has a clear layout and is easy to read. The reader doesn't feel overwhelmed with too much information, but there is a fair amount of detail. There is a focus on the skills and strengths of this candidate, and specific examples are given as evidence. The personal statement is detailed and includes career goals.

An example CV which needs improving

CV

The candidate's name should be the title. ✖

Email address is not professional. ✖

Maya Arden
75 Old Street
Oakley OL2 7TV

Email: mayas-party-time@mailer.com
Phone: 07XXXXXXXXX

I am hard-working and like being creative! I am a happy and energetic student and good at working with people.

Includes a personal statement but not enough detail. There is also no evidence to prove what is being said. There is guidance on writing a personal statement in **Section 4**. ✖

Education
City College (2018-2020)
BTEC Level Three Art and Design

New Street Academy (2013 to 2018)

It is difficult to tell the difference between headings and other information. There is a CV style-guide in **Section 3**. ✖

- Maths **(4)**
- English Language **(5)**
- EnglishLiterature(5)
- Science, **(4)**
- Art & Design, 6
- Geography, 4
- Business

Formatting (e.g. brackets, commas, dashes) is not consistent. There is a CV style-guide in **Section 3**. ✖

Experience
The Corner Shop, Junior Sales Associate
- Dealing with customer queries
- Handling money and reviewing stock
- Stack shelves and unload van

Missing information, such as dates. Not enough detail about what the job involved. ✖

New Lane Dental Practice (April)
Administration Assistant (work experience)

- Answering phones and speaking to the public
- Scheduling appointments
- Worked in a fast-paced environment

Not enough detail. Employers want to know what skills a candidate has - not just what they have done in the past. **Section 5** has advice on writing about skills. ✖

Other
- Excellent school attendance record
- Volunteer at my local community centre
- Planned and produced a talent show at my college.

Some useful information, but needs more detail about each item. Employers want to know how hobbies and interests make candidates more highly skilled. **Section 5** has advice on writing about skills. ✖

This CV includes the essential information, but there are some problems with the layout and style. There isn't enough detail, and there are not enough clear links back to the skills of this candidate. All work experience should demonstrate what the candidate is good at. It is important to provide specific examples as evidence of these skills.

03

Style guide

Using levels

Different titles and headings help make sense of the things we read. Text style, colour, and size create structure within documents and guide the reader. Most people use two different styles of text (or 'levels') in their work. Usually, this will be bold 'titles', alongside less eye-catching 'main content'. However, in a CV, there is lots of information to communicate quickly - and several different sections. Employers could spend just eight seconds reviewing each CV, so yours needs an incredibly clear layout to stand out. You should be using at least three 'levels' or styles of text in a CV.

Main title	Section headings	Subheadings	Main content
The most eye-catching part of your CV - your name. This should be big and bold! Employers will need to know who the CV belongs to before any other information.	Sections like 'Education' and 'Employment' should grab attention, but be less noticeable than the main title.	Each section will have different items within it (e.g. jobs, schools etc). It's important these don't blend into each other. Use a subtle subheading to separate them.	Your personal statement, grades and skills should be easy to read, but not be distracting. Employers will use the headings to find what they need, then read further.

Creating levels

There are several ways to show the different levels within a CV. You could increase the text size, use a bold font, capitalise the writing or underline it. Think carefully about which is most appropriate, and what you want the reader to see first, second, third, etc. Another way to divide sections is by using blank space. Don't use the same amount of empty space throughout - use larger spacing to break up sections, and smaller gaps between things like jobs and qualifications.

Large 'title' style for the name

JAMIE SMITH

Address
6a High Street, London XX XXX

Email
jamie_y_smith@mail.com

Sections clearly shown with headings

Smaller sub-headings within sections

EDUCATION

City College (2018-2020)
Business Studies BTEC

New Street Academy (2013-2018)

Consistent punctuation

Brackets used for any details

- English (4)
- Maths (5)
- Science (4)
- Art (6)

EXPERIENCE

Bulleted lists only used when needed

The Corner Shop (June-September 2020)
Junior Sales Associate

- Problem-solving and excellent communication dealing with customer queries
- Attention to detail when handling money and reviewing stock
- Worked in a team to stack shelves and unload van

Capital letters used to show job titles

New Lane Dental Practice (April 2017)
Administration Assistant (work experience)

- Learnt confidence in answering phones and speaking to the public
- Strong data-processing and computer skills when scheduling appointments

04 Personal statement

A great personal statement should tell employers who you are, your strengths and your career ambitions. It should be between 50 and 200 words, or around five sentences.

Crucially, everything you say should be backed-up with evidence. This might mean you mention a piece of coursework you completed, or an after-school group you have attended. For every skill that you include, try to reference something from your life which helped you gain that skill.

It might help to think about the statement as having three sections.

