

Building a great CV

10 SEPTEMBER 2016



What is a CV for?

The aim of the CV is to get an interview

- You are generating interest in you and putting yourself in the shop window

CV is a snapshot of your career, not an in depth story

- Your CV should prompt questions at interview (that way you know the answers)
- Want the reader to engage with your CV quickly and be left wanting to find out more about you

Ultimately it is an advert for your skills

- Needs to have a clear message
- Need to get on the “find out more” pile

There is no “right” way of doing it

- Your CV is personal to you



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<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/writing-applications>

What makes a successful CV?

Targeted at your audience

- With appropriate language and examples

Brief

- Ideally 2 sides

Clear

- Not too much jargon – will be read by HR and hiring manager

Clean

- Simple fonts, no colour, clear paragraphs, use whitespace

Focused on results

- Be clear about what you have achieved

Test everything with “*Will this help me get an interview?*” and remove what does not help

Style and language

Use positive language

- Use power words from the list
- Start sentences with the most important words

Use short clear sentences and bullet points

- Break up large blocks of text, they are hard to scan

Focus on achievements

- Where possible use facts and figures
- Remember to include the benefit to the organisation

Highlight your keys skills

- Use examples to make them real not generic



Main Elements of a CV

Contact details

Profile (covered last week)

Achievements

Employment experience

Educational qualifications

Skills

Interests

References

The file

Bold = essential

Main Elements of the CV

Contact details

Needs to have correct contact details at top

- Name in bold at the top - this is easier for people handling your CV
- Address – especially if you live near where you applying
- Phone number (mobile)
- Email address (professional)
- Possibly LinkedIn address

Don't usually include

- Age
- Nationality – But if from overseas useful to explain that you have a right to work in UK
- Photo
- Gender
- Marital status

No need to say CV or Curriculum Vitae

Main Elements of the CV

Employment Experience

In reverse date order with your most recent at the top

- Can include full time, part time, temporary or voluntary, paid or unpaid

Include your job title, the name of the organisation and dates

- Don't undersell it

Describe your duties, and especially your achievements, plus relevant skills.

- It is important to use keywords that match the skills and experience that the job requires

Think of ways to make your most relevant experience stand out

- May want to have 'Relevant work experience' and 'Additional work experience' sections
- Again this should be in reverse chronological order with your current or most recent work at the top
- Can highlight in cover letter

Main Elements of the CV

Educational Qualifications

In reverse date order with your most recent at the top

- Level of detail depends on how relevant it is to the role you're applying for
- Summarise qualifications such as GCSEs where listing them all could take up too much space

Make sure you include the qualification, name of the institution and the dates

- Include grades if relevant and recent *“Will it help me get an interview?”*

Translate qualifications into terms useful to employer

- Employers may not be aware of the specifics of your course
- Especially important for overseas applications

Include any relevant content or projects

- Major elements are part of your experience
- Think about how these showed your technical and general skills

Main Elements of the CV

Skills

This is an optional section

- Lets you to outline the personal skills you offer, such as communication, leadership and organisation.

Make sure your headings reflect the skills for the job you are applying for

- Do not simply list all your skills
- Describe specific examples of how you have gained them
- Try to show how your actions made a difference to the organisation (the result)

Don't repeat information that you have covered in other sections

- If you've already described all your skills, you don't need a separate skills section

Make sure that practical skills are listed somewhere in your CV

- Including IT, languages and driving licence

Main Elements of the CV

Achievements

An optional section for people with experience

- Lets you to highlight significant achievements

Make sure achievements are relevant to the type of job you are applying for

- Make sure that the employer will see them as achievements
- Where possible use facts and figures
- Describe specific examples with the outcome for the organisation

Don't repeat text from the skills or employments sections

- Should be clear who achievement was for

Main Elements of the CV

Interests

Good to include short descriptions of some of your different leisure interests

- Try to demonstrate a good cross-section of your abilities and personality
- Don't just produce a long list of activities or take up so much space that this section dominates your CV
- What would you say if asked about them at interview?

Think about what these say about you and get the balance right

- Think about the test *"Will it help me get an interview?"*
- Some are seen as positive – acting, team sports,
- Some generally seen as negative eg watching TV, facebook (unless going for social media job!)

Main Elements of the CV

References

Usually two people who can comment on what you have done recently

- Include the referee's name, relationship to you and full contact details
- Always ask permission first and keep them informed about what you are applying for
- Can be work and academic
- Some companies are very limited in what they can say

Depends if you are required to produce references

- Can just put "References available on request" but need to have them ready if asked

Main Elements of the CV

The File

Use a clear filename

- On email this is the first thing the recruiter will see of your CV

Include your name in the filename

- Makes it easy to find when they have saved it

Avoid generic or working titles

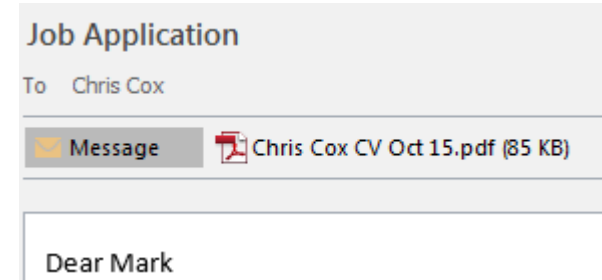
- Document23, CV version 6, CV corrected by VR.....

