

A GUIDE TO...

CV PREPARATION

A well-prepared C.V. is often the key to a successful job hunt and it is important that it does justice to your abilities. It should be a concise, carefully thought out and well presented document that provides the employer with an indicator of your potential worth. It should be an honest but positive reflection of your skills, experience, achievements and goals. In short, it should make the reader want to find out more as opposed to consigning your details to the bin!

Presentation

The look and feel of your C.V. should be as simple and clear as possible and although there is no hard and fast rule you should aim to fit all your information within two pages of A4. Presentation counts for a great deal and consideration should be given to details such as the typeface used, correct spelling and layout. Generally information should be conveyed in an ordered and professional manner.

Structure

There is no single, standard way of structuring a C.V. but the main components are as follows:

- Personal Details
- Career Objectives
- Employment History
- Skills and Interests (particularly skills such as vocational qualifications and languages)
- Education and References

Two particularly important sections are Career Objectives and Employment History (though the others should not be neglected) and it is worth discussing these sections in a little more detail.

The Career Objectives section should very briefly detail the type of position (and possibly the type of company) that you are seeking and why you are right for the role. It also gives you the opportunity to highlight the key strengths and attributes that you could bring to bear in the role.

The Employment History section provides key employment information and should demonstrate a clear development path right up to the present time. The whole section should link with and offer justification for your Career Objectives.

Employment History Tips

Your Employment History break down should always start with your current or most recent company listing your latest role within that company first. Greater detail should be provided about more recent and more significant roles.

Whatever the role, concentrate on highlighting your achievements within it rather than simply describing your responsibilities. It is often helpful to bullet point your achievements and you will find that sentences which start with words such as “initiated” or “co-ordinated” strike the right note. Remember though, that you should discuss your achievements in the employer’s terms (i.e. how you actually helped your company) rather than purely your own.

Avoid the temptation of padding out your Employment History section unnecessarily. Particularly if you are a recent graduate or you are applying for one of your first jobs, it is better to place a little more emphasis on other aspects such as your qualifications and training. Also avoid glossing over employment gaps. Long, unexplained career gaps can count against you so, wherever possible, explain them.

Final Points

When you have completed your C.V. make sure that you re-read it on your own and preferably with a friend. Think about how well you have tailored it to the position on offer. For example, if the position is in an industry sector that is new to you, have you emphasised your transferable skills? If it is in the same sector, have you emphasised your industry knowledge? In a competitive situation, the attention you give your C.V. is vital.

Top Tips.

- First impressions count. Choose an easy-to-read and professional looking font.
- Be clear and concise - ensure that each sentence and paragraph has a purpose.
- Concentrate on highlighting your achievements rather than simply listing your educational or employment history.
- Proof read your CV thoroughly, and if possible, get someone else to also proof read it for you.

