

## PREPARING YOUR CURRICULUM VITAE

A Curriculum Vitae (CV) is a written document outlining your educational qualifications and your career to date. The purpose of the CV is to get you an interview so you should treat it as a sales tool.

The overall design of your CV should be simple, clear and short.

You should keep your CV to two pages. Rarely, should your CV exceed this length. Don't ever pad out your CV with waffle – one page of useful information is undoubtedly worth for more to an employer than two pages full of irrelevant facts.

### What Should be Included in a CV?

- **Personal Details:** If you live away from home, include your current Dublin address along with your permanent address. Include contact numbers as well – but make sure your mobile phone answer message sounds professional.
- **Education:** This should be listed in reverse chronological order (i.e. most recent/current first). It is not necessary to list all subjects completed at third level. A brief sample of subjects covered and overall (or expected) result are sufficient.
- **Work Experience:** This should also be listed in reverse chronological order. Use “active” rather than “passive” verbs to describe your experience e.g. “I managed” rather than “the management of”. Also, link your skills and experience to the requirements of the position for which you are applying.
- **Skills, Achievements, Personal Interests:** Skills may include languages, computer skills, driving licence, etc, as well as transferable skills such as communication and teamwork skills. Remember to give evidence of your skills. Achievements may include the attainment of personal goals, awards, certificates, medals, etc. Don't overload your CV with interests.
- **Referees:** Make sure you ask the permission of your referees before you put their details on your CV. Only two referees are needed – ideally one academic and one employment related. Give only two unless specifically asked for more. Include contact phone numbers as well as addresses so that they can be contacted easily.

### CV Tips

- There is no such thing as the perfect CV.
- Your CV is the first impression an employer gets of you – make it a good one!
- CVs should be typed and no longer than two sheets of an A4 (not double sided) page.
- A photograph on a CV is optional and depends upon company policy. In general one is not required.
- CVs should always be accompanied by a covering letter.
- Adapt your CV for each job for which you apply.
- Use positive, businesslike language and concise phrases.
- Use action verbs (e.g. manage, organise, develop) to quantify your experience. Do not repeat details common to several positions.
- Put yourself in the employers' shoes: what are they looking for? Have you researched the company, read the job/person specification to check that you have the skills required.
- Emphasise the skills you have developed – through part time jobs, voluntary work, community work, hobbies, clubs, sports and courses.
- Make sure you give concrete evidence to back up the skills you say you have.
- Visit the Guidance Counsellor for examples of CVs or make an appointment to discuss your own CV.

- Ask someone to read your CV before you send it. Check for spelling and grammatical errors.
- Always retain a copy of your CV on disk. This makes it easier to update when information changes.
- Photocopy your CV on the best quality (bonded A4) paper – a poorly presented CV does not create a good first impression!

**Tips for Electronically Scanned CVs (ESCVs)**

- ESCVs refer to the increased use by companies of high-speed scanners for short-listing candidates.
- Normally, a company will warn you in advance if they are using this system.
- The system reads the text and extracts key data such as name, address, phone number, skills, qualifications, previous employers and positions. These key data are matched with the requirements for the job on offer.
- Use normal typeface like ‘courier’.
- Do not underline or use italics
- Pages should not be stapled
- Text should be on one side of the page only.
- Use plain, white A4 paper
- The applicant’s name should be the first text on the CV. Addresses and telephone numbers should not be on the same line as the name.

**PREPARING A COVER LETTER**

A cover letter should accompany any CV you send when applying for a position in an organisation. It is particularly important to send if your CV is unsolicited and speculative.

**What should be included in a covering letter?**

- A covering letter should state the reason that you are writing to the prospective employer/organisation – whether it is a speculative letter or in response to an advertisement. It should be no longer than one page in length. Keep it simple and to the point. It is preferable to type covering letters onto best quality (bonded A4) paper.
- Do not write “Dear Sir” or “Dear Madam” on letters. Always address your letter to the relevant person in the company – get a name! A simple phone call to the organisation will establish who is in charge of recruitment.
- Make sure you get names, addresses and titles exactly right. Sloppy addressing can turn an employer off you at first glance!
- Tailor your letter to suit the company and the job for which you are applying. Use it to highlight relevant parts of your CV.
- Be positive in your letter. The covering letter creates a first impression and sets the tone of the application.
- Always check spelling and grammar.
- Keep copies of all letters you send out. It may be some months before the company replies by which time you will have forgotten what you wrote in your letter.

### Cover Letter Tips

- A covering letter need only be one A4 side, and it should not simply repeat what is said on the CV.
- The cover letter should explain why you are writing e.g. in response to an advertisement, or on a speculative basis, why you want to work for the company, why you want the job and why you would be great for the job.
- Always end cover letters on a positive note e.g. I look forward to hearing from you.

### Cover Letter Samples

For good examples of cover letters – both speculative letters and letters answering advertisements, check out the following link: [Careers4graduates.org](http://Careers4graduates.org) – Ireland's first career planning website.

### TIPS FOR APPLICATION FORMS

- Make a copy of the form.
- Gather information about the company and about yourself.
- Read the employer literature, check information in the careers service and the website.
- Make sure you are aware of any topical issues facing the company.
- Find out as much as you can about the job function – especially important in competitive areas such as marketing and advertising.
- Draft your answers to ensure they fit in the space provided – give evidence of same through examples taken from academic work, work experience, etc.
- Make sure your form is clean and legible.
- Pay particular attention to instructions regarding the colour of ink and use of capitals.
- Be careful about spelling and punctuation – if necessary word-process your application first and use a spell check, but beware of American spellings e.g. license as opposed to licence.
- Never leave a section blank unless it is clearly inappropriate for you (in which case you enter 'n/a').
- Remember to sign and date your final form.
- Keep a copy of your answers as they may be used as a basis for discussion/interview – and they will come in useful for future forms.