

Outplacement Support

CV writing guide



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Outplacement guide

We understand that any change can be difficult to deal with, and without the right information at the right time any stress it causes can be made worse. To help you to transition to the next stage of your working life we've created this guide that covers the everything you need to know about creating the best CV to get you noticed.

This guide has been designed to support you through the process and give you a 'route map' to help you find your next job. However, it's also important to take time out to reflect on what you might want to do. Often redundancy allows us the opportunity to look at other options; we might decide to follow a long-held dream or passion, whether that be starting your own business, retiring, studying or travelling. You may want to do something different, consider what your transferrable skills are or take the opportunity to learn something new.

CV writing

What is a CV? (sometimes referred to as a Resume)

Your CV is your personal brochure and should reflect you and what you wish to project to a potential employer. It's used to explain to employers what you **can do** and what you **have done**. A CV should present your knowledge, learning, skills and competencies in a positive, honest way. There are no golden rules, but here are some guidelines to help you.

Where to start with your CV

Putting together a CV can feel overwhelming, but the benefits are clear. It's a great investment in your future and a good CV will double your chances of getting an interview. Make sure your CV is well presented and includes all the relevant information. Most employers see hundreds of CVs and yours may get less than a minute of their time if it's not presented well.

In **Appendix 1** there is **Personal Career Appraisal** worksheet which you might find useful to help work out what your **key strengths and attributes** are. Dedicating time to complete this worksheet can help you understand yourself better and get you thinking about what you're good at, what you enjoy doing and how can you showcase yourself to a new employer. It will also help you identify the transferrable skills you have if you're considering a different kind of job.

What does a good CV look like?

Here are some useful links to CVs and templates for different job types:

<https://www.totaljobs.com/advice/cv-templates>

<https://www.cv-library.co.uk/career-advice/cv/cv-templates/>

<https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/getting-job/building-cv> - contains a handy CV building tool

Most people follow a historical CV format; covering your employment history starting with your current or last role to show your career progression. Whatever format you choose, your CV should look clear and tidy with all the information easy to find. **Consider:**

- Using a confident tone and positive language
- Concentrating on your achievements, not just your responsibilities or duties. This means listing things you have done such as projects, sales increased and awards won not just re-writing your job description
- Making your most relevant experience and skills noticeable, to encourage the employer to read on
- Keeping it snappy and to the point and ideally around 2 or 3 pages (depending on how many jobs you've done and how long you've been working)
- Checking thoroughly the spelling and grammar - spotting errors is a quick way for potential employers to reject candidates
- Asking someone to read through your CV, as this will help to spot errors and spelling mistakes
- Having a generic CV but be prepared to tailor it where required to fit specific jobs

Here's some top tips on what to include in a CV

Contact details	Name, address (don't include if you are posting your CV on a job board – just include your nearest town), mobile phone number, email address and LinkedIn profile (if you have one).
Personal profile/statement	This is optional but a short statement to "sell" yourself and summarise your key skills and experience. You also have the option of including this in a covering letter if you prefer.
Employment/work experience	List your most recent role experience including; the employer, brief description of the company, dates of employment, the work you did. Make sure it's in short sentences or bullet points using straight-forward and positive language.
Responsibilities	Include key skills and strengths you have demonstrated in each role.
Achievements	This is a chance to show how your previous experience has given you the skills you need to make you a suitable candidate. Include information about key achievements in your role(s).
Qualifications	Add your qualifications, especially those relevant to the role you are applying for. Don't forget to include certification or role specific training you have done.
Education	This should be a brief summary, with the highest/most relevant qualification first. You don't have to include dates unless they're qualifications with expiry dates.

It's important that your CV is tailored to the needs of the potential employer and the particular job. If there is a job specification, job description or advert show how you're a good fit by giving examples of how you're the right person for the job, paying particular attention to the ones marked 'essential'. If there is a gap between jobs, it's often best to explain why. Unexplained gaps can leave the potential employer questioning why.

Reasons for gaps may include:

- Contract ended
- Left to continue education
- Took a career break to raise a family or care for someone else
- Redundancy
- Relocation

Preparing a personal profile/statement

Make an immediate connection with the potential employer by adding a personal profile/statement. This is usually a punchy paragraph at the start of your CV that includes:

- Who you are and where your experience lies
- What role you're looking to do next

- What your personal strengths are
- What you can contribute to the business you are looking to join

If you're not sure what your strengths are, you could ask those who know you best as they will find it easier to provide an objective view. Try your manager, trusted colleagues, close friends or immediate family. Ask them to be honest and to share with you an example of how you demonstrate this. Remember to tailor your personal statement to the job you're applying for or cover the points you want to make in a covering letter.

