

Building your Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Competition in the job market is increasingly fierce, and your CV is a vital tool in winning the position you want. Most job postings attract many more applicants than could possibly be interviewed. If your CV stands from the rest then it is certain that you will at least have the chance of an interview.

Below you will find some exercises to help you get started as well as some tips in the form of Q&A to help you address specific issues pertaining to how you can better present your background.

Exercise 1

Think about each of the last three posts that you have held. What would a recruiter see as your most important achievements during your time in that post?

Now rank the achievements in each post within order of importance to select which ones you are going to put on your CV.

To ensure that the reader focuses on the most important points, you should describe a maximum of six achievements in your most recent post, and give less detail about previous jobs.

Exercise 2

For each of the achievements that you wrote down in **Exercise 1**, ask yourself:

- What are the most important points about this achievement that the recruiter needs to know?
- Does this achievement reflect my key selling points?

Then describe each achievement in one or two sentences for your CV.

What to Leave Out

Don't give the reasons why you left each job that you have held unless you are specifically asked to by the recruiter. If you left for a post with better prospects and more responsibility it should be obvious from your description of that next job. Any other reason may reflect badly on you. Never admit on your CV to having left a company because, for example, you couldn't get on with your boss.

Laying Out the Information

The details of your career and achievements must be clear and easy to read. The best format for laying out your information on each post is usually:

Job title	Name of company	Dates post held
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What you did in the job will probably be more important than the company in which you did it, so the job title is placed to the left where it will be the first thing that the reader sees. If the company you worked for was very prestigious, you can reverse these two items. The start and finish dates for each job are of lesser importance, and therefore appear on the right of the page.

Question & Answer Session

Q1: 'I have had an unusual career pattern. After doing a number of different jobs, I went back to college as a mature student and changed career. How do I present this information so that the recruiter doesn't think I'm a job hopper who can't stick to one thing for long?'

A1: As the labor market changes, fewer and fewer people enjoy a traditional career of unbroken progress in one specialization. CVs often show:

- career breaks to pursue full-time education or look after children
- career changes
- periods of unemployment
- working for a wide variety of employers.

Most employers are now used to this. Many appreciate the breadth of perspective and skills that this kind of career can offer. Try to show a logical pattern behind your career history with each move developing your skills and abilities further and an underlying purpose or area of expertise. It could be that your career has been one of caring for children, first as a nurse and then as a teacher; or managing teams, first in the armed forces and then in an industry. It also helps if you can show a positive reason for career changes – perhaps because in your first career you were able to identify an area of strength that you wanted to build on. If you have spent some time outside of paid work, this needs to be shown on your CV to avoid leaving a suspicious-looking gap, for example:

Q2: 'I have spent fifteen years with one company. Won't new employers think I'm set in my ways?'

A2: If you have had many years of experience with one employer, you will need to show that you have grown, progressed and gained a breadth of experience within that organization. If you have held a number of posts there, you may want to emphasize this fact by dividing the information that you give on your time with that organization into a number of sub sections.

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Q3: I ran my own business for several years, but did not make enough money to make it viable in the long term. How do I present this information on a CV?

A3: Identify and sell your achievements as you would if you had been employed.

Running your own business demonstrates that you have developed:

- self-discipline and motivation
- commercial acumen
- a broad entrepreneurial perspective, which is of great worth to many organizations.

If you were recently self-employed, you might want to put in a positive reason for your wish to switch to employment to reassure the employer that you will be happy working for someone else.

Q4: 'I've been on maternity leave twice. How do I present this on my CV?'

A4: If you took a few months off and then returned to work with the same firm, your CV doesn't need to say that you were on maternity leave. The same principle applies if you have been on long-term sick leave. It isn't a selling point with employers, so leave it out. If you resigned from your job and took a longer break, treat it as you would a career break (see above).

The Skills-Based CV

A skills-based CV enables you to put an emphasis firmly on what you can do, rather than when you last did it or when you learnt to do it. It is organized around your most relevant and marketable skills. For example, someone looking for a post managing a printer's workshop might show the following on their CV:

Workshop Manager

- control and inspection of workshop equipment
- purchasing and control of all workshop materials
- control of all workshop documentation.

Team Leader

- managing teams of up to twenty workers, technicians and office staff
- staff recruitment
- running apprenticeship / internship training schemes, successfully training over 30 young people during my career
- organizing shifts for 24-hour emergency breakdown cover.

