

Wellington Careers and Employment

Career Essentials—Your CV

A curriculum vitae (CV) or résumé refers to the professional document that you submit to employers to apply for a job. Your CV is a marketing tool that describes how your skills, experience, and personality are suitable for a specific role. Your aim in creating and distributing your CV is to be offered an interview each time.

Preparation

There is no one correct format for a CV. Everyone you ask and every website you refer to will have different advice on how to produce one. Employers will also have their own preferences for CVs. Here are a few guidelines to help you prepare a generic chronological CV. Researching each role before you apply is essential for producing a suitable CV style relevant to that industry.

Targeting It's essential to determine your market audience: the person who will be reading your CV. Try to identify the requirements of your prospective employer, the position, industry, company, and culture. Not all the information collected in your brainstorming exercise will be used in every CV. You will need to highlight your experiences and skills that are particularly relevant to the position you are applying for. It may be helpful to have a 'master' CV that contains the most comprehensive information about you.

Content

Headings and sections Make each heading clear and distinct from the previous section. This makes it easier for the employer to find the information quickly. Within each section, use reverse chronological order beginning with your most recent experience. Ensure the most important information in each section is immediately under the heading so that it will be noticed easily (e.g., job titles). Additional sub-headings may help clarify information further.

Personal details These are essential but need to be brief, and a heading itself is not necessary. Have your name in large font at the top. Always include a phone number and professional email address. It's optional to include your mailing address. Where appropriate, include your residency or citizenship status. Details such as date of birth, gender, marital status, and health are not required. It's optional to include a head and shoulders photo.

Career objective or Personal statement This is optional and assists the reader to know exactly what type of position you want. Use short sentences to describe your employment goal, what industry you want to be in, and briefly what skills, knowledge, and/or experience you offer.

Education / Qualifications List the degree you've done (or will be completing), the educational institution, and dates. Start with your most recent and highest qualification and work backwards. If you are a recent graduate, put this section on the first page of your CV.

If your degree has little to do with the position you are applying for, place it after your Skills and Employment sections to draw more attention to those strengths.



Tertiary Provide brief details of specific courses within your degree if they are relevant to the position you are applying for.

Secondary This is optional and should only be included if you completed high school in the last few years. Include achievements, awards, and positions of responsibility from your final year only.

Further Training or Professional Development Under this heading you may wish to include any courses, workshops, and seminars you have attended if they are relevant to the position. State the name of the certificate in full, when you completed it, and the organisation that provided the training. This can sometimes be combined with the Education section if both are relatively brief.

Relevant Skills or Key Skills Ideally, the skills you record here will ‘match’ what is required in each role you apply for. Your skills are gained from a wide range of sources, and can usually be transferred to any environment, industry, or occupation. Each skill may be presented as a sub-heading (e.g., communication, problem solving). Under each skill, use bullet points to provide a brief example of how you have demonstrated that skill so that the employer has concrete evidence of your ability. You may want to include a separate Technical or Scientific skills section for science, IT, design, or other disciplines involving industry-specific skills.

Experience / Employment These could be two separate sections, provided the experience is directly relevant to the role, and could be specifically labelled to the position (e.g., design experience, marketing experience). It can include unpaid work relevant to the job. List your most recent experience first and work backwards. Record the job title, name and location of the organisation, and dates. Using bullet points and a variety of strong promotional verbs, briefly describe your achievements and responsibilities. Do not assume that the reader will have knowledge of the activities associated with the roles you have had. A separate Employment section can include jobs that are less relevant to what you’re applying for and can go later in the document. If you’ve had several part-time or temporary positions, it may not be necessary to list details of every position. It may be simpler to summarise such employment according to industry group or other classification.

Volunteering Relevant voluntary work can be recorded either in the Experience section, or, if less relevant to the job, then in a separate Volunteering section. This can be any community involvement, personal projects, helping family and friends, and extra-curricular activities. Include a little detail about what you achieved in each role.

Achievements / Memberships / Interests These sections are all optional. Achievements can refer to academic awards and personal achievements in extracurricular and work contexts. Mention positions of responsibility you have held, such as class representative, captain or coach of a team, or any special rewards received. Memberships of professional associations should be included.

Referees Include the names and details of two to three referees: people you nominate for the employer to speak with about their knowledge and experience of you. These can be a current or previous employer, a university staff member, a sports coach, or fellow club member. Ask each referee for permission for their information to be recorded on your CV. Keep your referees up to date with your applications and interviews.

A Good CV...

- Has correct spelling and grammar. Ask someone to do a final check of your CV.
- Can be easily read with clear section headings and concise information. Aim for two or three pages.
- Provides maximum relevant information using minimum wording.

