

## Writing your CV

This handout aims to help you gain the knowledge and ability to create and tailor a CV. It will focus on these key areas:

1. CV Do's and Don'ts
2. CV Layout
3. Selling yourself
4. Employability skills/transferable skills for your CV
5. Writing with power
6. Chronological CV template
7. Skills based CV template
8. Sending your CV

### 1. CV do's and don'ts

#### Do

- ✓ Always **TARGET** your CV to each different job. Check the specifics of what a CV looks like for your sector.
- ✓ **MATCH** the skills you have to the skills the employer is looking for
- ✓ Make it **EASY TO READ**: an attractive layout will grab an employer's attention
- ✓ Pay attention to **GRAMMAR** and **SPELLING**: your CV may not get through to the next stage if there are mistakes
- ✓ Give **SPECIFIC EXAMPLES**: remember who, what, when and how
- ✓ Get someone to **CHECK** over your CV

#### Don't

- ✗ Don't lie. Be honest and objective. You will be questioned about your CV in detail during the interview
- ✗ Don't send a generalised CV to any job
- ✗ Don't write curriculum vitae at the top of your CV
- ✗ Don't write long descriptive sentences, keep them concise and to the point
- ✗ Don't be downbeat. Avoid negative words, false modesty or inappropriate email addresses.
- ✗ Don't include a photograph unless you are applying for a job in the modelling or acting profession

## 2. CV layout

When deciding what layout to use always think **RELEVANCE** and **TARGETTING**. Put the most relevant information about you and your biggest selling points which relate to the job, near the top of your CV. It's often a good idea to put yourself in the employer's shoes – if you were an employer, what would you want to see on a candidate's CV?

There are 2 main types of CVs, although be aware that there are lots of variations on these 2 types which can work perfectly well.

### Chronological CV

- Lists education, work and other experiences in reverse order, starting with the most recent first. **CV1** is an example of a Chronological CV
- This is most commonly used if you have relevant work experience in relation to the job and/or your education is your biggest selling point
- Skills developed will be interweaved into the body of the CV rather than be in a separate section.


### Skills Based CV / Functional CV

- This type of CV emphasises skills required for the job in a specific section, details on education and work experience will be brief. See **CV2**.
- This layout is best if you have limited work experience but can demonstrate evidence of the required skill set i.e. communication skills, team work and time management through your degree, part - time work, volunteering.
- It is also useful for career changers who may have a lot of experience but want to show how skills are relevant to a different job.

### CV Headings and Order

There is no one-size fits all template when it comes to CVs, what you put in or leave out of your CV should be interchangeable depending on the opportunity. Generally:

- Personal Details
- Profile/career objective\*
- Education\*
- Relevant Work Experience\*
- Other Work Experience\*
- Skills\*
- Additional Information /Positions of Responsibility / Achievements\*
- Interests
- References



The headings with \* next to them, indicates that these headings can be used/swapped around according to what is most suitable to you in relation to the job applied for.

### 3. Selling yourself

**REMEMBER:** Before you write your CV, it's really important that you can reflect on who you are and what your skills are. Always put your unique selling points near the top of your CV and make sure they are relevant to the job you are applying for, as required skills and experience will vary from one job to the next.

Look at the advertisement snippet below:

Applicants should be **organised** individuals with a desire to **learn and develop** in the field of direct marketing. No experience in the field is required, as full training will be provided, but applicants must have a **resilient can-do attitude**, be able to **meet deadlines**, and to **work under pressure** with a range of stakeholders. Applicants should also be good **team players**, have sound **administrative skills**, and be comfortable in a computerised environment.

#### Establish what skills the employer wants

From this you can establish that the employer has set some key criteria, these are the words in bold and these are the skills you need to match within your CV.

#### Document your evidence and subsequent employability/transferable skills

This may not be the final version, but will provide a good framework to work from. The following approach may help you in this.

Skills	Evidence
Desire to learn & develop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developing relevant skills and knowledge through my degree.</li><li>• Training courses attended via work covered effective customer service skills and promotional activities.</li><li>• Completed a placement year within a marketing department.</li></ul>
Can-do attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Helped to form new student society.</li><li>• Promoted and marketed the society and gained 25 members.</li><li>• Developed a varied programme of events.</li></ul>
Able to meet deadlines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Worked to challenging targets in my part-time job.</li><li>• Met multiple assignment deadlines throughout my studies.</li></ul>
Administrative & IT skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Experienced user of MS Word etc.</li></ul>

## 4. Employability skills / transferable skills for your CV

Some skills are highly specific in nature and particular to an occupation, e.g. programming skills within computing or being able to perform x-ray crystallography. Employability skills/transferable skills on the other hand are the 'softer skills' that enable you to be more effective in your day to day working role.

