

South Devon College

CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY CENTRE

CV & Covering Letter

Booklet



South Devon College



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What is a CV?

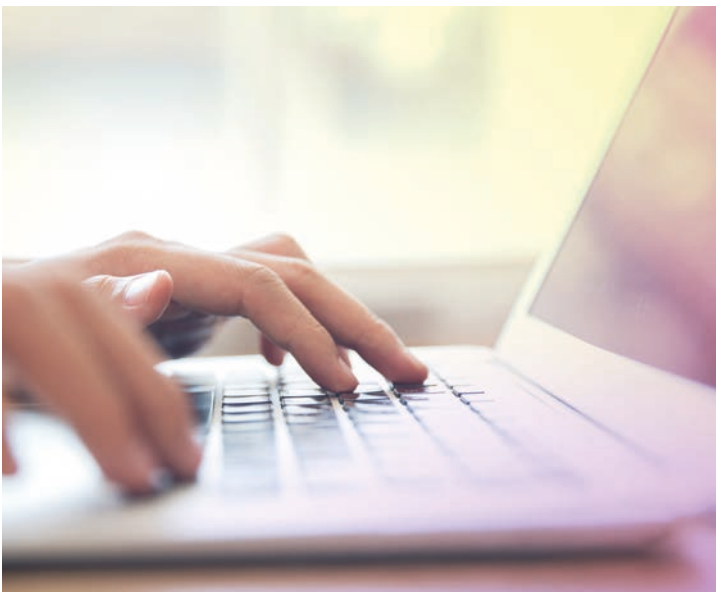
A CV (Curriculum Vitae) is a written record of your education, qualifications and employment. To apply for an advertised job you will often be asked to send a CV and covering letter. The CV is therefore not just a record of your career or education to date, but also a chance to **sell** yourself.

How to write a Personal Profile for your CV

Your CV is one of the most important documents you will have when it comes to looking for work. It will require updating regularly with work experience and qualifications that you gain as your working career develops.

A Personal Profile (or 'Career Profile') is an introductory paragraph at the beginning of your CV containing a short summary of your background and career plans.

Your personal profile should be located at the top of your CV just below your name and contact details. It is one of the first things an employer will read, and they may decide to offer an interview or not on that alone. If you make it too long they may not read it all, but make it too short or impersonal and you won't stand out from the crowd. Your personal profile is your opportunity to sell yourself!



In the box below write down at least 10 skills or qualities you think an employer is looking for in an employee.

Top tips: Reliable, committed, efficient. Use positive language.

Using the words you've listed above, now circle the 5 skills or qualities you feel describe you best.

Action words

These are some general examples of positive “action/achieving” words to use when applying for jobs:

achieved	lead	communicated	positive
created	resourceful	established	trained
improved	built	organised	co-ordinated
proficient	directed	successful	guided
administered	managed	consistent	processed
designed	capable	expanded	versatile
initiated	competent	participated	implemented
qualified	specialised	supervised	produced
analysed	efficient	controlled	willing
developed	monitored	experience	adaptable

Action phrases

- Analysed problems and developed solutions
- Excellent interpersonal and people management skills
- Able to analyse and interpret data
- Able to exercise good judgement and sound reasoning
- Good interpersonal skills
- Able to concentrate and pay attention to detail
- Can work well on own initiative
- A good communicator
- Experienced, self-motivated and energetic
- Ability to organise and motivate staff
- A good planner
- Careful and methodical approach
- Able to work accurately under pressure
- A good organiser with an eye for detail
- A good team worker
- Patient, tolerant and able to communicate
- A good listener with a common sense approach
- Persuasive but tactful
- A flexible approach to changing situations
- A manager of change
- Determination and drive to see projects to successful completion
- An active decision maker
- An effective time manager
- Highly numerate and computer literate
- Adaptable to team or individual roles
- Produces to deadlines
- Extensive visual memory

What is your current situation?

Top tip: I am a student at South Devon College studying a Level 2 Diploma in Bricklaying...

What are your skills and qualities? Use the 5 you have circled previously!

Top tip: I possess excellent communication skills and enjoy contributing in a group. I am punctual and reliable, and pride myself on my methodical approach to work.

Do you have any work experience or have you taken on any additional responsibilities? What have you learnt from them?

Top tip: I have undertaken numerous positions of responsibility, including being in charge of showing younger children and their parents around school on our open day. This required me to be understanding and approachable...

