CV Preparation

Making a great first impression with your CV

A Guide to CV preparation

What is a CV?

The words Curriculum Vitae literally mean "story of your life". Your CV is a summary of your skills, accomplishments, experiences and education, designed to capture a prospective employer's interest. Your CV should be regarded as a work in progress and updated regularly. The importance of a great CV cannot be over-estimated as it can:-

• Get you an interview by intriguing a potential employer.

• Encourage the interviewer to focus on your achievements.

• Help you to remember the key points that you want to emphasise at interviews.

• Leave the interviewer with a clear reminder of what you could do for their organisation.

To achieve these aims, you must ensure your CV stands out from other CVs to make sure that it is short-listed for a job. It must be distinctive and professional so that it creates impact and interest.

Presentation is the key

• Create an air of quality – you are being judged initially by your CV alone.

• Always type your CV and use good quality paper, preferably white in colour.

• Don't use binders, covers or title pages, which add clutter.

• Make sure that your CV works independently of a cover letter in case they become separated.

• Make your CV concise and tailored to the role in question.

• Unless otherwise specified, don't include a photograph.

• Present your details in a clear flowing style and be consistent throughout.

• Keep in mind the needs of the employer who will be reading it.

• Consider what s/he is looking for in a candidate and make it easy for the reader to pick out those skills.

• Use common typeface such as Times New Roman or Arial, size between 10-14 points and the font colour - black.

• If you want to use bold typeface, save it for headings and never use it to type your name, address or telephone number.

• Never incorporate graphics, shading, brackets, italics, underlining or columns and always send an original CV, never a photocopy.

Structure

Personal Details
- Name
- Address
- Telephone Number

Personal Profile
Education & Qualifications
Key Skills

Career History
- Employer
- Position
- Dates
- Duties

References

Content

- Education qualifications / work experience should be presented in reverse chronological order, starting with the most recent qualification / job and working backwards in time.
- Give the starting and finishing dates to include date, month and year.
- If you are applying for a job requiring specific skills, tailor your CV to the position.
- Check grammar and spelling. Spelling mistakes and poorly constructed sentences communicate negative impressions about the candidate.
- Sending a few carefully tailored CVs, rather than hundreds of general ones, will produce far greater success.
- Keep a careful note of the dates you send CVs to employers and make a polite follow up by telephone or letter if you don't get a reply within 10-14 days. This is likely to have the effect of emphasising your continued interest and shows a business-like approach.
- Keep your CV up-to-date. Remember, each new skill or experience makes you more valuable to future employers.

What is a Cover Letter?

A cover letter is a necessary business letter that accompanies your CV whether you post, e-mail or fax your CV. Its purpose is to introduce your CV and express your personality and enthusiasm for the position.

How to write a good Cover Letter

• Make sure that you type each letter using the same font and high quality paper as your CV.

• Be brief and concise. The cover letter should not exceed more than one page in length.

• Expand on your CV, rather than repeat the CV content.

• Individualise and target each cover letter to the position you seek. Recruiters can spot a mass produced or general letter and will consider it unprofessional.

• Address your letter to a specific person e.g. Recruiter / Human Resource Manager. This should ensure speedy response.

• Remember to sign and date your cover letter.

Remember, a killer CV can be the first step on your journey to a whole new career.