

How to Write a CV: Tips for 2017

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When it comes to job hunting, your CV is paramount. Get it right, and you'll have an interview in no time; get it wrong, and you'll face rejection after rejection. Every CV is different — you want to show why you're unique, of course — but all follow a similar structure. This guide will show you how to write a great CV for 2017.

What is a CV?

Your CV, short for *curriculum vitae*, is a personal marketing tool used to sell yourself to prospective employers. It should tell them about you, your professional history, and your skills; ultimately, it should show why you're the best candidate for the job.

The basic CV format

There are particular sections that employers expect to see on your CV regardless of industry or job role, so we recommend using the following structure:

- Contact details
- Personal statement
- Experience
- Education
- Achievements
- Hobbies and interests
- References

Contact details

The first part of your CV, positioned at the top of the page, should contain your contact details. This is the very basic stuff: your name, physical address, email address, and phone number, although you might choose to include your LinkedIn URL, too. It's not necessary to include personal details such as your date of birth, marital status, or religion.

Not sure if your LinkedIn profile is ready to be included in your CV? Check out [our guide](#) to see if it's up to scratch.

Personal statement

Your personal statement is one of the most important aspects of your CV. It's where you give an overview of who you are and inject a touch of personality. You should tailor it to every job you apply for, highlighting specific qualities that match you to the role. Aim to keep your personal statement short and sweet, and no longer than a few sentences. To make the most of this section, you should try to address the following:

1. Who are you?
2. What can you offer the company?
3. What are your career goals?

If you want more on how to write your personal statement, it's worth checking out [our comprehensive guide](#).

Experience and employment history

This section gives you a chance to outline your previous jobs, internships, and work experience. Your experience should be listed in reverse chronological order. You should state your job title and the dates you worked, followed by your responsibilities. It helps to choose the duties most relevant to the job you're applying for, especially if it's a long list. You can experiment with the format, but in this section, bullet points are useful for clarity and highlighting key skills.

Below is a very basic example, but you should take this chance to showcase your strongest areas and your achievements in previous positions.

***Administrative Assistant at Company Name
(April 2012 – January 2014)***

Responsible for:

- ***Keeping records up-to-date;***
- ***Implementing the new company filing system; and***
- ***Answering phone calls/responding to emails.***

Education

Like the Experience section, your education should be listed in reverse chronological order. Include the name of the institutions and the dates you were there, followed by the grades you achieved. If you have a lot of qualifications, there's no need to list them all; just choose the most relevant. If you have a degree, you could list a few of the most relevant modules you took.

Bullet points are useful in this section, too. For example:

Name of Institution

(September 2009 – July 2011)

A-Levels:

- ***History, Business, English Literature***
- ***Achieved grades A-B***

Achievements

You might look at this section and think you have no achievements, but achievements don't have to be formal awards. If you've done anything you're particularly proud of, like completing a project or receiving a promotion, you can and should include it. It's only going to help the recruiter build a picture of you and your successes, so don't worry about what qualifies as an achievement — if you're proud of it, let them know.

Hobbies and interests

You don't need to state your hobbies and interests on your CV, but they help recruiters know more about your personality. If you have any interesting hobbies that make you shine, or if your hobbies relate to the industry you're going into, you can use this section to build a bigger picture of you as a person. If you're running low on space, don't worry too much; just remember that, if worded well, this section could really make you stand out.

References

Your referees should be your previous employers or your educational tutors, but there's no need to list all their details in this section. A person's name, physical address, contact number, and email address are common things to include. Something like the following is fine:

John Smith (Head of Sales)

Sales Company LTD

1 Manchester Road

MANCHESTER

M50 3AH

Or, you can save space by simply stating:

References available upon request.

Recruiters can then ask for more information if and when they need it.

