



A Curriculum Vitae (CV) is a short description of where you've worked, where you went to school and your skills and qualifications. It gives an employer a sense of what you can do and what experience you have. Employers decide who to interview based on the CVs they receive for each job.

It is advisable to change your CV to meet the needs of the specific job you are applying for. Emphasise certain skills more than others or highlight particular experiences more than others for a particular job application.

This document will assist you with simple steps to create the perfect CV.

Once you have found the perfect job, you think you meet all the necessary requirements, but before you apply for the position and thinking about a possible interview, you need to have a CV that stands out from the rest.

For every job advertised, there are often hundreds of applications and many applicants submit their CVs, which makes it very important that your CV captures the attention of the Recruiters.

Getting started

Whenever you apply for a job, it is necessary for you to update you CV to display your relevant skills and experience that relate to the position that you are applying for.

Step 1: Plan your CV

You will need the following information in order to draft your CV:

- **Personal information:** This includes your names, contact details and ID number.
- **Work experience:** List your work experience, starting with your most recent job and working your way back to your first job. It is important that you include the actual dates you started and left each organisation/company. You must also reflect the companies' names and a summary of your key duties for each of the positions you held. It is advisable to insert bullet points outlining your responsibilities and achievements in each of the positions you held.
- **Education:** You must list all your qualifications, starting with the most recent and ending with your first. You must include institution names, degrees/qualifications earned, graduation dates, and any honors or distinctions.
- **Skills:** Write down all the necessary skills that you have acquired in the various positions you have held in your career. If you don't have any work experience then you must list all the skills that you have which will enable you to perform the duties of the post that you are applying for.



- **Achievements:** It would be useful to highlight any specific accomplishments, awards, or projects that demonstrate your skills and contributions in your previous positions.
 - **References:** List the names, positions and current contact details of colleagues who can give insight into your work performance. Make sure their contact information is accurate and that you have their permission to use them.
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Step 2: Design your CV

There are many ways to create your CV and with countless apps and digital tools, it just got easier. Remember that your CV style needs to suit the type of job you're applying for.

A professional CV should showcase your qualifications, experience, and suitability for the job while being easy to read and visually appealing. The design should enhance the readability and overall presentation of your CV, helping you stand out as a strong candidate.

You can use Microsoft Word to create your CV document. Save your Word document as a PDF so that no one can change your details.

Here's how you can create a visually appealing and professional document:

- **Choose a Clean Layout:** Opt for a clean, organised layout that is easy to read. Use a simple and professional font (e.g., Arial, Calibri) for the body text and a slightly larger font for headings.
- **Use bullet points:** Present information using bullet points to make it easier for employers to skim through your CV and quickly identify key details.
- **Section Headings:** Use clear section headings (e.g., Contact Information, Work Experience, Education etc.) to structure your CV and guide the reader.
- **Consistent Formatting:** Maintain consistency in formatting, such as font sizes, text alignment, and spacing, throughout the CV.
- **Visual Hierarchy:** Use formatting techniques (e.g., bold, italics, underlining) to create a visual hierarchy, emphasising important information such as your name, headings, and key achievements.
- **Colours:** Use limited colours, sticking to neutral and professional colors that complement each other.
- **Margins:** Set reasonable header, footer and side margins to ensure that your CV content fits comfortably within the page and is not crowded.
- **Consistent Dates:** Ensure that dates of employment, education, and other events are consistently formatted.



- **PDF Format:** Save your CV as a PDF to ensure that formatting remains consistent across different devices and platforms.
 - **Proofread:** Thoroughly review your CV for spelling, grammar, and formatting errors. Consider having someone else review it as well. Even minor mistakes can create an unprofessional impression.
 - **Optional Sections:** Depending on your background, you might include sections like certifications, languages, volunteer work, or memberships.
 - **Templates:** Consider using CV templates available online to guide your design. Many templates are customizable and can help you create a polished CV.
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Step 3: Your cover letter

Although it is not mandatory to submit a CV cover letter, it could be beneficial to do so as it will be the first thing most recruiters see before browsing through your CV. The CV is about your qualifications and skills etc. but the cover letter should give recruiters an idea of whether you meet the company's requirements. Read the job advertisement so that the content in your cover letter matches the requirements in the advertisement.

