



Top tips for writing a successful CV

The majority of housing associations will ask you to fill in an application form rather than ask to see your CV, but it's always a good idea to have an up to date CV ready to send out to potential employers.

Your CV should reflect your individuality, your unique achievements, your particular combination of skills and expertise. It should set you apart from other applicants. Your CV is the first piece of you an employer gets to see, and tells the story of your professional life, so first impressions count! Along with a well-written cover letter, this is what will get your foot in the boardroom door.

Your CV should provide a current and accurate list of all your professional accomplishments, with the addition of any voluntary activities. But a good CV isn't just a boring, exhaustive encyclopaedia of your career. It should be interesting and easy to read, as employers will only have time to skim the information. Use clear and simple language, and always, always use your spelling and grammar checker!

Presentation is also crucial, so just as you would wear a crisp shirt or a new suit to an interview, make your CV pleasant to read. Resist the temptation to add your photo and avoid the use of colour. Typeface is a matter of personal taste but should be easy to read. More obscure fonts cannot be electronically transmitted and will jumble your formatting upon receipt. In general, non-seriph type fonts (e.g. Arial, Times New Roman, Verdana) are quite modern and easily read. Once you've chosen a font – stick to it!

There is no commonly accepted format for your CV, but you should aim to keep it to no more than four sides of A4.

A good place to start is to write your name centrally and in bold at the top of the page. Use a large size text so it really stands out.

What to include in your CV

- **Your details**
Always include your name, address, telephone numbers and email address so that you can be contacted easily. Information such as nationality, age and driving licence status are optional
- **Personal statement**
Compose a paragraph that immediately captures the attention of your reader and entices them to find out more about you. Take your main skill and relate it to the job you're after to show employers why you meet their needs

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- **Work experience**
List your most recent position first, continuing in reverse chronological order including the name, location, and dates of your employment for each company you have worked for. Aim to use bullet points wherever possible to highlight your responsibilities and achievements in each role so the person scanning your CV can quickly match up your experience with their job description.
- **Education**
Again in reverse chronological order, give brief details of your academic and professional qualifications
- **Skills**
Whether you realise it or not you will have picked up many skills over the years, some tangible, some less so. Include every IT package or programme you have used as well as any foreign language skills you have gained, and state whether you're at a basic, intermediate or advanced level. Skills such as communication and project management are harder to substantiate and should be backed up with examples
- **Hobbies & Interests**
Including these is optional and often used to fill up space at the end of the document. The idea is to give the interviewer a more rounded picture and, perhaps, something more personal to discuss at an interview
- **References**
It isn't necessary to list your referees, but you should state that details are available on request. You should choose references you are confident will give positive remarks, but also make sure they would be easily contactable by potential employers when the time arises

What should a CV look like?

- Underlining and italics can be distracting - use bold for headings instead
- Use font sizes of 10 to 12. Smaller is difficult to read, while larger looks like a primary school project
- The layout should be clear and balanced. Use margins and plenty of white spaces to help the reader easily scan the document and reduce eye fatigue
- Keep paragraphs short and use bullet points to list responsibilities and achievements. This makes it easier for potential employers to absorb all the detail
- Don't use fancy borders, pictures and other special effects as they distract the reader from what is important and hinder electronic transmission and printing
- Pages should be numbered and it's a good idea to have the document title (e.g. Jane Doe – CV) on the bottom of each page
- Last of all, SPELL CHECK the CV and proof read for any grammatical errors