



21 Tips For Writing a Killer CV

1. **Targeted.** Employers receive hundreds or even thousands of CV's a week and many of them show no interest in or knowledge of the company. Do your research. Go to <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/Pages/Home.aspx> look up the job and make sure the key skills you need are in your CV (with samples of how you achieved this) and then go to the company's website and check if there's anything in there you can add or reference that will show you're not doing a 'one-size-fits-all' CV mail bomb drop. Show them you specifically targeted them.
2. **Sales pitch not history.** A modern CV is not a statement of past glories, it's a sales pitch saying what YOU can do for the company you're applying to.
3. **Key Words.** If you're uploading to Monster, fish4jobs or the recruitment agencies it's not a human being who reads your CV. It's put into a database and they use a search to find key words the employer is looking for. You haven't got the key words, you don't come up. Use the National Careers Service site to find key words there, go through the company website to see if there are any more and use their job advert (if there is one) and make sure you've not missed anything. The more key words you get in, the more chance your CV will come up in the search. It's really that simple!
4. **Short, sharp and punchy!** Anything over two pages is too long (unless it's an academic CV with extra pages dedicated to published work references). If you can't get it down to two pages you're repeating yourself (and that's boring!) or going back too far (anything over ten years is now out of date). You can reference earlier (relevant) experience but don't go into detail. They can ask at the interview.
5. **Direct their focus.** They want to see the stuff relevant to them ASAP, so put it at the top. Use clearly marked headers to draw their attention to what they're looking for.
6. **Focus on the positive** I once had a client whose entire profile (the first thing the employer sees at the top of the page) consisted of the fact he'd failed at his last two attempts at self-employment. Needless to say, he had no interview offers. We all fail regularly, but your CV is not the time to point that out. If they ask in the interview about when things go wrong, THAT'S the time to talk about it, but show what you learned from the experience and how you'll avoid repetition.
7. **Spelling and grammar are not optional extras.** Check it properly and get someone else (whose standards are good) to check it too!
8. **Reduce the clutter.** Human eyes (and minds) need white space to give them a chance to process what they're looking at. Don't give them a headache, give them room to think.
9. **But don't overdo it.** Too much white space leaves them looking for an oasis in the desert. If it won't stretch to two pages, reduce it to one. Adjust margins, font size and line space to lay it out neatly.
10. **It's a CV not an art class.** Fancy fonts can distract and may not convert properly on the receiving computer, leaving them staring at lines of gobbledegook. Stick to the traditional ones (Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri (on Word 2010) etc.) and avoid loads of **bold**, *italic* or underlining. Reserve those for the stuff you want to stand out.



11. **Never lie.** If you do and you're found out it could cost you anything from your job to six months in jail.
12. **Be specific.** If someone could read your profile and still not know what job you're going for, change it. It should be clear from the outset the specific job you're targeting.
13. **References** Do NOT put these in your CV unless you've been asked for them and you've checked with the referees that it's all right to do so. If the referees are OK with it then this is your chance to tell them what the job is and why you want it, which will help them to write a good reference for you.
14. **Swap referees regularly.** This will take the pressure off those you've already used and keep them up to date. I have had to write references for more people than I care to count, but being asked by someone I haven't seen in 20 years for a reference is ridiculous.
15. **Layout**
 - a. Name and contact details at the top, but don't let it take up too much space. Name, home address, telephone number/s, e-mail*
 - b. Profile – your chance to tell them how you fit the job perfectly.
 - c. Professional Accomplishments/Key Skills under skills headings and that can INCLUDE voluntary work. Most relevant skill at the top (with 3 or four examples), then next most relevant, etc.
 - d. Work Experience MOST RECENT FIRST, but all you need is years (don't include months but keep a record for your own use for on line applications that demand it), name of company and position. That's it! Don't add anything more here because the relevant stuff should be under the appropriate skills heads so you don't need to repeat it.
 - e. Education. If you've got it (as the song goes) flaunt it. If not, stick to the basics and move on. If literacy and numeracy are missing you may need to address that so check out free courses at your local colleges or adult education centres. You can include on the job training and expired courses if they're relevant as this shows you've done it in the past so should be easy to re-train (and so less expensive to the employer).
 - f. Hobbies. This one's optional. If you haven't got any leave it out (and then go get some. Seriously! A hobby you enjoy and are good at can make you feel good when everything about you is a disaster. There are tons of resources on line you can do for free and fun.) If you have and they're dangerous or a bit weird you might want to keep quiet until they know you better. Whatever you do, don't put socialising (unless you're a professional escort) or reading (unless you're a bibliophile). Employers read that as you enjoy going down the pub/club and reading the news headlines.
 - g. I usually add 'References Available On Request' at the end to show the employer there's no more.
16. **Keep it up to date** Once you've got your new job, don't forget your old CV. The time will come when you'll need it again, so every time you get training or master new skills add it to the CV and at least once a year check it over and make sure it's up to date. That way, when the time comes to go on the hunt again you won't be struggling to remember.



17. **Use a professional e-mail address** sexybabe@hotmail.com won't cut it! Use gmail to set up an email with your name. The chances are for many of you that will already have gone but add THIS YEAR'S DATE afterwards (so shaz-ney-2013@ etc) and you should find this one's available. If not add middle initials. Do NOT use your birth year, because if you do you've just told them how old you are. As you get older that will become a problem.
18. **It's embarrassing!** If you have trouble tooting your own horn, here's a way around it. At the top of the CV, before you do anything else, put someone else's name and address grabbed randomly from the phone book. This utter stranger is now your best friend in all the world who happens to have the same experience, skills and ambitions as you. They're applying for their dream job and have asked YOU to help them write their CV. Now, you wouldn't let your best friend get away with underselling themselves, would you? So write the CV for them. If your conscience tries to muscle in, point out this isn't your CV, it's an exercise to see how good you can make it, so your conscience can butt out. Keep interrogating your 'friend' and fine tuning until it's something to be proud of. Then and ONLY then, change the name at the top. It's you, after all!
19. **When will I know it's ready?** If you look at it and think 'that'll do' it's not even close. If you look at it and it's embarrassingly good, you've done it!
20. **Think like the employer.** Put yourself in their shoes. If you were the one hiring, what would you look for? What would stand out for you and make you want to interview them? To do this you need to research the position you're applying for thoroughly.
21. * **Twitter and Facebook** Employers check these so if you put the information don't be surprised to find they've looked at your profiles. Don't put up compromising pictures or pass negative comments on previous employers. Like it or not these are now part of your CV, so if you don't want employers to see it, don't paste it on those sites!

GOOD LUCK!