

The 6-step guide to perfecting your graduate CV

Your CV is a crucial part of your application for a graduate job, so make sure you target it to the role and the employer every time. A well-crafted CV will show your career interests and highlight your most relevant skills and work experience in the way recruiters like. Follow the six steps below and you will be well on your way to securing that graduate job interview...

01 Focus your message

Decide what your CV actually needs to say; read job adverts and job descriptions carefully and pull out the key skills and experience the employer seeks. Use these to help you work out what information to include and how to express it.

02 Pick a CV format and stick to it – the '30-second rule'

A recruiter is likely to spend between 30 seconds and a minute scanning a CV – just long enough to read it (and to notice any spelling mistakes). So first impressions count. As you put your CV together, ask yourself if it is clear, easy to read, and if the formatting is consistent throughout.

04 Fill in the gaps

Never leave anything up to the imagination of a graduate recruiter. Gaps are highly conspicuous on CVs and recruiters will spot them a mile off – they'll be looking for them when they check continuity and consistency.

06 Check your CV carefully

Once you have finished your CV print off a copy and read through it to make sure you are happy that it makes sense, is targeted to the job and employer, shows you meet the employer's minimum requirements and has no spelling errors. Try to get feedback from other people you trust.

03 use the space on your CV wisely – section your CV into themes

The maximum length of a graduate CV is two pages of A4 – there is no room to waffle! Be logical – employers will read from the beginning so this is where the most relevant information needs to go to catch the recruiter's attention. Be sure to section your CV into themes and prioritise the information based on how relevant the items are to the position for which you are applying.

05 Stand out from the crowd (in the right way)

When you're competing against other grads for the very best positions, you've got to stand out from the crowd or risk being lost in a sea of identical applications and CVs. Showing any evidence of work experience and skills developed through extracurricular activities will always give you an extra edge in a pile of CVs from similarly qualified applicants.