

Episode 1

General Overview, Layout, Format and Language

Slide 1: Mini-Series: Own your CV. Brought to you by UCT Careers Service. Episode 1: General Overview, Layout, Format and Language.

Slide 2: In episode 1 you'll learn about why writing a CV is good for you and how a CV gets you shortlisted. In addition, the layout, format and language that is used to write a great CV is explained.

Slide 3: Working on your CV is good for you, and here is why! It helps you to think about and record what you have done and this helps develop a base document to work from. Capturing all this can make you feel pretty good, but may also highlight things you need to do or need to work on...which is also good!

Slide 4: So what is a CV anyway?

Slide 5: CV stands for Curriculum Vitae – which means path of life. A CV and a resume mean the same thing in a South African context. They are both short-targeted documents highlighting relevant activities and skills. A CV is one part of an application package together with a cover letter, an application form (if there is one), and any requested documentation. It is most important that you read the instructions about what they want and what you should include.

Slide 6: A CV is like an advert for you, and adverts don't feature bad parts. So you would not say you get nervous about public speaking. However, this is not a bragging document either, so you wouldn't say you have great communication skills. Any claims you make must be supported with evidence. This will be covered in a later episode.

Slide 7: For any selection process for a job or bursary, there is a list of requirements.

A selection committee decides who matches the requirements. This is done by people, or CVs can be put through software. There are usually more applicants than a committee has time to meet in person, so they make a shortlist of people to interview.

Slide 8: For a human committee, your CV may be viewed after hundreds of others.

You may be a great applicant but if your CV doesn't show this, you may not get an interview.

Remember the main purpose of a CV is to get you an interview! Will your CV stand out enough to get you shortlisted? The rest of the mini-series will help you to develop a CV that will increase your chances

Slide 9: The first step in increasing your chances of having your CV selected is making sure you have the correct layout.

Slide 10: In terms of CV templates and layouts, one size does NOT fit all. You do not need a cover page, and you do not have to use the words "Curriculum Vitae"

There are many CV templates available, but be careful, as sometimes these will not be fit for purpose for your experiences. Some templates do not let you edit headings, which can be a problem.

Slide 11: Include a photograph if it is requested, but otherwise be cautious of photographs.

If you choose to add one, ensure that it is a professional head and shoulders picture. You never know what sorts of unconscious biases they may set off in people reading your CV. Rather, let your content convince!

Slide 12: CVs are typically two pages, but there is usually not a length restraint for academic CVs. However, always comply to what is asked for in an application process. If your

document is just over two pages, try adjusting your margins, which may help to keep it on two pages

Slide 13: In addition to the layout, one should pay particular attention to the way their CV is organised. That being, the format.

Slide 14: In all aspects of your CV, make sure that everything is consistent. Use the same font throughout, and make sure that all your headings are the same size. Only use all caps for headings, and not in your body text. Make sure that there is consistent spacing between your sections

Put all activities in reverse chronological order meaning that the most recent things first. Do not use a font size smaller than size 11 for your body text Use an uncluttered font. And use bold text selectively, only if you want things to stand out. For example, it is not necessary to put dates in bold. And lastly, make sure that your information is not too crowded.

Slide 15: Choose suitable headings for each section. Some are common and will probably be in everyone's CVs like Education, Work experience, and Skills. For the other headings, try to use eye-catching headings that describe your experiences. For example: Community work and Leadership are much better headings than extra-curricular mural activities.

Slide 16: The language used on a CV is just as important as the format and layout.

Slide 17: It is important to remember that the language on your CV must be both appropriate and professional which means using no jargon or slang. Avoid using "I" in your CV, and do not use the third person for example: "Siya was on the house committee of Glen residence". Do not use paragraphs and full sentences. Instead, use note form language for example, Glen residence house committee member

Slide 18: Remember to use bullets for subpoints only, not for headings. Start with action verbs like organised, initiated, developed, designed and the use present tense for current activities, and past tense for past activities.

Slide 19: Use acronyms to save space, but write the full name of the organisation, or institution in full first, followed by the acronym. Use spell check but remember spell check will not pick up ambiguities. And get someone else to read over your CV with a fresh eye, as you may not pick up some mistakes yourself.

Slide 20: Thank you for tuning in to episode 1 of Mini-series: Own your CV brought to you by the UCT Careers Service. Be sure to tune in to episode 2 where we will be focusing on the Name, Contact details, Personal profile, and Education sections of your CV.