

OPTIMISE YOUR CV

There is no single, correct way to format a CV. Just as you are an individual with your own experience, knowledge and skillset, a CV should be an individual showcase of your professional history and achievements. However, with the average hiring manager reviewing each CV for less than a minute, it's crucial that yours highlights your attributes in a clear, concise and attention-grabbing way. Having a CV that you can easily adapt for each application is useful too, so here are our best practice tips for updating your CV to ensure it's the best showcase for you as a potential employee.

First, your CV should have clearly identified sections, enabling employers to review experience, education and qualifications in an easily digestible way. Here is our preferred two-page layout although this can obviously be adapted.

Page 1

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| 1. Essential Information |
| 2. Professional Summary |
| 3. Key Knowledge & Skills |
| 4. Experience |

Page 2

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|---------------------------|
| 4. Experience (continued) |
| 5. Qualifications & CPD |
| 3. Personal Summary |

1. ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Always include your full name and contact details (daytime telephone/mobile and email). Do not include your date of birth, home address or photo; these are private details and are not relevant to any application. If your LinkedIn profile is public and complete, you can include the link here for added professional authentication.

2. PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Consider this to be a condensed version of a Cover Letter. A professional profile should explain what you do, what key skills you have and your aspirations. This can (and should be!) be adapted for different applications, enabling you to bring different skills, achievements or qualifications to the fore that you feel are particularly relevant.

Example:

I am an experienced Producer with five years' line-management responsibility. I have produced multi-media content in a studio environment and on location, targeting multiple demographics and resulting in award-winning

programming and year-on-year audience growth. I am skilled in technical operation, Adobe Creative Suite and Avid, able to produce engaging content for on-air, online and social media. I am currently seeking an opportunity to utilise my knowledge and experience with a leading content platform.

Which can be easily adapted for another role...

II. I am an experienced Sales Manager with five year's line-management responsibility. I have grown accounts across print and digital platforms, resulting in award winning campaigns and year-on-year revenue growth. I am skilled in negotiation, presenting and pitching, able to secure new business as well as nurturing client relationships to maximise existing accounts. I am currently seeking an opportunity to utilise my knowledge and experience within a leading media sales team.

3. KEY KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS

Often bullet-pointed, this is an opportunity to 'mirror' any must-haves in the role's job specification. From soft skills (e.g., line-management, coaching, presentation or negotiation skills) to specific hard skills (e.g., Photoshop, Hootsuite, Advanced Excel), this is a headline-grabbing opportunity to show you possess the knowledge and skills the role requires.

4. EXPERIENCE

Allow yourself just over a page to outline your key experience, starting with the most recent (if you have a long career history, briefly summarise older and less relevant roles under an 'Early Career' sub-heading). Do not write long paragraphs for each role, instead write a headline 'explainer' that outlines the role's purpose and follow it with bullet-pointed responsibilities and achievements. This enables the reader to take in key information quickly and helps to focus their mind on what you can do.

Example: Sales Manager, Company ABC (Jan 2015 – Jan 2020)

In this role, I led a team of six salespeople to generate new business in the local area. I led team meetings, set targets and ensured objectives were met by leading all negotiations and coaching individuals where appropriate.

Responsibilities:

- o Managing a team, recruiting and inducting new starts.
- o Generating new business and growing existing accounts.
- o Pitching to clients and leading negotiations to close.

Achievements:

- o Year-on-Year growth over the past five years.
- o Promoted within a year of joining business.
- o Landed new business with ABC and DEF Brands.

5. QUALIFICATIONS & CPD

You should obviously always include qualifications in your CV. Start with the highest level attained (whether it's postgraduate, graduate or diploma) and follow with earlier qualifications. You do not have to list every subject taken in earlier qualifications but it's always a good idea to include Maths & English if you have achieved them. As stated earlier, many employers now place a greater emphasis on relevant skills and experience over formal qualifications but if a role requires a qualification move this section to the front page or make a reference to it in your Professional Summary.

Your learning and development don't stop when you leave formal education, so providing evidence of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is increasingly valued by employers. Showing that you have a history of developing your knowledge and skills throughout your career, whether employer-led or self-guided, demonstrates commitment, drive and initiative so include anything relevant in your Qualifications section. You could include employer-led training days (e.g., workshops) as well as your own learning regardless of format or source.

6. PERSONAL SUMMARY

This last section is optional. It's a final, more personal opportunity for you to demonstrate your character, personality or ambitions. You could include extra-curricular activity (voluntary, social, philanthropic) or notable achievements (a music grading for example demonstrates dedication). Do not use this section to simply list favourite sports, hobbies or pastimes; it would be better to add more to other, more important sections.

TOP TIPS

- Write in the first person, not third (i.e., 'I...').
- Always spell-check and sub; most hiring managers are sticklers for detail (and rightly so).
- Use a clear, appropriately sized font (don't minimise text to fit and leave your CV almost illegible).
- Keep it clean and simple; don't over design, add lots of colours, pictures or graphics.
- Stick to word documents over pdfs as some businesses cut/paste key info. into briefing sheets for hiring managers in preparation for interviews.

FURTHER READING

- Ten Tips on how to write the perfect CV ([The Guardian](#))
- CV Templates to fit every stage of your Career ([The Guardian](#))
- How to write a CV: Tips for 2020 with examples ([CV Library](#))