What opportunities are you looking/applying for?

Top tip: I am seeking part-time employment to undertake alongside my studies...

When put together, these sections create your Personal Profile!



Creating your CV

Name:

Address:

Contact number:

Email address:

Personal Profile

Education

- Most recent first, then list all
- Dates
- Educational establishment
- Qualifications obtained/currently studying for

Work Experience

- Most recent first in the most detail
- Dates
- Employer/company name
- Role and brief description of responsibilities and duties

Additional Skills and Achievements

- IT skills
- Recognition and awards
- Interests and hobbies

References

- Provide two references (such as tutor and previous employer)

Do

Keep it short and sweet. The most effective CVs aren't just informative, they're also concise. Try and get straight to the most pertinent points and ideally take up no more than two sides of A4.

Choose a professional font. A professional font ensures that your CV can be easily read and simply scanned. Remember: Comic Sans is not your friend.

Present things in a logical order. Use sufficient spacing, clear section headings (e.g. Work Experience, Education) and a reverse chronological order to keep things clear and easily legible. Also highlight your most recent achievements.

Play to your strengths. Format your CV to maximise the impact of your application. For example, if you feel a lack of experience is holding you back, lead with education instead. As long as you can relate it back to the role in question, how you order the sections is very much up to you.

Use bullet points. They're a great way to draw attention to any key facts or relevant information, allowing a hiring manager to skim the document easily and find out your significant achievements without having to wade through the hyperbole.

Tailor your personal statement. Look at the core values and mission statement of the particular company you are applying to, and reference them.

Other things to do: Include contact details, keep email address professional (madforit33@email.com does not count), maintain consistent formatting, ask someone to check.

Don't

Be afraid of white space. Don't fear the gaps. Even if you think your CV looks quite bare, as long as you've included all the relevant information and applicable, quantifiable achievements, you needn't worry. Remember: sometimes less is more.

Try to include too much. The ideal CV should be a checklist of all of your accomplishments. It should not be your life story. Tailoring your CV to the role is a great way to skim some of the fat and keep all waffle to a minimum.

Include irrelevant information. Before including any points in your application, ask the same question: will it help you get the role. If the answer is no, take it out. Hobbies and interests are a great example. If they don't help you stand out, don't waste valuable space.

Forget your cover letter. Although it is often seen as a different entity all together, your cover letter is attached to your CV and both are vital in helping you clinch the right role. Utilise yours properly, and your CV becomes the perfect document to reinforce your talent. Oh, they didn't say include one? Still do. Every extra opportunity to sell yourself should be taken.

Experiment with size. You may think that changing font size is a great way to fit your CV onto two pages. But whether you're using large font to make your application seem longer or you're using smaller font to make sure everything fits, you're not fooling anyone. See also, margin size.



Example CV

Sarah Bartholomew

477 Retreat Street, Edinburgh, ED11 7HD

Email: sarahb@hotmail.com

Tel: 07832006383

I am an ambitious and personable individual with experience in customer service and administration. Soon to graduate, I am seeking a role to build on my biological studies.

Education and qualifications

2012 - 2015 University of Edinburgh
BSc Marine Biology, 2:1

Modules included: Professional and Research Skills for Biologists, Marine Biology, Biotechnology and Oceanography, Evolutionary Ecology and Physiology of Animals, Conservation Biology and Fish Ecology.

Dissertation: The effects of petrochemical effluents on the biodiversity of macro and micro fauna.

2010 - 2012 Turnpike Sixth Form, Hull
A-Levels: Biology (A), Chemistry (B), Maths (B), General Studies (B)

2006 - 2010 St James' High School, Hull
GCSEs: Double Science (A*), Maths (A), English Language (A), Geography (A), Technology (A), Spanish (A), English Literature (B), History (B)

Work experience

Jan 2014 - Sept 2014 **Retail Assistant, Student Union Co-op, Edinburgh**

In this role I served customers, worked the till system, took deliveries, stocked shelves and undertook general cleaning duties. Working quickly as part of a team to ensure customer waiting times were kept to a minimum. I was also the nominated First Aider for the shop and this required training and review on a regular basis.

October 2013 **Student Ambassador, University of Edinburgh**

I was responsible for meeting and greeting new students to the university and advising them on locations and functions within the campus. As part of this role I was asked to present to a full cohort of students as part of an open day and manage questions from students and parents to best promote the university.

