

Thinking about a CV

There are a few things to bear in mind about a CV, (and many of these apply, also, to your online profile.)

There are different expectations for, say, an academic CV and a CV for professionals: you need to know what people will expect in your context.

Less is often more: a CV can be thought of as a teaser document. You want to give enough information that people want to meet you; but not so much that they have no unanswered questions.

Target your CV to what you want to be, not to what you are coming from. If you are exploring several different options, develop different CVs (and keep track of which you send to whom!)

Read relevant job advertisements to see what qualities (personal as well as professional) are required, and be sure to demonstrate them wherever possible. Job descriptions tell you the skills that you will need to demonstrate; person specifications tell you the personal qualities that you will need to convey.

Don't waste the top third of your CV by filling it with contact details: have a single line for them. There is depressing research that suggests employers only spend thirty seconds glancing at CV for their first look, most of it focused on the top half of the first page: use that space carefully.

After your name and a contact line, start with a brief profile: who you are and what you are looking for.

Ensure that your CV emphasises your strengths and your achievements: these are what will make people want to meet you.

Where possible, quantify achievements, or describe the organisational benefits realised by your contribution.

Unless long CVs are standard in your type of work, stick to two pages or less.

Get someone else to proof-read it. It is all too easy to overlook our own typos, and even grammatical errors, and they significantly detract from the first impression that you are seeking to make.

Get people inside your target organisations to give you feedback on your CV and how to improve, focus or strengthen it to make it more compelling: use Information Meetings (qv) for this.

Consider how to convey a consistent image online: on Linked In and any role-specific sites that are relevant.