



Preparing Your Curriculum Vitae

Apart from your birth, marriage and death certificate a CV is one of the most important documents you will have. It gives a would be employer a summary of your education, work experience, achievements to date and overall abilities. Most employers and commercial employment agencies look for a CV and a covering letter when recruiting. Some will use Standard Application forms, either on paper or online, but even here you can copy and paste information from your CV. You can also use a CV to apply speculatively to employers, most large employers expect you to do this.

Employers receive many CV's for each vacancy and tend to glance over them quickly so your CV should be brief, eye-catching and as interesting as you can make it.

- A CV should not be more than 2 pages for a Leaving Cert, more if you are a graduate.
- Use good quality A4 paper, not the cheap photocopying paper.
- Lay out your CV professionally - use a word processor and a good quality printer. If it is an E-CV, make sure it looks good on screen.
- Target each CV to the job for which you are applying. The CV should highlight the different strengths require by different jobs.
- There are no hard and fast rules, but most people centre their name, address and home telephone number at the top of the page. Other personal information such as date of birth, marital status, nationality are technically not necessary, but you can give this information if you want. Don't forget to mention a driver's licence.
- Use capital letters to highlight important points and bullet points to list achievements and results.
- Choose concise clear sentences. Watch punctuation, spelling and grammar, it's usually best to have someone look over your final draft.
- Emphasise your achievements and results by using power verbs e.g. managed, organised, developed, indicated and implemented.
- Quantify your achievements e.g. developed fluency in Irish to Honours standard; increased sales by 20% over a 6 month period.
- Education and work experience should be indicated in chronological order (i.e. most recent first). Your primary school is probably not that important.
- Avoid misinformation. Most employers will check out the facts before offering you a job.
- Don't leave any unexplained gaps. If there are gaps, explain them as clearly and honestly as you can.
- Make sure you have asked the referee's permission to use their names.

Guidelines for completing Standard Job Application Forms

- Research the company before completing the form. (Use the web).
- Analyse the job description and applicant requirements / specification. Make sure that you are clear about the main duties, skills and experience that they are looking for in applicants.
- Read the whole form and the instructions before filling in any sections.
- Always draft the answers to the questions before completing the form. Think about the reasons for the questions.
- Follow any instructions as to how the form should be completed - in black ink, block capitals etc.
- Avoid spelling and grammatical mistakes. Get someone to check your draft answers.
- Answer each question fully and don't leave any questions unanswered. The space allowed for each question usually indicates its importance. Make sure you respond to all parts of each question.
- Make sure your answers are relevant to the question and do not omit any relevant information.
- Show that you have a good understanding of what the job involves and the type of person looked for. You need to link the requirements of the job to your own qualifications, abilities, skills, personal qualities and experience. Give evidence of these from your past experiences. You need to convince the employer that you match all these requirements.
- You need to market yourself to the employer. Where possible emphasise your achievements, skills and successes from your academic school study and work experience to date.
- Don't leave any gaps of time as they may arouse doubts. Account positively for the ways in which you have spent your time since leaving school or college or when you were unemployed e.g. developing other skills such as learning a language or improving your computer skills, travelling, voluntary or part-time work.
- Keep a copy of the application form when you have completed it to look at before your interview.

Preparing for a Job Interview

- Be clear about why you want the job and show a good knowledge of what the company does and if possible what the specifications of the job are. This may involve some prior research.
- Know your CV well; it would create a bad impression if asked about qualifications, interests and experience, not to be able to explain or elaborate upon what is claimed in the CV.
- Show an interest in wanting the job. Don't expect the potential employer to have to sell it to you or else the employer is likely to opt for a more enthusiastic applicant.
- Research the company in question as well as the job on offer and have a list of questions ready to ask.
- Be prepared. Anticipate many of the questions that may be asked and try to think, in advance, of follow up questions that may result from your statements.
- Presentation is very important. You should be well dressed and groomed in your appearance as you may have only one opportunity to make an impression.
- Make sure your hand shake is firm and that you establish eye contact with the interviewer at the outset.
- Never lie about why you want a job or want to leave your old one. But if you are leaving an old job be positive about the reasons for your decisions; emphasising the negative aspects of your old job will create a bad impression and make an employer wary of hiring you.
- If you're told to come in for a chat about the job, don't be fooled into thinking this is just a casual get-together. It's more likely to be a formal grilling!
- If asked about weaknesses resist the temptation to be too honest about faults. Make weaknesses such as impatience look like strengths.
- Show a sense of humour, but only laugh at the appropriate times and remember that what you find funny may not appeal to everyone else.
- Expect the unexpected, such as very awkward questions, or a sudden requirement to demonstrate skills, as employers will use the opportunity to assess how you can react to this.
- Don't be phased by the "good cop, bad cop" routine that pairs of interviewers often use.
- Wait as long as possible before bringing up the subject of money. Hopefully, the employer will do this.