

In a recent survey of recruiters, nearly 90% said the bulk of the CVs they receive have errors. A shocking stat – but one that means there is an opportunity for jobseekers to improve their CVs and stand out from the crowd.

Perhaps the hardest thing about a CV is communicating your achievements, skills and experience in the sort of language that will make a recruiter sit up and take notice. When we asked jobseekers, nearly three-quarters said they found it a struggle to represent themselves well in a CV.

## What have I achieved?

This is the most important part of your CV, for the simple reason that recruiters will often be scanning a large number of CVs for keywords: job titles, software packages, technical skills. Get it right, and you're half-way to getting an interview.

### Showcasing your achievements

It's not enough to simply list the companies you've worked for; you have to show the impact you had while there.

The most important information about your previous roles is how well you performed in them. Give some thought to the following:

- Did you deliver to a punishing deadline?
- Have you ever made a significant contribution to an ad hoc project or something outside of your remit; anything that shows you're a go-to person when something out of the ordinary needs doing?
- Have you ever improved flawed or inefficient business processes?
- Ever received feedback from other teams or managers recognising your contributions?
- Ever been officially recognised for your contributions?

These details are unique to you – they illustrate your approach to work in a way that will differentiate you from other applicants.

### Technical skills

If you're going for an IT job, chances are you've got a range of IT skills. It's standard to split out your technical skills by the following:

- Software
- Platforms
- Packages
- Programming languages

For each skill, state your proficiency (e.g. competent, expert) and try to only use jargon or acronyms your reader will be familiar with.

If you're building your CV to apply for a particular job, make sure you reference the skills the recruiter has specified, paying special attention to any keywords in the job ad.

## What did you add?

Once you've identified all your achievements, the next step is to quantify them and demonstrate your commercial awareness. You need to be able to back-up your claims with figures. Recruiters love to see language such as savings made, return on investment (ROI) and turnover increased.

If your contributions resulted in efficiencies or improvements to quality of service, try to quantify the saving or improvement and include the figures e.g. 35% time saved; 75% more people served per week; 50% more bugs fixed per month.

Calculate and demonstrate ROI in your previous roles, and state any improvements to speed, reduced error rates or platform down times.

These numbers will work as beacons to recruiters, grabbing their attention and making them more likely to direct your CV to their 'maybe' pile. Conversely, they will be suspicious if they come across a CV without any quantified achievements.

A recruiter will scan your CV in a matter of seconds, looking for the right job titles. So it's important that you get the language right. If you worked as a java developer but went under a different title, just put java developer – at this stage you just need to catch a recruiter's attention before they move onto the next CV.

And this is equally important when uploading your CV to a job board's database. Recruiters search on relevancy of job title, location and salary. Ensure your job title matches your level of experience and is industry recognised.

**You're now ready to write your CV!**

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
**80% of CVs are not read beyond the first page**

## The next step: Presentation

So you've identified all your achievements, listed out your accomplishments, you've even mentioned your treasured Employee of the Month certificate. But no matter how extensive your experience or comprehensive your skills, if your CV presentation is muddled or badly formatted, chances are it's going straight into the employer's bin.

Here are the key things to bear in mind as you lay out your CV.

### Length

A recruiter will have a stack of CVs to get through, so don't make yours the length of Knuth's *The Art of Computer Programming*! No matter how extensive your experience, you should effectively be able to sum up your career over two concise pages.

If your CV ends up longer than two pages, take another look and consider how you might make it more concise. Look for any waffle that's taking up space and ruthlessly cut it – you don't need it.

### Design and layout

It's so easy to go wrong at this stage. A poorly-chosen font or an ill-judged layout and it could be curtains. If you can remember to keep things easy on the eye of the recruiter, you won't go too far wrong.

First thing to think about it is whether to include a personal statement at the head of your CV. This is a brief summation or introduction of you and your career path. However, since recruiters are just looking for keywords, chances are they might not read the statement, especially if it's more than a line or two. It also happens to be very easy to write an incredibly boring statement that they've seen a thousand times before. So if you can't be original, leave it out.

The order of your CV depends on your situation. So, if you're a graduate, you'll want to list your academic achievements first. But if you've got 15 years' experience, you should list out your career history and achievements first, coming to your academic record later (if at all).

Arrange your employment history in date order, beginning with the most recent. You might feel that the earlier jobs don't warrant as much detail as your current job or more recent jobs. This is especially true if you started your career waiting tables.

### Spelling!

It bears repeating: check your spelling. Then get someone else to check. Then check again. Nothing will kill your application stone-dead quicker than a rogue typo in your CV. And while this may seem obvious, double-check your language settings too. You don't want to find out you've written in American-English after you've sent it!

### Finally...

If you've listed your skills and quantified your achievements, kept the presentation clean and simple, and not made any spelling or grammar howlers, you should have a CV that will stop a recruiter in their tracks. But here's a final checklist of CV no-nos just to make sure.

- **Don't lie** – the bigger the lie, the more likely you are to get caught. It's just not worth it.
- **Don't list** all the one-day training courses you've ever been on unless they're relevant.
- **Don't use** elaborate fonts and colours so your CV stands out. You want the words to do the work, not an eye-catching font.
- **Don't divulge** sensitive information such as your NI or passport number.
- **Don't list** every one of your referees – include your previous employer and one other. At this stage, it's probably better to write, References are available on request.
- **Don't start** every sentence in the first person, i.e. I, Me and My. It's just boring.
- **Avoid clichés.** You should do everything in your power to keep your CV fresh. If you find sentences like this: *I am a highly motivated individual who works well on my own or in a team, with exceptional communication skills and the ability to work under pressure to produce results under tight deadlines* – cut them out!

## About CWJobs

[CWJobs.co.uk](http://CWJobs.co.uk) is the leading specialist IT recruitment website, enabling permanent and contract IT jobseekers to search and apply for jobs across all skill sets and industry sectors throughout the UK and Ireland. Each month, 308,000 jobseekers use our site, attracted by the opportunity to search thousands of jobs from hundreds of leading employers.

CWJobs has teamed up with [TheFuller CV.com](http://TheFullerCV.com), a CV writing service with expertise in IT, who will review your CV for free. This free CV review is exclusive to CWJobs users so visit our career advice section today to find out how you could take advantage.