

Excellent CVs - The Essentials

Content

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Market yourself. Sell yourself – highlight your strengths. ▪ Provide prompts for your interviewer (e.g. “I implemented several significant changes”). ▪ Tailor your CV to the advertised position. Read the advertisement carefully and look for the key words. Repeat these – or similar ones - in your CV and covering letter. Give examples of how you have demonstrated key skills. Find out about the organisation/role and reflect what you've learned. ▪ Put in a competence summary (aligned to match the advertisement). ▪ List things chronologically – most recent first. ▪ List your employment history as achievements not as responsibilities or duties. Start each one with a verb e.g. “led, team ... managed ... introduced ... initiated ... created”. Hence instead of “responsible for a £2m budget” - write “effectively managed a £2m budget and introduced savings of 8% by improving financial accountability”. ▪ Explain any career gaps if you've a good enough story to tell. ▪ Ensure the content hangs together and is consistent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Under or oversell. Its like perfume – too much or too little doesn't work. ▪ Be tempted to be wacky or to use humour. ▪ List every qualification/ training course/hobby/ interest – just list the relevant ones. ▪ Put in things, which might bias someone against you – e.g. political affiliations. ▪ Use jargon, which the interviewer might not understand. ▪ Use clichés. ▪ Lay out your whole life – warts and all. ▪ Lie.

Layout

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make your name stand out clearly in the top centre of the first page. Also include here your address, contact numbers and email. ▪ Keep it to two sides (on separate sheets). ▪ Laser print your CV on good quality paper and use a good quality envelope. ▪ Make your headings stand out using bold and a slightly larger font. ▪ Have a logical flow to your CV. ▪ Have lots of organised white space. Make sure the margins are wide. Use bullets points rather than long paragraphs but make sure they aren't over brief. ▪ Use Arial or Times New Roman font. ▪ Use white or pale coloured paper so that it copies well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fold your CV – instead buy an A4 envelope. ▪ Use too much colour. ▪ Don't underline headings (it can confuse a scanner). ▪ Have headings such as “CV” or “Address” – as they are obvious and can irritate recruiters.

Final tips:

- Spell check your CV and ask someone to proof read it for you. Check the grammar.
- Send your CV with a *typed, tailor written* covering letter – no more than 1 page. Make sure you address it to the right person – and spell their name correctly. Keep it brief but mention your key skills and why the job is right for you. Try to keep it formal and not chatty.
- The most common qualities employers look for are: communication skills, team skills, attention to detail, energy/drive, initiative, ability to handle pressure, enthusiasm and leadership. In the absence of hints in the advertisement – use these words in your CV and provide lots of examples.
- Keep your CV **S**imple, **S**tructured, **S**uccinct and **S**ignificant.
- Remember: “*Who gets hired is not necessarily the one who can do the best job – but the one who knows best how to get hired*” Natasha Josefowitz.