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Printer

- extensive experience of bulk printing of all types of publications, including newspapers, flyers, banners, magazines, booklets, folders, offset & digital printing.
- Understanding of how the business functions

Exercise 3

Look at your key selling points. Think through the last ten years of your career. Then ask yourself the question:

- What are my most marketable skills?

Once you have compiled a list, rank them in order of importance. To ensure that the recruiter focuses on the most relevant points, pick no more than six of your most important skills for your CV. These will form the subheadings of your Career and Achievements Section.

Exercise 4

For each skill heading that you created in Exercise 3, ask the questions:

- How can I prove that I have this skill?
- What are my most important achievements in this area?

Rank the points within each section in order of importance. To maintain focus, there should be a maximum of six points under each heading with fewer points shown under the headings lower down the list.

Choosing Your Section Headings

While it is tempting to copy the section headings from someone else's CV, this will lead you into difficulties later on as you try to fit your information into unsuitable categories. The skills sections that you choose should reflect your own personal selling points and your unique abilities and career history.

Voluntary Work

It may be appropriate to list some skills that you developed outside regular employment. For example, you may have developed your team-building skills in the boys' / girls' scouts or your flair for organizing events in part-time voluntary work. These 'selling points' can be fitted into your skill groupings in the same way as those gained working for an employer. **However, the main focus of your CV must be on your achievements in regular employment.**

Question & Answer Session

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Q5: 'I have spent five years on a career break looking after my young children. I am now looking to re-enter employment as an engineer. While I have been on career break, I have managed a household budget, developed interpersonal skills coping with fractious toddlers, and learned how to do six things at once! Can I include these skills on my CV?'

A5: Not if you are looking for a job at a senior level. Unfortunately, listing skills that you have acquired as a homemaker detracts from your professional image. It also emphasizes the fact that you have not been in paid employment for a number of years. You can, however, include information on any freelance or voluntary work that you have done during this time – for example, helping to run a playgroup, or work with a parent-teacher association.

Listing Your Past Employers

A description of your skills should always be followed by a summary of your career. Ideally, this should be a list of each of your past employers **in reverse chronological order**, with the posts that you held at each and relevant dates. However, if you have held down a great number of jobs, then this may not be practical – and you may not remember details of the jobs you were doing 30 years ago! If this is the case, select a list of your major employers – including, of course, the most prestigious and those with the closest links to the recruiting company or industry.

Summaries

There will be situations in which it is appropriate to summarize a period of your career rather than give details of every post that you held during that time.

The Long Career

Your CV should concentrate on posts that you have held in recent years. **Much less information** will need to be given on earlier jobs, **particularly those you worked in over fifteen years ago**.

Those nearer the end of their working lives might want to show details of whole decades in summary form – for example:

Self-employed trader – 1965–1975

Graduated from trading on market stalls in the New York area to owning and managing a ladies' fashions shop in Stanford New Jersey.

Or,

Gained experience of retailing in a number of junior positions – 1960–1970.

This prevents valuable space on your CV being taken up with out-of-date information and means the reader focuses on the information on your more recent and relevant

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career history. Drawing attention away from jobs that you did many years ago is particularly useful if you are concerned that you may be discriminated against on the grounds of your age. It is also useful if you have had a change of career or have risen to the top from humble beginnings.

The Career Change

If you have changed career, you will not want to give detailed information on the jobs that you did in your first specialization. You will, however, want to sell the transferable skills that you developed. For example, a businesswoman who originally trained as a nurse might wish to summarize this period as follows:

Registered General Nurse 1981–1992

Gaining full professional qualifications at St John's Hospital in Ontario, Canada. Developing my career working in a variety of hospitals, reaching the position of Sister in charge of the Accident and Emergency ward and a team of ten nurses. This experience has given me a high level of interpersonal skills and the ability to manage a team working under extreme pressure.

Short-Term Jobs

Many job hunters have spent a period of their career working in a number of short-term jobs. This could be for any of the following reasons:

- career development through temporary or contract work
- filling in while looking for a permanent post
- time out traveling
- **moving around while following a spouse's career.**

This may be time during which you developed very valuable skills, but you should not clutter up your CV with the details of each temporary post. The period can be summarized as in the following examples:

Temporary jobs XXXX – XXXX

Temporary secretarial, clerical and food & beverage industry work while traveling around Europe.

