

Hints and tips on compiling your CV¹

Your curriculum vitae (CV) is your 'shop window'. It has to be good enough to get you shortlisted for the interview so that your undoubted qualities have an opportunity to shine through. Looks are all important, so make sure that your application and CV are designed to catch the eye of those doing the shortlisting, especially if you're expecting lots of competition for the post(s) for which you are applying.

Important points

1. A poorly organised CV may be interpreted as evidence of poor communication skills.
 - *Think carefully about the layout.*
 - *Ensure that your strengths are clearly presented.*
 - *Do not be modest.*
2. Do not go into too much detail about your earlier years, but make sure that all dates are correct and there are no gaps. If you have had a career break, be prepared to justify it.
3. Tailor your CV for each application.
 - *Identify important information in the advertisement and the person specification.*
 - *Draw the attention of the people short-listing for interview to your suitability by summarising your key strengths on a front page – that's what the appointment committee really want to know.*
4. Consider a competency-based CV.
 - *Explain how it is that you are competent for the job for which you have applied – this does not concentrate on what posts you have held, but what you have achieved. It might state, for example, that you learnt basic health-care skills in your previous practice and the enhanced skills you have now from your current post – undertaking spirometry or audits for example.*
 - *Someone applying for a management post might describe the competencies she/he has gained in people and project management through a series of jobs.*
5. Resist the temptation to say 'please see CV' if an application form is required to be filled in.
6. Spelling mistakes are *inexcusable* with word-processed CVs.
 - *Get someone to proof-read it for you to look for other errors. These will be distracting and detract from the content of your application.*
 - *Consider asking a colleague at work for their comments on whether you have organised your CV in a way that is expected (so long as you do not mind them knowing that you are looking for a new job).*
7. Keep your CV short and to the point – do not pad it out with unnecessary words or be repetitive.
 - *Use action words like 'achieved' to start your sentences where you are describing your experience.*

Reference

1. Chambers R (editor). *Career Planning for Everyone in the NHS. The Toolkit*. Oxford: Radcliffe Publishing; 2005.