

Writing Your CV

The Plot

1. The **purpose** of a CV is first to lead to being selected for interview and then to provide the best possible basis for the ensuing interview.
2. Start not with yourself but with your best assessment of what the position requires in terms of experience, strengths and capabilities. The purpose of your CV is to convince specific readers that your attributes match the requirements.
3. Given that purpose it becomes obvious that your CV must be written with **two different types of readers** in mind. It must be structured and written to engender the desired perceptions in first, **the screener** and second, in **the interviewer**.

Screening and Call for Interview – The First Page

4. The **First Page** of a CV is what is predominantly used for screening and for selection for an interview. The screener(s) may not always be the subsequent interviewer(s).
5. Whatever the structure of the CV the First page needs to be **self-contained**. The screener should find no need to turn the page (or to scroll down too far).
6. This is the page where the **match** between the applicant's strengths and capabilities and the required abilities must become obvious to the screener.
7. **Basic data** about age and qualifications – data which could be used in screening out candidates – should be tabulated in very concise form.
8. **Key experience areas** and **strengths** and **capabilities** are often best presented as a narrative but the text should be written such that the screener can easily identify and compare these against what he is likely to be looking for as the required attributes for the position in question.
9. Font and font size should be maintained for **ease of readability**. The temptation to use small fonts or fancy fonts or to cram too much onto one page should be resisted.
10. A small **photograph** should be used but unnecessary italics, underlining, fonts, colours or artistic flourishes are generally to be avoided (unless of course they are a way of demonstrating capability)
11. The First Page is not the place to provide detail which in the eyes of the screener is irrelevant or unnecessary and therefore irritating
12. Any tabulations of events over time should be in **reverse chronological order**.

The body of the CV

13. The **body** of the CV is the back-up for the First Page and provides the detailed “evidence” which proves the point that the experience, capabilities and strengths available match or exceed the required attributes. If a narrative is used for the First Page it is particularly important that strengths and capabilities highlighted here are “backed-up”.

14. No CV – in addition to the First Page - needs to be longer than **three pages**. Preferably – from the viewpoint of the interviewer - it should be not more than two. Eliminate material that you cannot connect to the strengths and capabilities you are trying to highlight.
15. The purpose of this part of the CV is to reconfirm the selection for interview, to provide the interviewer with the basis for conducting his interview and to lead him towards **coming to a conclusion** in your favour.
16. **Sub-sections** should be used to cover the following topics: *Formal academic history, Other courses of study, Work experience, Achievements and awards* and - where appropriate - *Publications, Honorary positions, Language abilities, Voluntary activities, Military service, Public service, Other interests and Referees*.
17. Sub-sections should be included as necessary but only if they truly add value. They should each be addressed in reverse chronological order but whether they are in tabulated form or as a narrative or some combination depends upon the position being sought and ultimately is a matter of your own **style**. Recent events should contain more detail than events long past.
18. The sub-sections you include and the order in which you present them – provided they are not totally irrelevant – can sometimes be used to **structure the interview** itself. It provides a default format for the interviewer to follow if he has not prepared one of his own.
19. There is no need to repeat the same narrative text about strengths and capabilities which has already been included in the First Page. However these and potential weaknesses are best referred to in the sub-section concerning **Work experience**.
20. The manner in which **strengths** are alluded to is important. They must leave the interviewer with the perception that they are real but may have been **understated**.
21. You should anticipate which **weaknesses** the interviewer may be particularly concerned about. These together with your own perceived weaknesses should be brought out clearly but always within the context of how the weakness is being addressed.
22. **Breadth of experience** – whether work related or not – is very relevant to any interviewer. Experiences which demonstrate working in a team or of leading a team or dispute resolution or of working across cultural boundaries are also equally relevant. Allusions to such experience must be kept concise but can be a little cryptic such that the interviewer is intrigued sufficiently to pursue these during the interview.
23. **Awards, Honors and achievements** should be stated baldly and invite further exploration.
24. Lists of **Publications** should contain the full reference but the publications should not be attached.

General Tips

25. Ensure that you have the prior approval of any Referees you have named. Brief them in advance about the position you are seeking.
26. Have your name, date and date of birth within the footer on all pages.

27. Check and recheck the First Page against the body of the CV to ensure that there are no inconsistencies and that everything highlighted on the First Page is “backed-up” in the body.
28. Avoid jargon and abbreviations. (They are not convincing in conveying familiarity with a particular industry).
29. Anything you have written can certainly be written shorter.
30. Do not use too many fonts or many different font sizes. Check that all fonts are consistently used. Check for spelling and grammar.
31. Never lie.

CV Contents (example)

FIRST PAGE

Photograph
Basic Data (table) name, dob, address, email, telephone nos., (Nationality),
Key strengths and Experience (table or a narrative)
Biographical Sketch (narrative)

Body of the CV

Academic Qualifications (table RCO)
Work Experience (RCO narrative)
Other courses of study (RCO)
Achievements and awards
Publications
Honorary positions
Language abilities
Voluntary activities
Military service
Public service
Other interests
Referees

Footer: *Name, date, date of birth and page number of no. of pages*
