



Writing a CV

Your CV is your personal marketing tool. In a competitive market it is essential that you create a winning impression at the earliest opportunity so your CV needs to impress.

Your CV needs to persuade an employer that you have the potential they are looking for and convince them that they should offer you an interview. As such, you need to clearly demonstrate that you have the key attributes they require. Presentation is also crucial; you can only make a first impression once.

You should allow as much time as possible to prepare a CV as it is time consuming and tailor it to each specific opportunity you wish to apply for.

Before your start

It is tempting to rush straight into writing a CV but a couple of quick tasks before you begin may save you time in the long run and help tailor your CV appropriately to a particular opportunity.

- Check that a CV is the correct method of applying to the organisation. Many employers now expect you to apply online via their website and will not accept a CV
- Investigate the employer and the business sector. You should try to demonstrate your understanding of both of these throughout the application process. This is known as commercial awareness
nottingham.ac.uk/careers/researchemployers
- Research what the employer is looking for. Look at the advert or information on the employer's website. What does it say about the job requirements? Are they looking for specific skills or competencies?
- Think carefully about your own attributes, achievements, and experiences. You may not be able to fit all of these onto your CV so it is essential to decide what you most want to communicate based on what the employer is looking for

Presentation

At first glance your CV needs to look impressive. It should appear neat and stylish and demonstrate that you have taken care to ensure excellent presentation.

- Always check spelling and grammar
- As a guide, a two-page CV is the accepted norm. However, some industries prefer shorter one-page CVs that are very concise, whereas an academic CV tends to be longer and can include more information
- Avoid a very text heavy appearance – be concise and use short bullet points, try not to use lengthy paragraphs
- Be consistent with formatting – emphasise headings by using a larger text size and/or bold. Choose font styles carefully, they should be easy to read. Align text neatly
- Use creativity with caution – it may be appropriate to introduce colour, graphics, or images when applying for certain roles and this can really help to get your CV noticed
- Try to draw attention to the most relevant items on your CV by locating them on the first page, by doing this an employer should be able to quickly see that you are a strong candidate and have the necessary attributes

CV sections

Your CV should be unique, just like you. It should display your most relevant achievements and experience. It should be tailored for each opportunity you wish to apply for and clearly demonstrate why you are the ideal candidate. You should decide what information a prospective employer would be most interested in and then use appropriate sections to achieve this. Below are some suggestions of sections you may wish to include:

Contact details

Make sure these are fully up to date.

- Use a professional sounding email address
- Remember that your University email address will not be available after you graduate
- Consider including links to your LinkedIn profile, personal blog, or professional Twitter page. Ensure that links to online content are appropriate for viewing by a prospective employer

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Personal statement and career objective

This is optional, but if you do decide to have one it should be a short summary of your key attributes and may include a career goal or aim. It should clearly identify why you are the ideal candidate for the job.

- Two sentences is a good length to aim for; try to avoid lengthy paragraphs
- Avoid sounding cliché by using too many buzzwords
- Think of this as your very own strapline: it should be unique, memorable, and sell product 'you'!

Education and qualifications

Start with the most recent or most relevant educational experience. As well as listing dates, institutions, awarding bodies, and overall grade, you could also consider including the following:

- the titles of relevant modules studied
- the title of your dissertation or a significant piece of work
- details of any key academic or transferable skills gained
- details of any work placements or industry experience included in the course
- details of any competitive scholarships or academic awards

You may also want to include additional qualifications – these could go in a separate section:

- language qualifications
- medical or first aid qualifications
- driving licence information

Employment history and work experience

It is important to stress any work experience that is directly relevant first. You could consider splitting your employment history into two sections and using subtitles: 'relevant work experience' and 'additional work experience'.

As well as listing dates, employers and locations, you could also consider including the following:

- main responsibilities
- key achievements

Where appropriate, you may also want to mention:

- membership of a professional body
- sector or industry events that you have attended
- details of any awards or recommendations you have received
- occasions when you have been an ambassador or represented a company or organisation

If you have had a lot of general part-time work experience and are short of space on your CV, you could consider grouping these jobs together and simply listing the key skills you feel you have gained.