Examples of personal statements:

"A dedicated Account Administrator who works well under pressure to consistently meet strict deadlines. Enjoys working as part of a team, using own initiative, effective communication skills to achieve and exceed objectives and goals"

"An experienced and enthusiastic Personal Assistant with a history of working at Board Director level within large multinational organisations. Computer literate, with strong organisation and problem solving skills, completing all assignments in a confident and reliable manner"

Should I include a covering letter?

Yes, a covering letter will help you to tailor your application to the job you are applying for. This is your chance to show potential employers why you'd be good at the job and get them interested.

It's all about me!

It's important to highlight your key achievements and skills in your CV to tell the new employer what contributions you have made in the positions you have held throughout your career and, which you can bring to the role you're applying for.

Think about the main purpose of the jobs you have done - answering the following questions will help identify your skills and competencies:

- What was your role?
- What kind of problems or tasks was your role involved in solving?
- What action did you take?
- What was the result?
- You may like to mention awards or feedback from a manager/ colleague showing how well you did
- Describe your career history in terms of achievements
- What have you done over and above your job description?
- Where have you gone the extra mile?
- Where have you demonstrated flexibility, creative thinking or innovation?
- What projects have you been involved in and what was your contribution to the outcome?
- What legacy have you left behind?
- What did the team/business look like when you left compared to when you started and what part did you play in that?
- Describe your career history in terms of progress you've made
- Use numbers to highlight your accomplishments – think money, think time, think

amounts

In Appendix 1 (at the end of this document) there is a **Personal Career Appraisal** worksheet. This can help you identify what your key strengths, attributes and achievements are.

Once you have this, you can begin to create a list of achievements and contributions from your previous roles. You then need to pull this information together into a paragraph/ bullet points that can then be used in your CV. For example:

- Efficiently entered customer details onto a database whilst handling high call volumes, keeping mistakes to a minimum and ensuring records were easy to understand for other colleagues.
- Reduced overall cost by 15% in one year by introducing a competitive tendering process.
- Consistently exceeded company 'outbound' call targets to collect overdue payments. Exceeding targets ensured arrears were collected from customers and helped to drive both personal and team performance.
- Handled customer complaints by listening and using empathy skills offering swift and appropriate solutions and maintaining an excellent standard of customer service, which retained customer loyalty.
- Was awarded 'Employee of the Year' from a team of 300 Customer Support Agents by achieving excellent customer feedback ratings consistently over the year.

Useful words you may want to use in your CV

To make sure your CV gives you the best return, why not review it and see if you can use another word? You need to make sure every word counts and adds value to the picture you are trying to paint about yourself. Check out Appendix 2 on page 13 for some alternative word suggestions.

Common mistakes in CVs

With lots of CVs arriving in potential employers' mailboxes every day, you want YOUR CV to stand out, keep this in mind and review the most common mistakes below:

Spelling and grammar	You don't gain anything by getting it right, but you lose a lot when you get it wrong. Check every word, then double check it before you send it off. Consider getting a friend to look it over.
Too duty-oriented	If you're copying your job description into your CV, you're missing the point. Potential employers already know what the job is; your CV should highlight what you've achieved whilst you've been doing it.
Inaccurate dates	Potential employers want to know where and when you worked to understand your working history. Dates of employment may be used for background checks. Include specific ranges in months and years for every position. If you have gaps, explain them, either in your CV or covering letter.

Poor formatting	Different typefaces and boxes may look nice on paper, but as your CV goes through various email formats and IT packages electronically, it can get distorted. If you want everyone to see your CV in the same format, keep it in plain text.
Long paragraphs	Make sure your CV is quick and easy to read. Focus on the skills and accomplishments that are relevant to the job applying for and put them into snappy bullet points.
Unqualified candidates	If you think you have what it takes, look at the job description and highlight the skills they're looking for in your personal statement along with your relevant qualifications at the top of the document.
Keep it relevant	With the limited time potential employers spend on your CV, you need to think about what an employer needs and what you bring to the table. A hobbies and interests section is valid but you don't need to include them or let it dominate your CV.

