

iCount

CV writing and interview skills



imagination at work

Why does it matter?

Writing effective job applications which get you an interview, and then knowing how to present yourself to your best advantage when you're face-to-face with an interviewer, could be the difference between taking any job that's available and taking control of your own future

What would you rather do?

Your priorities

Decide what job you would like to do. Then think about what would be **MOST** important to you at work such as:

- Small vs. large company
- Individual v team culture
- Contribution to society
- Long term v job hopping
- Compensation philosophy
- Salary v benefits
- Regular reviews?
- Work/life balance
- Career development
- Investment in the future
- Meritocracy v seniority
- Training
- Professional
- Leadership

Know what motivates YOU

Writing your CV

Writing your CV

Your Curriculum Vitae (Latin for 'course of life') is a snapshot of who you are and what you have done in your life so far.

Career focus

- Must highlight relevant skills and achievements

CV basics

- Sole purpose is to get an interview
- CV will be used by the interviewer
- Poorly laid out CVs are likely to be binned
- Use 11 or 12 point size and easy-to-read font
- Leave empty spaces
- Ideal length is 2 pages

Suggested CV structure

Name and contact details
Career goal
Summary of skills List 3 or 4 skills which are relevant to your career goal
Education Name of school/college plus key subjects and grades obtained
Awards (only if applicable)
Positions held (only if applicable)
Work experience
Personal activities

CV content – summary of skills

Focus on skills which are relevant to the type of post you are looking for.
Examples might include:

CV content – summary of skills

Focus on skills which are relevant to the type of post you are looking for. Examples might include:

- Organisational
- Communication
- Computer literacy
- Leadership
- Craft skills
- Numeracy
- Persuasion
- Design
- Problem solving
- Teamwork

For each of the 3 or 4 skills you have selected, write 2/3 concise statements giving examples of how you have used it.

CV content – work experience

Try to describe what you were responsible for rather than just what you did.

Example: Part-time supermarket assistant

Duties included:

- | | | |
|---|----|---|
| • Showing customers where they can find items | OR | • Ensuring customer satisfaction when selecting goods |
| • Working on the tills on busy Saturdays | OR | • Handling money accurately |
| • Setting up new displays | OR | • Achieving a good presentation of goods |
| • Showing new Saturday staff what to do | OR | • Supervising new members of Saturday staff |

Which descriptions are more likely to get you an interview?

Replying to job adverts

What do you think would happen to this application?

31 May 2008

Ms Harriet Irving
12 Bluebell Meadow
Hadley
Winchester
Hampshire SO23 8AZ

Dear Sir/Madam

I am riting about the job in todays Echo.

I will be leeving school in 2 weeks and wood like to work for a company which is close to home. Also the monney looks good.

Please give me a ring about an interviewe. I work part time but I'll try and get away.

Yours faithfully

Harriet Irving

PS Wood I get money off clothes?

Replying to job adverts

- Put YOUR complete address
- Provide name, title, position, full organisation name and address as in the advert
- Start Dear and the name – NOT Sir/Madam
- Refer to the job you are applying for and say where you saw the advert
- Say why you are applying and why you would make a good candidate. Refer to any relevant experience
- State how you can be contacted
- Sign off with 'Yours sincerely'
- Check it carefully for spelling and grammar get someone else to check too
- Keep a copy

31 May 2008

Ms Harriet Irving
12 Bluebell Meadow
Hadley
Winchester
Hampshire SO23 8AZ

Mr John Fletcher
Shop Manager
Trendline
44 Wellington Street
Winchester
Hampshire SO27 8DQ

Dear Mr Fletcher

Job vacancy for Trainee in Fashion Sales

I am very interested in your advertisement in today's copy of the "Winchester Echo" for the position of Trainee in Fashion Sales and I have pleasure in enclosing my CV as requested.

I will be leaving school in 2 weeks' time and would like a job in which I can meet the general public and use my strong interpersonal skills. I very much enjoyed my week's work experience at Sainsbury's Supermarkets when I helped customers, displayed the stock and handled money but would prefer to work in fashion sales for my career.

I would welcome the opportunity of discussing my application further at an interview. I can be contacted on 01926 778899 or 07786 234567 [or email address if you have one].

Yours sincerely

Harriet Irving

Approaching employers yourself

You don't have to wait for an advert to appear once you have decided on the type of work you want and have a CV prepared.

Finding the contacts

- Directories e.g. Yell.com
- Corporate websites for background
- Call for name of Human Resources Manager

Send your CV

- Write a covering letter
- Don't count on immediate results
- Good potential candidates are worth keeping on file

Application forms – top tips

Most employers expect you to complete an application form and a CV

1. Copy the form and fill in the copy as a rough draft
2. Read any completion instructions carefully
3. Never leave blank spaces – put N/A if a section doesn't apply to you
4. Do the easy bits first – name, address, date of birth etc.
5. Details of work experience – include any part time or holiday jobs
6. Reason for leaving – not a problem on your first job
7. Why you are applying – think about this one carefully
8. Write a short letter when you send the form back
9. Send your CV as well if it hasn't already been sent
10. Take a copy of the completed form

Summary of key points

- Prepare a CV before you start looking and get other people to read it
- Focus on skills and achievements that are relevant to the type of work you want
- Make sure your CV is well laid out and easy to read – clear print and 2 pages
- Always send a covering letter with your CV when replying to adverts
- Get application forms copied and complete a draft on the COPY
- Keep a copy of application forms you are sending in

Interview skills

Prepare for typical questions

Tell me about yourself? or Give me a brief overview of your background?

Why are you interested in this position?

Tell me about your technical skills

What do you consider are your biggest accomplishments?

What do you know about this organisation?

What are your strengths? (You may be asked to rank them)

What are your weaknesses? (Again, you may be asked to rank them)

What are your goals? or Where do you want to be in X years?

Do you have any questions for me?

In the interview

Make a positive impression

- Views are formed instantly and are likely to stay for 90% of the interview
 - Dress smartly and avoid bright colours
 - Don't use strongly scented perfume/cologne
 - Arrive on time
 - Treat everyone you meet with respect
 - Greet the interviewer with confidence – firm handshake and smile
 - Don't slouch or lean forward

In the interview

- Show positive behaviour
- Keep good eye contact with the interviewer at all times
- Listen carefully to questions – don't answer until the speaker has finished
- Don't be afraid to ask for clarification if you haven't fully understood a question
- Stick to what you have been asked – don't go off at a tangent or ramble
- If you'd like to know more about something you're told, speak up
- Take your time before answering in-depth questions
- Always be positive and honest when talking about achievements
- Have some questions ready when the interviewer asks for them

In the interview

Leave on a high note

- If you realise the job isn't what you're looking for, say so politely, explain why and thank the interviewer for their time
- Otherwise, thank the interviewer and tell them you are looking forward to hearing from them
- If you don't get the position, contact the interviewer and ask if they would give you some feedback – there may be something you can improve next time

Summary of key points

- Research the organisation before the interview
- Think about how you will answer common interview questions
- Plan examples of skills you have used which are relevant to this job
- Present yourself positively through dress, punctuality and attitude
- Show positive behaviour through eye contact, listening skills and well thought out answers to questions
- Make sure you have 2 - 4 good questions to ask

Interview practice (optional)

Typical questions

One question per person – 10 minutes to prepare

Maximum 2 minutes to answer

1. Tell me about yourself
2. What do you consider is your biggest accomplishment?
3. What are your 3 greatest strengths in descending order?
4. What are your weaknesses?



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