

Classic CV Guidelines

The Do's and Don'ts

Either of the two formats outlined below can be used for any application for many jobs including managerial, professional, administration and any other non-academic job. In general the chronological format tends to be used by new graduates or those with less work experience. You need to choose which of the two layouts suit you best and what you are most comfortable writing.

A **Chronological layout** gives an historical account of your career path so far. This is the format most people are familiar with – we have called this the ‘Classic CV’.

A **Skills layout** places emphasis on the skills, experience and strengths you have acquired and can offer the employer. It is not written chronologically but under headings which prioritize and match the skills the employer is looking for.

However, the ‘do’s and don’ts are the same for both CV formats.

You only have two pages to sell yourself, so your CV needs to be a powerful marketing document which markets you to a prospective employer ahead of other applicants. It is important to realize that the purpose of a CV is not to get a job, but to get on the short list for an INTERVIEW. You do not need to write your life history: don’t tell them everything or you will have nothing left to talk about at the interview! Only write what is relevant to the post you are applying for.

You need to match the content of your CV to the needs of the organization you are applying to. It should highlight your education, academic history, skills and any work experience you have which will enhance your application, Use evidence to demonstrate that you can provide the skills the organization needs.

Do's:

Use 14 font for your name and 11 font for the rest of your CV. Use Ariel or another clear font style – why not look at Tahoma or Verdana

Capitalize and bold your major headings and use bold for any sub-headings

Write your name on the top of each sheet you write

Use one font style

Be crisp and concise

Be appropriate to your situation

Make it attractive and appealing to the eye

Write in statements – bullet points are most effective

Avoid using the word ‘I’

Use action/power words at the beginning of each statement (See end of this section for examples)

Do not be afraid of white space

Write headings which suit you and your experience/history. The headings in the CV example are for guidelines only

Make sure it is two pages long – max!

Don'ts:

Use the words Curriculum Vitae – the reader knows what it is!!

Your photograph (unless you are applying for a job for which a photo is essential)

Job descriptions – the reader will know!

Non-essential personal information

Long sentences

Lists – such as your GCSE's

Top 5 Layout Suggestions

Write your name in the middle of the page – or on the right margin. Use a large font – this is you – this is what you are marketing! Your date of birth is NOT necessary

Put a line between your contact information and the main body of your CV. It gives your CV more definition

Always write an Objective – you may be sending your CV speculatively to an organization and they do not want to second-guess what you are looking for. It also helps the person reading your CV to focus exactly on what you – and they – are looking for.

Prioritization of information – for instance education followed by employment history in the chronological format. Then prioritize the information under each heading. One example could be:

Played football for the University 1st 11 and was captain

Captain of 1st 11 University football team

The second example would be the preferred option as it highlights that you were captain and could lead a team not that you played football.

Be consistent – make it easy for the reader to find out all about you in a logical and readable layout. For instance, write your dates in the same place – perhaps always on the left-hand margin.

Words to use on your CV

Here are some examples of action/power words you could use. Select words which match the opportunity you are applying – the clues will be in the job description.

Achieved	Administered	Advised	Analyzed
Assessed	Arranged	Budgeted	Calculated
Completed	Conducted	Controlled	Co-ordinated
Created	Designed	Devised	Developed
Discovered	Distributed	Evaluated	Examined

Explained	Increased	Instructed	Liased
Managed	Monitored	Negotiated	Organized
Planned	Promoted	Recommended	Reformed
Represented	Researched	Responsible for	Resulted
Selected	Sold	Solved	Supervised
Taught	Tested	Trained	Welcomed

Your CV Checklist:

Is it in a consistent and readable format? First impressions matter – how your CV is laid out tells the person who is reading it a lot about you – see about being consistent mentioned above

Does the document emphasize your skills and achievements? Does it tell the reader what they need/want to know about you? Look at what you have written from the employer’s perspective – is it logical and fluid?

Is it accurate? Check your documents for spelling and grammar

Have you used enough white space? Do not put too much information on a page

Have you prioritized your information and used words which make you sound proactive and positive?

Have you asked your referees if it is OK to give their names before you include them?

Have you used abbreviations? Don’t!

Have you asked someone to proof read your CV before sending it?

Have you told the truth?

Have you kept a copy?