
14

TRAINING MODULE 14

CVs and application forms



Module updated: 15 July 2021

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Introducing yourself to an employer

Your CV is your chance to let employers know all about you and what you can offer them. The best way to use a CV is to write a general document and then adapt it a bit every time you apply for a job so you can show the skills you have that fit the job you are applying for.

The learning outcomes of module 14

After successfully completing this module, you will:

- Have identified some skills you can refer to in your CV
- Be able to give relevant examples of your skills
- Know some of the key points to keep in mind when writing a CV

Section 1—Your skills and experiences

The first step is to think about the skills you have. They might be doing something you have done before, or they might be transferable skills that you can apply and make use of in a number of different roles. This section will help you to identify the skills that you have gained through various experiences in your lifetime.

Examples of transferable skills are:

action planning	language	presenting
adaptability	leadership	prioritising
computing	learning	problem-solving
creativity	literacy	professionalism
customer service	money management	reliability
decision making	negotiating	team working
delegation	organisation	time management
initiative	persistence	communication



Activity: What relevant experiences do you have?

It can be difficult to think of examples where you have displayed skills that employers are looking for. You can make it easier by thinking about your experiences in the following categories:

- School/college
- Work experience
- Home life

Answer the questions that are relevant to you in the 'Your experience' section and include as much detail as possible. Leave the 'Skills' section blank for now.

Example:

Question	Your experience	Skills
<i>What clubs were you in (at school or outside of school)?</i>	<i>I played on the football team as the goal keeper, I also organised our weekly matches.</i>	

School/College

Question	Your experience	Skills
What clubs were you in (at school or outside of school)?		
What positions of responsibility did you have (e.g. captain of a sports team, role within a club, prefect)?		
What examples do you have of presenting in front of other people (e.g. assemblies, speaking in front of the class, drama classes)?		
Were you involved in creating something (think about technology classes, drama, music or arts)?		

Question	Your experience	Skills
What were your hobbies?		
Did you get any awards or recognition (e.g. certificates, medals, trophies)?		
What did you do that you were proud of?		
Did you have a weekend job (e.g. babysitting, paper round)?		
Did you do any volunteering (e.g. Duke of Edinburgh award, help in the community during citizenship lessons, church)?		

Home life

Question	Your experience	Skills
Have you done any courses or training?		
Did you do any volunteering (e.g. sports coaching, looking after a relative)?		
What are your hobbies?		
Have you helped your family by contributing money or looking after relatives?		

Jobs/Work experience

Questions	Your experience	Skills
Who did you work with?		
What were you responsible for? (e.g. stock checks, helping customers, answering phones)		
What experiences did you have of working in a team?		
What did you do that you were proud of in your job?		

Section 2—Your achievements

It is important to highlight your achievements in your CV, rather than only focusing on your responsibilities. Achievements give the employer practical examples of what you have done.

Responsibility: something which you have a duty to deal with	Achievement: something which you have done you have successfully, by effort or skill.
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Example:

Responsibility: Had to organise a daily stock check.	Achievement: Organised the daily stock check, making sure that any problems were directly communicated to my manager.
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Positive verbs

You can use positive verbs (doing words) to make sure your actions and achievements stand out:

assembled	evaluated	proposed
assisted	expanded	proved
attended	experienced	provided
communicated	improved	repaired
designed	informed	reported
developed	led	researched
directed	motivated	reviewed
edited	organised	selected
encouraged	planned	strengthened
ensured	prepared	supported
established	produced	trained

Remember:

You should **never lie** on your CV. Not only are you likely to be caught out at the interview stage, but if you really don't have the qualifications or skills for the job, you will not be able to do the job. It is better to have a basic CV with strong evidence than an impressive CV with no evidence.

The statements in the table below provide examples of responsibilities you might have at work. Re-write these to turn them into achievements, using the example above to help you.

Responsibility	Achievement
Tasked with arranging the shop shelves	
In charge of creating the menu for the café	
<i>Add in your own from a previous job/work placement/home life:</i>	
<i>Add in your own from a previous job/work placement/home life:</i>	

Example answers: 1. I arranged the shop shelves according to the shelving policy communicated to me
 2. I created the menu for the café and managed the design and printing processes with the printers



Activity: Turning experiences into skills

Now that you have identified these experiences, the next step is to show and communicate the skills you demonstrated in each situation. Go back through each of your responses in the table of your experiences in section 1 and highlight the parts which you think required a skill. Then in the 'Skills' column, write the skill, and if you can think of one, a specific achievement that supports it.

