



Curriculum Vitae Workbook/Fact Sheet

HOW TO PRESENT YOUR CV

Introduction

When applying for a new job as a PA or Secretary it is vitally important to ensure that you make a good impression. You only have a number of seconds to form that impression. It is, therefore, your **responsibility** to ensure that the impression you make is accurate, professional and significantly superior to your counterparts.

This booklet is designed to help you get the best out of those few seconds.

We want you to think about the information you are about to hand to your potential employer; we want you to think about the style and format of the first impression you are going to make. We want you to get to that all-important interview where your potential employer has the opportunity to meet you and find out what you have to offer.

Question: 1

What do you think a CV is?

I think a CV is:

myPA Answer:

A CV, or to give it its full name, Curriculum Vitae is:

-  A Marketing Tool. It offers your prospective employer their first impression of you.
-  A Competitive Document. A tool in which to compete against others people for the opportunity to have an interview with a prospective employer.
-  A Stepping Stone. It is the first step in the recruitment process.

Alternative you could think of a CV as a brochure. Your brochure will list all the benefits, services, skills and abilities you can offer a prospective new employer.

A CV gives you an opportunity to sell yourself, but you only have circa 15 seconds to do so.

Question: 2

Why is a CV so important?

I think a CV is essential because:

myPA Answer:

Employers will ask for a CV to be sent to them before they agree to meet you for an interview. A CV is the first step in any organisations recruitment process.

It is generally the only opportunity you get to present yourself to a prospective employer; it gives you the chance to gain that all-important interview. A CV is a sales opportunity, something that will catch the eye of the recruiter and make your CV stand out from the hundreds of others that the recruiter has already viewed that day.

There are no second chances for that interview once your CV has been viewed and disregarded as not being suitable. Remember - You might be the perfect person for the role, but if your CV is not up to scratch then you will not be successful.

Question: 3**Why write a CV?**

I think you should write a CV because:

myPA Answer:

There are various reasons for writing a CV:

1. To apply for a job within the same field – you might like what you do, but you may want to do it somewhere else. In this case, you are looking to highlight your achievements and show a prospective employer that you can meet the objectives of a particular role.
2. To apply for a job within a different field (you may want to pursue an entirely different career), in this case, your CV will need to highlight any experience or qualifications in your new area of employment. It would also be sensible to indicate within your CV why you are changing career.
3. To summarise your life achievements – as you never know when a new opportunity is going to come up, it is always a good idea to keep your CV up to date at all times, remembering to include any relevant courses or qualifications along the way. This way, when applying for a new role your CV will already be partially written. If you then apply for a different position, you will only need to edit your CV to suit the particular post.
4. To apply for a particular job vacancy - in this case, your CV must address all the specific job requirements. If you do not have formal qualifications that an employer has requested, then try to make up for it by showing your experience. Read the advertisement carefully and follow the instructions to the letter.

Styles of CVs

A CV must have focus. When a recruiter reads your CV, they should understand your career path. More important than your CV format is the actual content of your CV and how you present it. There are five major CV styles:

1 Targeted CV: this type of CV is a way to focus your career towards a particular objective, within a specific industry or a specific company. A targeted CV should be written in a way that highlights skills, qualifications and experience that match the requirements of the advertised role. This kind of CV is useful when:

-  You know the requirements of the position
-  You know which company you will be sending your CV to
-  You are sending your CV in reply to a specific job advert
-  You need to compose different CV 's, each corresponding to a different career objective

2 Inventory CV: The inventory CV should be used when sending your CV to various recruiters and when you do not have a specific job objective. This kind of CV has a more general overview of your skills, achievements and qualifications. Focusing on a broad purpose or career strategy when sending an inventory CV helps in being that little bit more specific towards your career goals (i.e. “a secretary working within a legal firm”)

3 Chronological CV: This CV shows your career progression and growth. The information stated moves from the beginning of your career to the present day. It should be an easy to read CV. You should use this CV where:

-  You have a solid career history within the same field/company, and there are no significant gaps present.
-  Your responsibilities have developed with each career change
-  Your jobs have been high profile
-  Your most recent jobs are the most important in your career history
-  The job advert asks for this kind of CV

4 Functional CV: The functional CV highlights your career accomplishments, skills and qualifications at the beginning of the CV (timescale is not an issue). Your career history placed at the end of your CV along with small details about your previous jobs. This type of CV focuses on your skills and accomplishments rather than your whole life history – i.e. what you have done rather than when and where. It can be said that employers are not generally receptive to this type of CV as they can be perceived as being used to hide a gap or issue in a career history. The functional CV can be used in the following circumstances:

-  You are looking for your first job
-  You do not want to advertise your age
-  Your significant achievements happened a while ago
-  You have been unemployed for a period
-  You are changing careers

5 Combination CV: This CV is usually used by those who are looking for employment and have a solid background associated with their career objectives. This CV should include sections that highlight your education and experience, then followed by your career history. This CV is used when you have a definitive career path and a targeted job area that is related to your job history and experience. This type of CV combines the best of the functional and the chronological CV styles. Another good time to use this CV would be when each position has unique responsibilities and when a shorter style CV is not suitable. List your responsibilities, accomplishments, skills that you have developed after each job or training. A useful tip can be to start each sentence with a verb, i.e. awarded, assisted, implemented e.t.c.

Advantages of Combined CV:

-  combines the best from both the chronological and functional styles of CV
-  emphasises your achievements and strengths as well as experience
-  starts with a profile, followed by career history which is ideal for grabbing the attention of the employer
-  your accomplishments are noticed

Disadvantages of combined CV:

-  It is the lengthiest style of CV
-  If you cannot grab the employer's attention in the profile, then it is likely that they will not read any more of your CV

Do not use Combined CV when:

-  your work experience is limited
-  you have several or unexplained job gaps
-  you change jobs frequently

Question: 4

What Style of CV should I write?

