

# CV Writing

**A CV or Curriculum Vitae is: Your Life History + Your Job History + Your Achievements**

## Why Write a CV?

To apply for a job within the same field.

To apply for a job within a different field.

To summarise your life achievements.

To apply for a particular job vacancy.



## The Basics Of A Good CV

The basic function of a CV is to present relevant information about yourself to the prospective employer. Though the definition sounds simple, there are a lot of angles to the presentation of a CV or curriculum vitae or biodata as is commonly known, which mostly depends upon what type of a job you are applying for. However, whatever be the type of the CV, the basics would remain constant. A good CV should:

- Be preceded by a neat cover letter which is addressed by name or authority (designation) to the person who is in charge of recruiting or the chief of the organisation (be careful here that you have right name, it is spelled right, and has the right and exact designation); the cover letter should summarise in two-five line paragraphs why you think you would be fit for the job showcasing your best talents to match the requirements of the job (and add a little extra)
- Represent accurately all the relevant job information (personal and professional)
- Be crisp and highly informative (make sure you do not have any long winding sentences while describing experience and other traits)
- Be written well to make an interesting reading for the prospective employer, highlighting you best achievements (avoid tabulated form unless the information requires it, such as your education)
- Highlight your match to the job through relevant experience, qualification and personal traits (some examples are, good communication skills, friendliness, dependability, fast learning ability, etc)
- Be tailor made (or rather written) to match the exact requirements of the proposed job.
- Follow the standard format of the country or region, such as the order of the presentations of information (in some places the personal information precedes all other information, while in many places this is presented at the end)
- Written in impeccable language (which ever language the CV is written) grammatically
- Absolutely free of any spelling errors (as a matter of fact this is one of the highest quoted reasons for rejection of the CV)
- Preferably typed neatly on good quality paper.
- Preferably give two good unrelated references or mention that references may be given on request

A good CV will not only be tailor made for the job you are applying for, will also match carefully all your talents and capabilities to the requirements of the job specifically and the goals of the company overall. Your CV should make your candidature for the job look like it is a win-win situation to the company to employ you, i.e. the company will profit from engaging you just as much as you would profit from being part of the company.

## CV Documents

### **Documents and materials need to write a CV:**

- Job descriptions for all positions held
- Educational transcripts and records of seminars/conferences attended since secondary school.
- References

## **CV Heading**

In CV heading you can write your general information:

- Name
- Surname
- Local address
- E-mail address
- Home Phone number / Mobile Number



## **CV Skills Summary**

The Skills Summary section of your CV includes your main skills. You should only include keywords in this section, do not go into lengthy descriptions of your skills. The skill summary is also called personal profile.

## **CV Objective**

The CV Objective, sometimes also referred to as CV Personal Profile states "What is my next step in my career?" This should be a short, concise statement that informs the employer what kind of position you are looking for. The type of position, the role (managerial, supervisor, contractor) should be included as well.

If you are job hunting it is a good idea to have several CV's with different profiles or objectives. For example, you can have a CV for a sales supervisor and the other for a shop floor manager. Your 'sales supervisor' CV can highlight achievements in this area, the CV would be tuned to that particular in terms of job descriptions and achievements.

## **Education on your CV**

List all your qualifications in this section. Include all of your education including certifications from non-academic institutions, especially those that are related to this job vacancy. If you have more work experience than qualifications, put your work experience before your qualifications.

## **Honours, Awards or Accomplishments**

Academic and related awards are listed here. Relevant Courses which are directly related to the job vacancy you are applying for should be listed in this section. If your degree is not related to this job, highlight aspects of the course that are. List any projects you have worked on that are related to this job.

## **Professional or Work Experience description on your CV**

This section includes any work experience that you have in the field you are applying for. Even if the post was unpaid, voluntary, summer job, internship, co-op experience or extracurricular activity. When listing these work experiences include what kind of job was it (internship/full time/ part time etc).



Each job detail should include this basic information

- Title of position
- Length you held the post
- Responsibilities
- Name of organisation.

Include also languages (spoken/written/understood). Computer Skills (include title of software package and proficiency level), Research Skills and other skills that are not in the rest of your CV.

