**CV Writing Best Practices**

Primarily used throughout Europe, a CV, much like a resume, outlines a jobseeker’s work history in an easy to digest format. While there are many similarities between a resume and a CV, there are a few differences that set the two documents apart.

Some of these differences include:

1. ***Paper size*** - CVs are formatted to A4 paper whereas resumes are formatted to letter sized (8"x11.5") paper.
2. ***Personal information*** - CVs may include information such as sex, nationality, date of birth, and marital status.
3. ***Interests*** - Whereas resumes DO NOT include interests/hobbies unless they are relevant to the position an individual is applying for, it is acceptable to include this additional information on a CV.
4. ***Personal photo -*** While our system does not currently have the capability to include personal photographs/headshots, these too are acceptable on CVs and international resumes.
5. ***Type of business/sector*** – Usually not included in resume but included in a CV. This is included right under employer information.

It is important to not confuse a European CV with an American CV, which is used in academia, provides a comprehensive account of an individual's work, publication, and research history, and can range from 2 to 10+ pages in length.

Some of the most important sections on your CV, in order of inclusion, are:

1. Professional Summary
2. Work experience (in reverse chronological order)
3. Education and Training
4. Personal Skills/Languages (and proficiency level)
5. Organisational/Managerial Skills\*
6. Job-related Skills\*
7. Digital Competence
8. Additional Information (publications, presentations, projects, conferences, seminars, honours and awards, memberships, references, citations, hobbies and interests, achievements)

\*These two sections can be combined into a single “Areas of Expertise” section and placed between the Professional Summary and Work Experience.

We will go into more detail on each of these sections below.

**CV Formatting**

1. CVs are created for A4 paper size. Fonts should not be difficult to read and no smaller than 10pt.
2. In most cases, a reverse chronological or combination format should be used. Functional CV formats are used for 1) career changers, 2) jobseekers with repetitive job descriptions such as nurses or administrative assistants, and 3) recent graduates with zero work experience.
3. Entry-level CVs should not be longer than 1 page and professional-level CVs should be no longer than 2 pages in length with about 1 page covering 10 years of work experience. Executive-level resumes can be up to 3 pages.

**Contact Information**

1. Check and double check contact information to make sure it is correct and up to date. This information includes your name, address, phone number, and email address.
2. If you have an unprofessional sounding email address, consider creating a new, more professional one for your job search. DO NOT use your current work email address unless you are applying for an internal position.
3. Make sure your phone number is formatted correctly. DO NOT repeat the same number for both Home and Mobile; when in doubt, simply include information in the Mobile section.
4. If you are uncomfortable providing your home address, it is perfectly acceptable to only include city, state, and zip/postal code.
5. CVs include personal details such as date of birth, marital status, family information, nationality, and languages spoken.
6. DO NOT include irrelevant credentials after your name. Only professional designations should be included. These include RN for nurses, PMP for Project Management Professionals, MD for doctors, etc. Some academic designations that can be included are BSN (Bachelor of Science in Nursing), MSN (Master of Science in Nursing), MSW (Master of Social Work) or PhDs as they are used as qualifications in their respective fields.

**CV Sections**

1. ***Professional Summary***: A standalone objective statement is no longer recommended and is integrated into a professional summary. The professional summary is 4-6 lines and provides an overview of your work experience, two or three major skill sets, and valuable personality traits or soft skills.
   1. This is your CV’s “hook” and should engage the reader and encourage them to keep reading your CV while at the same time providing them a snapshot of what you have to offer them.
   2. An objective statement (within the professional summary) is useful for entry-level positions, career changers, or jobseekers looking to transition to a higher position.
   3. If you are including the years of experience you have, make sure to write “years of experience” or “years’ experience,” not “years experience.”
   4. Using fragmented sentences is acceptable in CV/resume writing.
2. ***Work Experience:*** Start with your most current or recent position and go backwards chronologically.
   1. Include your Job Title, Employer, Employer’s location, dates of employment, and sector for each position.
   2. Typically, positions over 10 years old will not be included, or if they are included, omit dates of employment and details about the position.
   3. Highlight positions of increasing responsibility within an organisation.
   4. Use present tense for current employment and past tense for past positions.
   5. List experience using bullet points. This makes it easier for your potential employer to gain an understanding of your abilities.
   6. Each position should contain mix of duties, specific achievements, contributions, and accomplishments.
   7. Use abbreviations only if they are commonly known. Otherwise, write out what the abbreviation means with the abbreviation itself in parenthesis.
   8. DO Include quantifiable metrics wherever possible, and include specifics on projects, process improvements, leadership, management, etc. If needed, create a separate Achievements/Career Highlights Section and place it before Work Experience.
   9. DO NOT use the same words over and over. Manage, direct, oversee, supervise, and command can be used interchangeably while helping to diversify your strengths. Break out your thesaurus and see what you can come up with!
   10. DO NOT use “responsible for” or “accountable for.” Start each bullet point with a strong action word.
3. ***Education and Training:*** Start with the most recent degree or course of study completed. If you are currently pursuing a degree, certification, qualification, or diploma, write “Current” or “Anticipated graduation, 20XX”
   1. DO NOT include GPA unless you are a recent graduate. Feel free to list honours, magna cum laude, summa cum laude, etc.
   2. It is acceptable to leave off date of graduation, but be consistent with all degrees.
   3. DO include relevant work experiences, internships, campus organisations, or coursework.
   4. Certifications can be included in the education section or be put in a separate “Certification” section.
   5. DO NOT include high school unless it is your only education.
   6. If you took classes in a particular subject but did not obtain a degree, list “Coursework in XX, School Name, School’s Location” or “XX Studies, School Name, School’s Location.”
4. ***Personal Skills:*** This section includes either formal or self-assessments such as languages spoken and your level of proficiency in terms of reading, writing, and speaking.
5. ***Organisational/Managerial/Job-Related Skills:*** These skills can be included in an area of expertise section. Or, you can list your skills and the context in which they were attained in this section. Examples include:
   1. “Good communication skills gained through my experience as sales manager”
   2. “Good command of quality control processes (currently responsible for quality audit)”
   3. “Leadership (currently responsible for a team of 10 people)”

*Of course, if you can integrate these skills into the Work Experience section, it will eliminate the need for these sections.*

1. ***Digital Competence:*** This is a self-assessment of your computer skills and proficiencies (if applicable).
2. ***Additional Information:*** This section (if included) will contain information on your Achievements: publications, presentations, projects, conferences, seminars, honours and awards, memberships, references and citations. You can also include a section on your Hobbies and Interests.

**General**

1. DO NOT include anything that can be viewed as political, religious, or controversial.
2. DO NOT include an explanation of why you left a prior position.
3. DO NOT rely on spellcheck. Double and triple check to make sure grammar and spelling are correct. Spellcheck will not correct homonyms.
4. DO NOT use third-person writing on the CV (ex. “lead high-performing teams” vs. “leads high-performing teams.”
5. Write out numbers below 10; exception: when there is a mix of numbers below and above 10, then you can just use numerals.
6. Download your document as a PDF and read it for widows and orphans; a widow is when the last line of a paragraph appears at the top of the next page, whereas an orphan is when the first line of a paragraph appears at the bottom of the first page. This also gives you the opportunity to adjust formatting issues prior to submitting your CV to a potential employer.