

CV Preparation

A CV is a vital document for job hunting. It gives a clear summary of your education, work experience, achievements and abilities. Many employers and commercial employment agencies ask for a CV and a covering letter when recruiting. You can also use a CV to apply speculatively to employers. Employers receive many CV's for each vacancy and tend to glance over them quickly so your CV should be short, eye-catching and interesting.

- A CV should not be more than 2 pages.
- Use good quality A4 paper.
- Lay out your CV professionally - use a word processor and, if possible, a laser printer.
- Target each CV to the job for which you are applying.
- Centre your name, address and home telephone number at the top of the page. Other personal information such as date of birth, marital status, nationality are not necessary.
- Use capital letters to highlight important points and bullet points to list achievements and results.
- Choose sharp clear sentences.
- Emphasise your achievements and results by using power verbs e.g. managed, organised, developed, indicated and implemented.
- Quantify your achievements e.g. developed fluency in German to degree standard; increased sales by 20% over a 6 month period.
- Education and work experience should be indicated in chronological order (i.e. most recent first).
- Avoid misinformation. An employer will check out the facts before offering you a job.
- Don't leave any unexplained gaps.
- Check for correct spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Use relevant references. Make sure you have asked the referee's permission to use their names.

Hints for completing Job Application Forms

- Research the company before completing the form.
- Analyse the job description and applicant requirements / specification. Make sure that you are clear about the main duties, skills and experience that they are looking for in applicants.
- Read the whole form and the instructions before filling in any sections.
- Always draft the answers to the questions before completing the form.
- Follow any instructions as to how the form should be completed - in black ink, block capitals etc.
- Avoid spelling and grammatical mistakes. Get someone to check your draft answers.
- Answer each question fully and don't leave any questions unanswered. The space allowed for each question usually indicates its importance. Make sure you respond to all parts of each question.
- Make sure your answers are relevant to the question and do not omit any relevant information.
- Linking back to 2. show that you have a good understanding of what the job involves and the type of person looked for. You need to link the requirements of the job to your own qualifications, abilities, skills, personal qualities and experience. Give evidence of these from your past experiences. You need to convince the employer that you match all these requirements.
- You need to market yourself to the employer. Where possible emphasise your achievements, skills and successes from your academic school study and work experience to date.
- Don't leave any gaps of time as they may arouse doubts. Account positively for the ways in which you have spent your time since leaving school or college or when you were unemployed e.g. developing other skills such as learning a language or improving your computer skills, travelling, voluntary or part-time work.
- Keep a copy of the application form when you have completed it to look at before your interview.

Covering Letter

When sending a CV to apply for an advertised position, or sending to a company speculatively you should always include a covering letter. Research the company before writing the letter. Read through the job description and target the letter at the job you are applying for. Bring together all the evidence as to why you are the person for the job.

- Be clear, concise - not long winded
- Use quality paper and layout similar to that used for your C.V.
- Address the letter to a named individual in the company.
- Focus the letter on the potential employer's needs.
- Match the needs of the job with your achievements.
- Specify your availability for interview.
- Check for spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Sign the letter personally.

Preparing for a Job Interview

- Be clear about why you want the job and show a good knowledge of what the company does and if possible what the specifications of the job are. This may involve some prior research.
- Know your CV well; it would create a bad impression if asked about qualifications, interests and experience, not to be able to explain or elaborate upon what is claimed in the CV.
- Show an interest in wanting the job. Don't expect the potential employer to have to sell it to you or else the employer is likely to opt for a more enthusiastic applicant.
- Research the company in question as well as the job on offer and have a list of questions ready to ask.
- Be prepared. Anticipate many of the questions that may be asked and try to think, in advance, of follow up questions that may result from your statements.
- Presentation is very important. You should be well dressed and groomed in your appearance as you may have only one opportunity to make an impression.
- Make sure your hand shake is firm and that you establish eye contact with the interviewer at the outset.
- Never lie about why you want a job or want to leave your old one. But if you are leaving an old job be positive about the reasons for your decisions; emphasising the negative aspects of your old job will create a bad impression and make an employer wary of hiring you.
- If you're told to come in for a chat about the job, don't be fooled into thinking this is just a casual get-together. It's more likely to be a formal grilling!
- If asked about weaknesses resist the temptation to be too confessional about faults. Make weaknesses such as impatience look like strengths.
- Show a sense of humour, but only laugh at the appropriate times and remember that what you find funny may not appeal to everyone else.
- Expect the unexpected, such as very awkward questions, or a sudden requirement to demonstrate skills, as employers will use the opportunity to assess how you can react to sudden requirement.
- Don't be phased by the "good cop, bad cop" routine that pairs of interviewers often use.
- Wait as long as possible before bringing up the subject of money. Hopefully, the employer will do this.