Skills profile

A skills profile lists the key skills needed for a particular role and gives examples from across your experience that demonstrates you have these. It can be a useful tool if you have no direct experience but do have lots of transferable skills.

- Look carefully at the job description and decide what you feel the main three to five key skills required are
- Use these key skills as subheadings
- Under each subheading give brief examples of how you have demonstrated this skill

Additional achievements

You may decide to include further detail of any other significant achievements. Remember to also consider the relevance of these and suggest how your success can be transferred to another context.

Positions of responsibility

If you include significant positions of responsibility, remember to consider the relevance of these and suggest how your experience can be used in another context.

References

- If you are giving named referees, remember to include their full contact details and indicate what their relationship to you is
- It is perfectly acceptable to write 'references available on request'. This can be a good way to save space

The language of CVs

How you use language is important

You can dramatically strengthen your statements by using simple language techniques effectively.

Make verbs work for you

Use active verbs rather than passive verbs. For example:

- I **organised** a programme of speakers
- I **motivated** the team
- I **analysed** research data

Combine action verbs to further emphasise your achievements. For example:

- I **researched** alternative options and **negotiated** a better deal
- I **managed** the project and **delegated** responsibilities to team members
- I **designed** and **implemented** a new system

Use the list of action verbs provided to ensure that you demonstrate a range of experience and abilities.

Avoid weak verbs

For example:

- I tried to...
- I hoped to...
- I attempted to...

Writing a CV

Add detail to your examples

Explain your contribution clearly by adding appropriate details. This will help to quantify the level of your actions and emphasise your achievements. For example:

- I increased sales by 25%
- I organised a charity ball for 150 guests and 12 VIPs
- I resolved customer enquiries efficiently by responding to all enquiries within 24 hours
- I achieved consistently positive feedback from customers; 85% ranked the service they received as excellent.

Cut the padding

Try not to use overly long sentences or lengthy paragraphs. It is important to be concise in order to quickly impress. Unlike writing an essay when putting your CV together it isn't essential to use joining words such as: 'however', 'furthermore', and 'nevertheless'. And, it is also useful to limit your use of stock phrases such as: 'as a result of this...', 'in response to this...', 'in order to...'

Action verbs for CVs

A

Accelerated
Achieved
Administrated
Advised
Allocated
Analysed
Appraised
Arranged
Assessed
Assisted
Attained

B

Broadened
Budgeted

C

Checked
Coached
Communicated
Competent
Completed
Comprehensive
Conducted
Considerable
Consistently
Consolidated
Controlled
Converted
Coordinated
Created

D

Delegated
Delivered
Demonstrated
Designed
Developed
Devised
Directed

E

Ensured
Established
Evaluated
Expanded

F

Facilitated

G

Generated

H

Helped

I

Identified
Implemented
Improved
Increased
Influenced
Initiated

Innovated
Instructed
Interviewed
Introduced
Investigated

L

Launched
Led
Liaised

M

Maintained
Managed
Marketed
Minimised
Motivated

N

Negotiated
Networked

O

Operated
Organised

P

Participated
Performed
Persuaded
Pertinent

Pinpointed
Planned
Prepared
Presented
Processed
Produced
Programmed
Promoted
Prompt
Proposed
Proved
Provided

Q

Qualified

R

Recommended
Recruited
Reduced
Reorganised
Represented
Researched
Resolved
Resourceful
Responded
Responsible
Reviewed
Revised

S

Selected to
Simplified
Spearheaded
Strengthened
Supervised

T

Taught
Tested
Trained
Transformed
Translated

U

Undertook

V

Volunteered

W

Won

An example of a chronological CV

This style of CV is particularly useful when applying for a role related to your degree and/or where you have relevant work experience.

Adam Brown

07881 111222

AdamJBrown@email.com

12 Green Drive

Lenton

Nottingham

NG7 2XX

A final year geography student with practical experience of environmental sampling and a sound knowledge of environmental issues seeking a graduate role in environmental consultancy

Education

2017 – 2020

University of Nottingham

BSc Hons. Geography - predicted 2:1

My course focuses on the physical and human environment and provides an overview of geographical information science. It has enabled me to develop strong research skills and an ability to analyse information and interpret data.