Recruiters will ask for evidence of these skills and will examine your applications for evidence of having developed them. Being able to identify when, where, what and how you developed certain transferable skills and competencies will give you a head-start in terms of doing a CV and performing well at interview.

Here are some examples of employability/transferable skills. Don't feel you have to squeeze all of them onto your CV but it would be useful to get some of them in.

Skills	Definition
Decision making	Identifying options, evaluating them, and then choosing the most appropriate course of action.
Problem solving	Identifying and using an appropriate method or technique to arrive at a solution.
Planning	Working out how to schedule available resources and activities in order to meet an objective or deadline.
Oral communication	Using speech to express ideas and give information or explanations effectively.
Written communication	Producing grammatical, well expressed, easily understood and interesting text in an appropriate format.
Negotiating	Holding discussions with people in order to reach a position of mutual satisfaction and agreement.
Adapting	Changing or modifying your behaviour in response to the needs, wishes or demands of others.
Leadership	Being able to lead and motivate, set direction, and win the commitment of others.
Business awareness	An interest in and knowledge of, the commercial environment.
Researching information	Finding information appropriate to an issue from a variety of sources.
Flexibility	Being able to change plans and respond to new information and / or situations.
IT literacy	Understanding and being able to use a range of office software such as word processing, spreadsheets and databases.
Time management	Ability to manage personal tasks effectively and to meet deadlines.
Numeracy	Ability to use and work with figures.
Team working	Ability to work effectively with others to achieve objectives.
Ability to prioritise	Being able to decide priorities for achieving targets.

A useful technique to use in trying to write down evidence of your skills is by using the **STAR** acronym. This is useful for reflecting on yourself for CVs, applications as well as job interviews. **STAR** stands for:

**S ituation** think of a situation where you had to use / demonstrate a skill

**T ask** what was the actual task you had to carry out?

**A ction** what did you actually do? (focus on what YOU did)

**R esult** what was the result / outcome?

Here is an example which could be used to illustrate a number of different transferable skills e.g. researching information, team working, planning and organising etc.

### **Situation**

Required to work as part of a small project team which had to carry out a financial planning exercise and then present findings to fellow students and Tutors for formal assessment.

### **Task**

My specific role was to research the different business plan models and prepare a briefing paper with my recommendations as to which model the team should use. This was to be achieved within a very tight time frame.

### **Action**

The action I took was to research business plans on various web sites, visit several local banks for advice and obtain CD-ROMS containing BP models and spoke to the local Business Link for advice.

### **Result**

Outcome - I prepared a report with assessments of the various BP models and my recommendation for which one the team should adopt. This was achieved within the target date owing to effective planning and organising of meetings with various parties. We were commended for our presentation and in particular the quality and effectiveness of our business plan by both students and the assessors (we received a mark of 78%).

## 5. Writing with power

Make sure you write with impact on your CV. Note the writing style within the points of evidence below; items listed begin with positive verbs, e.g. 'developed', 'promoted', 'completed' etc. These will all help to convey a positive image to the employer reading your CV. Never list skills without evidence.

Here are some other words or phrases that could be incorporated into your CV and covering letter:

### Useful phrases:

More than x years extensive and diverse experience in . . .

Demonstrated skills in . . .

Extensive academic/practical background in . . .

In charge of implementing . . .

Knowledge of . ./experienced as . . .

Extensive training/involvement in . . .

Constant interaction with . . .

Provided technical assistance to . . .

Worked closely with . . .

Succeeded in . . .

Planned and managed . . .

Initiated financial savings by . . .

Initially employed to/joined organisation to specialise in . . .

Experienced in all facets/phases/aspects of . . .

Promoted to . . .

Proven track record in . . .

Experience involved/included . . .

Successful in/at developing . . .

Reported to senior management when . . .

Disseminated results of analysis . . .

Instrumental in . . .

Good knowledge of . . .

Supported customers/colleagues with . . .

Researched, assessed and synthesised. . .