Here are some guidelines to assist you in preparing a CV cover letter:

- **Heading and Contact Details:** Place your name, address, phone number, and email address at the top. Include the date of writing the letter beneath your contact details.
- **Opening Paragraph:** Start with a strong and personalised introduction. Mention the specific job/s you're applying for and how you learned about it/them. Express your enthusiasm for the opportunity to apply for the position/s.
- **Middle Paragraph(s):** Highlight your qualifications, skills, and experiences that make you a suitable candidate for the role. Focus on how your background aligns with the job requirements. Use specific examples to showcase your achievements. Explain why you're interested in the organisation and how your values align with theirs. Mention any research you've done about the company and its projects. Write down three reasons telling the recruiter why they should hire you. Once you have listed the reasons, back them up by listing your experience for each reason.
- **Closing Paragraph:** Summarise your interest in the role and express your eagerness to discuss your application further. Mention that your CV is attached and that you're looking forward to the opportunity to interview.
- **Closing:** End the letter with a professional closing, such as "Sincerely" or "Kind regards." Leave space for your signature and type your name underneath. If sending electronically, you can simply type your name.



- **Proofreading:** Thoroughly proofread the cover letter for any grammatical or spelling errors. Ensure the tone is professional and positive.
 - **Format:** Format the cover letter similarly to a formal business letter. Use a professional font and maintain a neat and organized layout.
 - A well-written cover letter should complement your CV, showcase your motivation, and explain why you're the right fit for the job.
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Step 4: Review

Now that you have designed your CV, here are some tips to consider when planning and preparing your CV:

- Make sure that you read the job advertisement properly and ensure that you meet all the requirements before applying for a position.
 - It is advisable not to include unnecessary information in your CV such as you do not need to include your religion, a photo (unless it is requested), or your political affiliation.
 - Try to be creative when you describe your personality or skills. Avoid using words the recruiter may have seen in 50 other CVs. Be credible, if your CV mentions specific skills, remember to back this up with previous job experience and a reference who can attest to this.
 - Ensure that your CV is always neat and that there are no spelling or grammatical errors as first impressions last.
 - Use a font that is readable and easy to look at such as Arial, Helvetica, Century Gothic or Calibri. Avoid making everything bold or uppercase.
 - Do not skip any important details. Make sure you have a good subject line when applying via e-mail; tell the person who you are and what job you're applying for. The person reading your e-mail may have 100 other messages to read so try to ensure that your e-mail stands out.
 - Always be contactable. If you are applying for a job, make sure you have provided the correct contact details and that you answer your phone.
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Step 5: Finalise your CV

Use this checklist below to make sure your CV is error-free. If you have missed any of the blocks, go back and amend your CV accordingly.

| CV content review checklist | Yes |
|---|------------|
| Contact Information | |
| I have included my full name, contact details, location and ID number. | |
| My contact details are correct and the recruiter will have no problems getting hold of me. | |
| Work Experience | |
| Listed in reverse chronological order with accurate dates. | |
| Included job titles, company names, and locations. | |
| Provided detailed bullet points for responsibilities and achievements. | |
| Ensured there are no unexplained gaps in your work experience or inconsistencies in dates. | |
| Education | |
| Listed in reverse chronological order with accurate dates, starting with my tertiary education. | |
| Included institution names, degrees/qualifications, and graduation dates. | |
| Skills | |
| I have listed the necessary skills for the job and ensured that my working experience matches the skills I have listed. | |
| Achievements | |
| Included quantifiable accomplishments and significant projects. | |
| References | |
| My references are contactable and know that I am listing them. | |
| Formatting | |
| Consistent font styles and sizes throughout the CV. | |
| Clear section headings and bullet points. | |
| My CV design suits the jobs that I am applying for. | |
| I have used spell check and have no grammatical errors. | |
| Relevance | |
| Ensured that your cover letter complements the information in your CV. | |
| Tailored content to match the jobs you're applying for. | |