Modules include:

- Earth and Environmental Dynamics (71%)
- Interpreting Geographical Data (68%)
- Economic Geography (67%)
- Environmental Change (67%)

2011 – 2017

Tunbridge Wells School, Kent

A levels: Geography (A) Mathematics (B) Physics (B)

GCSEs: 9 (5 As, 4 Bs) including English and Maths

Relevant Experience

July – Sept 2018

Greencap Environmental Sampling, Kent

- Attended site visits with the Geotechnical Division to investigate, test and advise on geological, ground and structural conditions and risk factors.
- Analysed data from soil and water samples and communicated findings to clients. Retested samples to check for discrepancies and liaised with different colleagues across the organisation to correctly interpret findings before reporting back to clients.
- Gained an awareness of testing, inspection and compliance to ensure that companies adhere to health and safety issues and environmental protection guidelines.
- Developed understanding of soil and rock classification and geophysical, hydrographic and topographic surveying techniques.
- Liaised with colleagues across the company to produce a report for senior managers outlining current working practices and ideas for improvement.

Other Experience

September 2017 – present

The Bell, Nottingham

Barman (part-time)

- Developed excellent customer service skills working regular shifts behind the bar of a busy pub restaurant.

June and September 2018

School of Geography

Open Day Assistant

- Showed prospective students and their parents around the University and the School of Geography answering questions about the course and student life.

If you have done well in some relevant modules, but have a lower overall average, you could omit your predicted grade and just give the results for key modules.

You can include a list of key module relevant to the employer.

There is no need to list all your GCSEs.

If your most recent experience is not the most relevant, you could divide your work experience into "Relevant Experience" and "Other Experience".

Start with your most recent experience – this can be paid and unpaid – and list in reverse chronological order.

Use action verbs to give impact.

Provide evidence and give details. How many? How much? How long?

Adam Brown – CV continued

Activities

GeogSoc

- Led a team of 4 organising the Nottingham Geography Society Ball for 200 people; we raised £400 for charity.
- Coordinated a varied guest lecture series for members.
- Networked with professionals at events developing my confidence and gaining further insight into a range of careers.

Nottingham University Karate Club

- Assistant Coach for newer club members, demonstrating different movements and basic techniques.
- Arranged training sessions and regular practice, which requires dedication and commitment.
- Negotiated a £200 sponsorship deal with a local business to subsidise the cost of kit to allow more students to try out karate.

Nottingham Advantage Award

- Participated in extracurricular workshops to develop employability skills, including interviews, networking, negotiation skills workshops, plus Intensive Skills Day delivered by PwC.

Running

- Developed endurance and determination completing the Great North Run and Tunbridge Wells Half Marathon last year.

Additional Skills and Qualifications

- IT: proficient in use of Microsoft Office, SPSS and Mat Lab
- Languages: intermediate Spanish speaker – mainly learnt during a gap year project in Guatemala and wider travelling in South America.
- Driving: full, clean licence
- Qualified first-aider

References

Available on request

It is perfectly acceptable to put "References available on request" (unless specifically asked for); this can save space.

An example of a skill-based CV

This style of CV may show your skills to best advantage when applying for roles for which you have no direct experience.

Adam Brown
Flat 3, 6 St Paul's Road, Nottingham NG8 4PQ
AdamJBrown@email.com Tel: 0115 333 4444 Mobile: 07881 11222

Personal Profile

Final year geography student with excellent problem-solving and communication skills seeking a career in management consulting

Education

2017 – 2020	University of Nottingham BSc (Hons) Geography – predicted 2:1 My course has enabled me to develop strong research skills and an ability to analyse information and interpret data.
2011 – 2017	Tunbridge Wells School, Kent A levels: Geography (A), Mathematics (B), Physics (B) GCSEs: 9 (5 As, 4 Bs) including English and Maths

Effective Communication

- Analysed data from soil and water samples and communicated findings to clients during a three-month placement at Greencap Environmental Sampling.
- Liaised with colleagues in several departments across the organisation at Greencap to write a report for senior managers on current working practices and ideas for improvement.
- Led groups of up to 30 prospective students and their parents around the School of Geography and the campus during University Open Days, effectively promoting the university's courses and facilities.
- Acted as Assistant Coach for newer club members of University Karate Club, demonstrating different movements and basic techniques.