## Positive, power words:

Achieved	Distributed	Keen	Quantified
Adaptable	Effective	Launched	Reacted
Administered	Efficient	Led	Recommended
Advised	Eliminated	Liaised	Refined
Analysed	Enabled	Managed	Repaired
Arranged	Encouraged	Maintained	Represented
Assessed	Engineered	Mediated	Researched
Broadened	Ensured	Minimised	Resourceful
Built	Established	Modernised	Resolved
Capable	Evaluated	Monitored	Responded
Collated	Expanded	Motivated	Restored
Communicated	Experienced	Negotiated	Revamped
Competent	Expertise	Networked	Reviewed
Completed	Facilitated	Operated	Significant
Composed	Flexible	Organised	Simplified
Consistent	Focused	Participated	Solved
Consulted	Generated	Performed	Specialised
Controlled	Goal-oriented	Persuaded	Streamlined
Co-ordinated	Guided	Planned	Strengthened
Created	Hard-working	Presented	Successful
Customer-focused	Helpful	Pro-active	Supervised
Dedicated	Honest	Processed	Thorough
Delegated	Identified	Produced	Trained
Demonstrated	Implemented	Productive	Transformed
Designed	Improved	Proficient	Trustworthy
Determined	Influenced	Profitable	Undertook
Developed	Initiated	Programmed	Unsupervised
Devised	Instigated	Promoted	Valued
Diagnosed	Instructed	Proposed	Versatile
Diligent	Interacted	Provided	Volunteered
Directed	Introduced	Qualified	Willing

## 6. Example of chronological CV

### JAMES PARKER

Address: 14 Flower Street, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 8XX  
Tel: 0121 123 4567  
Email: J.G.Parker-student@student.salford.ac.uk

#### PROFILE

- Predicted 2:1 degree in Computer Science and Information Systems.
- 12 months' experience of database development with Boots PLC.
- Undertaking industry-based data security project for Boots PLC.

#### EDUCATION & QUALIFICATIONS

##### 2007 - 2011 University of Poppleton

###### **BSc (Hons) Computer Science & Information Systems (2.i expected)**

Includes Systems Analysis, Programming Methods, Networks, Artificial Intelligence, Web Development, Databases and Software Engineering.

**Final Year Project:** Conducting a study of data security systems within Boots R&D department. This will involve product research, analysing system requirements and presenting recommendations to IT and R&D department managers.

##### 2005 - 2007 Eric Watson College, Birmingham

A Levels: Computer Science (B), Mathematics (B), Geography (D),  
General Studies (D).

##### 2000 - 2005 Maryhill Higher School, Birmingham

9 GCSEs: Grades A to C including Mathematics and English.

#### RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE

##### 2009 - 2010 Data Processing Assistant, Boots

- Co-ordinated work on drawing up specifications for a new database system and web interfaces.
- Planned the required work for myself and one other person and monitored this plan to ensure target deadlines were met.
- Analysed information requirements and designed and built web based forms and questionnaires to feed information into the database.
- Trained other staff in the operation of the new packages.

#### TECHNICAL SKILLS

- Knowledge of JAVA, C++, HTML, PHP, XML., Oracle and Firewall and security systems. Experienced in the use of applications including Access, Excel, Word and Dreamweaver.



## **SKILLS**

### **Problem Solving**

When undertaking analysis of data requirements for the new database at Boots, there was very little common ground emerging from users. I presented a number of solutions and asked users to rank them. The result being one of my solutions was taken forward for implementation.

### **Customer Service**

Working with a variety of customers at Asda helped develop my communication and listening skills ensuring a positive and friendly manner at all times.

### **Time Management**

Whilst working in Boots, I had to plan and manage work for myself and one other person. To ensure deadlines were met I kept an up to date Outlook diary as well as getting weekly check ins from my colleague to make sure we hit our deadline targets.

## **OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE**

### **Summer 2008 Contractor Supervisor, Birmingham City Council**

Organised this period of 4 weeks' vacation work during which I was responsible for supervising contractors who were decorating the Town Hall. I gained valuable experience in planning, organising and problem solving when delays occurred.

### **2005 - 2007 Checkout Operator, Asda**

I worked mostly in the evenings on point-of-sale cash tills providing the high levels of customer service demanded by Asda.

### **2004 - 2005 Trolley Collector, Asda**

I achieved a quality award within the first month for my work.

