

TIPS FOR WRITING A PERFECT CV

Where do CVs go wrong?

If you want your CV to be shortlisted, you have to make it very easy for the employer to see why you are the ideal candidate for the role by emphasizing your relevant skills and experience. The way your CV is presented will also be subject to scrutiny. For instance, you may claim to have great attention to detail or be an excellent communicator, but the employer is unlikely to believe this if your CV is sloppily presented or the language you use is clumsily expressed.

Unfortunately many candidates get this wrong. In a Personal Career Management survey of 500 CVs ranging from senior managers to graduates, 98 per cent of the CVs were clearly heading straight for the reject pile. The good news is that if you are able to avoid the common mistakes made by most candidates, then you are far more likely to be shortlisted ahead of the competition.

These are the pitfalls to avoid.

Lack of relevant information

Many candidates make misplaced assumptions about what is important to the employer and so fail to provide the relevant information in their CV. Do your research and show that you have the specific skills, experience and approach required within the first half page of your CV, so the recruiter can quickly see your suitability.

Insufficient evidence

Unsubstantiated claims won't work. You need to prove you have what they need. So instead of your CV saying you have 'good communication skills', give an example of where you demonstrated this to good effect e.g. 'write monthly blog on company developments as part of our social media strategy'.

Too generic

Many candidates write a broad CV because they want to keep their options open. However, unless it is clear who you are and what you do, then recruiters won't know what to do with you.

Errors

Nine out of 10 CVs have errors on them and are often rejected on that basis alone. Your CV must be impeccably presented if you want to demonstrate your professionalism and attention to detail. Always ask someone else to check it over for you.

Negative information

Your CV should include only positive information. Never criticise a previous employer or refer to difficulties or disappointments unless you were able to turn them around.

Poor language

The use of jargon, clumsy expression or clichés can sabotage the chances of even the most capable of candidates. Instead of using the ‘I’ pronoun, such as ‘I did this, I did that’, use positive action words to lead bullet points e.g. ‘Initiated this, created that’, which will seem much more dynamic. This will give a very energetic feel to your CV and help reinforce the message that you are an upbeat, ‘can-do’ type of candidate.

Software issues

When you apply online for a role, your CV is scanned by software before human eyes ever see it. Formatting options like columns, shading, boxes etc may look nice, but they could interfere with the software’s ability to store the information on your CV. So make your CV as plain as possible or if you are uploading a pdf file, make sure it is compatible with the software. Online recruiters will use key words to search for CVs containing particular skills and qualifications, so ensure that your CV includes the relevant key words likely to be used.

DO’S

Research: Find out exactly what the employer you want to impress is looking for, then write a CV that exactly matches their requirements.

Evidence: Prove what a great candidate you are by including examples of achievements, improvements you made at work or problems you solved.

Two pages: Aim for a two-page CV. Any more than this and you are likely to be waffling, but any less and you have not provided enough information.

Proofreading: Thoroughly check your CV for errors and ensure that what you have written makes sense. Then ask someone to double-check it for you.

Covering letter: Always provide a covering letter or email to go with your CV, as it’s another chance to convince the employer of your suitability.

DON’TS

Be negative: Avoid any criticisms of past or present employers, or mention any difficult periods in your career history. Your CV needs to be very positive.

Photo: Do not use a photo with your CV unless you are specifically asked to. It’s usually only relevant for work like modelling or promotions work.

Rely on one CV: Expect to have a number of CVs that you change depending on the job you are applying for. Always tailor your CV. **Use fancy layout:** Avoid unusual fonts, columns, tables etc in your CV when writing it in a Word document. The formatting can so easily go awry when it is read by a recruiter.

Be disheartened: If your CV is not being shortlisted then talk to a career coach or someone who works in your chosen area, to check whether your CV is doing you justice and that it is a good match for the roles you have been applying for. Advice and feedback from others is the best and quickest way to turn around a job search campaign which doesn't seem to be working.

Build your own CV with our CV TEMPLATES
<http://www.yourcvbuilder.com>