

Writing an effective CV

There are many facts and fallacies about writing an effective resume and depending where you turn, you'll get different advice - all presenting itself as the final word on the subject. There are rules to be followed, as we outline below, but there is also room for flexibility.

General Tips

1. If you send a resume before seeing someone, its purpose is to **act as a personal marketing document** - one that will get you invited to an interview or to a meeting.
2. People who receive resumes often use them for screening you 'out' rather than 'in.' The first person to look at your resume for a specific job is not likely to be the person who will do the interviewing; **the person screening out inappropriate resumes may only have a list of criteria to match** . Your resume will have to get beyond this point to ensure you are considered for an interview.
3. When you get to the interview, your resume can **act as the agenda for your discussion**, giving the interviewer a springboard from which to launch the inquiry. It is acceptable to keep it in front of you but only refer to it as, and when, you need to.

Layout & Content

Do

- Keep the layout and design legible, consistent and easy to follow, with good, clear headings, large easy-to-read typeface such as Times New Roman, Courier or Arial. Arial is preferred today.
- **Use 12-point font** for the text and 14-point font for the headings for easy readability. Use 16 or 18-point font for the title of your resume.
- Use good quality, plain paper. Do not use coloured paper or fancy borders or shadings for your resume. This is an informational document not a creative one.
- Add specific achievements rather than just duties and responsibilities. It should tell prospective employers everything that might interest them and nothing that will waste their time.
- Write in clear, concise terms, using **active words** (eg. Wrote, prepared, presented, liaised with, accomplished, negotiated, etc). The employer wants to know what you actually did.

- Keep it succinct. Highlight particular personal achievements, eg. 'During my period as Manager, turnover decreased 120 per cent.'
- Put your work history and educational details in reverse chronological order, starting with the most recent. This is easier to follow.
- Be specific in your resume. Use numbers or percentages to illustrate your successes or the impact you can have.

Don't

- Don't add your date of birth, or marital status to your resume. These things do not matter and are of no relevance to your working life.
- **Do not use tables** to set out your resume. They do not necessarily add anything to the presentation of your document.
- Don't send poor quality photocopies. It doesn't cost much for good quality reproductions or original printed copies.
- Don't exaggerate your academic achievements or experience to make it sound more impressive. Employers do check!.
- Don't claim complete responsibility for achievements; this implies no one else deserves any credit, which is seldom the case.
- Don't write a novel or your autobiography! The CV presents a picture of you and your job and academic history. Key points should be highlighted to develop interest in you as a potential candidate.
- Don't use a narrative style. Highlight your accomplishments in bullet points. Take note that brief points must be carefully thought out.
- Don't use initials and jargon. Write so you are understood. People who really know their subject write and speak clearly and don't try to complicate their writing or presentations.