Or

Contract Consumer Goods Sales Manager XXXX – XXXX

Managing teams of Consumer Goods sales promoters around the central Helsinki area,

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around the greater Paris metropolitan area and the London City area. Major employers included:

- Procter & Gamble
- L' Oreal
- Nokia
- Coca-Cola
- Nestle

Checklist

Task	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have you given most room on your CV to your most recent and relevant experience?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have you made sure that there are no gaps in your employment history?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have you included all the information that the recruiter will want to know about your previous employers?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you confident that you have not included too much information?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have you focused on your achievements, rather than your duties?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you are using a skills-based CV format, is the information on your career organized under appropriate headings?	

Points to Consider

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Would a time-based or a skills-based CV be the most appropriate way of presenting your career? Why?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are your three main achievements in your career to date? Are these clearly presented on your CV?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Would it be helpful if your CV summarized a period of your career?	

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Laying out your CV

The title of your CV should be your name, placed clearly at the top of the first page where it will be easily found by the reader.

The next two or three lines should contain your contact details. Check these carefully as this is the only way recruiters will be able to get in touch with you. Include a mobile telephone number and email address if you have one. Include your nationality here too, if you want to (it is not necessary. In some countries it may be helpful for reasons of work permits. Including your nationality of an EU country can immediately flag the recruiter that you are authorized to work within the EU).

If you have a driving license, you may wish to state this here, or in the "skills" section later on (in case you are applying for a job in which it is essential to drive e.g. sales promoter).

You should not include a date of birth or your age on your CV. Age discrimination laws mean that this kind of information should not be discussed at any point during the recruitment process, or even during employment itself. In any case, if your CV is properly structured the recruiter can easily figure out your age by the dates of your education.

Career Objective/CV Summary

Including a short personal description or career objective at the start of your CV allows you to clearly describe your career goals, hopes and aspirations to your potential employer.

Detailing what you aim to achieve, or alternatively indicating your main skills and qualities in a short personal statement at the start of your CV, can be an effective means of attracting a recruiter's attention to your application. It is quite acceptable to omit this section from your CV altogether, but it is highly advisable to include it, as it will help your CV to get noticed.

Never use "I", "am" or "we" in your CV summary. Instead, write in the third person throughout. This helps to keep your CV more focused and direct.

An example career objective might be the following:

"Motivated science graduate, with internship experience at KPMG. Interested in training as a chartered accountant, developing technical knowledge skills in audit and pursuing a career in finance."

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Another example, using bullet points, would be:

- Highly motivated top tier science graduate with internship experience.
- Skilled mathematician keen to train as a chartered accountant and develop technical skills in audit.
- Passionate sportsman / sportswoman with experience of leading successful teams in basketball and waterpolo.

Educational History

If you graduated from the university less than 12 months ago, or have only worked in low-skilled jobs since graduating that are not relevant to the industry you are now applying to, this section should go before "Employment History / Work Experience" on your CV.

However, if you have worked in positions that are relevant to the industry you are applying to, put your employment history before this section. **In other words, make sure the section that best supports your application goes first.**

Write your educational history in reverse chronological order, with the most recent qualifications first. Your level of education will dictate how much detail you should include on your CV. For example, if you have a university degree, you do not need to include a list of your high school subjects – just the grades will suffice.

You should include:

- The date the qualification was attained
- The grade obtained
- The name of the subject
- The name of the establishment, university or college from which you qualified.
- The city/county of the establishment. If it was abroad, include the country.
- Any additional details that you may wish to add that may support your application.

Employment History / Work Experience

In this section, list your employers in reverse chronological order, **the most recent first.**

Make sure you include:

- Dates of employment
- Company/organization name

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- City (or country where relevant)
- Job title
- Details of position – what you did and experienced gained (including any training courses attended or skills acquired)
- Further details – quantify anything impressive you have achieved in employment, e.g. *"Initiated a number of operational directives that resulted in increased sales of circa €3k per month"*.

Make sure you include any relevant internships or work experience here, clearly marking these positions as such.

