

CV WRITING



Curriculum Vitae

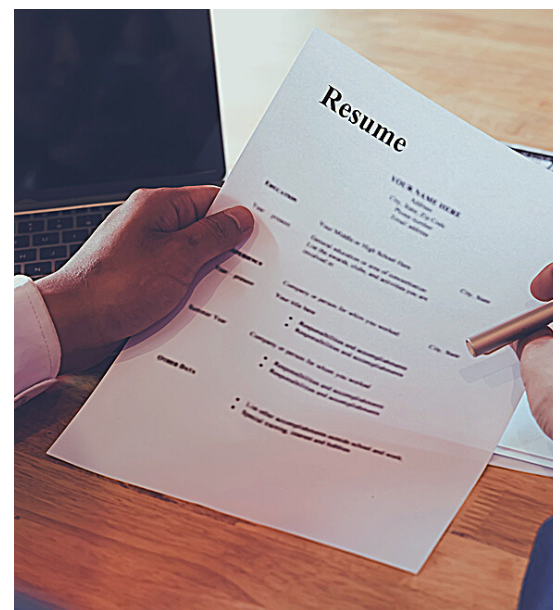
A Curriculum Vitae, [Latin, the race of life] is a comprehensive written description of your achievements, work experience, education, professional activity,

voluntary work, affiliations and skills. A CV will often be requested when you apply for a job, grant, training position, or roles in academic, research, and health professions.

The content and form of a CV differ in various parts of the world.

This module is designed to assist you in knowing where to start when writing your CV, and will allow you to understand:

- How to write an exemplary CV.
- How to identify and target your skills to a particular application.





Basic principles of writing the CV:

1. Relevance

Be selective about what you include. Always ask yourself the question “Is this going to be relevant to the employer who is reading this?” If it isn’t, then discard it.

2. Tailoring

Your CV needs to match the particular job you are applying for. For example, if the job requires skills in teamwork and creativity, you need to ensure the employer can clearly see that you have gained these skills somewhere in your life.

3. Language

Using positive, action-oriented words creates the impression of a positive, proactive person. Use words such as “achieved”, “created” and “organized” and avoid tentative words such as “maybe”, “attempted” and “perhaps”. Make sure your spelling and grammar is accurate.

4. Gaps in your CV

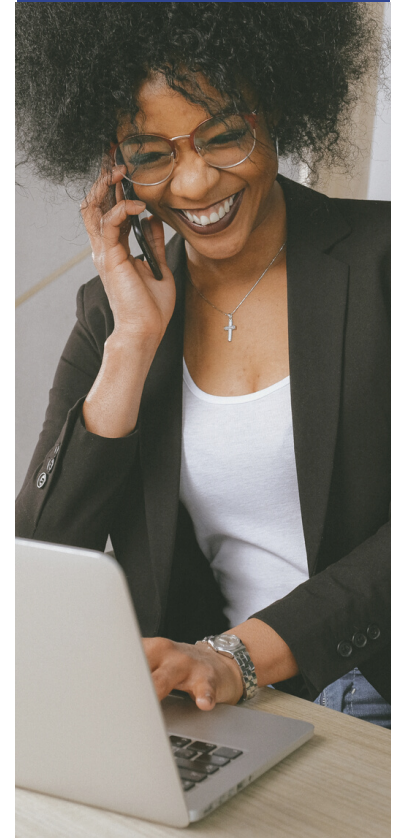
Employers can be suspicious about extensive periods of unexplained time on a CV and as a general rule, it is always best to explain these gaps or best, try not have the gaps in your CV. Obviously, you don’t need to account for every week or even every month, but if, for example, you took a year between school and university to go travelling, it is best to account for it and mention it on your CV. However, if there are very personal or sensitive reasons which prevented you being in work or study (including things like criminal convictions, long periods of illness and caring for family members) then you do not have to declare these on your CV. You should, however, be prepared to talk about any gaps in your CV at interview.

5. Truthfulness

As well as it being against the law to lie on your CV, you should be willing to talk about anything on your CV, even details in your interests and extra-curricular activities sections.

6. Keep your CV updated at all times:

Having a full up-to-date CV is always a good idea as you never know when an opportunity will come up. This way, when you prepare yourself for promotion, your CV will already be written and has details on your courses/experiences/projects etc.





CV LAYOUT AND DESIGN:

1. How long should a CV be?

In almost all cases your CV should be no longer than four pages of A4 but this will also vary with information and experience. A minority of organizations will expect a one-page CV, but for most a two-page CV is acceptable unless otherwise specified.

2. Should I use a CV template?

We advise you not to because a CV is a personal document and should be unique to you.

3. Should I use different colours on my CV?

No - black ink on white paper is standard. Using more exciting colours will certainly make you stand out, but perhaps not in a positive way unless you're applying for a creative or design role.

4. What font should I use?

Avoid unusual fonts; they have the effect of making the reader focus on the font rather than the content. We recommend use of Times New Roman and Arial which can make your CV look clean, neat and most importantly readable.

5. Should I use bullet points or text?

There are no rules about this but try to avoid a CV that is too "text heavy". Some of the most effective CVs use a combination of text and bullet points. Experiment and see what looks clearest, what is most easy to read and what has the most impact visually.