## **INTERESTS**

Member, and now Treasurer of the University Hiking Club. I manage funds of up to £3,000 per year. I planned routes and camp sites for two sponsored treks on the Pennine Way. Each raised over £1,000, for local charities. I have played the violin since the age of 7 and have Grade VI theory and Grade VII practice. I play in the South Birmingham Youth Orchestra and lead the string section.

## **REFEREES**

Dr C. Charles (Course Tutor)  
School of Computing, Science & Engineering  
University of Poppleton  
Manchester  
M5 4WT  
0161 295 5555

Miss F. Lawton (HR Manager)  
Boots PLC  
New Hall Street  
Birmingham  
B24 5XX  
0161 295 4444

## 7. Example of skills-based CV

### Martha Wright

26 Riverside Road  
Reddish  
Stockport  
SK18 2XX

Tel: 0161 123 4567  
Mobile: 07777 987654  
Email: mattw@yahoo.ac.uk

A recent Business Studies graduate in Banking and Finance, with seventeen years' experience in personal and corporate banking, seeking to develop a new career in Chartered Accountancy.

### SKILLS

**Communication:** Successfully maintained close working relationships with business customers at NatWest Bank. Achieved this by providing complex information, in plain language and by paying attention to their requirements. Have also developed advocacy skills in my role as Student Representative where I present student views and concerns at the Staff Student Committee.

**IT:** Experienced user of MS Excel, Access, Word, PowerPoint. Familiar with SAGE and SPSS statistics packages. I can build websites using HTML and Dreamweaver. Have designed and produced a website for a friend's business.

**Business Awareness:** As a Small Business Adviser, I had to assess business plans and lending proposals from new businesses. This required me to make judgements about the likely success of proposed business ventures. I provided advice to proposers on how to construct a business plan.

**Organisational:** The demands of being a full time student, having a part-time job and family commitments have required me to plan my time thoroughly to ensure that deadlines are met and that quality of work is maintained.

**Teamwork:** In team assignments at University, I have encouraged all group members to contribute to decision making and production of work plans by asking open-ended questions, using brainstorming and summarising interim group decisions to check for agreement.

### EDUCATION

#### University of Poppleton

2008 - 2011

#### BSc (Hons) Business Studies with Financial Management

Broad-based business degree covering management, economics and finance. Specialised in finance in the Final Year. This included management accounts, company law, the corporate financial environment and auditing. Completed a dissertation examining the effects of regulation on the process of new business set up.

#### Stockport College of FE

2006 - 2008

A Levels (Evening Course) Business Studies B, Economics B.

#### Stockport Grammar School

1987 - 1992

8 GCSEs Grade C and above including English and Mathematics.

## **TRAINING**

### **Institute of Bankers Examinations**

**1992 - 1995**

Passed Stages 1 and 2.

### **NatWest Employee Development Programme**

**1997 - 2004**

Courses undertaken included Negotiation Skills, Understanding Small Business, Supervisory Skills, Business Planning and Corporate Taxation.

Also attended courses on Presentation Skills and IT skills courses covering use of spreadsheets and NatWest internal software packages.

## **WORK EXPERIENCE**

### **Lloyds TSB Call Centre, Team Leader**

**Sept 2004 - present**

This has been a part-time job throughout my time at University. I am currently a Team Leader supervising 20 part-time staff, with responsibility for their training and attendance rotas.

### **NatWest Bank, Small Business Adviser**

**Sept 1992 - June 2004**

Advised new business start ups on their business plans and proposals, assessing applications for loans and providing information on some of the technical and financial aspects of setting up a business.

Previous roles included aspects of personal banking, including managing a portfolio of premium customer accounts, providing brokering services in the NatWest Share Shop and working as a cashier in a busy city centre branch.

## **ACHIEVEMENTS**

Raised £1,500 for my daughter's play group by organising a sponsored fun run. This involved devising a course, raising interest from our local newspaper, recruiting other parents to provide assistance and accounting for all the money raised. In all 50 runners took part.

As student representative on my course, I achieved a change to the course assessment schedule. Students expressed concern that coursework deadlines were too close together. I logged the deadlines over the previous year and presented this information to our Programme Leader. Agreement was reached that deadlines would be spaced out better in future.

## **INTERESTS**

- Web design - I have set up and run my own website.
- Member of Reddish Rugby Union Club and regularly play for the Third XV.

**References available on request**