Appendix 1

Personal Career Appraisal

Technical and business strengths

List what you regard as being your most important **technical** and **business strengths** – the particular **knowledge, experience** and **skills** you've acquired that you feel will be an asset to the job you want to do:

Technical and business strengths	Are these transferable to other jobs?
1.	Yes / No
2.	Yes / No
3.	Yes / No
4.	Yes / No
5.	Yes / No
6.	Yes / No
7.	Yes / No
8.	Yes / No
9.	Yes / No
10.	Yes / No

Personal Strengths

Tick or highlight 10 statements which you feel reflect your personal strengths and attributes at work:

I am able to accept a challenge I am a good communicator I am able to make decisions easily I am good at managing other people I am well organised I am good at meeting deadlines I am good at seeing the root of a problem and resolving it I am able to use my initiative I am good at delegating responsibility to others I am able to understand the needs of others I am not easily put off obstacles I get on well with people I like to be part of a team I enjoy working under pressure I am good at persuading other I can handle several different tasks	I am tolerant I enjoy teaching others I like making presentations I set myself high standards I have a keen eye for detail I like finding new ways to do things I establish relationships easily I am able to work hard and consistently I have a good sense of humour I am determined to be successful I am ambitious I have lots of common sense I am a good judge of people I am adaptable to change I am able to implement new ideas easily I am good at presenting complex information simply I enjoy participating in the social side of
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simultaneously
I am good at prioritising my work
I enjoy providing a good service to others

working life
I find it easy to praise others

Think of some examples of how you've demonstrated your strengths. They will be useful for your CV and interviews.

What would you regard as being your weaknesses/things you aren't so good at?

What have you done to address your weaknesses or what could you do?

Can you reproduce below any comments made about you in your most recent performance appraisals at work?

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Finally, in this section, identify 5 important personal achievements or high points in your life:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

The work you have done so far will form an important basis from which you should be able to do the following:

- Begin to plan your next steps
- Clarify your background, experience and objectives
- Start to understand better the sort of person you are
- Maintain your confidence in your ability
- Construct a good CV
- Help you describe yourself well to someone else

Why not share your Personal Career Appraisal with someone who knows you well at work to see if they agree with you and have any feedback.

Appendix 2

Useful words you may want to use in your CV

To make sure your CV gives you the best return, why not review it and see if you can use another word? You need to make sure every word counts and adds value to the picture you are trying to paint about yourself. Here's some alternative word suggestions:

PLANNED

Administered
Arranged
Assembled
Centralised
Compiled
Composed
Co-ordinated
Designed
Developed
Organised
Prepared
Proposed
Scheduled

STARTED

Built
Conceived
Created
Devised
Established
Founded
Generated
Initiated
Installed
Instigated
Introduced
Launched
Originated
Piloted
Renewed
Setup

CHANGED

Altered
Combined
Converted
Modified
Re-designed
Re-organised
Replaced
Re-structured
Shaped
Transformed

IMPLEMENTED

Conducted
Demonstrated
Effected
Enacted
Executed
Formulated
Negotiated
Processed
Produced
Undertook
Utilised

ACHIEVED

Accomplished
Attained
Completed
Ensured
Negotiated
Overcame
Saved
Succeeded
Traded
Won

ADVISED

Approved
Counselled
Forecasted
Guided
Judged
Liaised
Prescribed
Promoted
Proposed
Recommended
Selected
Specified
Suggested

URGED

Encouraged
Inspired
Led
Motivated
Spurred
Stimulated
Taught
Trained

WROTE

Documented
Drafted
Edited
Interpreted
Outlined
Publicised
Published
Revised
Translated

INCREASED

Accelerated
Broadened
Doubled
Enlarged
Exceeded

MAINTAINED

Consolidated
Continued
Preserved
Supported
Updated

IMPROVED

Corrected
Enhanced
Rectified
Refined
Remedied

LESSEned

Decreased
Halved
Lightened
Lowered
Minimised

Expanded
Extended
Heightened
Strengthened
Surpassed
Widened

Conserved
Sustained

Repaired
Rescued
Resolved
Restored
Revised
Saved
Transformed

Reduced
Shortened
Streamlined

MANAGED

Directed
Headed
Instructed
Led
Ordered
Piloted
Regulated
Steered
Supervised
Taught
Trained

OBTAINED

Acquired
Bought
Captured
Collected
Employed
Hired
Purchased
Recruited
Retained
Secured
Halted
Liquidated

PREVENTED

Anticipated
Averted
Avoided
Completed
Diverted
Eliminated
Ended
Eradicated
Evaded
Finished
Forestalled

RESEARCHED

Analysed
Appraised
Appraised
Audited
Calculated
Collated
Defined
Estimated
Evaluated
Examined
Highlighted
Identified
Investigated
Monitored
Surveyed
Tested
Uncovered
Verified