It is not necessary to include every, or even any, particularly irrelevant positions you were involved in during university (e.g. working in a catering job when applying to be a lawyer), unless you feel they would support your application. However, it is advisable to make a note of every post-university employer on your CV. Some recruiters associate time unaccounted for on your CV with time spent in prison. If you do have extended gaps between jobs then clearly state why this is – e.g. traveling. If you have been involved in several stop-gap or short-term jobs after graduation state this on your CV, rather than listing every employer – recruiters are not interested in small details, but they do want to see that all periods of your life are accounted for.

Use bullet points to describe roles, key skills and any further details more concisely.

Never write anything negative about a past or present employer on your CV.

Targeting your CV

Candidates should refine their CV for **each job** they apply for. It is crucial to do this, because different recruiters and different jobs require different key skills. You should consider what each employer is looking for from job applicants before you send them your CV, and make sure you mention that you have these key skills specifically.

Specialist Skills

Include any particularly relevant skills you have on your CV so long as they are relevant and support your application. Examples include bookkeeping, foreign languages or specialist IT software skills. Familiarity with Microsoft Office, email or the internet is considered as given and it is not necessary to mention this unless you are particularly able. Do mention anything that would set you apart from other candidates.

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References

Due to data protection laws candidates should **never provide referees' names, addresses or any other contact details on CVs**. Instead, candidates should simply write "*References available on request*" at the very end of their CV (positioning this in the centre of the page usually looks best).

If you are called for interview and need to supply references, recent graduates with little or no formal experience should generally provide one academic reference and one professional reference, if available. Experienced candidates should provide two professional references.

Always ask permission to provide someone with your referee's details. When you do, include telephone number, email address and postal address. Many employers will write by post to your referees and expect a reply, so it is in your interests to prepare them should this happen.

You do not need to provide more than two references unless you are asked to do so.

The most common reasons for CVs being rejected by recruiters are bad grammar, poor spelling and lousy punctuation.

Spell-check, proof-read and double-check your CV every time you send it to an employer.

Photos

Including a photo with a CV is strongly discouraged except where a photo is required or expected (e.g. modeling, acting). Employers may still request a photograph regardless. If you do need to include one, make sure it is a professional head-shot, just like your passport photo.

Cover Letter

If applying for a specific position (rather than a graduate scheme), you should always include a covering letter (commonly known as a cover letter) to explain your suitability. You should do this even if applying by email. Be aware that covering letters are not always read, and therefore you should include any particularly relevant information on both your CV as well as on your cover letter.

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The Best Layouts for a CV

The three CV / resume templates that are available with Microsoft Word provide a good starting point. They can be accessed via the menu File->New->Template. Each of the templates available roughly follows the style guidelines given in this document.

In the following pages please find some samples & templates.

YOUR NAME

222 FIRST STREET, CALGARY, T3A-3Y5
PHONE (403) 000-0000 • E-MAIL ME@HOME.COM

OBJECTIVE

[Type Objective Here]

EDUCATION

200x - 200x [School/Organization Name] [City, Province]
[*Diploma/Certificate/Degree/Major*]

- [Details of education completed.]

200x - 200x [School/Organization Name] [City, Province]
[*Diploma/Certificate/Degree/Major*]

- [Details of education completed.]

WORK EXPERIENCE

200x - 200x [Company/Organization Name] [City, Province]
[*Job Title*]

- [Details of position.]

200x - 200x [Company/Organization Name] [City, Province]
[*Job Title*]

- [Details of position.]

200x - 200x [Company/Organization Name] [City, Province]
[*Job Title*]

- [Details of position.]

SKILLS

[Click here and enter information.]

REFERENCES

References and letters of recommendation available on request.

Your Name

Address Line 1
Address Line 2
Ph: (123) 456-7890 Fax: (123) 456-7899
name@company.com

Objective: An Interesting position with a growing company

Experience:

Start Date to End Date	Company <i>Title</i>	City, State
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- Designed art and copy layouts.
- Studied illustrations and photographs in order to plan the presentation of material, product and service.
- Determined size and arrangement of illustrative material and copy.
- Was instrumental in <what>.
- Selected style and size of type and arranged layout based upon available space, knowledge of layout principles and aesthetic design concepts.
- Drew sample of finished layout and presented sample to art director.
- Supervised and managed <what> for <what kind of> firm.
- Conducted research in order to select and secure suitable illustrative material.
- Successfully handled <what>.
- Reviewed, approved and presented final layouts to client and department head for approval.
- Structured and maintained <what>.
- Reviewed final layout and suggested improvements as needed.
- Sold <what> to <whom>.
- Prepared illustrations and rough sketches of material according to instructions of client and supervisor.
- Served as <function> for <organization>, including <specific tasks>.
- Produced still and animated graphic formats for on-air and taped portions of television news broadcasts, using electronic video equipment.
- Photographed layouts, using camera, to make layout prints for supervisor and client.
- Responsible for <what>.
- Structured and maintained <what>.

