



Your CV

The cornerstone of
your application

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Introduction

A good CV is the first step towards getting a job and building your career.

Use this guidance and our template for creating your CV for work experience, apprenticeship, internship or graduate job applications.

And don't forget the CV's ally, the covering letter – see our separate [covering letter guide](#).



What is a CV and why's it so important?

A CV tells employers what you've done and what you can do. It covers your skills, your experience and your qualifications. Along with your covering letter, your CV's often all employers have to go on when they compare you with other applicants.

Because of this, it's crucial that your CV makes you stand out from the crowd. Your CV needs to cover key information and show you're suitable for the advertised role. It also needs to look professional and be easy to read.

There are lots of different ways to present your CV, but this guide shows a clear and logical structure specifically designed for early careers roles. Use it as a framework for your work experience, apprenticeship, internship or graduate job applications.

Your CV's sections

Personal and contact details

As obvious as it sounds, your CV needs to tell employers who you are and how to contact you. Include your personal and contact details clearly at the top of your CV's first page. Don't let them take up too much space. Include your:

- Full name
- Email address (use a sensible address and not a novelty one – set up a new one if you need to)
- Landline/mobile telephone number
- Location (there's no need to show your full postal address but include your town at least)

Don't include your date of birth, marital status or gender.

Personal statement

This section's optional, but it can be an eye-catching way to introduce yourself, highlight your suitability and show your passion. Use short, summarised examples of your experience, skills and interests to give your statement credibility.

If you want to include examples but can't fit them in here, feature them in your covering letter.

Your personal statement should:

- Appear at the top of your CV
- Contain 2-4 sentences and use a maximum of 80 words
- Summarise your current situation and explain what you're looking for from your next position
- Avoid cliché words or phrases (like hardworking, dynamic, team player)
- Be tailored for each role you apply for
- Be upbeat!

Key skills

Overlay your own skills with the ones listed in the job advert and list the common skills (and other related ones) here to show how well suited you are. You'll need to tailor this section for each application as different job adverts ask for different skills.

Key skills might be 'soft' (like communication and teamwork), technical (like software- or platform-specific ones) or a combination of the two.

List the skills with brief explanations if necessary – but don't go into too much detail at this point.

Exercise

What skills from the list below do you have? Try thinking of examples as evidence...

Good communication – speaking and listening

Motivation and initiative

Leadership

Reliability/dependability

Following instructions

Teamwork

Patience

Adaptability

Emotional control

Resilience

Education and qualifications

Summarise your education and qualifications, starting with the most recent and working backwards.

Include any further and higher education courses and qualifications (anything after the age of 16). State the name of the school, college or university, the title of the programme and the year you earned it or expect to earn it.

Summarise any qualifications you earned at school.

If you've got lots of relevant work experience (see **Work experience and employment history section**) you might want to keep this section brief. Otherwise, you can include more detail on relevant modules or topics you've studied which are particularly relevant to the role you're applying for.

Achievements

List any awards or honours you earned during your time in education or in external extra-curricular activities. These might include competitions you've won or positions of responsibility you've been given.

Work experience and employment history

You might think you haven't got much work experience yet. But it's easy to overlook things that recruiters would be keen to know about. Include:

- Student work experience
- Work shadowing
- Internships
- Voluntary work
- Part-time or temporary jobs or placements

List the most recent experience first and work backwards. Include:

- The dates you were employed
- Your role
- The employer or company name
- A sentence or two summarising your responsibilities and the skills you showed, with additional bullet points for more detail
- Evidence for claims you make about skills development or achievements – use real examples

Hobbies and interests

Give the employer an idea of what you're like and what you enjoy outside work. This is the chance to let your personality shine through on your CV. So, mention hobbies and interests (keep it appropriate!) and particularly highlight any interests that align with the company, industry or specialism.

You might want to include details of:

- Sports teams you're part of
- Societies or clubs you belong to
- Your travels
- Other creative or productive hobbies you spend time doing

Be specific (do you train or compete weekly?) to show passion and commitment, and make sure you reference any responsibilities and/or achievements.

List two people (referees) for the recruiter to contact. It's up to you whether you include contact details. You might want to leave them out if the referee is a current employer, or if you'd prefer to contact the referee first.

Let your referees know you're using them in your job search so they're not surprised if they get a call or email.

Alternatively, you can note that 'References are available on request' so the recruiter knows you're willing and prepared to provide them.

Top CV tips

- Use a widely supported file format like a Word doc. or PDF
- Make sure your CV isn't longer than two pages
- Don't rush writing it – take your time to build the core elements of your CV over time
- Use a font and type size that's easy to read
- Use bullet points and numbering to help make lists clear
- Pay attention to formatting – make sure:
 - Text aligns where it should
 - Headings are consistent in style
 - There aren't too many different fonts or type sizes
- Make section titles clear
- When listing experiences, start with the most recent first and work backwards
- Frontload your CV with the most relevant parts – highlight on the job advert the key requirements and make sure you evidence them on your CV's first page
- Check, double check and triple check!
 - Read your CV out loud to check it makes sense and has a logical flow
 - Proofread for spelling and grammar mistakes as well as using your software's spellcheck function
 - Print it and check it again – you might see something you didn't on-screen
 - Ask someone else – a friend or family member – to check it too
 - Above all, make sure your own details are accurate!