



WRITING AN EFFECTIVE CV

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LIFE AFTER COLLEGE



- Job hunting is full of hurdles.
- What is the most effective way of evading the first hurdles at the front office?
- Send an emissary (CV).



So, What is a CV?

Definition:

- **A curriculum vitae (CV) is a short account of the academic qualifications, accomplishments and other relevant skills a person has to offer a potential employer.**



What is the Role of the CV?

- From your point of view:
 - ✓ Primary focus is to sell yourself to get an interview, not the job
 - ✓ Demonstrate in the CV that you have the skills, experience and motivation for the job targeted.
- From the employers' point of view, the CV helps to:
 - ✓ Weed out unsuitable candidates quickly.
 - ✓ Make a shortlist of candidates to interview.





Things to Note

- Never send a CV alone, dispatch with a covering letter.
- Your CV being your first contact with a potential employer, **first impressions** matter.
- **How the CV is written is as important as what it contains.**
- Since your CV is **competing** with many other CVs, it needs to show **immediately** that you have the:
 - ✓ Relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes.
 - ✓ Necessary experience.
 - ✓ Motivation for the job.
- One obvious but often overlooked aspect of good CV writing is proof-reading for spelling, punctuation and other errors.





Matching your CV with the Task



- Tailor your CV to each post you apply for; It is not a ‘one size fits all’ facility.
- Before editing your CV, research the company you are writing to:
 - ✓ Do they have a mission statement or core values?
 - ✓ What will they be looking for in you?
 - ✓ Who works there at the moment?
 - ✓ What are they passionate about?



Proving your Suitability

There are four main things employers will look for in CVs:

- **Education** - ability to think clearly, analyse and assess information, draw conclusions, research capacity.
- **Work experience** – accomplishments, ability to work in teams, capacity to work under pressure.
- **Interests** - ability to plan and organize, co-operation with others, competitiveness, leadership.
- **Specific skills** – e.g. computer skills, communication skills, artistic skills.



Basic Structure of a CV

- Personal details
- Personal statement or career objective
- Educational profile
- Awards (if you have any)
- Work experience
- Personal skills / attributes
- Interests/extra curricular activities
- References



Personal Details

- Use Name (as a heading rather than ‘CV’)
- Address (Work and home)
- Telephone number
- Email address
 - ✓ Preferably, use a professional email address (if available)
- The following are not requirements, but if you wish, you can include: Nationality, Gender, Date of birth.
- **Leave out religion and political affiliation.**



Career Objective

- Your career objective tells the employer what you are really looking for in a position.
- The purpose is to highlight key points that you want an employer to know about you (e.g. skills, experience, career goal).
- Less is more. 1 – 3 sentences, maximum of 4 lines.
- Use strong, positive language that you can prove.
- But avoid using superlatives, you can not prove or demonstrate:
“I am the best synthetic chemist you can find”.



Educational Profile

- Should be written in reverse chronological order (start with the most recent).
- Don't forget your current study.
 - ✓ You might like to mention any exceptional achievements.
- Include the years of study, with grades and name of the Institution.
- Relevance – no need to include a comprehensive list of every topic studied.
- The older the qualification, the less detail you give.



Educational Profile

Sept 2012-July 2016 **University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya**

BSc Chemistry:

Achieved First class honours

Jan 2008-Nov 2011 **Achievers Academy, Nakuru, Kenya**

KCSE: Mean grade A-

Jan 2000-Nov 2007 **Consolata Primary School, Nairobi, Kenya**

KCPE: A-



Awards

- Awards demonstrate your achievements to your employer.
- Give the award details in quantifiable terms.

e.g. Awarded the Unilever prize for the best student in chemistry in 2017.

- Given a certificate for the best final year chemistry project in 2017.



Skills Profile and Personal Attributes

- This section tells the employer what skills you have that fit the position they are looking for.
- **Emphasize skills and attributes which are relevant to the job/employer/sector.**
- Don't just list skills and attributes, provide evidence. Try to describe the skill you have and how you have demonstrated it.
 - ✓ **Good communication skills** – I have been a member of the debating team at college.
 - ✓ **Basic computer skills** – I regularly use email to communicate with people and the internet to research topics of interest.



Work Experience

- Generally listed in reverse chronological order.
- Show dates you were there and your job title.
- Show the employer/organisation name, broad location and if helpful, the nature of the duty you performed.
- There is no need to list every job you've ever had – detail the most relevant.
- Don't just list your duties– sell your skills. Which skills are relevant to the position/company you are applying to?
- Dates, name of company, position and skills acquired.



Work Experience Employment

**Sept 2012-July 2016 Glaxo-Smithline, Nairobi, Kenya
Research and Development Division**

Laboratory technician

- set up apparatus for preparation of novel compounds
- carried out syntheses and tested resulting products using mass spectrometry
- compiled reports of work carried out
- presented work reports at weekly meetings



Interests and Activities

- This section is optional. Avoid using the heading “hobbies”
- It demonstrates breadth of personality.
- Socializing with friends doesn't count.
- Sports, clubs, charities, cultural activities.
- Be aware of current affairs.
- Think about what value the information adds to your CV – what are you trying to get across?; how will it help to persuade an employer to interview me?
- Only include things which you are happy to be interrogated about in an interview.



Interests and Activities

- Choose interests and activities which can demonstrate skills relevant to the job such as:
 - ✓ Teamwork: Debating
 - ✓ Organizing: Conferencing
 - ✓ Commitment
 - ✓ Your intellectual abilities: Reading
 - ✓ Your personality
 - ✓ Your artistic ability



References

- This is the final part of the CV.
- Provide the contact details of your referees (name, address, job title, telephone no. and email address).
- **Out of courtesy, call your referees first and ask their willingness to act as a referee.**
- It is usual to provide two referees – ideally one academic and the other preferably work related.
- Use relevant references, if possible.
- **For first time job seekers, keep your CV to 2 pages maximum.**



What is a Cover Letter?

- Never send a CV alone, accompany it with a covering letter.
- The cover letter reflects your communication skills and to some extent your personality.
- **Paragraph 1** introduce yourself, what you are applying for, where you saw it.
- **Paragraph 2** why do you want to work in this job/activity?
- **Paragraph 3** why do you want to work for this company?
- **Paragraph 4** why you are a suitable candidate, what relevant skills and experience do you bring?
- **Paragraph 5** – In closing, refer to your CV and availability and propose a step for further action.



Online CV Templates

- Online tips on building CV are widely available.
- You can build your Europass CV

(<https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/documents/curriculum-vitae>)



FINALLY!!!

- Good luck in writing a good cover letter and an impressive CV.
- It is good practice to leave a copy of your CV at the Chairman's office at the end of your programme.

THANK YOU!