

STEP 2 : GUIDE TO PREPARING AN EFFECTIVE CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)

What do employers look for?

Employers use a Curriculum Vitae (CV) to determine how well you match the criteria of their job, and how well you will fit into their organisation. Your CV needs to prove that you have

- Researched their company and the job on offer
- Understand what they want from you
- Can identify what you will offer them

An employer will judge you on two main criteria (1) your skills, abilities and experiences (2) the quality and appearance of the CV.

On average, an employer only spends **10-20 seconds** reading each CV, so you have a really short time to make a great impression! Here are some tips to make sure that you stand out from the crowd.

Identify the skills for the job

Use the job description, the person specification and the company website to find out the exact skills that are needed for this particular position, and give examples of where you have demonstrated these. You should try to tailor each individual CV for each new position you are applying for. The employers will notice this additional effort, and that your CV matches their individual requirements.

Note: Where there is not job description or person specification provided, or you are compiling a speculative CV, make sure it is relevant to the organisation and demonstrates the specific skills and experiences you will need for the roles available or on offer.

It might be helpful to have a spreadsheet or word document with skills and competencies, and examples from present and previous positions of where you have demonstrated these. You might find the [Keywords and Sample Phrases to use in your CV](#) helpful.

Choose a format

There are several different types of CV, and a Google search will bring up many different templates and examples for you to refer to. However, the two most common formats are Traditional (Chronological) or Functional (Skills Based). We have provided examples and templates of these to help you build your own CV, and have explained the difference between the two below.

Traditional CV

This is sometimes called the Chronological CV, as it goes through your work history in order starting with the most recent. It allows you to provide clear details of qualifications, work history and responsibilities matched to the job description.

It is important to include:

- Dates – do not leave any gaps in your history or where there are gaps explain them
- Qualifications and work experience - make sure that they match the job
- Additional skills and knowledge – make sure that you cover essential and any desirable

Functional CV

This is also known as a Skills Based CV, and is quite useful if you have gaps in your employment history. It is also good if you have more limited experience or are applying for a job that is a change in your career, or was not related to your training and qualifications.

You will have skills that are transferrable to many different employers and roles, so this type of CV allows you to focus on these, irrespective of where they came from.

It is important to:

- Position the skills profile prominently
- Match skills to the role profile and use the same headings
- Provide evidence of where you have used these skills in a real situation

Decide what to include

Your CV should fit nicely onto **2 sides of A4 paper**. This means that you need to work out exactly what to include and what to leave out. In general you should always include:

- Key experiences, skills and qualifications
- Up to date contact details

Now, you do not need to put on your age, gender or marital status, as these are protected characteristics and will not inform the decision of whether you get the job or not.

You might want to put your references on the CV, but it is best practice to get their approval before you do so.

Prove your skills

Try to provide evidence to support each of your skills, and avoid general statements such as 'enthusiastic team player' or 'great communication skills'. Your examples need to be more specific as employers like to see evidence. For example, "I increased productivity by more than 20% in 6 months, boosting company revenue by 10%" Once you have written your examples, make sure you include them in the relevant sections of your CV.

Note: make sure that you do not lie on your CV, as it will come back and haunt you in the interview or once you have started your job. Employers do check your background.

If you are not sure about how to write about your achievements on your CV, you might find the document [How to Write about Achievements in your CV](#) helpful

Make your language effective

Your CV is basically a marketing tool to sell you to another employer, so avoid woolly, passive statements and focus on active and bold ones. For example:

“Talked to clients” could become “established effective working relationships with clients”

“Made a leaflet” could become “designed and produced a targeted marketing leaflet”

Also, here at NHSBT, we use a lot of jargon and abbreviations that do not make sense to people outside of the organisation. For example, a Healthcare Technical Officer is known as a Laboratory Assistant in other parts of the NHS and other organisations. Go through your CV and cut out any acronyms (for example changing NHSBT to NHS Blood and Transplant) and make sure other people will know what you mean.

Do one last check

Before you send off your CV, you need to do a final check.

1. Does it highlight all of my skills, experiences, qualities and achievements
2. Ask yourself the 6 C's - is it:
 - a. **Clear** – easy to read
 - b. **Correct** – free of spelling mistakes and grammatical errors
 - c. **Concise** – shorter than 2 A4 pages
 - d. **Complete** – cover my education, achievements, career history, skills, references
 - e. **Consistent** – fonts and formatting
 - f. **Current** – up to date
3. Is it what the employer wants? Can they see important information in 20 seconds? Would they be persuaded to find out more?

Keeping your CV current

You should keep your CV up-to-date whether you're looking for a job or not. Every time something significant occurs in your career, record it so you don't later forget something that could be important.

Relevant websites

- <http://www.monster.co.uk/career-advice/>
- <https://www.reed.co.uk/career-advice/cvs/>
- <https://www.totaljobs.com/careers-advice/cvs-and-applications>
- <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/get-a-job> - see 'Your CV' and 'CV Tips'

Related documents

- [How to Write about Achievements in Your CV](#)
- [Keywords and Sample Phrases to use in Your CV](#)
- [Sample Traditional CV for Support Roles](#)
- [Sample Traditional CV for Management Roles](#)
- [Sample Targeted Functional CV](#)
- [Sample Speculative Functional CV](#)
- [Template Traditional CV](#)
- [Template Functional CV](#)