I think you should write a CV because:

myPA Answer:

This is very much a personal choice, but whatever style you chose, you must make sure you are completely happy with it, you have told the truth and that you keep a copy of it for reference.

Question: 5

How should I set out my CV?

I think you should set my CV out like:

myPA Answer:

Before even turning on your PC, you should ensure you have prepared adequately for writing your CV. Think about your skills, competencies, accomplishments, qualifications and experience. Do you have a unique selling point? What are your strengths and ambitions? Most people still commit the mistake of writing a run-of-the-mill CV with the same headlines, same order of ideas and the same general manner of writing which comes across as at best dull and at worst like a poor copy of a standard template.

Remember that you want your CV to be read and more importantly, responded to with a job interview. Make sure you include enough information to stimulate the employer's interests but not so much that you bore them to death. Include smaller, more easily readable pieces of information rather than large paragraphs of text. Ensure your CV is well structured and laid out, giving the impression of a logical thought process. Aim to include factual information or objective evidence and always focus on the benefits that your achievements have produced.

How should I format my CV?

First Page: Should always contain your details including name, address and contact details at the top. Follow this with a summary of educational and qualification achievements. An overview statement should always be included highlighting your strengths in the relevant area, skills and experience and the type of position sought.

Second and Third Page: These should be used to highlight your employment history. Present it in reverse chronological order. If you have only worked for one company, then break it down into each role. Indicate briefly the responsibilities and work undertaken with each position held. Where possible, quantify your achievements in sales in financial terms. Each post you have held should contain at least one account of your accomplishment. List hobbies and interests in no more than three lines and only if they are relevant to the position. Always include any voluntary, charity or work placement experience gained along with any languages, courses, training, a professional membership which could apply to the role.

Do's:

-  Do keep your CV to less than three pages if at all possible. One is perfect!
-  Do use bullet points when listing achievements, responsibilities e.t.c. however, only if there is enough of a point of interest that will hold the employer's interest
-  Do include only factual information or objective evidence
-  Do focus on your achievements
-  Do pay attention to reply instructions in an advertisement and always tailor your CV to their specifications
-  Do get a friend or family member to check your spelling and grammar – no excuses!
-  Do use A4 white paper, no coloured paper.

Question: 6**What should I avoid when putting my CV together:**

When putting my CV together, I should avoid:

myPA Answer:**Don't:**

-  Don't waffle, be concise and avoid lengthy and tedious paragraphs
-  Don't use self-opinion in your CV
-  Don't be tempted to lie – you will be caught out!
-  Don't put anything on the first page that is likely to strike a negative note
-  Don't include salary, age or ages of children
-  Don't add your reason for leaving a job
-  Don't put anything down under interests unless it refers to the position and you can talk inspiringly about it for hours!
-  Don't use coloured paper or be tempted to fill the CV with pretty diagrams and layout – keep it simple.
-  Don't use jargon and abbreviations

Where to get information to help with writing your CV:

When writing your CV, you should ensure that you include all the relevant details that have been requested. Read all the information about the company you can find (this will involve going on the internet if applicable), getting company brochures and talking to current staff if you can.

When creating your CV use the Job description as a guideline to help you answer many of the competencies that will be required, review the job advertisement or even your performance reviews if applicable.

Question: 7

What tools would be useful in helping you write your CV?

To help me write the perfect CV, I think the tools that would help me are:

myPA Answer:

Please note, this list is not exhaustive, and you will find many other tools that could help you.

-  Job descriptions
-  Performance reviews
-  Job advertisements
-  Job References
-  Educational records
-  Training evaluations
-  Research on the Internet
-  Talking to other members of the company and team

Sending your CV

When you have completed your CV, you will need to send it to the organisation that is looking for a new employee. The mailing address may not be the address where you could potentially be working. Reread the advertisement very carefully and follow all the instructions.

What to send with your CV?

CV's are seldom used alone; therefore, when sending your CV, unless told not to, you should include a covering letter. The letter gives you the opportunity to let your personality come through. The cover letter should explain what vacancy you are applying for, where you have seen the job advertised and an overview of why you should be considered. Remember though not just to repeat what your CV says. The cover letter can pick up points where, due to space, your CV does not allow. A cover letter can save you from having to rewrite the CV each time you want to target your application to a specific advertisement or industry.

Tips for writing cover letters:

-  Think of your cover letter as the first page of your CV. The purpose is to get you an interview so view it as a one-page advertisement of yourself.
-  Make your letter brief, enthusiastic and interesting
-  Always make sure that you have the correct details of the person the letter is being addressed to (name, title, and address). If in doubt, then ring the company and request this information specifically
-  Try not to begin every sentence with "I."
-  Research your target company thoroughly, know their competitors, strengths, weaknesses, projects, plans and opportunities
-  Indicate in brief paragraphs what you are applying for, who you are, why you are interested, and what you have to offer. Don't oversell though
-  Refer your reader to your CV. Chose 3 or 4 top achievements and expressed them in the letter but in a different way to your CV. Make sure the achievements are relevant to the job you are applying for.

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-  Do not put anything in the letter which gives the reader the opportunity to put the letter to one side. Don't apologise for anything in the letter
 -  If the letter is a speculative approach, then get the name, where possible, of the decision maker, so the letter reaches and is read by the right person.
 -  Be specific; think about what you are asking for in the letter. If you are requesting a meeting, then ask for one.
 -  Always telephone to check that your letter and CV has been received by the intended person.
 -  Always ensure that if there is a closing date you get your letter and CV in within the allocated timescale. Any received after this date may not even be read.