



## CV Tips

We see hundreds of CVs at Tandem each month, some good and some not so good! Drawing on our experiences over the years we've put a few suggestions together to help you produce the perfect CV...

### Introduce yourself

- Start with your name and contact details at the top of the page. Be sure to make this as compact as possible to leave you plenty of space for the important stuff.
- Follow with a 'Profile' - a short, concise paragraph highlighting your strongest skills, achievements and ambitions. Prospective employers will gain their first impressions of you from this so it is vital to get it right. You may need to alter this slightly to best suit the specific vacancy for which you are applying.
- Leave out your marital status, number of children, their names, ages, star signs and pets ...we've seen it all but it's too much information!

### Education v Employment History

- Next should come either Education & Qualifications or Employment History. Which to put first is a common dilemma and there is no correct answer. It really depends on how much working experience you have and what the requirements are for the vacancy. If a particular qualification is quoted as being 'essential' it is sensible to mention this early on. However, if your qualifications are not relevant but you've had 20 years of experience in a similar role you may decide to put your education at the end.
- Whichever way you choose, make sure you use sub heading so a prospective employer can easily find the information that he or she requires.

### Employment History

- Start with your current or most recent employment and go backwards from there.
- Each employment entry should start with a bold heading including your dates of employment, the company name and town/country (in the age of the internet full addresses are not necessary) and your job title.
- Unless the employer is a household name a one line summary explaining the nature of the business is also very helpful.
- Then should follow around 10 to 15 bullet points detailing succinctly your duties, responsibilities, significant achievements and details of any packages, software or machinery used. Be specific and don't generalize but resist the temptation to try and include every minute aspect of your role. The idea is to give an overview of what you have done, too much detail and the reader will lose interest.
- If you have had a long and varied career you do not need the same number of bullet points for all employers. Concentrate either on your most recent roles or the ones that are most relevant to the job for which you are applying and just have one or two points for the rest.
- It is better to explain gaps in your employment history. You may have been travelling, caring for a sick relative or you may have had a period of unemployment. If this is the case describe what you did with your time - for example, developing your skills by partaking in courses or working voluntarily.

### Education & Qualifications

- Working backwards, list your *relevant* qualifications including the years they were completed and the establishment or organization. You should only need a line for each.
- This should be followed by details of any further education, again including dates, names of establishments, qualifications and results achieved.
- Only if you obtained good grades at school include the name and location of your secondary education with number of qualifications obtained and grades (e.g. 8 GCSEs grades A-C). There is no need to include the actual subjects unless you left school within the last 5 years.
- In this section you should also include details of recent training or skills development events you have attended which could be relevant and any professional memberships.

### Hobbies & Interests

- The aim of this section is to give the prospective employer more of a rounded view of you as a person. Two or three lines or a few bullet points are sufficient but use this opportunity wisely.
- If at all possible pick hobbies that you genuinely (!) have which might imply characteristics of an ideal candidate for the role e.g. Dramatic Arts for a sales role that possibly calls for someone with an outgoing nature.
- Include any personal achievements which demonstrate potential desirable qualities e.g. completion of a marathon or charity work/events and details of involvement in clubs/societies.

### References

- Don't waste valuable space listing names and addresses. It is sufficient to have a heading 'References' with the words 'Available on request' underneath. Just make sure that you do have details available of at least one previous employer who is willing to provide a reference if asked.

### Covering Letter

- It is essential that you include a covering letter when sending out your CV. If you are responding to an advertisement the purpose of the letter is to clarify which position it is that you are interested in and draw the employer's attention to any relevant experience that you have. Don't repeat what's on your CV but highlight specific points that relate to the content of the advert.
- Do not be tempted to use a standard letter, it should be geared to each specific employer.
- If you are sending your CV speculatively you should explain the type of position you are looking for and detail your strengths.
- Whatever your situation keep it formal, clear and concise. Two to three short paragraphs should be sufficient.

### Some Final Points

- Ensure that you choose a font that is easily legible (at least 11pt) and preferably fairly standard (e.g. Arial).
- Use italic, bold and/or underline to highlight or separate sections - leave space between sections.
- Aim for 2 pages, 3 at most. If you are struggling to fit everything in, review the content. Have you included unnecessary information? Have you used a third of a page for your personal details? Have you got huge margins on the page or lots of wasted space top and bottom?
- Avoid trying to be funny. Your prospective employer may not share your sense of humour.
- Do not be tempted to stretch the truth; you could end up in hot water. There is no harm however in minimising less favourable details, e.g. omitting poor GCSE grades.
- Check thoroughly for spelling mistakes and errors with punctuation. Then check again!
- Finally be prepared to try doing something different. If your CV is not working for you don't keep sending the same one out! If possible ask for feedback from employers that have turned you down, find out what is going against you and try an alternative approach.