Explaining a gap in your CV

Whether you've been travelling or unemployed, sometimes there can be gaps in your CV. Though you may be worried, you should avoid lying about these gaps; every situation can be explained and some even used to your advantage. There are legitimate reasons for gaps, and short breaks shouldn't make a huge difference to your CV. If you've been out of work for a long time, though, you'll have to explain them eventually.

If you took time out to go travelling, you can describe your cultural experiences, and you may have even worked while you were away — it's not all about full moon parties and putting pictures of sunsets on Instagram. There are many interpersonal skills you can demonstrate from your time abroad, as well as other desirable characteristics like leadership, adaptability, and financial planning. List this in your Experience section as you would if it had been a previous job.

If you took a prolonged period of time off due to sickness, you shouldn't have a problem being honest as long as the illness doesn't affect your ability to do the job. State that, due to a medical condition, you had to take some time away from work but have now returned to full health and are looking to re-enter the workplace.

Likewise, if you were made redundant and became unemployed for quite some time, explain that your company had to make cutbacks that unfortunately led to a reduction in the number of staff. Your CV only needs to go back to a maximum of about ten years' experience, so any gaps before then will be ignored anyway.

7 Tips for CV Success in 2017

1. Be creative

Experiment with the format of your CV and try to add your personal flair to the layout. In recent years, candidates have even gone digital in the form of [video CVs](#) and games, but this is usually only worth it if you're in a creative industry.

2. Be careful

If you choose a more creative format for your CV, don't let it be detrimental — don't choose anything too distracting or difficult to read from.

3. Proofread

Make sure you triple check your CV; you don't want avoidable errors to hinder your chances before you're even through the door. Have someone else check over it, too.

4. Don't make it too long

Your CV should be no longer than one or two A4 pages. Recruiters aren't likely to have the time to read five pages, no matter how talented you are.

5. Tailor each CV

Every CV you send out should be [tailored to the role](#) you're applying for. Choose relevant examples and skills to demonstrate why you're the best person for the job.

6. Keep it up-to-date

Update your CV whenever you gain a new skill or qualification. Remember that your career goals may change over time and that your CV should reflect this. With the New Year just around the corner, now is the perfect time to get your CV up to scratch for 2017.

7. Sending your CV online

In today's digital world, it's likely that you'll be sending your CV via email or through a job board like CV-Library. Save your CV with the .PDF file extension to ensure that recruiters can open it on any device. A PDF will also maintain formatting, so you can be sure that employers are seeing your CV as you intended.

Frequently asked CV questions

Below is a list of questions that our career experts are often asked. If you have any questions we haven't addressed, please leave a comment below or get in touch via [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

Should I include a picture?

This is becoming an increasingly important discussion in the recruitment world — should CVs include pictures? With access to social media profiles, some argue that putting a picture on your CV doesn't make much difference. Others argue that it could lead to discrimination. It's ultimately your choice, but common practice is to not include a picture.

If you do decide to attach a picture of yourself, make sure it's a professional one — perhaps a professional headshot or LinkedIn photo. Snapchat selfies aren't going to make the best impression. [And definitely don't include a full-frontal naked picture.](#)

Should I use bullet points or paragraphs?

Bullet points can help to divide the layout of your CV and make it look clearer, especially in the Experience and Education sections. They can also draw attention to certain skills and key points. Paragraphs work better for your personal profile, but if you're being creative with the style, you might play around with this format. It's up to you, but bullet points can help to prevent your CV from being one big block of text.

How far back should my employment history go?

Your employment history should go back no further than the last ten years; an exception could be made if you've completed a very long stint within a company. But if you've had numerous jobs, you shouldn't worry about going any further than ten years.

Next steps

Get your CV right from the outset, and you may well [find a job](#) more quickly. Your CV is your chance to make a great first impression and secure yourself an interview, so follow this guide and be as creative as you can.

If you've followed along and think you're ready to create a winning CV for 2017, be sure to check out our [CV Templates](#) for a head start.

Source: <https://www.cv-library.co.uk/career-advice/cv/how-to-write-a-cv-tips-for-2017/>