10 tips on writing a successful CV

When it comes to applying for a new job, your CV could be just the ticket to get you that initial foot in the door and secure an interview – but how do you ensure your CV is added to the interview pile rather than thrown straight in the bin?

Putting together a successful CV is easy once you know how. It's a case of taking all your skills and experience and tailoring them to the job you're applying for. But what if you don't meet the right criteria? Well, I've put together the following tips to help you get started in creating a successful CV and securing your first (or next) arts job.

Get the basics right

There is no right or wrong way to write a CV but there are some common sections you should cover. These include: personal and contact information; education and qualifications; work history and/or experience; relevant skills to the job in question; own interests, achievements or hobbies; and some references.

Presentation is key

A successful CV is always carefully and clearly presented, and printed on clean, crisp white paper. The layout should always be clean and well structured and CVs should never be crumpled or folded, so use an A4 envelope to post your applications.

Always remember the CV hotspot – the upper middle area of the first page is where the recruiter's eye will naturally fall, so make sure you include your most important information there.

Stick to no more than two pages of A4

A good CV is clear, concise and makes every point necessary without waffling. You don't need pages and pages of paper – you just keep things short and sweet. A CV is a reassurance to a potential employer, it's a chance to tick the right boxes. And if everything is satisfied, there's a better chance of a job interview. Also, employers receive dozens of CVs all the time so it's unlikely they'll read each one cover to

cover. Most will make a judgment about a CV within sections, so stick to a maximum of two pages of A4 paper.

Understand the job description

The clues are in the job application, so read the details from start to finish. Take notes and create bullet points, highlighting everything you can satisfy and all the bits you can't. With the areas where you're lacking, fill in the blanks by adapting the skills you do have. For example, if the job in question requires someone with sales experience, there's nothing stopping you from using any retail work you've undertaken – even if it was something to help pay the bills through university. It will demonstrate the skills you do have and show how they're transferable.

Tailor the CV to the role

When you've established what the job entails and how you can match each requirement, create a CV specifically for that role. Remember, there is no such thing as a generic CV. Every CV you send to a potential employee should be tailored to that role so don't be lazy and hope that a general CV will work because it won't.

Create a unique CV for every job you apply for. You don't have to re-write the whole thing, just adapt the details so they're relevant.

Making the most of skills

Under the skills section of your CV don't forget to mention key skills that can help you to stand out from the crowd. These could include: communication skills; computer skills; team working; problem solving or even speaking a foreign language. Skills can come out of the most unlikely places, so really think about what you've done to grow your own skills, even if you take examples from being in a local sports team or joining a voluntary group – it's all relevant.

Making the most of interests

Under interests, highlight the things that show off skills you've gained and employers look for. Describe any examples of positions of

responsibility, working in a team or anything that shows you can use your own initiative. For example, if you ran your university's newspaper or if you started a weekend league football team that became a success.

Include anything that shows how diverse, interested and skilled you are. Don't include passive interests like watching TV, solitary hobbies that can be perceived as you lacking in people skills. Make yourself sound really interesting.

Making the most of experience

Use assertive and positive language under the work history and experience sections, such as "developed", "organised" or "achieved". Try to relate the skills you have learned to the job role you're applying for. For example: "The work experience involved working in a team," or "This position involved planning, organisation and leadership as I was responsible for a team of people".

Really get to grips with the valuable skills and experience you have gained from past work positions, even if it was just working in a restaurant – every little helps.

Including references

References should be from someone who has employed you in the past and can vouch for your skills and experience. If you've never worked before you're OK to use a teacher or tutor as a referee. Try to include two if you can.

Keep your CV updated

It's crucial to review your CV on a regular basis and add any new skills or experience that's missing. For example, if you've just done some volunteering or worked on a new project, make sure they're on there – potential employers are always impressed with candidates who go the extra mile to boost their own skills and experience.

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