



Top Tips for Jobseekers

How To Write a Killer CV

What is a CV?

A CV or resume is a summary of what you have done so far in education, in work, and in any volunteer or placement experience that might interest an employer, or be relevant to the job you are interested in.

When writing a CV it can be difficult to decide what to put in and what to leave out. Think about the things which are going to matter to an employer and apply to the job you are interested in. As a general rule a CV should be a maximum of three sides in length, printed on single-sided paper.

Why use a CV?

When employers have jobs they wish to fill they will ask you for a CV so they can quickly look at the skills and experience you have gained. If they are impressed with your CV and think you have experience that relates to the job they can then ask you for interview to find out more about you.

How do I put a CV together?

When you write a CV think about what is required for the job, what you have to offer and what you want that particular employer to know about you. Often larger employers will receive a number of CV's when they advertise a position - think about the person who has to read all these – they'd want to get to the most recent, relevant information first.

Your CV needs to stand out in order for the employer to notice you, but only for the right reasons; avoid images, fancy borders & other special effects as they distract from the information about **you**, which is the most important part. Think about the font and layout; make them relevant to the organisation you are applying to. The layout should be clear and balanced, using margins and plenty of white space to guide the eye around the page. Use **bold** text to highlight your headings, as *italic/underlined text* can be hard to read. Using a non-serif font such as Arial or Verdana at size 10-12 looks smart and is easy to read.

Employers within the welfare and community sector tend to look for simple designs, with clear and concise information ordered in a way that makes it easy to understand. Try and tailor your CV to the particular job you are applying for; many people have a few versions depending on what industry/ type of position they are looking to get into.

The following may help you put your own CV together:

1) Personal details

- Write your name clearly at the top of the page.
- Then provide a postal address, a residential address if different, a phone number and your e-mail address. It's a good idea to provide a mobile phone number too.
- If you are currently living at more than one place or don't get back to your usual address very much, use an address where you can easily pick up mail.

If you use an e-mail address keep your address simple and professional eg johnsmith@hotmail.com. Remember that addresses like crazymadchick@hotmail.com might be fun for your friends but are not taken very well by employers. Sometimes people choose to have two e-mail addresses. One they use for

contacts about work and the other for friends and family. Also think about the message you use on your mobile phone if you have one. Keep it professional and simple if you think employers will be contacting you to arrange interviews or to let you know if you have been successful.

Other optional information such as your nationality, date of birth, driver's license details and visa status can be added to this section if you feel they are relevant.

2) CV Skills Summary/Personal Profile

A skills summary or personal profile at the start of your CV is also optional, but can be a good way to draw attention to you and any special skills, qualities or contribution you consider you have to offer. If you choose to write a summary include only keywords in this section – keep it short and focused, no more than 200 words.

New graduates, or those who are coming into work after a break may feel that they don't have much experience to draw on in order to sell themselves to employers in this section. You may not have the direct experience, but you will almost certainly have transferable skills from other activities, eg. volunteer work and your personal qualities are important: if you are an enthusiastic person who works hard and is willing to go that extra mile to prove yourself, highlight this to employers!

3) Education/Training/Skills

List all your qualifications in this section, with the **most recent first**, eg. school, college, university, and any short courses you may have attended **especially** those that are relevant to the job.

Include:

The year you graduated, or if unfinished the year started & level achieved to date

The name of the qualification

Name of the University/TAFE/School

4) Skills

You could include this with Education/Training or do a new category. For example, highlight your IT skills if you are confident in using in Word, PowerPoint and/or Excel. If you speak a second language fluently, mention this as it can imply good communication skills.

5) Work Experience

If you have more work experience than qualifications, put your work experience before your qualifications.

State your work experiences with the **most recent first**: include dates of the job, the name of the employer and your job title. Briefly outline your duties and the tasks you undertook in bullet point form. Put emphasis on positions in the Social Welfare field, where appropriate summarise less relevant positions. If you were out of the workforce for a while, state why.

Don't assume people know what you have done. Tell them what your job involved and don't undersell yourself eg. did you have any special responsibilities where you worked, did you get any promotions.

If you feel you don't have much information to put in this section is there a way of getting more experience eg. voluntary experience? Student placements? What are your interests? You could look at the paper for opportunities with local clubs and groups, look at the Internet or call non-government organisations eg. Mission Australia who might need volunteers.

7. Referees section

Include a list of your referees and their contact phone numbers. This demonstrates that you have nothing to hide. Choose referees that are professionals ideally, eg Headteacher/Principal, course tutor, current work supervisor, past employers, mentors. Ensure that these referees are aware that they might be contacted.

You may want to include letters of commendation or recommendation with your application if employers, mentors etc., have given you these.

Now your CV is written...

CHECK FOR SPELLING MISTAKES, ERRORS ON DATES OF QUALIFICATIONS, YEAR OF EMPLOYMENT, DETAILS OF ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBERS. They are all really common mistakes that don't take long to correct and make a lot of difference.

1. Have a look at the CV templates and resources provided on www.seek.com.au. Look at their examples of good CVs and compare them to your own – what works and what doesn't?
2. Show your CV to other people, preferably people who don't know you very well. Ask them to tell you the good and bad points in your CV. Make a written note of these comments and apply them to your own CV.