Send as PDF

- Avoids possible formatting issues between mac and PC and on printers

Keep a copy of what you sent

- Important when preparing for interview - especially if tailored to the job



Checking, checking, checking

Some employers will **reject any** CV with mistakes in it

- Get someone else to check it
- One tip is to review from the bottom up

No spelling mistakes

- An absolute no-no as Word will highlight the obvious ones
- Check company names and job titles carefully

Other typos

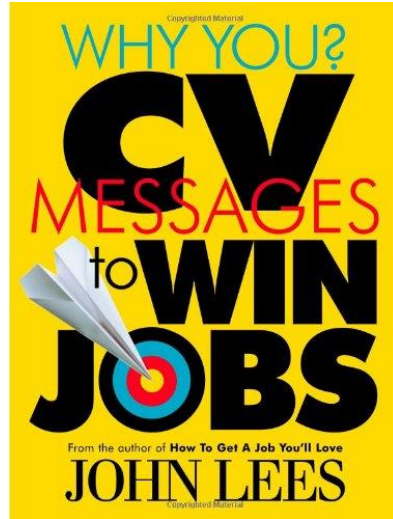
- Check for random double spaces (use find and replace)
- Consistent capitalisation for job Titles and Technical terms
- Make sure there are full stops at the end of sentences.
- Be consistent in styling, especially with bullet points – capitals, full stops...
- Check the length of dashes – word can change them - sometimes

Consistent formatting

- Make sure everything is aligned and font sizes are consistent

More Information

Book



Online Course



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The Biggest Mistakes I See on Resumes



[LASZLO BOCK](#)

SVP, PEOPLE OPERATIONS AT GOOGLE

POSTED SEP 17 2014

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/article/20140917045901-24454816-the-5-biggest-mistakes-i-see-on-resumes-and-how-to-correct-them>

Mistake 1: Typos

This one seems obvious, but it happens again and again.

- A 2013 CareerBuilder survey found that 58% of resumes have typos.
- In fact, people who tweak their resumes the most carefully can be especially vulnerable to this kind of error, because they often result from going back again and again to fine tune their resumes just one last time. And in doing so, a subject and verb suddenly don't match up, or a period is left in the wrong place, or a set of dates gets knocked out of alignment.
- I see this in MBA resumes all the time.

Typos are deadly because employers interpret them as a lack of detail-orientation, as a failure to care about quality.

FIX: Read your resume from bottom to top

- Reversing the normal order helps you focus on each line in isolation.
- Or have someone else proofread closely for you.

Mistake 2: Length

A good rule of thumb is one page of resume for every ten years of work experience.

- Hard to fit it all in, right?
- But a three or four or ten page resume simply won't get read closely.
- As Blaise Pascal wrote, "I would have written you a shorter letter, but I did not have the time." A crisp, focused resume demonstrates an ability to synthesize, prioritize, and convey the most important information about you.

Think about it this way: the **sole** purpose of a resume is to get you an interview.

- That's it.
- It's not to convince a hiring manager to say "yes" to you (that's what the interview is for)
- or to tell your life's story (that's what a patient spouse is for).
- Your resume is a tool that gets you to that first interview.
- Once you're in the room, the resume doesn't matter much. So cut back your resume. It's too long.

Mistake 3: Formatting

Unless you're applying for a job such as a designer or artist, your focus should be on making your resume clean and legible

- At least ten point font
- At least half-inch margins
- White paper, black ink
- Consistent spacing between lines
- Columns aligned
- Your name and contact information on every page.

Formatting can get garbled when moving across platforms.

- If you can, look at it in both Google Docs and Word, and then attach it to an email and open it as a preview
- Saving it as a PDF is a good way to go

Mistake 4: Confidential information

I once received a resume from an applicant working at a top-three consulting firm.

- This firm had a strict confidentiality policy: client names were never to be shared.
- On the resume, the candidate wrote: "Consulted to a major software company in Redmond, Washington." Rejected!

There's an inherent conflict between your employer's needs (keep business secrets confidential) and your needs (show how awesome I am so I can get a better job).

- So candidates often find ways to honor the letter of their confidentiality agreements but not the spirit. It's a mistake.
- While this candidate didn't mention Microsoft specifically, any reviewer knew that's what he meant.
- In a very rough audit, we found that at least 5-10% of resumes reveal confidential information.
- Which tells me, as an employer, that I should never hire those candidates ... unless I want my own trade secrets emailed to my competitors.

The *New York Times* test is helpful here: if you wouldn't want to see it on the home page of the *NYT* with your name attached (or if your boss wouldn't!), don't put it on your resume.

Mistake 5: Lies

Putting a lie on your resume is never, ever, ever, worth it.

- Everyone, up to and including CEOs, gets fired for this. (Google "CEO fired for lying on resume" and see.)
- People lie about their degrees (three credits shy of a college degree is not a degree),
- GPAs (I've seen hundreds of people "accidentally" round their GPAs up, but never have I seen one accidentally rounded down -- never), and where they went to school (sorry, but employers don't view a degree granted online for "life experience" as the same as UCLA or Seton Hall).
- People lie about how long they were at companies, how big their teams were, and their sales results, always goofing in their favour.

There are three big problems with lying:

(1) You can easily get busted.

- The Internet, reference checks, and people who worked at your company in the past can all reveal your fraud.

(2) Lies follow you forever.

- Fib on your resume and 15 years later get a big promotion and are discovered? Fired. And try explaining that in your next interview.

(3) Our Moms taught us better.

- Seriously.