

Creating a great CV

A CV is a marketing tool, which is intended to put across your best points. You may have a lot to offer, but if your CV is poor, you may not get past the first stage in the selection process

Here are some tips to help you to develop a CV that you will be proud of:

✓ What is the CV for?

If your CV is for a particular job or bursary, make sure that you have the requirements or the job spec. This is like a blue print for your CV and will help you to know what is important.

✓ What skills are required?

These are often outlined in the job spec. Identify examples of where you have used skills drawing from all your activities (studying, part time work, cultural or sporting activities, community involvement or voluntary work).

✓ Choose your headings wisely

Choose headings that fit your experience. Don't just use headings from a template, or those that you know are commonly used. Headings should be eye-catching and be fitting to what you have done and achieved. Look at our example for ideas

✓ Use evidence to strengthen your skills section

Many students claim to have skills, but give no examples that act as evidence of what they have done. Evidence is powerful and shows that you have thought about how you can transfer a skill from one area to what you are applying to. See our examples in this handout

✓ Avoid repetition

Try not to repeat information. Some of the same information could go under different headings. You need to decide where to put information so that your CV is not repetitive

✓ Check spelling and Grammar

Your CV needs to be error free. Applications can be rejected if they have spelling errors and typos. Also make sure that your formatting, spacing and headings are consistent

✓ Include a Cover letter

Always send your CV with a cover letter. A cover letter enables you to write in prose, which you should not do in a CV. See our Cover letter resource for tips.

What employers tell us makes a good CV:

- Good targeted content and layout
- Easy to read
- Reflects your ability to do the job/fulfil bursary requirements drawing from all aspects of your life
- Is unique to you
- Is error free

Giving evidence in your skills section

Let's use the example of a position that requires someone to have organisational skills. Look at the following two examples candidates used in their skills section:

Candidate A:

- *Demonstrated strong organisational skills as secretary of the UCT mountain club*

Candidate B:

- *Organised a three day hike in the Cedarberg for ten new members of the UCT mountain club including transport, permits, catering and equipment*

Can you see that Candidate B is more effective? This is why:

- ✓ She gives evidence of the skill by using examples
- ✓ She starts with an action word
- ✓ It has a timescale and metrics to make the examples more concrete

Some help with language:

- ✓ Use professional, appropriate and relevant language. No clichés or jargon
- ✓ Avoid using "I" Start with action verbs, like organised, initiated, managed, improved, co-ordinated, led, budgeted, developed, designed, created, researched
- ✓ Do not use paragraphs in your CV. Use bullets for maximum effect
- ✓ Use acronyms to save space, but first write the name of the institution or company in full followed by the acronym
- ✓ Use spell check, but realise that spell check will not pick up ambiguities
- ✓ Get someone to read over your CV with a fresh eye, as you may not pick up mistakes yourself

Tips on Layout and Formatting

- Put all activities in reverse chronological order
- Use the same font and font size for all headings
- Font size for body text should not be smaller than 11.
- Be careful of templates. They may not serve your purpose
- Avoid using ALL CAPS other than in headings
- CVs are typically 2 pages, but employers may request otherwise, so always follow instructions. Academic CVs can be longer
- Use your space wisely, but don't overcrowd the information
- Adjust your margins if you are trying to keep to two pages and are one or two lines over
- Only include a photograph if the employer specifically requests one

Just ONE Example of a CV

Remember one size does not fit all!

Palesa Naidoo

(No cover page, just your name, not the word Curriculum Vitae)

20 Stanley Rd, Rosebank; cell: 084 237 1400; email:pnaidoo@gmail.com

(not hotlips@hotmail.com)

(Date of birth, marital and health status and nationality not necessary under equity legislation. But you may choose to put nationality if there are visa/work permit implications)

Personal Statement/ Summary

- *This is optional, and usually not necessary as a graduate, but if you choose to be specific and concise about your goal and intention. Should be no longer than 4 bullet points*
- *Could be appropriate for students or graduates with extensive work experience*

Education

20XX	Honours in Sociology	University of Cape Town (UCT)
20XX – 20XX	Bachelor of Arts (Sociology and Media Studies)	University of Cape Town (UCT)
20XX	Matric Certificate	South Peninsula High School

- *Most recent qualifications first*
- *If you completed a thesis or major project that may be relevant, include the title*
- *You could mention academic achievements here, or in a later separate section*

Other Training *(if you have any and it is relevant)*

- *Any non-degree or additional courses or training if relevant to your application*

Achievements/Roles of responsibility/Leadership/Community work/Cultural activities/Sport *(Choose category/categories that fit your experience)*

- *Group activities together to avoid repetition e.g. UCT Basketball team (2011-2013) rather than mentioning it under each year*
- *Post matric experiences are important, but you can include school activities but not too far back*

Work Experience

June 2013	Brian's Burger Palace	Waitress
Dec/Jan 2012	Feed the hungry NGO	Receptionist

- *Feed the hungry runs feeding schemes at township day-care centres and shelters.*
- *Responsible for food orders, client communication and logistics of daily soup kitchens*
- *Work experience can be full time, part time and voluntary*
- *Also include information about a business of your own, or a family business*

- Use reverse chronological order
 - Briefly describe the organisation and/or responsibilities if not obvious from the title
 - Some of what you might bullet here could also provide material in your skills section
- Avoid repetition in both sections

Publications and Conferences

- Include if appropriate to your application or if you are applying for an academic position

Membership of Professional Associations

- If you belong to professional associations or societies, include a chronological list here.

Skills

e.g. Teaching and Facilitating (sub heading appropriate to you)

- Tutor for 5 first year Sociology 1 classes (**your evidence**)
- Facilitate 20 grade 11s for extra Maths lessons every week
- Your skills section should be relevant to the opportunity you are applying for.
- Think about your different roles and responsibilities and the skills you used
- Can you provide for these?
- Use examples from different areas of your life to demonstrate how you transferred and applied your skills
- Avoid using more than three sentences or bullets or long narratives to provide evidence for a skill.

SOME TYPICAL GRADUATE SKILLS CATEGORIES

Communication; Interpersonal; Teamwork; Leadership; Problem Solving; Project Management; Organisation and Management; Teaching and Research; IT/Computer Literacy; Technical; Numeracy; Business; Entrepreneurial; Adaptability/Flexibility

- Where appropriate group similar skills, or sub skills in a single category. For example, languages, public speaking and debating along with writing skills could all fall under the heading, communication

Additional Information

- You may choose to mention additional experiences not covered elsewhere in your CV.
- Avoid including generic information such as 'reading', 'socialising', or 'watching TV'.
- Where relevant, also include date information or timelines.

Referees

(Two lines should be sufficient to list a single referee's details) Prof Percy Plant, Head: University of Cape Town Botany Department: percy.plant@uct.ac.za, cell: 076 4264912

- Your referee should know you fairly well, and must have agreed to serve as your referee.
- Ask a referee beforehand for permission. Inform them of the position you are applying for.
- Ideally you should include at least two referees, but no friends or family members.
- Include their name, position, organisation and contact details. At least one of them should be able to comment on your recent academic performance.