July 2013 - October 2013 Administration Assistant, The Fringe Festival, Edinburgh

This role was mainly office-based but also involved taking to the street to deliver promotional material and sell tickets. In the office I was responsible for taking customer orders over the telephone and processing tickets for dispatch. I also had responsibility for updating the show area of the website and contributing to social media feeds.

Summer 2012 Customer Service Assistant, The Deep, Hull

As front-of-house, I was the first point of call for visitors to The Deep. Advising customers on different exhibitions and feeding times, I generated tickets and upsold additional experiences. This was a busy role with a strong focus on customer service and I was awarded the "Gone Beyond" award at the end of the summer in recognition of the positive customer comments that had been received about me.

Summer 2010 Aquatic Centre Assistant, The Deep, Hull

Working in the penguin enclosure, I carried out general cleaning, feeding and maintenance duties. At feeding times, we encourage the penguins to interact with the visitors. I worked as part of a team of assistants, rotating duties and ensuring the penguins were well cared for.

2009 - Present Voluntary Care Assistant, RSPCA, Hull

I became involved with the RSPCA at school and have continued to volunteer in their Hull centre during the university holidays. I assist with vulnerable and injured animals, clean and maintain animal enclosures, feed and exercise the animals. I also welcome visitors to the centre and encourage responsible ownership.

Additional skills and achievements

IT Skills:

Confident in Microsoft Office packages.
Experienced in social media feeds and web content.

Recognition:

Head Girl at St James' High School, 2009
"First Aider at Work" (qualified)
Competed and ranked at Surfing Boardmasters Competition, Ireland, 2013
"Gone Beyond" Award, The Deep

Interests and hobbies:

Active member of the USCC (University Student Conservation Club)
Active campaigner for animal rights
Enjoy surfing, horse riding and playing badminton.

References

Mrs M Sheldrake
School of Biological Sciences
James Clerk-Maxwell Building
The King's Buildings
Edinburgh EH9 3FD

Mr B Fellows
Hull & East Riding RSPCA Animal Centre
Clough Road
Hull
HU6 7PE

University tutor
Tel: 0131 650 8649
Email: bto@ed.ac.uk

Manager at Hull & East Riding RSPCA Animal Centre
Tel: 01482 341331



What is a covering letter?

A covering letter personalises your CV and gives you the opportunity to express your enthusiasm. The aim of the covering letter is to make you stand out, and to convince the employer that you are the right person for the job.

What should I include?

- Start off by addressing the letter to the right person. If it mentions a name in the advert, use this. If you are sending a CV out to an employer 'on-spec' to ask if they have any jobs, ring them first to get the contact name of the person in charge of hiring, human resources or the recruitment department and address it to them.
- The next thing you do is explain why you are writing- whether you are replying to an advert or applying 'on-spec'. If you're replying to an advert and it includes a job reference code, make sure you include this.
- Give more information about your most relevant skills and experience. For example, if you've put on your CV that you did work experience at the company, you could go into a little more detail in the covering letter. Explain how your skills will fit the job, and what you will be able to do for the employer.
- Do some research into what the organisation does and then mention this in the covering letter; this will show your enthusiasm and that you've taken the time to get the details right. It also shows you're not sending out the same letter to different organisations.

What shouldn't I include?

Although the reader of your letter may be unknown to you, it is important to achieve a suitable tone in your writing, and not be too casual or too formal.

- Avoid jargon, slang and unprofessional phrases.
- Use shorter sentences rather than longer ones.
- Be clear and to the point but don't be blunt.
- Don't include too much information about your personal life.
- Avoid pictures, coloured paper, jazzy borders or fonts.

Sincerely or faithfully?

If you're writing to someone whose name and title you do not know, use the greeting "Dear Sir or Madam". On concluding the letter use "Yours faithfully" and your initials and surname.

If you are writing to a named person, address them as "Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss" and conclude with "Yours sincerely".





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Enrol on the Careers and Employability Centre page
(under Whole College Resources)

nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk

prospects.ac.uk

giraffecvs.co.uk

reed.co.uk/cvbuilder

youtube.co.uk

monster.co.uk

Useful websites for Career Finders:

targetcareers.co.uk

kudos.cascaid.co.uk

See a Careers and Employability Centre or Helpzone staff member for assistance.

allaboutschoolleavers.co.uk