

ARTICLE: TIPS FOR CV WRITING AND INTERVIEWING

NOTE: this article can be subdivided into two separate articles, one for CVs and one for interviews, at the break point marked below.

In a competitive job market, it has never been more important to ensure that your CV stands out. Whether you are applying for your first job, or you already have a well-established career behind you, your CV has to do more than set out your work experience, it needs to tell the story of who you are.

It is reported that most recruiters will only spend one or two minutes reading each CV, so need to make yours count. This article sets out a brief step-by-step guide to making sure that your CV reflects the full breadth of your accomplishments.

There are few important points to consider from the outset:

1. **Contact information:** it may sound simple, but it is easy to forget. Make sure you include your name and contact details at the top of the first page, and make sure they stand out.
2. **Length:** your CV needs to cover all the important aspects, but it cannot be too long. For most people, two pages of A4 is recommended, but for experienced applicants or consultants with long project histories, three pages is fine.
3. **Design:** Try to use clear, easy-to-read fonts, and only use a couple of text designs throughout. Do not overcomplicate the design, or the colour scheme, as this will distract from the important parts which recruiters want to read.
4. **Order:** lead off with a short personal statement, only a couple of sentences, describing who you are, your skillsets, and what you bring to the job. Then include your employment history, starting with your most recent job or project, explaining a bit about each job, what you achieved, and how this could benefit future employers. Then include your education, starting with degrees, then school, then any additional qualifications.
5. **Accuracy:** Make sure that what you write is honest and accurate, as potential employers will check references. Do not exaggerate your achievements or your grades, as the risk to your reputation is not worth it. Also, make sure you proofread the document, or have a friend or family member look at it before you send it out, to make sure it is perfect.
6. **Refreshing:** Do not be afraid to change your CV to suit the job you are applying for, focusing on the specific requirements of the job description. Also make sure you regularly update your CV, reflecting new achievements.

It is preferable not to include a personal photo on your CV. Except in the case of the request of the employer. While this has traditionally been accepted, most recruiters today prefer not having it, as it can lead to unconscious bias.

Once your CV has caught the interest of recruiters, and you are invited to an interview, then the hard work begins. You will have 45 minutes, at most, to

convince the people across the table that you are someone they should invest thousands of pounds in bringing on board, so you need to make it count.

Make sure you follow these steps;

1. **Research:** Make sure that, before your interview, you have read up on the employer, their mission, what they do, and who they work with. If you know the name of the people interviewing you, look them up as well. Make sure you know where you would fit in, and what you can do to add value.
2. **Presentation:** Again, this is something people forget, but first impressions are essential. Make sure you are dressed smartly. Wear shirt and smart trousers, or a suit if you have one. Also make sure your hair is tidy and pay attention to personal hygiene. When you are waiting for your interview, make sure you sit straight, and don't use your phone while you're waiting.
3. **Introductions:** Make the right first impression by being friendly and engaging when you meet your interviewers. Shake hands firmly, and keep eye contact. Ask them how their day has been going, and respond politely and positively to questions.
4. **Answering questions:** You will probably be able to guess some of the questions you will be asked, like why you are interested in the job, what similar work you have done in the past, and what new ideas you would bring to the role. Make sure to have some key points ready. Talk about your achievements in other jobs, what you delivered, and how it can be applied to the new role. Make sure you answer the question and don't talk for too long.
5. **At the end of your interview:** Your interviewer will often ask whether you have any questions for them - try to think of a couple of interesting ones about the organisation, the work they do, and how you might fit in. Then remember to thank the interviewers for their time, and shake hands again before you leave.

Good luck!