## **The Activities and Interests Section in your CV**

Any activities that you do in your free time, can be related to your job. If you worked in the school yearbook it shows initiative and you are willing to make sacrifices in order to further your career. Participating in student activities, professional associations or enthusiast clubs shows leadership qualities. Leave out any activities related to politics religion or controversial topics alienating the reader.

## **CV References Available Upon Request**

If you have references, which you are willing to provide include the above statement. Ask people if they are willing to serve as references before you give their names to a potential employer.

## **Time and place for drawing up a CV**

A common mistake is for people to draw up a general type of CV and only change the **cover letter** and send the companies. Nothing could be more harmful to your chances to get to an interview. Since each job is specific and has special requirements, there is no way how a regular CV can match of all the jobs universally. Rather when the CV is not drawn to highlight your fit to the company, it is summarily rejected without further inspection.

It is important hence, to have a tailor-made CV for each job you are applying for. It is also important to have your CV continuously upgraded to include each and every aspect of your professional and personal (relevant) growth. You should, for best results, have a master CV in your computer which can be changed at the drop of hat to fit any job requirements so it can be submitted properly. However, the master CV would slowly be polished to contain each and every facet on your professional and personal life. Then whenever you need you can pick those traits which are best suited to a particular job and wait for that interview letter.

Hence, you start writing your CV now, the sooner the better. When you have the CV written down well, your thoughts will also be organised particularly to your strengths and weaknesses and other aspects that you will be able to present better and better. The fact that you have control over the facts will in turn give you increased confidence which will clearly come through in your CV and your interview.

## **How to manage gap history in your CV**

The CV is the basis on which the employer makes his/her first impression about you. We all know that. Hence, we always tend to put our best qualities in it so as to create the best possible impression. However, sometimes there will be some minor (and some major) hiccups. Are you able to sail through with poise and rationale? The commonest reaction is to bluff (or tell a white lie) but with an employer it is really not an advisable path to take because truth has the knack to come up at the most unfortunate moments of your life and create some major embarrassment, if not more. There are better ways to handle difficulties - with the truth put across plausibly:

Scenario no 1: Suppose you have a two years gap in you CV between two jobs when you did not have any job. 'What happened in the gap period?' the employer will ask. In most cases, people leave their jobs to pursue higher studies - if that is the case with you, do let your employer know. In this context the gap will be seen as a benefit. If this is not the case, and you have just been in between jobs for a gap of more than one year - you might say that you have helped your father, uncle, bother, friend, etc to set up their business (be sure you have the details ready as you will be asked for it); you may also say that you have volunteered to work for some philanthropic cause that your family, community, or friends created (again be ready to give details); you can say you wanted to be with your family for sometime before you started working again (be sure you have plausible reasons - like grandmother sick or wife/husband having a too demanding career which neglected the children who were young at the time).

Scenario no 2: Suppose you have a minor gap of a few months (less than a year). In that case nobody needs to know about it really. All you have to do is to write your CV with yearly gaps instead of giving the month and year. In this way, when you mention only the years it will not be visible that there is a gap of a few months in between.

The point is that you have to assuage the fears of the employer that you may not be dependable. They will be worried to see the unexplained gaps because they would picture you as an unreliable person. Hence, it is best to explain the gap in as simple and realistic situation as possible, which in all probability will not recur in the future.

### **Are you too young for the job?**

There are many young people who are appearing for jobs world wide and the age is going down every day. This is because the children today need and love the financial independence that a job can give them. It is not necessary that you are at a disadvantage when you are young and apply for a job. Highlight for the benefit of the employer what value addition you can give the company and particularly the job:

**Willing to work harder:** Young people are associated to willingness to work, enthusiasm and long hours. Ensure that your CV says this clearly. Assure the employer in the CV summary that you are a hard-worker who is willing to put in long hours to prove your worth in the job.

**Willing to work for less remuneration:** While mentioning your fit in the cover letter, you may like to mention that you would be willing to accept less remuneration for the honour to start your career in a leading company such as so-and-so (name of the company). Many employers love the saving offer, and they will try you out.