Section 3—Writing a CV

Once you have a list of skills and evidence for them, you can start putting your information into a CV. CV stands for “Curriculum Vitae”, which means “course of life” in Latin. Your CV is a short written summary of your career, qualifications, and education—the course of your life so far. Alternatively, a job may require you to fill out an application form, which will generally require the same kind of information.

Step 1: Read the job description carefully

Before you even start writing your CV, make sure you have read the description of the job you are applying for carefully, taking note of any keywords and requirements. Compare everything you write to the job description to see if the person you are describing is someone you would hire for the job.

Step 2: Find a template

There are hundreds of CV templates online so you may find it helpful to pick one that you like rather than working from scratch. Go for one that is tailored to your situation to make your CV as relevant as possible. For example, if you have been out of work for a while, go for a template designed for people who have had gaps in employment. Make sure you also choose a simple design to make it easier to read and keep the focus on you and your experience.

Step 3: Fill out your basic information

The CV should include your name, phone number, email address, and home address clearly at the top.

Tip: Make sure your email address is professional and easy to remember! `firstname.lastname@emailservice.com` is a safe format to follow, e.g. `jessica.smith@gmail.com`.

Step 4: Write your personal profile

This is a brief description of who you are. If you are unsure how to write one, write a sentence about your current or most recent occupation, a sentence about your most valuable skills and assets, and a sentence about your career aspirations. Remember to reference your experience and keep it short and relevant to the job description.

Step 5: List your education and employment history

Your CV should include the name of each school you attended and company you worked for with start and end dates for each. Further information can be included under each position, such as your grades or key responsibilities and achievements.

Rather than trying to list everything you did, focus on the areas where your experience overlaps the job description, and add a bullet point for each skill, accomplishment or responsibility at the position relevant to the role you are applying for. Even if it is not mentioned directly in the job description, anything which demonstrates your ability to learn, work hard, cooperate, and perform well should be included.

Tip: Expect anything you write to be asked about in the interview! Only write what you are confident you can back up.

You can leave out anything that does not support your application, like bad grades or jobs that did not last.

Step 6: Other details and finishing touches

Add other information like where you have volunteered, interests that are relevant to the position, and so on, then make sure everything fits neatly on 2 pages or less, the formatting is consistent, and the spelling and grammar are correct.

Example CV: Chronological

Sometimes known as a traditional or a graduate CV, a chronological CV is used to match your qualifications and work experience with the requirements for the job role. This type of CV is structured in reverse chronological order i.e. the most recent qualifications and experience are listed first.

Jo Smith
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I am a final-year maths undergraduate with customer service and sales experience in the energy industry. As a tutor and maths club coordinator I can explain maths concepts to all ages and abilities. I am keen to use my maths and commercial skills to train as an energy industry analyst.

Education

University of Birmingham (2018-2021)

BSc (Hons) Mathematics. Predicted 2:1.

Modules included mathematical modelling, mathematics in industry, real and complex analysis and mathematical finance.

Any Town High School (2010-2017)

A-levels: maths, physics, chemistry. AS-level geography.

9 GCSEs including English language and English literature.

Employment

Inbound customer service adviser, Energex UK call centre (2018-2020)

- Helping customers assess energy costs and tariffs
- Ensuring quality and compliance standards during the switching process
- Meeting and exceeding sales targets consistently

Maths tutoring for 11+ (2017-2018)

- Assessing pupils level of maths and confidence in their abilities
- Preparing and delivering individual lessons
- 100% pass rate of students

Volunteering

Coordinated Year 7 and 8 lunchtime maths club (2015-2017)

I started Maths Buzz so younger pupils could enjoy and succeed at maths. I had to publicise the group and recruit members. I also had to devise a programme of weekly activities. We had a waiting list at the end of the first term and teachers reported that pupils were achieving more in class as a result of the club.

