

Explore what makes a winning CV

Introduction

You might have written a CV when you applied for previous jobs or internships or you may never have written a CV before. Either way, the Curriculum Vitae (CV, meaning 'course of life' in Latin) is likely to be your first opportunity to tell potential employers why you're the right person for the job. So, it's worth spending the time and energy to make it as impactful as possible for every application.

This activity helps you recognise what to include in a CV and how to stand out from the crowd. You can type your answers into the boxes.

Worksheet one: What makes a CV stand out?

Imagine that a CV is like a TV advert – only, instead of selling a product, a CV is selling a person, or candidate, to an employer. TV adverts have just a few seconds to grab our attention and persuade us, and, similarly for CVs, employers may take just moments to skim over a CV and make a decision about whether they want to interview someone.

How would you make a CV stand out, but without using gimmicks?

What might put employers off a CV at first glance?



Now it's time to play the boss and see what you would do as an employer. Take a look at this interactive tool: barclayslifeskills.com/playtheboss

Once you click 'start', you'll have 10 seconds to decide whether the CVs are good enough to be picked for a job. Select the thumbs up or thumbs down button depending on what you think.

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Worksheet one: What makes a CV stand out? (cont'd)

Reflect and note answers to following questions once you've finished the game:

How would you make a CV stand out, but without using gimmicks?

What might put employers off a CV at first glance?

What might put employers off a CV at first glance?

1.

2.

3.

For more advice on what to include, read the article [5 tips for writing a great application](#).

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Worksheet two: What goes into a great CV?

First, write down everything you think a CV should contain:

Compare your answers with Sample CV 1 on the next page and note down answers to the following questions:

Why are all these different elements of a CV so important to include?

Which do you think are the most important?

This CV has been put in a chronological order (arranging information according to the time they occurred).

Why are all these different elements of a CV so important to include?

Can you think of any other ways a CV might be ordered? Think about some of the observations you made about the most important pieces of information to include on a CV. Are there any other ways you could prioritise the different elements? Look at Sample CV 2 – this is a skills-based or functional order CV order (arranging information according to the most important in regards to skills, experience and qualifications).

On the next page, look at both the chronological and skills-based/functional sample CVs side by side. Compare the way information is presented on each CV.

- How do they present the same information in different ways?
- What does each one highlight?
- What are the pros and cons of each?

Use the boxes on the next two pages to write or type notes on each for comparison.

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Sample CV 1: chronological order

Mary Smith
24 Maple Road, Cardiff, Wales CF10 XXX
Telephone: 0207 536 253
Mobile: 077-283522
Email: mary.smith@address.co.uk

Personal profile

I am a very positive, proactive and enthusiastic person who works well both on my own and as part of a team. I am confident and motivated to aim high, I have a strong desire to develop a career in customer service.

Education and qualifications

2016-2021	Northvale Park Secondary	GCSEs:	
		Maths	C
		English	B
		Science	C
		Design & Technology	D
		Geography	C

Employment and work experience

2021-2022	Customer Assistant, Tesco Express
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collected, replenished, organised and managed stock, and dealt with a range of customers Worked under pressure and learned to stay positive and adapt in a diverse environment Strengthened my communication, numeracy, listening and customer service skills
2019-2021	Mentor, Poplar Youth Club
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Led a group of young people aged 9–13, working to promote an interest in learning Helped them improve their self-confidence and academic achievement, and assessed their work to help them set targets

Other skills and achievements

- Leadership: a successful captain for the school football team, with a proven track record
- Employee of the month on three occasions during 2022
- Class President during 2020-2021
- Level 3 certificate in 'Introduction to Mentoring Skills' (2019)
- Team working: reliable, honest and capable, helping teams complete learning tasks and projects properly and on time
- Short story published in 'Write Now! Expressions of Youth' (YOUNG WRITERS 2018)

Interests

- I enjoy team and individual sports including football, cricket and badminton
- At present I play league football for Newark FC. This involves me training once a week (Thursday)
- Keen on technology, in my spare time I like to research this industry to keep myself up to date

Referees

Available on request.

How is this information presented?

What are the advantages of presenting the information this way, and what does it allow you to highlight?

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Sample CV 2: Skills based/functional order

Alex Brown
72 Red Lane, Limehouse, London E14 XXX
Telephone: 0207 536 253
Mobile: 077-283522
Email: alex.brown@address.co.uk

Personal profile

I am a very positive, proactive and enthusiastic person who works well both on my own and as part of a team. I am responsible, thorough, respectful, confident and motivated to do my best. I have a strong desire to develop a career in customer service.

Skills and personal qualities

Customer care Served and helped customers of diverse ages and backgrounds.
Level 3 certificate in 'Introduction to Mentoring Skills' (2019).

Communication Worked with young people aged 9–13 to promote an interest in learning and helped them improve their self-confidence and academic achievement.
Short story published in 'Write Now! Expressions of Youth' (YOUNG WRITERS 2018).

Numeracy Handled cash and credit transactions.
Helped young people with numeracy tasks.

Proactivity Employee of the month on three occasions in 2022.
Received certificate for work experience (Trident), in recognition of my high standard of work (2018).

Organisation Collected, replenished, organised and managed stock.
Stayed positive while working under pressure in a busy retail environment.
Helped teams complete learning tasks and projects properly and on time at school and college.

Leadership Successful captain for the school football team.
Class President at school (2019–2020).

Education and qualifications

2016–2021	Langdon Park Secondary	GCSEs:	
		Maths	4
		English	5
		Science	4
		Design & Technology	5
		Geography	3

Employment and work experience

2021–2022 Customer Assistant, Tesco Express

2019–2021 Mentor, Poplar Youth Club

Interests

- I enjoy team and individual sports including football, cricket and badminton
- At present I play league football for Newark FC. This involves me training once a week (Thursday)
- Keen on technology, in my spare time I proactively research this industry to keep myself up to date

Referees

Available on request.

How is this information presented?

What are the advantages of presenting the information this way, and what does it allow you to highlight?

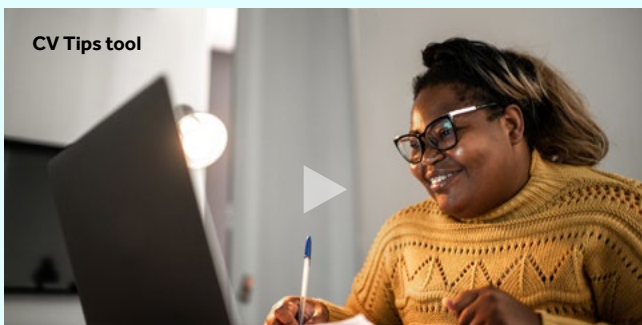
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Worksheet three: Write your own personal statement

Using everything you've learnt from these activities, write your own personal profile or statement below. You can use the sample CVs for inspiration.

Your personal profile should highlight your best skills and personal qualities and can be included at the top of your CV. Think about whether you have skills that might transfer to the world of work. Are you good at staying positive when under pressure at school? Do you excel at leadership, or thrive when working in a team? Do you enjoy presenting to a group, or being creative? Are you able to adapt your communication and leadership skills when taking part in virtual activities e.g. working on a team project remotely, or supporting friends via online mentoring? Do you like solving problems?

Remember to think of how an employer would react. Read it back to yourself when you are finished. What might an employer think of it? Will it grab someone's attention and give them the right impression?



For more details and examples on how to create a great CV, explore the [CV Tips interactive tool](#).