

Write the Perfect CV!

So many graduates don't realise just how important a phenomenal CV is, producing a school-level document with just a basic outline of their education and any work experience they might have. Very little consideration is often given to using the right 'impact' words, making the layout both attractive and professional, and highlighting their skills and experience so the employer only has to scan the pages to see they've got what it takes.

The CV is your first line of attack and a form of introduction to the employer that shapes their first impression of you. First impressions can really make or break your success in the application process. Chances are you don't already know the employer, so you have to show them how professional, how skilled, how brilliant you are, all in 2 sides of A4.

The Graduate Advantage team have prepared some Do's and Don'ts below to help you create a sterling CV:

Do:

Be selective!

An employer doesn't need to know the details of everything you've ever done – only what is strictly relevant to the position you're applying for.

Introduce yourself in a short paragraph.

Your 'profile' will be the first thing an employer sees and sets the tone for the rest of your CV. Keep it short and sweet – 50 words is usually enough to describe your background, what you're looking for and what you feel your unique selling point (USP) is!

Be consistent!

Font type, font size and spacing should be consistent throughout the document. As should the formats of dates – don't write Sep 09 in one section and 09/2009 in another.

List your information in chronological order

Every section should start with your most recent employment/education/experience and work backwards.

Make sure your name and contact info information is displayed clearly and correctly

You will never get invited for interviews if your phone number or email address is out of date or even worse – not there at all!

Consider the order of your sections

If you are a recent graduate, it is likely that your education is your key selling point. In this case, this should be the section that follows your profile paragraph. However, if your previous experience is more relevant to your chosen career path than your degree – this should take pole position. Likewise, in your 'Employment' section if your most relevant employment isn't your most recent, split the section into 'Relevant Employment' and 'Additional Employment/Experience', letting the more relevant information really stand out!

Keep your CV to 2 pages max

We've heard tales of CVs exceeding 2 pages being automatically discounted! Take note... But scare stories aside – 2 pages is enough to get the key info down. Any longer and you risk losing the employers interest.

Ask the opinion of a few trusted friends/relatives.

Not only can they check your spelling and grammar, they may think of something you've forgotten to mention.

Don't:**Let something as trivial as a spelling mistake let you down**

Proof read and proof read again! It's not just spelling mistakes that set off alarm bells for recruiters – misuse of punctuation, non-capitalisation of names (or worse, a lowercase 'i' instead of 'I') and generally poor readability can all create a negative impression.

Waffle!

Go through your CV word by word, sentence by sentence and eliminate anything that isn't vital to getting your key points across.

Lie!

You will be found out either at interview stage or soon after. All employers value honesty.

Include a picture of yourself

However good looking you are (or think you are!) this will not work in your favour. Besides, employers are not allowed to discriminate on personal appearance, positively or negatively.

Use an unusual format – stick to .doc or .pdf

This is especially important when it comes to sending your CV to an employer by email – you do not want to end up in their spam folder in error.

Disclose the details of your referees

If employers require details of your referees they will ask for them. This is personal information and you should remember this when you upload your CV to job websites that this is then entering the public domain.

Disclose your date of birth, marital status or details of your ethnicity

Equal opportunities legislation forbids employers from discriminating on the basis of any of the above.

As a handy guide and to help you get started, we've also provided a CV template below. **You do not have to copy this exact template.** Remember, the whole point of editing your CV is to make it as unique and as professional as possible in order to make the best first impression. So feel free to get creative!*