**Willing to work as an apprentice:** Even if you have the right qualifications you will need good relevant experience to really be useful in an organisation. Assure your would-be employer that you would love to take up the job of an apprentice till you pick up the tricks of the trade and prove really valuable to the company. An employer would be tempted to at least check you out if your offer is good enough.

You can have a brief paragraph at the top of the CV stating why you would think you are fit for the job, and how the company would benefit from hiring you. It should not exceed four lines.

Market your youth as the most desirable product you have - the prospective employer will always look for the best ways in which the company will benefit. Explain in the profile or **cover letter** how being young is actually an important plus point since the young can learn well and fast, cost the company less, and work longer hours.

**Be confident:** Remember that you are competing against people who have higher qualifications and/or more experience. In order to show yourself as a confident and self-assured person, you need to have a highly concise professionally drawn-up CV.

### **What to do when you have too little experience to show?**

This drawback usually plagues the interview due to lack of experience to show on the resume. There are many things that can be improvised in this scenario:

Bring the attention of the prospective employer away from the lack of experience by highlighting your match to the job in terms of skills and personal traits. Be sure you use those skills and traits that are best required by the job you are applying for

A skills CV (see also **functional resume**) will be the best bet for you - more so when you can highlight your willingness to work hard and long hours to gain valuable experience. Your willingness to work hard should come strong enough to attract the attention of the prospective employer, so it should not be written as an after-thought, rather as an emphasis after your description of skills.

If you have an outstanding academic background, highlight this explaining that you are a fast learner who can in no time be a valuable member of the organization. Attract attention to the subjects and/or areas where the matters are supportive of the job's requirements.

Do you have any extra-curricular activities that would boost your skills (with respect to the job you applied for). For example if you are applying for a PR or marketing position, your standing first in elocution and debate competition (proving the gift of the gab) would stand you in good stead.

You can also use the experience gained in your summer projects or any other hands-on projects that you have done during your college days to show that you are aware of your match to the job and that the past experience, even not in a paid job, made you confident that you can be successful if given a chance to prove yourself.

Highlight the fact that you will be honoured to **start your career** in an elite company such as X (name of the organisation) and assure that you would be happy to work harder than anyone else to prove your abilities and become a valuable employee of the organization

Be candid in your application and down-to-earth. People usually like young people because they have a nothing-is-impossible attitude. Try to project that attitude without sounding over confident or cocky. You can do that by repeating at different intervals that you are willing to learn and work hard so you can fit even better not only in the job, but also the goals of the company overall (do your homework and be specific here; vagueness will seem like boasting)

You indicate that you would be willing to travel, relocate and/or work late (even on weekends) so as to learn the ropes as fast as possible

It is rare that companies resist the enthusiasm of young people applying - and unless the job really needs a lot of experience, you will definitely reach the interview stage if you keep your CV crisp, focused and highlighting yourself as a go-getter.

### **Formatting your CV for best results**

We all know what a CV should contain, and in general terms how it should be arranged on the page. In spite of knowing all the technicalities, people still commit the mistake of writing a run-of-the-mill CV with the same headlines, the same order of ideas, and the same general matter in a dull business language. In this way the CV looks indeed as a poor copy of a standard template.

The formatting should be backed up by the right information of course, but in order to have a good flow of ideas, the CV should have a building-up style of presentation. You start at the personal details, or educational qualification and slowly build up to show how your talents are best suited for the job at hand.

The impression of the paper presentation - the quality of the paper, the arrangements of the text, its font, typesetting will create an unwitting impact on the prospective employer. Be sure that you use this trait to your advantage. Use the skills of a good typist and/or word processor to make your CV a work of art.

Each and every aspect of your CV should work towards creating the right impression with the employer. This will be done with the help of a lot of research to know what he/she wants in the first place. Search the net and libraries for reports and news, ask around old and present employees and use the information to form a critical focus on your best talents and traits.

Writing a CV is hard work - do not kid yourself that it is any other way. It is not just the way you put together your personal data - but rather the way you arrange that personal and professional data to attract the attention and interest of the prospective employee. It is an art that has to be perfected with time, patience and practice. It is the most important tool in job searching since it gives the opening line to the employer and thus creates the first impression about you in his/her mind.