

Hints and tips on compiling your CV

Your curriculum vitae (CV) is your 'shop window.' It has to be good enough to get you short-listed for 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) you are going for.¹

Important points

1. A poorly organised CV may be interpreted as evidence of poor communication skills, therefore you should:
 - *think carefully about the layout*
 - *ensure that your strengths are clearly presented*
 - *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 to account for. If you have had a career break, be prepared to justify it.
3. Make sure your CV is neat, legible and typed (if possible).
4. Tailor your CV for each application:
 - *identify important information in the advertisement and the person specification*
 - *draw the attention of the short-listers to your suitability by summarising your key strengths on a front page – this is what the appointment committee really want to know.*
5. Consider a competence-based CV:
 - *explain why you are competent for the job you have applied for – this does not concentrate on what posts you have held, but on what you have achieved. So it might state that you learnt basic health care skills in your previous practice and the enhanced skills you have now from your current post – eg undertaking spirometry or audits*
 - *an applicant for a management post might describe the competences she/he has gained in people and project management through a series of jobs.*
6. Resist the temptation to say 'please see CV' if an application form must be filled in.
7. Spelling mistakes are inexcusable with wordprocessed CVs:
 - *ask someone to proofread it for you for errors, these will detract from the content of your application*
 - *consider asking a colleague at work for their comments on whether or not you have organised your CV in a way that is expected (provided you do not mind them knowing that you are looking for a new job).*
8. Keep your CV short and to the point – do not pad it out with unnecessary words and avoid repetition:
 - *use action words like 'achieved' to start the 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.