CVs

- Getting started

This briefing gives introductory practical advice on creating a good CV. You will most likely also want to look at our **CV Guide examples** (from CVs for part-time jobs to those for graduate roles) for more detail and, if you are just getting started on creating a new CV, you may also wish to use our on-line **CV Builder,** which allows you to create a fully editable and well-structured CV. **See resource links at end of this sheet for access details**. Do note that CVs need to be targeted carefully to particular roles, so always read any job details available to help you tailor your CV appropriately.

The basic structure of a good CV – from the top!

Your Name: this should be centred at the top of the page, **in bold**, and in a slightly larger font than the rest of the document.

Contact details: include one address for correspondence, a land line and/or mobile phone number, and an email address, that's all! You don't include: gender, date of birth, national insurance number, or any other non-essential information. Phone numbers with unusual answer phone messages and unprofessional email addresses should never be on a CV. You want employers to take you seriously! Do include a link to your LinkedIn profile though (if you have a good one).

Profile: this is optional. Some employers like them, but they can be difficult to write well. They should always be short, only 2 to 3 lines maximum, and summarise your critical experience, skills and career aims (only the key points though!). Remember, you are trying to influence the reader positively and convey how you might help their organisation. So think, what is the USP - Unique Selling Point - you are trying to convey? Think of your profile as your marketing strap line, which serves as a 'hook' to engage the reader. You may actually find it easier to complete your profile **after** you have completed the other sections of your CV.

Content – the main sections of your CV

Work out the order of section headings that suit you given the context of the job you are applying for, seek advice from Careers if unsure. The main sections to normally include, are:

Education: most recent first. Name of institution, dates, degree/qualification studied, grade obtained/anticipated. Don't list all the modules you've ever taken, instead put: 'Relevant modules include:' and select a list, tailored to the job. You may also want to include dissertation/independent study modules which can be good examples of project management. Don't forget to include 'A' levels (national exams in the UK, typically taken at age 17/18) or equivalent if you are an international student, and a summary of your GCSEs (taken at around age 16), but not every single subject!

Useful Modules on the Careers Resource Portal:

Career Options and Skills, CVs and Covering Letters

Other Hot Tips you may find useful:

Covering Letters; Application Forms; Skills, STAR (describing your skills)

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Work Experience/Relevant Employment: again usually most recent experience first. Although if you have directly 'relevant' experience and 'other' experience, always state the relevant work first. Include company name, period of time there (rough timescale will be fine) and your job title. List duties/responsibilities briefly and try to use 'action' words – see 'Hot Tips: Action words – communicating with impact'. Don't forget to mention the skills you used and any accomplishments and targets you may have met.

Skills: see 'Hot Tips: Skills & Attributes – what are employers looking for?' You could either include a short skills section or you could link your skills directly to your work experience in your 'Work Experience' section. Try to match your skills to those required on the job specification, following the employer's order of priority. Don't forget to provide evidence for your skills, it is not enough to just say you have good communication skills – back it up with at least one example.

Achievements & Interests: yes, still an important section even now. It gives the employer a sense of your personality and motivations so cite practical examples. "Reading, cycling and going to the cinema" are too general and won't win friends and influence people. Say something about what you have actually achieved: 'My first love is music. I listen to a range of styles and have played bass guitar in several bands'; 'I captained the university basketball team and we reached the finals this year'; I walked 500 miles and raised £1,500 for x charity'.

References: most employers would like to see these on a CV. ALWAYS SEEK REFEREES' PERMISSION FIRST, then include: designation (Personal Tutor, Line Manager etc.), full address, telephone and email address (if you have permission to use these). If not available put: References available on request.

Your CV should always be:

NEAT: think about your layout, is it professional? Your CV needs to look good not just sound good! Consider your typeface (arial or other 'sans serif' fonts look good). Have enough margin space so the text doesn't look cramped and do include sub-headings, bullets and bold typeface for ease of reading.

LOGICALLY STRUCTURED: employers need to know quickly where to find the information they need, so a logical order is important. Remember Education and Work Experience should both be in reverse chronological order i.e.most recent experiences first.

CLEAR: don't use jargon or abbreviations. Your font size should be a minimum of 10.

CONCISE: two sides of A4 is the norm for CVs for placements and graduate jobs in the UK. This said, CVs for part-time work or for speculative (direct) applications for unadvertised roles *may* be one page long, depending on the role. If in doubt, ask at Careers.

QUALITY FOCUSED: if you are posting rather than emailing a CV, use good quality paper and do not fold it into a small envelope. You want to make a good impression.

COMPETENCE-BASED: demonstrate your skills (specialist and transferable) wherever possible, using a range of examples from work, academic study, achievements and interests.

TARGETED: have particular jobs/employers in mind when creating your CV and design the document accordingly. Research first, the sorts of skills the employer might want.

REVIEWED: you own your CV and its layout. Careers staff are able to give you specific tactical advice on how best to structure your CV for professional impact. They are however unable to provide a dedicated proof reading/grammar checking service as this might lead to misrepresentation of your capabilities to potential employers, or other opportunity providers. You can always can ask family, friends and academics for general feedback on your CV and they may spot typographical errors or awkward turns of phrase.

- **CV and Covering Letter Guide:**
  http://www.brookes.ac.uk/students/careers/students-and-graduates/cv-guide/

CV Builder: to access the CV builder follow this link and log in using your student ID and password , via the RESOURCES tab: http://www.brookes.ac.uk/students/careers/ Go to CVs and Covering Letters.