Education:

Date	Name of University Degree earned	City, State
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Date	Name of University Degree earned	City, State
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Languages:	Language (Level / diploma)	Language (Level / diploma)
	Language (Level / diploma)	Language (Level / diploma)

PC Skills: Systems
Software

References: Available Upon Request

[Full Name]

[Address]

h: [Home Phone Number], m: [Mobile Phone Number]

e: [email address]

Personal Profile:

[Use this space to tell the employer about yourself- your relevant skills, achievements and personal qualities, what you are doing currently, and your goals etc]

Key Skills:

- [key skill]
- [key skill]
- [key skill]
- [key skill]
- [key skill]
- [key skill]

Key Achievements:

- [key achievement]
- [key achievement]
- [key achievement]
- [key achievement]

Employment History

[date – date]

[company name]

[your position]

Key Responsibilities:

[type a brief overview of what your responsibilities were in this role]

[date – date]

[company name]

[your position]

Key Responsibilities:

[type a brief overview of what your responsibilities were in this role]

[date – date]

[company name]
[your position]

Key Responsibilities:

[type a brief overview of what your responsibilities were in this role]

[date – date]

[company name]
[your position]

Key Responsibilities:

[type a brief overview of what your responsibilities were in this role]

Education and Training

[name of school/ institute]

[date – date]

Qualifications Achieved:

[year] [qualification]

[name of school/ institute]

[date – date]

Qualifications Achieved:

[year] [qualification]

Languages

[Use this space to tell the employer about the languages you speak & write]

PC Skills

[Use this space to tell the employer about your PC Skills]

References

References available upon request

Jane Doe

Summary "[Click here and type a BRIEF summary of your skills]"

Experience 2000 – Current ABC Company Wellington
National Sales Manager
ABC Company is a national organisation providing outsourced technical services to a range of mid – large sized companies. We manage their pay roll utilizing our systems.

Responsibilities

- Managed a team of 8 staff developing technical solutions for our clients
- Managed and worked on a number of RFPs
- Liaised with the implementation team once RFP won
- Followed up with client Post Sales to ensure satisfaction and on-going business

Achievements

- Increased sales from \$10 million to \$32 million.
- Doubled sales per representative
- Suggested new products that increased earnings by 23%.

1994–1999 Ferguson and Biggs Lower Hutt
District Sales Manager
Ferguson and Biggs is a company specializing in the supply of IT financial packages for mid – large businesses. It holds the franchise for a range of products and this office covers the lower North Island.

Responsibilities

- Managed a team of 5 staff
- Looked after the top 5 clients personally
- Managed training for all staff
- Developed sales methodologies in conjunction with the team
- Liaised with the implementation team

Achievements

- Increased regional sales from \$3 million to \$10 million.
- Managed 5 sales representatives in 3 different locations.
- Implemented training course for new recruits — increasing profitability.

1990–1993 Duffy Vineyards Hastings
Senior Sales Representative
Duffy Vineyards had just increased its production to the point where it needed to more actively market their products nationally and overseas.

Responsibilities

- Developed a sales strategy
- Worked in conjunction with a marketing company to establish branding for local and overseas markets

Achievements

- Expanded sales team from 1 to 3 representatives.
- Tripled revenues for the company.
- Expanded sales to include mail order accounts.

1987–1990 LitWare Ltd Napier
Litware supplies specialized lighting equipment to commercial premises
Sales Representative

Responsibilities

- Worked with the Sales Manager to identify potential markets in the Hawkes Bay and surrounding regions
- Cold called on a number of potential customers and developed business with about 25% of these
- Developed a mail - out campaign and then followed up with good success
- Maintained contact with customers and obtained follow up business

Achievements

- Expanded territorial sales by 200%.
- Received company's highest sales award two years in a row.

Education

1983–1986 University of Waikato

- B.B S., Majoring in Business Administration and Information Science.

Technical Skills

"[Click here and type a summary of your technical skills"

References

Available upon request