6. Should I send my CV as a Word document or a PDF?

Whilst either format is almost always accepted by employers, it is generally recommended to send a PDF version if possible. A PDF will look the same on any computer, whereas sometimes a Word document might look different.

7. Do I need to mention my gender, age and nationality?

No. It is entirely optional whether you include this information. It is often deducible from other information (like your name and the date of your qualifications).

8. Should I include social media?

Don't hide social media such as blogs, LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook if they portray you in a professional light. Including them on your CV shows you have a grasp of new media.



FORMAT OF A GOOD CV: (WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR CURRICULUM VITAE)

1. Personal Contact Information

Personal contact information is located at the top of your CV. It should include your name in bold and larger font followed by contact details in standard font. If required for grant applications and scholarship applications, include citizenship; otherwise, it isn't necessary and should not be included. You can include your social media if they are professional, if not, keep them hidden or make them professional.

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2. Career Objective and Profile

Should I include a career profile/objective?

A career profile (or career objective) is a short statement, usually at the top of your CV immediately after your contacts, saying something about you and your career aims. For new graduates or postgraduates, career profiles are not really necessary as this content will be addressed in your cover letter. Profiles can run the risk of sounding clichéd. Profiles can be a useful addition to a CV if you have some very specific experience and you are very clear about the particular career area you are going for.

3. Education

In the education section, list the academics in reverse chronological order. Begin with your most recent degree, state the year of graduation in bold and followed by the institution.

3. Awards Honors and Achievements

In this section you should include all awards that were offered, even if you declined to accept them. List special recognition, honors, achievements including even athletic awards, arts etc. Professional and community awards related to your degree should also be included on your CV.

Example

Mandela Fellowship: Award for the outstanding Research, 2021

Young African Leadership Initiative: Award for Innovation in agriculture, 2018

FORMAT OF A GOOD CV: (WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR CURRICULUM VITAE)

5. Work Experience

What counts as “work experience”?

Don’t just think of “work experience” as referring to full-time positions. Please note that internships, attachments, voluntary/unpaid work, part-time jobs and entrepreneurial activities can be of equal value (they also count as work experience).

Employers are interested in the skills that you have developed which are transferable to another position. It is your job to decide how relevant that experience is to your application and to group and prioritise your experience accordingly to highlight this. Your experience working in a part-time or voluntary capacity may also be directly relevant to the position.

6. Other Skills and trainings

It is important to list the other trainings and skills you have gained which will be of great value to you getting the Job.

7. Professional Memberships

Becoming a member of professional associations is an excellent way of growing your career and getting established in your field. Professional associations provide many opportunities to connect with others in your discipline. Join or become affiliated with a professional organization that provides an opportunity to publish in academic journals about major issues in your field as well as attend conferences. List the professional bodies and the attended conferences.

8. Interest and Hobbies

Should not be many and they should be the things you can actually do, may add value to the position you are applying for.

What goes in my interests’ section? This section enables you to identify things that really interest or motivate you. It may also indicate what your values are, aspects of your personality and the transferable skills you have developed. It is better to include one or two things which you are really involved with and can describe fully.

FORMAT OF A GOOD CV: (WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR CURRICULUM VITAE)

9. References

When doing this, be sure you have up-to-date contact information, know that they will be available, and that you have asked permission to use their contact information. Always keep them informed that they are your referees and the applications you are making.

There are a few rules to remember about references:

- You should have three referees who know you well and are aware of the position you are applying for.
- At least two of the references should be researchers or work-related acquaintances: professors, work supervisors, practicum supervisors.
- You should also include one character reference such as a volunteer, community worker, former teacher, but not family member.

Once you have thought about whom you might list as a referee, provide them with the details of your career and the nature of the position you are seeking. Be sure to ask them if they have the time, would be available and comfortable to write a reference letter.

10. Finishing Touches

Keep your CV short and concise, while providing the required details. Include summaries of your achievements and education, rather than excessive detail. Write simply and clearly, using formal, well-written language (no slang or abbreviations). Double-check your CV for typos, spelling and grammatical errors, with the spell check feature on your word processing package. Reread it aloud several times, to help you notice where the grammar or sentence structure doesn't work.

Ask someone else to review it for you, ask them to provide an honest opinion on how it highlights your experience, and what it says about you. Always include a letter of introduction or cover letter with your CV, specifically for the position you are seeking and for the person you are sending it to. Never send a generic letter.

It can be tempting to over polish a CV, making your educational qualifications or work history sound a little better than they really are. If you're tempted to stretch the truth about your work history, don't. It will come back to haunt you. Never lie! Most employers conduct reference and background checks and if your CV doesn't match your actual work history or education, you will either not get the job or will be fired soon after you are hired.

Key points

- **Don't worry about style in the first draft: get started then perfect it.**
 - **Your CV must be concise and easy to read: simple phrases are always best.**
 - **Your CV must sell you: ensure most important accomplishments are clear.**
 - **Your CV must be clear, and well-organized manner.**
 - **Your CV must be customized for the job posting: write several versions.**
 - **Never submit a poorly written CV: revise, revise, and revise until it is perfect.**
 - **Never lie!**
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