

The CV

First and foremost the purpose of a CV is to gain an interview; it is usually also the main tool that an interviewer will use to set the agenda for an interview. It therefore follows that when you write a CV, you are in some part setting the agenda for an interview.

We recommend that you start from scratch. It won't take as long as you might think and it is likely that you will produce a much better document than you would by constantly updating your current resume.

Preparation

Start by listing all the facts concerning your personal data, past experiences and achievements, (see Achievements). Muse over each role again, you will probably remember changes or achievements that did not come to light in your initial recall in at least one role. You will now have more information than you need, although it is a useful list to keep, possibly as part of your preparation for interview. This factual list will demonstrate your personal and technical strengths

Achievements

Your achievements are likely to make the largest contribution to your successes at interview.

Employers will often judge candidates with the over-riding principle that 'leopards don't change their spots'. They will usually assume that the personal strengths and weaknesses, (not to be confused with skills), which you have demonstrated within your career to date are a permanent part of your make-up.

If your personal strengths are merely displayed on your CV (for instance, as part of a personal profile) without proof, an employer will not necessarily take them as read. The inclusion of positive achievements for each role will prove your personal strengths and should therefore be on the agenda for any interview, and consequently detailed on your CV.

Identifying your achievements is often more difficult than it sounds. Ensure that the vast majority of achievements relate to things that helped your employer rather than merely your own personal development. After identifying any achievements that come immediately to mind, revisit each role; you will probably recall more accomplishments in at least one role. Some answers will usually be found in these basic initial questions: 'What changed and what happened whilst I was there? How did that affect me and how did I affect it? What improvements/differences did I make whilst in this role?

Detailing your achievements should not only help you gain an interview but also direct the agenda for part of that interview, so make sure they are about things that you are able and happy to discuss.

Initial Draft

Use a thesaurus, (highlight then shift F7 if in Word), and choose your words precisely. Be positive and truthful. Do not be over-modest, when writing your CV you should be bolder than you would be in conversation and above all else, feel proud of what you have achieved.

Here are some key points to consider as you draft and re-edit your CV according to the 'Content ' Section.

- Present the document in a plain format. Avoid fancy fonts and folders.
- Be concise in each section; ideally keep your CV to 2-3 pages.
- Be honest and factual.
- Concentrate on the benefits your employer gained, rather than your own personal development.
- Do not leave unexplained gaps in your CV.

Content

Here are some notes regarding the content and layout of your CV.

Personal Details

- To avoid having more than one version of your CV you might want to refer to ideal roles, relocation, salary etc in a covering letter.
- Personal details (address, contact numbers etc) at the top of the document.
- Include language proficiencies here if appropriate.
- You may want to include a brief summary including key skills and principal professional achievements here. Ensure it is concise and factual if you do. Do not include a profile / summary section that describe purely personal qualities. If you want to discuss your personal merits, only do so in the context of the achievements that you have described in this section, (see achievements above).
- Systems / software experience may be placed here, (our preference) or after each role.
- Hobbies and interests section can also be placed here.

Education

List in reverse chronological order, stating colleges/schools, exams passed and grades achieved / pass record for professional qualifications (1st time passes etc.)

Employment History

- List positions in reverse chronological order.
- Start each role with headings detailing the company name; information regarding turnover, headcount, products/services; your position in the company and the dates that you worked there.
- Responsibilities and achievements, (see Achievements), to be listed for each role.
- Include a reason for leaving section at the end of each role, (at least at the end of your last / current role). Keep these brief and positive. Make sure you don't sound disloyal.