



# CV or Not CV

Everyone needs a CV. Whether you're a grand fromage or an ingénue, it's an essential part of getting yourself a new job. Even if you've got a great portfolio you still need to sell yourself in words.

Writing a CV comes easily to some people, but most of us find it a wee bit tricky. Either we're rusty or have never written one before. Maybe we don't have a clue where to start or else feel uncomfortable talking about ourselves like that.

Whatever your situation or frame of mind, we thought you might appreciate a bit of friendly advice. We never write CVs for you, but we can give you a few rules of thumbs which might just help you get started...

## **Take your time**

A good CV isn't something that's dashed off before Eastenders. But don't stress about it either – if you find you're still fiddling about with it 6 months later, it's time to step away from the computer.

## **Find your angle**

Think about the pitch, about the jobs you want to go for, how you want to present yourself, what your prospective new boss would want to know about you, what makes you different or interesting.

## **Size isn't everything**

Don't limit yourself to a one page CV. Most of us need a bit more room than that. But rarely is a 10 page tome justified. We think 2 or 3 pages is the comfortable norm, but see what works for you best. Include the stuff that makes you look good. Don't include the stuff we don't need to know; you might be proud of that 10 metre swimming badge but it's not likely to get you that dream job.

## **Set the tone**

Tonally, keep it factual but personal as you want people to get a sense of what you're like as well as what you have to offer. And never write in the third person; it's just wrong, wrong, wrong. Every CV should be a unique record of that person, their skills, experience and potential. So you should always write your CV yourself – although there's no harm in bouncing it off some friends or workmates first.

## **Truth be told**

Never lie. Never, ever. Lies always come back and bite you on the bum. Ours is a small industry, and everybody knows somebody. Anyway, it's not about lying; it's about presenting the truth in the most positive way.

## **Telling the time**

Whether it's your education or work experience, always start with the most recent (and therefore the most relevant) and work your way back from there.



### **It's all in the details**

It sounds obvious, but people need to know how to get hold of you. Including your name, address, mobile and email should cover it. You're not obliged to tell us your date of birth or marital status, unless you want to.

### **The big opening**

Include a profile; an opening paragraph, two at most, which sets you up as a candidate, who you are and what you offer this fab new company you're interested in. What follows in the body of the CV should be the proof of the pudding.

### **Education is key**

If you've got great academics, celebrate them. If they're not as good as you'd like, just be clear and upfront. When listing your degree (or in some cases degrees) always include your university, your degree subject, and your grade. If your dissertation was particularly interesting, include mention of that. A levels are also really important – we like to see the subjects you studied and the grades you got. But you don't need to list out every O level or GSCE, although it's good to know how many you got. And you can leave out the Grade 4 piano.

### **Experience is everything**

The work experience section of your CV is where a lot of your preparation comes into play. The golden rule is to present yourself as honestly and positively as possible and only include what is interesting, relevant or unique. Don't assume that everybody knows the companies that you've worked for – this is particularly true if your experience is outside the UK or you're looking for a career change. Give a brief one liner description of the company, and include a website address if possible. Then talk through your key achievements, the things you've done or been part of which you're proudest of. List clients, and always include a start and end date. If you went travelling in the middle of everything, or took time out to study, include that in the running order to make it easy to follow.

### **Be interesting**

Interests is a much forgotten and much under used part of the ol' CV. Yet it can speak volumes. It will give people a more rounded idea of you as a person. Paint a picture of yourself, don't just list words. "Reading, travel and food" could mean that you like an Egg McMuffin while reading the Star on the train in the morning. Write a paragraph about what you're like, what interests you, what you're passionate about, alternative careers, points of interest and distinction.

### **Keep it simple**

Whilst the pdf version of your CV that you spent ages on perfecting might be a work of art, it's not very user friendly. Stick to Word, black and white, and leave out the pictures. It means that we can format it, and all those lovely prospective employers can read it and print it off with ease.

That's quite enough of that then. Off you go. Try and enjoy writing it, and when you're ready, ping it over to us on [scope@periscopeuk.com](mailto:scope@periscopeuk.com) And we'll be in touch as soon as possible.