Section 1 - who you are

Introduce yourself and your journey so far. For example:

- "A recent school leaver with a flair for art..."
- "A hardworking BTEC graduate with a keen interest in..."
- "A creative team player, looking for entry-level work experience."

Section 2 - what you can offer

Explain your skills and strengths, but back them up with evidence. For example:

- "While studying for my BTEC, I developed an excellent eye for detail because my studies involved lots of research."
- "Lots of my previous experience involved working in a team, so I have been able to improve and use strong communication skills."

Section 3 - your goals

Show that you have thought about the ideal career for you. For example:

- "I am looking to work in a team to provide excellent customer service."
- "I am seeking to use my creativity to solve problems and help people."
- "I would like to build-up my scientific knowledge, ultimately taking on a management role."

05 Writing about skills

Why should a CV focus on skills?

Employers are increasingly using automated systems to help them select candidates. Often, a computer will scan CVs, searching for specific keywords. For example, if an employer is looking for somebody to carry out research, they might search CVs for phrases like, 'data', 'analysis' or 'attention to detail'. For this reason, your CV must include as many different skills as possible.

Where should I include my skills?

An easy way to include skills within a CV is alongside your employment history. You might not always have a job which is relevant to your professional goals, especially early in your career. So you need to show employers the skills you have - skills which are useful in many different jobs - rather than just the tasks you carried out. Employers are not interested in simply knowing what you did in each job. Instead, they want to see why these things make you a valuable employee. Think about a previous employer and the tasks you carried out for them. Now, for every task you carried out, try to decide what skills it helped you develop. Look at the examples below, and complete some more for yourself.

Responsibility in the job	Skill demonstrated
Selling products to customers	Good with people, great communication
Replacing stock on shelves	Attention to detail, proactive
Scheduling appointments	Computer skills, time management

Which skills should I include?

You should be honest about your abilities, but some skills are more universal than others. When employers are looking for new staff, they publish a Job Description which explains the type of person they want to hire. In it, they will list the skills required for the job. If you can, include as many of these in your CV. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has also published a list of key skills which they believe are most important to employers.

Organisation	Using information	Teamwork	Problem solving
Being on time and prepared. Knowing where to find the information you need.	Reviewing data and using it to make choices. E.g. understanding a spreadsheet.	Working with others in a way that is positive and supportive. Helping to get the job done.	Using the knowledge and resources you have to make good business choices.

Communication	Leadership	Research	Creativity
Sharing your ideas clearly. Adapting the way you communicate for different audiences.	Setting a great example for others, and guiding a team towards their goals.	Ability to find new information and understanding where it came from.	Generating creative ideas and solutions. Thinking outside the box to achieve results.

How should I write about skills?

It isn't easy to include your skills in a CV without it feeling too clunky. A great way to do it is by finding an online dictionary or thesaurus and using the following sentence structure.

e.g. "Demonstrated	communication skills,	by	responding to customer questions
[VERB]	[SKILL]		[JOB DESCRIPTION]

Use different verbs to keep your writing interesting, and adjectives to add detail. Don't forget, even if you aren't particularly confident in a skill, you can use words such as 'developed' or 'improved' to show your potential. Below are some example word combinations, which you can add to over time.

Verb	Adjective	Skill
Developed	strong	leadership
Showed	excellent	subject knowledge
Made use of	careful	attention to detail
Practised	meticulous	organisation
Needed	advanced	computer skills

STAR technique

There is one final step for excellent CV writing. It is not enough to tell employers what skills you have - you must also prove that you have them. It is challenging to do this in writing. You can use a writing technique called 'the STAR technique' to help you. Essentially, for each skill you want to include, you need to think of a real situation that required that skill. This could be a college project or a time at work. Write your sentences using the structure below to help describe your experience and prove your skills! Each letter of the word STAR stands for something you should include when writing about your skills and employment. An example of how to use the STAR technique is included below. After a while, you will be able to forget about this structure and write your own sentences with confidence.

Situation
Start the sentence with a little bit about the job or project:
"I carried out general housekeeping duties."
"I was asked to organise an activity for a college open evening."

Task
Give some more detail about what you had to do in the job or project:
"This included sorting the recycling and destroying private data."
"I decided to give a tour of the Science Department to new students."

Action
Use the sentences from earlier to describe what you did well:
"I needed to use good time-management to prioritise tasks."
"I stayed organised by creating a tour plan and lead the group around."

Result
Finish the sentence by telling employers why this is a good thing:
"I was given more responsibilities as a result of good work."
"My teacher praised my confidence and people skills."

Final sentence
Each statement on your CV could look something like this:
"I carried out general housekeeping duties such as destroying private data. I used my time-management skills to prioritise tasks and was given more responsibilities as a result of good work."

This could just as easily be bullet-points instead:
- General housekeeping duties such as destroying private data
- Used my time-management skills to prioritise tasks
- Was given more responsibilities as a result of good work