



Optimum Appointments CV Advice

A CV is an all-important first impression and selling tool. It is essentially a document that has to convince a prospective future employer that you have the necessary experience and educational background to fulfil a particular role.

It must be more than a chronological history of your life; it needs to be corporate, concise and relevant, conveying your skills and experience in the most effective way possible.

To make it stand out amongst the competition the decisions you will need to make are what to leave in and what to take out in order to create the impact that is required whilst still getting the breadth and depth of experience across to the reader. When composing your CV you should consider the following points concerning its purpose and objectives:

- Does it inspire the reader to contact me for more information and invite me for an interview?
- Will someone scanning this CV be able to easily extract the relevant information relating to the role I am applying for?
- Are the skills that I have to offer highlighted sufficiently in the CV and are they easy to identify?
- When I am at the interview, will my CV prompt the interviewer to ask me the right questions which will allow me to further 'sell' my relevant skills and experience?

Experience, backed by extensive market research, indicates that there are several key points that contribute to a successful CV.

Keep your CV as brief and as relevant as you can. The optimum length for a CV is two sides of A4, allowing explanation of the roles and duties performed in your career, yet being concise enough to be perused quickly.

Keep the layout professional and uncluttered. Limit paragraphs to five or six lines. Use bullet points to add clarity. Use short sentences. Short sentences are easy to read. Short sentences are more powerful. Check the spelling and make sure that the grammar is correct.

Use positive language to create a good impression by using positive action words such as 'implemented', 'launched', 'developed' and 'reorganised', whilst avoiding tenuous words like 'liaised' that make an employer question what your role was in the process. Show where you added value and how your career skill set advanced as a result.

Listed below are general guidelines on what should be included in every CV, but bear in mind that if you are replying to a specific advert or role, your CV should be adjusted to bring out the strengths that relate to that role and organisation in particular. Many candidates are found through keyword searches on CV databases so ensure that your CV contains all of the relevant keywords for the particular role but remember that this should be a matter of emphasis rather than substance.



Every CV should include the following information laid out in the order set out below.

Personal details

- Address and telephone (daytime, evening, mobile)
- E-mail address
- Nationality (work permit if applicable)
- Languages (include level of proficiency)

Education and qualifications

- List higher education and degree qualifications first, including name of institution and grade achieved.
- Mention any earlier general academic studies in brief.
- Include details of professional qualifications and training and place of study.
- Employers are also interested in any training and development gained within the workplace. Only list relevant courses.
- List computer packages you have used in the past, or are familiar with, and your level of expertise. Experience of specialist applications used by the employer is particularly important.

Career / Employment history

This is your main chance to market yourself. Focus on key outcomes and achievements in your career that will make an impact on the employer by conveying a positive image of your duties and responsibilities, showing that you have transferable skills or that you are strong in a particular area.

- List your most recent jobs first, including accurate details of the firm's name and your job title.
- If the organisation isn't well known, provide a quick description.
- Add a brief overview of your key responsibilities.
- Bullet point your major achievements, incorporating any measurable targets reached.
- Be selective and avoid flooding the recruiter with too much detail, which detracts from your key selling points.
- Offer greater detail on your most recent job. An employer is particularly interested in what you've achieved over the last five years.
- Help the reader appreciate your suitability for the position by using quantifiable language.
- It is imperative that all your time is accounted for. Do not leave off any employment periods - the employer will only ask you about it when you get to interview stage.



Interests

Your interests can help you stand out from the crowd, but in all cases should be kept relevant and brief. However, you should explain concisely what you have achieved outside of the work/educational environments and what your interests are. Do not list usual social activities as hobbies unless you are particularly committed and have achieved something as a result.

The following points should be avoided in your CV

Personal characteristics

A CV should infer what kind of person you are through what you have done rather than using a section to tell the employer what an ambitious, successful, dynamic individual you are. Detailing your achievements gives a better, more reliable picture of your capabilities than a list of superlatives. This is a common problem with CVs.

Graphics and artwork

A CV is a tool to portray you as a professional individual and it needs to reflect that, so try to make it look corporate. Pictures are considered unnecessary amongst most employers in the UK unless specifically requested.

Salary details

It is useful for both consultants and employers to know what your current or last remuneration package is in terms of the structure of the package and the value of each part; it forms the basis of any salary negotiations with clients and also helps consultants know where you are looking to pitch yourself in the marketplace. However, it should not be included as part of the CV itself and if your current expectations are markedly different to the current total, you should explain what you are looking for and why in a covering letter.

Finally

The most important thing to do once you have collated all the information and arranged it into the format that you are happy with is to **CHECK IT THOROUGHLY**. An employer can sometimes be looking for reasons to whittle down the pile and spelling mistakes, poor grammar and glaring omissions are the perfect excuses. Once you've checked it, talk it through with your consultant, who will advise with regards to the rest of your job-hunting strategy. If you are unsure about any aspect of writing or updating your CV, please ask for advice from your consultant.