When you are happy with it...

If you see a job advertised that you wish to apply for, your CV should be sent to an employer with a covering letter and selection criteria if required.

A **covering letter** is a very brief introduction to you and your CV, and should be no more than one page. It is a space to tell the employer why you are interested in the position and to highlight your suitability for the role. Look at the job description and use a paragraph or two to address as many of the key requirements of the job as you are able. A brief closing sentence should express your interest in an interview and give your contact telephone number. Does the advert say who to send your CV to? Address it to them. If not you may want to phone the organisation and ask whom to address the letter to.

Selection criteria (sometimes referred to as requirements) are the things an employer is looking at to determine if a candidate can perform in a position. They are usually presented as a list of short sentences, like "Demonstrated ability to ...", or "Experience in ...", or "Tertiary qualifications in ..."

For your selection criteria, you are expected to write 1-2 paragraphs explaining how you satisfy each requirement. These selection criteria should be answered in a separate document to your CV as they are very different things: a good CV should grab a prospective employer's attention quickly, and give them an idea of your capabilities before they read your answers to the selection criteria.

An easy way to save yourself from getting sidetracked or "waffling" is to use each selection criteria as a subheading, then write your 1-2 paragraphs underneath. This keeps things neat and easy to understand for an employer or recruitment consultant. When answering criteria, use examples from your previous employment or education. Also remember that many skills are transferable, such as interviewing or assessment. For example, someone may have no experience in assessing families for a family support service, but they may have experience assessing children in a child protection setting. These assessment skills could be transferred into a new setting.

Read through your CV and selection criteria before you finalise the application and send it in. Better yet, walk away for an hour or so, then come back and read it. You will be surprised how much better a proof read is if you have been away from the document for an hour or so and read what's actually written, not what you *think* is written. Spell check doesn't always recognise words that are out of order, or bad grammar, that's your job as part of the proof read.

If the place you want to work isn't advertising for jobs, you may want to send your CV to their HR manager and ask if they do apprenticeships, internships, or have internal vacancies. Employers value initiative; they may not always be able to help but they will be impressed with your effort and may even come back to you if opportunities arise later.



How to sell yourself in an interview

Prepare for your interview

Read through the job description and try to develop your responses to each of the selection criteria. What are the skills, qualifications, experience and qualities that the job needs? An interview will be used to find out whether you have these. Think about a time that you have utilised these skills or been in a similar situation to what is being asked. The better you fit the job the greater your chance of being successful. Think about what you have to offer and how you can best put this into words.

You may be asked some questions like these...

“Why do you want this job”?

“How are you suited to this job”?

“Why should we give you this job”?

“What are your strengths”?

“What are your weaknesses”?

You may be asked to answer behaviour-based questions, for example what you might do in a certain situation where a client is behaving aggressively towards you – what would you do?

Think of questions you would like to ask the interviewer about the job; for example

What are the main responsibilities/objectives of the position?

Why is this position open?

What training/ induction is on offer?

What would you like done differently by the next person to fill this position?

Why do people like working for you?

Good things to do in interviews

- Only attend the interview if you are genuinely interested in the role.
- Plan to arrive a few minutes early. Late arrival for a job interview is inexcusable and immediately puts you at a disadvantage to the other candidates applying.
- Greet the interviewer by his/her name if you are sure of the pronunciation. If you are not, ask them to repeat their name.
- Shake hands firmly. A dry, firm hand shake reflects a strong personality and is what most employers are looking for. Limp, sweaty hands are definitely a no. This is the first body language in the interview that your interviewer will "read".
- Sit upright in your chair, look alert and interested at all times. Be a good listener as well as a good talker. Smile! Look your prospective employer in the eye while you talk to him/her.
- Follow the interviewer's leads, but try to get them to describe the position and the duties to you early in the interview so that you can relate your background and skills to the position.
- Make sure that your good points get across to the interviewer in a factual, sincere manner.

Things to avoid in interviews

- Coming across as aggressive/overbearing/superior attitude and swearing are all offputting
- Mobile phone ringing – always switch it off before interviews
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm - passive manner – gives the impression you aren't interested
- Talking non-stop suggests that you are nervous & maybe lacking in confidence
- Being evasive with your answers or making excuses for history
- Behaving with lack of tact/maturity/courtesy
- Putting down past employers – it doesn't give a good impression
- Failure to look interviewer in the eye
- Failure to ask good questions about the job and the company suggests a lack of preparation for the interview – you should know as much as you can about the company.
- Don't smoke prior to the interview
- Do not differ your salary expectations from when you advised your agency
- Don't answer questions with a simple "yes" or "no". Explain but don't waffle.

Interviews can be stressful so try and stay calm, ask if you need questions repeated and answer as honestly and clearly as you can. Try and stay to the point and give examples wherever you can. Think about the what, when, why, how model...what you did, when you did it, why you did it, how you did it.

Try to stick to the facts. Employers value honesty. Remember that you may well be asked about things you wrote on your CV; so if you put on your CV that you had an interest in judo you might find you're being interviewed by an expert.