

National Careers Service

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[Home \(/\)](#) > [Careers advice \(/careers-advice\)](#) > CV sections

How to write a CV

- [CV explained](#)
- [Why you use a CV](#)
- [How to start](#)
- [CV layout](#)
- [What to include](#)
- [CV tips](#)

Use our guide to create a CV that stands out and gets you through to the interview stage.

CV explained

A CV is a short, written summary of your skills, achievements and experience. You use it in the first stage of applying for jobs. Employers often ask for a CV instead of an application form. You can do it on paper or online.

Why you use a CV

It's your first chance to promote yourself to an employer. A good CV will get you to an interview. Use it to apply for advertised jobs, or to introduce yourself to employers you'd like to work for. They may have unadvertised vacancies.

How to start

Gather useful information like:

- the job advert
- the job description
- a person specification
- company details
- your qualifications
- details about your past employers
- details about your past jobs or volunteering experience
- evidence of training courses you've completed

Speak to an adviser

Call 0800 100 900 or [use webchat \(/webchat/chat\)](#)

8am - 8pm Monday - Friday
10am - 5pm Saturday

You can use this information to show how your skills and experience match what the employer wants. You should tailor your CV to suit the job description and the company.

If the job you're applying for does not have a job description, you can use our [job profiles \(https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/explore-careers\)](https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/explore-careers) to help. They'll tell you the skills you'll need and the typical things you'll do in that job.

CV layout

There are different CV styles, so use the one which best matches the stage you're at in your life or career. The main styles are:

- traditional CV or chronological CV - list your work and education history, starting with the most recent
- skills based or targeted CV - focuses on your job-related skills and personal qualities
- technical CV - used in professions like IT and engineering and puts your industry-specific skills first followed by the other information
- creative CV - used in creative and digital arts and can link to an online portfolio, contain video or infographics, or include digital tools that make you stand out from the crowd
- academic CV - generally longer than a traditional or skills-based CV and often used for teaching and research careers

Your finished document should be no more than 2 sides of A4 unless it's an academic CV.

What to include

There are some things that you need to put in your CV. You can change the order of these to suit your situation and the type of CV layout you want to use.

Contact details

You'll need to include:

- your name at the top of your document - no need to add CV or curriculum vitae
- your full address and postcode
- telephone or mobile number - give the number you're most likely to be available on during the working day
- email address - always use a professional sounding email address

Leave out details like your age, date of birth, marital status and nationality. These are not required.

If you have a profile on a professional social media site like [LinkedIn \(https://www.linkedin.com/\)](https://www.linkedin.com/), you can add a link to it on your CV.

Personal profile

This is a few short lines that sum up who you are and what you hope to do.

Think about the job you want and what the employer is looking for. Make your profile sound like you're the right person for the job.

Your education history

This section can be added after your personal profile when you're early on in your career or if you do not have much work experience. Whatever order you choose, you'll need to give:

- the names of your qualifications
- the school, college or university where you studied
- the dates you attended

If you're older and have had several jobs you might want to change the order and display your work history and skills first.

Your work experience history

Include work placements, volunteering and any paid jobs you've held. You'll need to give details of:

- the employer, with most recent first
- the title of the job
- the dates you worked
- a brief outline of what you did - usually 2 to 3 lines

Use active words to highlight your strengths and skills for example, 'organised', 'created', 'built', 'managed' or 'planned'.

Give positive examples of your achievements rather than just listing duties. You can [use the STAR method \(/careers-advice/interview-advice/the-star-method\)](https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/interview-advice/the-star-method) to help.

If you've had a lot of jobs, you can use a skills-based CV to group them. This CV is also useful when you have gaps in your work history. Give examples of skills you've developed during the times you were out of work and how you got them.

Organisations like [Rethink \(https://www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/rights-restrictions/money-benefits-and-employment/work-and-mental-illness/\)](https://www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/rights-restrictions/money-benefits-and-employment/work-and-mental-illness/), [Carers UK \(https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/work-and-career/getting-back-into-employment\)](https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/work-and-career/getting-back-into-employment) and [Nacro \(https://www.nacro.org.uk/resettlement-advice-service/support-for-individuals/disclosing-criminal-records/disclosing-criminal-records-employers/\)](https://www.nacro.org.uk/resettlement-advice-service/support-for-individuals/disclosing-criminal-records/disclosing-criminal-records-employers/) can advise people in specific situations.

If you're applying for your first job, you can focus on skills you've learned through projects, part-time work, school work experience, internships, placements or volunteering.

Hobbies interests or achievements

Use examples that show you have skills that are relevant to the job. This section is useful if you do not have much work experience.

References

You can leave out the details of your references at this point. The recruiter

will ask for these when you get through to the next stage.

CV tips

Employers get lots of CVs to look at and have to decide quickly who they are going to interview. Here are some tips to make your CV stand out for all the right reasons.

When writing your CV remember:

- research the company and the job before you start
- choose a CV style that fits your situation or one that employers in that type of job prefer
- word-process your CV and use clear lettering like Arial, Times New Roman or Calibri, size 11 or bigger - always use the same style throughout
- use headings, bullet points and spacing to break information up to make it easier to read
- keep it to 2 sides of A4
- be clear and to the point
- match the words you use to the keywords in the job description or advert
- get someone else to read it to double check your spelling and grammar
- save a copy, including a final pdf version for emailing
- always send your CV with a [cover letter \(/careers-advice/covering-letter\)](/careers-advice/covering-letter)

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