How to write a winning CV: a summary

- Make sure that your **personal details** are all present and correct. Do not include the title "Curriculum Vitae", but do make sure your name is highlighted in bold type at the top of the page.

- If you are including a **personal profile**, keep it brief and factual.

- A **key skills** profile is often a good way of highlighting your strengths, especially if you do not have much experience in the sector to which you are applying. Skills are transferable, so if you can offer solid evidence of what you can do you will be ahead of other applicants.

- Your **employment** section can include details of voluntary and unpaid work experience as well as paid jobs; think about what is relevant to the job to which you are applying. If you are not including a key skills profile, then remember to highlight your skills in this section.

- It is important to have a section highlighting your **education and qualifications**, but you do not have to note down everything, for example you do not need to list all of your GCSEs.

- Use your **interests** to your advantage; they show that you are a well-rounded person and anything that you have achieved even outside of your work and studies can portray you in a good light. For example if you have participated in a student society this can show communication and interpersonal skills.

- Remember to seek permission from your **referees** before you list them; if you are short of space it is acceptable to write "References available upon request".

- Make sure that your **spelling** and **grammar** are correct, and ensure that you ask someone to double-check it for you.

- Finally, make sure that the **layout** is clear, and if you are sending a hard copy to a potential employer, use a decent printer and good quality paper.

Further resources

- **www.prospects.ac.uk** features a comprehensive CV section.

- **"CV Clinic"** feature in The Guardian's "Graduate" section; there will usually be copies of the most recent edition in Student Services or online at **www.careers.guardian.co.uk/cv**

- **Real World** magazine also features a CV clinic and is available in Student Services or online at **www.realworldmagazine.com**

- **Brave New Talent features** useful video content, including tips on writing your CV: **www.bravenewtalent.com/videos**

- A selection of books are available in Student Services in City North and upon request at other campuses. E-books are also available on the Careers and Job Prospects iCity pages.

ASK
ADVICE SUPPORT KNOWLEDGE
Student Services

T: 0121 331 5588
www.bcu.ac.uk/studentservices

Applying for jobs:
Writing a winning CV

Need more help? Just ASK!

Call in for initial advice at a Help Zone "Drop In" in Student Services, who will refer you to a career specialist if required:-

- City North Campus, First Floor Baker Building

- City Centre Campus, Gosta Green, Room G27

- City South Campus, Second Floor Seacole Building

- Millennium Point: Ask at reception

Telephone 0121 3315588 or visit our web pages for dates and times of Drop Ins and services at other sites.

Careers and Job Prospects websites:

- https://icity.bcu.ac.uk/careers

- www.bcu.ac.uk/alumni/careers

Online e-guidance service:

- www.bcu.ac.uk/askus

Social Media:

- Facebook: BCUemploymentzone

- Twitter: @employmentzone

View our full range of leaflets online:
https://icity.bcu.ac.uk/careers >> Quick Link >> Handouts

Careers and Job Prospects, August 2011

What is a CV and why do I need one?

What is a CV?

Your CV is a document that enables you to show a potential employer that your skills, knowledge and experience are just what they are looking for.

Why do I need a CV?

Even if you are using personal contacts or "networking" to try and find yourself a job, most employers will want you to show your skills on paper.

A winning CV will make a positive first impression and should get you through to the interview stage.

How do I write a CV?

There are a lot of resources out there to help you! Some books, magazines and websites will have templates that you can adapt. However, it is important to remember that your CV is supposed to be about you - so there is no point copying somebody else's CV or blindly sticking to a template.

Overleaf, you will find some top tips for creating a great CV. And remember, you can see a Careers specialist or use our online e-guidance service to get your CV reviewed.

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Starting points

Before you start, remember the basics:

- A CV should **not** exceed two sides of A4
- Use good quality print and paper; you want your CV to look as **professional** as possible
- Make sure that **relevant information** is easy to access; use short sentences and consider using bullet points
- Think about use of **blank space**; this can make it easier to pick out important information
- Use a clear **font** - usually Arial, 10 or 12 point
- It is important to check your **spelling and grammar**. Have a read through to spot any errors such as "their" and "there", and ask someone to double-check for you!

Don't forget...

- CV stands for "curriculum vitae" - literally, the "course of life"; but remember, the quality of your CV will depend just as much on what you leave out, as what you put in!
- It is vital that you target your CV and covering letter according to the organisation and role you are applying for. You will create a good impression if you can show that you have done some research!
- Some employers will ask you to apply by filling in an application form - if this is the case, follow their instructions, and don't assume that a CV and covering letter will suffice.
- The average amount of time an employer will spend looking at a CV is just 20 seconds. Think about it: what do they need to know in such a short space of time?

A little preparation goes a long way

Writing your CV gives you an opportunity to create your own unique application for the job. It can be beneficial to have different CVs for different types of jobs so with just a little preparation, your CV will stand out for all the right reasons.

You may wish to think about the following before you start:

- What do you know about the role for which you are applying? What skills and knowledge are required to do this job? If you are not sure, you may want to look at the Occupational Profiles on the Prospects website: **www.prospects.ac.uk —>** "**Jobs and Work Experience**" **—>** " **Types of Jobs**"

- Have you done some research on the employer? Start off by having a look at the company website, and also see our handout **Researching Employers**. Remember, you are trying to tell them that you are the right person for the job!

- Have you thought about what you have to offer? If you are not sure of your best attributes, our leaflet **Making Yourself Employable** may be helpful.

Content: what do I need to include?

You may wish to consider including some, or all, of the following sections in your CV. Please note that these elements are included for guidance only. It is up to **you** to choose what you put in your CV - if in doubt, speak to a Careers Consultant.

Personal information:

This should be a brief section at the top of the page, incorporating your **name**, **postal address**, **telephone number** and **email address** (make sure that this is suitable: for example "myname123@..." is probably better than "littlediva@..."!). You do not need to include your date of birth, nationality, gender or marital status.

Personal profile:

If you include this section, keep it brief. It should not exceed a couple of sentences or three or four lines of text. Read through it: have you written a punchy, factual summary of your situation and career objectives? If not, then try re-drafting it, but if in doubt, you do not need to include this section.

Skills:

If you include a skills profile, remember to illustrate each skill with a relevant example - the **Making Yourself Employable** leaflet will help you to do this. You can use skills gained from your **employment**, **education** or **extra-curricular** experience - remember that skills are transferable!

Education:

It is conventional to list your most recent qualifications first. You may not need to include every qualification you have; for example, you do not have to list all of your GCSEs; it will suffice to say "8 GCSEs including Maths and English".

Employment History:

Rather than "Work Experience", think about an "Employment" section, which can also include any unpaid or voluntary work that you have done. List your jobs starting with the most recent first. If you have been working for a long time, you may not have to list all of your experience; remember to keep it relevant to the job to which you are applying.

When describing your responsibilities, focus on the skills that you developed and any achievements accomplished in that role. If you have relevant employment experience, it may make sense to list your "Employment" section above your education and qualifications.

Interests and Achievements:

This is your chance to show that you are a well-rounded person with interests outside of your work or study. Don't just list things you have done, but think about what you have contributed: the skills you have used, and what you have achieved. Don't worry at this stage if you don't think anything you have done is relevant; again, you may find the **Making Yourself Employable** leaflet handy.

Referees:

If you have space, you should list two referees at the end of your CV. It is conventional for recent graduates to use one academic, and one work-related reference. Give their name, title and contact details, including telephone number and email address. Remember to ask their permission first!

If you are running short of space, it is fine to write "**References available upon request**".