Activities and achievements

- Anytown High School Heads' Award for School Service for creating and running Maths Buzz
- Duke of Edinburgh Bronze and Silver Awards.

Sports

- Member of Birmingham University Cricket 2nd XI
- Captain of Anytown School Cricket 1st XI

Example CV: School leaver

If you have recently left school and do not have much work or university experience, focus on the accomplishments and experience you do have. Do not try to pad things out, as a school leaver you are not expected to have much experience yet. Focus on presenting the experience you do have with as much relevance to the job as possible. Bullet points with key skills and achievements are a good way to do this.

Ellie Johnson

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I'm planning a business degree, either part-time through an apprenticeship or on a full-time course. My aim is to go into finance. An online business summer school showed me what a vast and varied world this is. During my work experience, I saw how different jobs fit together in a finance department and how a company plans its finances and runs its business systems in the short, medium and long term. My part-time job at Big Stores gives me practical experience in a small branch of a large organisation.

Education and Qualifications

Thistown Central Academy - A levels (2020)

Business A, Maths B, Computer Science B

GCSEs - Grades 9-4 (2018)

English Language, French, Spanish, PE, Art and Design, Computer Science, History, Maths, Combined Science

Employment and Work Experience

Big Stores Minimart (2019 - present)

Starting as a shelf stacker I progressed to till operator and am now a team leader. I contribute to:

- Staff shift pattern, including early mornings and lates, making sure all areas are covered
- Security of premises, sometimes unlocking and locking up, including cash handling
- Customer service, including complaints and returns
- Monitoring sell-by dates and minimising waste, reordering and stock control.

Thistown College Business and Finance Summer School (July 2020)

Five-day online programme covering:

- Business models, economic theory and concepts, marketing and business strategy
- Seminars with business leaders
- Group work presentation on a business case study.

Thistown Engineering Ltd, Finance Department (July 2019)

Two weeks work experience in the finance department of a local SME:

- Helping with the migration of financial information across IT systems, using my IT skills
- Spending a day in different areas of the department, including shadowing the finance director.

Year 13 Charity Rep on School Council (2019-2020)

Working with reps from other year groups to organise the school's charity fundraising. I was involved in:

- Getting suggestions from my year group about charities to support and which events to run
- Planning events and organising volunteers to help
- Being responsible for cash during events
- Reporting back to the Head after each event (what we learned, how would we do it next time).
- References available on request

Remember:

- **Match your CV to the job:** Employers can spot ‘one size fits all’ CVs a mile off so make sure yours stands out by tailoring your CV to fit the job you are applying for. Pick out the required skills listed in the job description and adapt your examples.
- **Keep it short:** A good CV is never longer than two sides of A4—if yours is longer than this, trim the least relevant parts. Leave a space between sections and do not use a font size smaller than 11.
- **Keep it simple:** Use simple language, stick to the point, and avoid repetition. There are no prizes for fancy prose here—recruiters spend an average of 5-7 seconds looking at each CV so you need to make them count!
- **Recommend yourself:** Your CV is your opportunity to show off your skills and accomplishments, so there is no need to be modest—other applicants are likely to be giving themselves 5-star reviews so you deserve one too! Be honest, but make the most positive case you can that you are right for the job.
- **Give examples:** Most of us are guilty of having written a CV full of buzzwords like ‘teamwork’ and ‘communication skills’ without explaining what we mean by them. Anyone can say they’re organised, so make sure you give an example and be ready to back it up.
- **Use keywords:** Many employers now use key word searches to see how relevant your CV is to the job, so pick out the most important words from the job description and use them. Once you have finished, save the document as your name so that it is easier for people to find.
- **Check, check and check again:** A single spelling mistake could be enough to make a recruiter pass on your CV, so read it a few times to make sure everything is correct. Why not ask someone else to read it over too? A fresh pair of eyes will often help to spot things you have missed.
- **Include a cover letter:** Cover letters are a great way to make a more personal appeal while still keeping your CV clean. If you have any gaps in your work history, this is a good place to explain them.
- **Be aware of your online presence:** The first thing most prospective employers will do after reading your CV is google you. Make sure your social media profiles are private and photos of your last big night out are hidden! Also, if you have a LinkedIn profile, make sure your CV matches it so that you appear consistent.

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