Problem-solving

- Carried out data analysis from site soil samples while working at Greencap. When discrepancies arose, I retested samples and worked with a colleague to correctly interpret findings before reporting back to clients.
- Arranged an alternative entertainer to perform at the Geography Ball when the original act cancelled at short notice due to illness.
- Negotiated a £200 sponsorship deal with a local company to subsidise the cost of kit to allow more students to try out karate.

Teamwork

- Worked effectively with 3 other students to carry out mapping and data collection and create a group presentation in the practical fieldwork element of my degree; we received 72% for our project report and presentation.
- Organised the annual Geography Ball for 200 students, as part of a team of 4 people, while Social Secretary of Nottingham University Geography Society.
- Worked flexibly as part of a team of 4 in a busy pub restaurant covering different tasks where necessary due to staff absence.

No need to have "Curriculum Vitae" at the top – your name should be the title.

A personal profile is optional. If included, it must be short and targeted at the position applied for; include relevant strengths and skills. It sits below your address.

Put your most relevant information first; this is likely to be your education.

If you have taken non-UK qualifications give an indication of their level for example, A level equivalent.

Pick 3-5 key skills for the sector you are applying for and provide evidence showing you have developed these skills.

Adam Brown – CV continued

Work experience

The Bell, Nottingham, Sept 2017 – to date

Barman (Part-time)

Worked behind the bar in a busy pub restaurant.

Provide brief information about any work experience – company, date, job role and key duties and responsibilities.

Greencap Environmental Sampling, Kent, July – Sept 2018

Summer Intern

- Summer placement carrying out environmental sampling.
- Attended site visits to investigate, test and advise on geological, ground and structural conditions and risk factors.

University of Nottingham, School of Geography, June and Sept 2018

Open Day Assistant

- Showed prospective students and their parents around the University.

Additional Skills

- IT skills – proficient in Microsoft Office, SPSS, Mat Lab
- Intermediate written and spoken Spanish
- Full, clean driving licence
- Qualified first-aider

If you have space, you may wish to include additional skills, such as languages, IT skills and a driving licence.

Achievements, Interests & Responsibilities

- Nottingham Advantage Award – participated in extracurricular workshops to develop employability skills
- Active member of Nottingham University Karate Club
- Enjoy running and have completed the Great North Run and Tunbridge Wells Half Marathon
- Enjoy films, reading, travelling and spent first year summer vacation inter-railing around Europe

References

Dr. J. Sutton (Tutor)
University of Nottingham
South Building
Jubilee Campus
Wollaton Road
Nottingham
NG8 1BB
Tel: 0115....
j.sutton@nottingham.....

Mrs Thompson (Internship Supervisor)
Greencap Environmental Sampling
Harper Road
Ashford
Kent
ANI IAF
Tel: 01.....
e.thompson@ ...

Include full contact details for referees.



Writing a CV

Further information

We can give you feedback on your CV but we expect you to have followed the advice in this leaflet and the other resources below.

We offer a number of workshops in the autumn and spring terms on developing a CV – book a place through our website at nottingham.ac.uk/careers/events

To book an appointment log on to MyCareer
mycareer.nottingham.ac.uk

There are a range of resources on our website that you can use to develop your CV
nottingham.ac.uk/careers/applications

Prospects website

This site covers what to include in your CV and covering letters and examples
prospects.ac.uk

This publication is available in alternative formats.

t: +44 (0)115 951 5559

For more information, please visit:
nottingham.ac.uk/careers

Careers and Employability Service
+44 (0)115 95 13680 | careers-team@nottingham.ac.uk

 CareersUoN  @UoNCareers

 blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/careers

