

Helpful tips and pointers from the ICAS  
Professional Development team.



# CV Writing Guide



# Writing your CV

Your CV is your personal sales pitch and gives you the opportunity to showcase your skills, experience, and qualifications to potential employers.

*You want your CV to help you stand out from other applicants and showcase your personality, as well as your skills and experiences. However, there is a fine line when personalising your CV and a balance needs to be struck between conveying yourself as an individual and conveying how you are as a professional. A clear, brief CV is likely to be appreciated by those reading it – two pages maximum.*

## Constructing your CV

### 1. Personal details

Your CV starts off simply with your name and contact details – have a think about what is relevant for employers, at this stage they will be looking for how to contact you so usually just a phone number and email address will do at this stage.

Your age, gender, address etc. are not required and could cause unconscious bias.

Be sure that your email address does not convey the wrong image, Iliketoparty@hotmail.com is an extreme example but you get the picture. If necessary, create a new email address just for job applications.

### 2. Personal profile/ objective

Many people include a personal profile within their CV. It is the hardest part of your CV to prepare but done effectively it can help your CV catch the eye of the recruiter.

Don't be generic. Your profile should be tailored to every role you apply for and is a chance for you to demonstrate your experience that will be most relevant and interesting to the employer you are applying too. State clearly where you are in your career e.g., student, newly qualified CA etc. Then, make sure you address; 1. your career plans and how the job you're applying for fits in, 2. your experience and how you fit the job description, 3. any extra skills that make you stand out as a candidate. Aim for 100 -150 words.

*To be effective, your personal profile needs to help you stand out as the ideal applicant for the job. The key to doing this is to tailor it carefully to what you are applying for.*

Try to avoid clichés like “I am a hard-working conscientious individual who is highly motivated....” This is relatively generic and doesn't tell the employer anything about you as a person. Aim to be targeted with the message you are trying to convey. What do you want the person reading to know about you? What are you trying to convey about yourself?

A potential alternative to a personal profile would be a list of bullet points, giving examples of a few accomplishments relevant to the position you are applying for. Try to keep achievements in specific roles back so you can list them under each job, rather than be too top heavy with your profile.

### **3. Work experience**

Start with your most recent or current role and then work back through your experience, clearly stating the company name, the dates you were employed and your job title for each.

Your most recent positions will be of most interest to the recruiter. Go back around 10 years depending on the number of roles. For roles prior to this just list the employer's name, job title and dates.

Use bullet points to highlight your responsibilities and any key achievements relevant to your application.

*Where possible state your key achievements in a measurable way, e.g., by stating the time period you achieved something in, or how many staff you were responsible for, or how much profitability improved by or any KPIs which were achieved.*

Quite a useful way to start each bullet point is with a verb, e.g., delivered, analysed, compiled, negotiated etc.

Avoid repetition in your CV. If you've had two very similar roles, the information relating to the second one needs to be significantly abbreviated.

### **4. Education**

In this section you should cite your first degree, any subsequent degree, professional qualification(s) and memberships, again starting with your most recent and then working backwards.

Include the Professional Body/ University etc where you studied, the dates which you were there and the grade that you received. At this stage if there are any specifically relevant modules which were undertaken that match the job description, include these here.

Make sure that it is easy for employers/recruiters to see your Educational experience, they don't want to be looking around for it.

Make sure you are consistent when formatting this and have each entry look the same.

Hopefully, it goes without saying that you need to ensure your qualifications are accurately recorded here - some employers verify these.

### **5. Other training/qualifications**

You may wish to have a separate section on your CV to cover any other types of qualification or training courses you have undertaken, again where you believe these will be relevant to the job you are applying for, e.g., ECDL, languages, clean driving licence.

If you are trying to save space to keep to your two-page limit – make sure the content you are including is relevant. If you are not going to be required to drive/have a driving licence for the role, then consider if it is appropriate to include this.

### **6. Personal interests**

Whilst not a necessity, including personal interests in your CV can again serve as a means of helping differentiate you from other applicants.

This is the place to mention any committees you play an active part in, voluntary work you do, sporting achievements etc. If possible, try to link up some of these skills to the role you are applying too. Try to avoid generic things like 'I like running' and potentially say 'I take part in the 5k Park Run most weekends and enjoy this because of X'. Socialising with friends and exercising are not great personal interests to mention here and do not tell the recruiter anything about you.

Like every other item on your CV ensure you can talk confidently about whatever you put in this section.

Keep this brief. A couple of lines should be sufficient.

## 7. Referees/ References

Unless you are applying for a job that expressly asks you to include your referees, "Available on request" or leaving this section out (again if you are trying to save on space) in this section is probably best. This helps keep contacting referees under your control. As best practice you should contact your reference/referee to let them know about the job vacancy if you know a reference request is coming their way it is much more consideration than them just receiving a request unexpectedly.

## CV Variations

For those who are seeking a change in career direction or returning after an extended career break, a skills-based CV may be more appropriate than a chronological CV. The focus here is on demonstrating the transferable skills and experience you have for the job.

After the personal details and personal profile section, the skills-based CV could include a section each for relevant skills, relevant achievements, and relevant work experience. The contents of each of these sections could be taken from a wide range of contexts, recognising that you may have gained many transferable skills from different experiences.

Be sure to provide factual examples for each skill included and be able to demonstrate tangible things to your prospective employers.

For anyone seeking an academic or research career an academic style of CV should be prepared. The main difference here is the emphasis given to your academic achievements. Appropriate headings might include:

- Dissertation/research abstracts
- Teaching Experience
- Publications
- Professional Memberships
- Presentations given/conferences attended.

Academic CVs represent the one exception to the rule of keeping your CV to a maximum of two pages long. Three pages should be the maximum length to aim for here.

For more information and resources regarding Career support, visit <https://www.icas.com/members/careers-support>

### Disclaimer:

This help sheet is designed to assist members with an important issue of general application and is not intended to be a definitive statement covering all aspects of this area. No responsibility for any person acting or refraining to act as a result of any material in this help sheet can be accepted by ICAS.



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