

The “Don’ts” in writing a CV

Here are 8 common mistakes candidates often make in their CVs that you can easily overcome.

1. Don’t ‘recycle’ your CV

In other words, do not send exactly the same CV to every employer.

An effective way to customize your CV and sharpen your focus is to add a section called "Summary of Qualifications," or "Profile". This can be a powerful resume opener that draws the reader in; it can be part of the top third of your resume that showcases your best selling points, catches the prospective employer's attention, and immediately demonstrates your value as a candidate for that specific job.

2. Don’t describe duties. Focus on achievements.

Every candidate is expected to perform basic duties. And what employers look for when scanning CVs are achievements. You need to focus on what you achieved in your job under each job function, not just list the duties given to you.

Include how you have helped your employers to make/save money, save time, improve workflow, expand business, attract or retain customers, increase market share, reduce complaints etc. The achievements you list should support your career goals.

3. Don’t ignore the formatting and layout of your CV.

The following are simple but effective rules that make your CV easy to read and pleasant to the eye - which is critical when the hiring manager has piles and piles of resumes to go through.

- **Ensure overall spacing and layout is neat & tidy.** Do not decrease font size and squeeze contents just to fit into 1 or 2 pages.
- **Be consistent.** Stick to a preferred format throughout - bulleted points or paragraphs.
- **Always start with listing your work experience** (unless you’re a fresh graduate then education may have to come first). Work experience must be listed in reverse chronology. Begin with the job title followed by organization and lastly the dates.
- **Highlight your skills/knowledge.** If you have key qualifications to the job opening (e.g. systems proficiency for IT jobs) put them in the summary section in the top third of your CV.
- **Ensure your resume is in its intended format.** Do not overlook the possibility that your CV may appear skewed when you send it in an electronic format. Send it to a friend first to ensure that the formatting appears consistently from computer to computer.

4. Don’t forget keywords.

Employers' reliance on keywords to find the candidates they want to interview has increased in recent years because of technology. If you apply for a job with a company that searches databases for keywords, and your resume doesn't have the keywords the company seeks for the person who fills that job, your CV will most likely be overlooked entirely.

5. Don’t list references directly on your CV.

List specific references on a separate sheet, and submit them *only* when specifically requested by an employer.

6. Don't list more than 15 years' experience on your resume.

The rule of thumb for someone with many years of experience is to list about 15 years worth of jobs. Age discrimination, unfortunately, is a reality, and even more likely, employers may think you're too expensive if you list too much experience on your resume.

7. Don't forget to attach a cover letter

Many applicants forget to attach or feel it is not important to attach a cover letter especially when applying for a job via email or online. Cover letters should be tailored to each specific company you are applying to. **It is essential to address it to a specific individual.** You can usually find out who this is through research or simply by calling the company to find out who you should address your letter to.

The letter should name the position for which you are applying. Indicate your knowledge of and interest in the work the company is currently doing, and your qualification for the position. You want the reader to know:

- why you want to work at that specific company,
- why you fit with that company
- how you qualify for the position to which you applying.

8. Do not lie

Do not lie on your resume. In the event that employer checks on your background, you will lose your credibility and be permanently 'blacklisted'.

CV CHECKLIST

Use the list below to critique your resume. If you can tick off every question, you have an excellent resume - and an excellent chance of getting an interview. If not, go back and make a few changes to your resume.

- **Overall Layout :** Is the layout/format pleasing to the eye?
- **Choice of Words:** Do you sound positive and confident: neither too aggressive nor overly modest? Do sentences and paragraphs begin with action verbs?
- **Goal Focused:** Does the content support objective?
- **Length:** Could it be better put in short, succinct points? Are you struggling to fill a page?
- **Relevance:** Is the material sequenced in order of importance and relevance? Has extraneous material been eliminated?
- **Specificity:** Does the resume avoid generalities and focus on specific information about experience, projects, products, etc.?
- **Completeness:** Are all-important information included?
- **Bottom Line/Targeted Focus:** How well does the resume accomplish its ultimate purpose of getting the employer to interview this applicant? Is it focused enough so that the employer is clear on what kind of position the applicant is seeking?
- **Quantified Results:** Are results of your past work experiences quantified when possible?