



## RCN Career Service

# Tips for completing application forms and CVs

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The first step in convincing a potential employer to select you for a post in nursing is to write an effective application form or curriculum vitae (CV).

### Writing a CV

Your CV is your personal marketing tool, used to show an employer that you have the necessary skills and professional, educational and personal experience to undertake a particular role. Your CV can be used for the following:

- in response to a job advert that asks you to apply in writing
- whenever you are asked to enclose a CV along with a standard application form
- whenever you feel that an employer's standard application form does not cover all of the points you would like to raise – however, you should always complete the application form as well
- to make speculative applications – that is, to generate interviews for a post which you'd like to apply for but have not seen advertised.

### Preparing to write your CV

Start by making a list of your experience and posts held, beginning with the most recent. For each post held, list the date of employment, name of employer, job title, your responsibilities and your main achievements.

Next, gather together all your educational certificates and make a list, working backwards chronologically, of the courses you have undertaken and qualifications gained, including dates and names of educational establishments. You should also list any professional activities – articles published, papers presented at conferences, membership of professional groups, etc.

### Format

There is no single perfect format for a CV. Ideally it should be logical, clear and concise and should ensure maximum attention is given to your strengths. Make sure your CV follows these basic rules:

- **personal details** – include your name, address, preferred contact telephone number and email address, if applicable. You don't need to provide your date of birth, nationality or marital status
- **opening statement** – provide a couple of sentences that summarise your personal and professional qualities. If you have a lot of experience you may want to include three or four major professional achievements as bullet points after the statement
- **experience** – begin with your most recent post and list dates, position(s) held and the name of the employer. Include three or four of the responsibilities

you held at your most recent and senior posts and three or four major achievements relevant to the position which you are applying for. Go through the job description and person specification if there is one

- **education** – provide details of your professional qualifications and education to date. Include your NMC pin number and expiry date
- **professional activities** – include a list of articles published, membership of professional groups and papers delivered at conferences
- **personal** – you may want to include extra information, such as your interests or voluntary work undertaken, but do so in general terms and only if they are relevant to the job. You might also include whether you hold a driving licence.

An example of a CV that uses the above format is given on page 6.

### General tips

- Try to use ‘action’ words, such as the following:

co-ordinated	created	developed	established	fulfilled	identified
implemented	improved	initiated	launched	managed	motivated
negotiated	organised	produced	undertook	completed	trained

- Try to omit the pronoun ‘I’.
- Explain gaps in your paid employment – for example, in order to raise a family. Remember that caring for a family member is a responsible job. You should also think about any achievements you have gained through voluntary work, such as serving on a school governors board.
- Try to use numbers to create an impact. For example, ‘managed a team of 30 staff’, ‘responsible for a budget of £500,000’.
- Do not exceed two pages. If you have a lot of experience, simply summarise positions you held more than ten years ago. If you have published a lot of articles, select the most important ones and summarise the others – for example, ‘more than 50 articles published in the nursing press on aspects of diabetes care, professional development and education’.
- Use good quality paper.
- Avoid the use of too many font styles. Fancy typefaces and borders are generally not needed.
- Avoid the use of abbreviations that will not be recognised easily.
- Inclusion of contact details for referees is optional. Add them if you are happy for them to be contacted.
- Enclose a covering letter which highlights the main points of your CV and how they relate to the post for which you are applying.
- Finally, get at least two people to proof read your CV for errors. Ask for constructive feedback on whether it is easy to read and if it makes an impact.

## Application forms

Increasingly, job applications are completed online. This has the advantage of allowing you to spell check documents and correct mistakes easily. Plus you can save the document on your computer and copy and paste relevant information to future application forms. Do be careful however, that you tailor your application to the particular job and don't copy over irrelevant information from previous applications. Make sure you provide all the information requested and don't press the 'send' button until you are completely happy with the end result. The following tips should help you complete paper application forms successfully:

- always do what the form asks, for example, complete in black ink and use block capitals, if requested
- take several photocopies before you start and practise completing the application in full
- complete the final copy in pencil first
- always provide all the information asked for. If a section does not apply to you, put 'not applicable' or insert a diagonal line, as appropriate
- always include a covering letter.

## Health assessment form

You will usually be asked to complete a health questionnaire. This should be sent to the occupational health department and remain confidential to that service. If you have declared any issues related to your health you may be called for an interview with an occupational health nurse, who will check that your, and others', health and safety will not be compromised by the role you have applied for.

## Declaring previous convictions

If you are asked to declare any previous convictions you must do so, even if they occurred over ten years ago. The interview panel will take account of the severity of the offence and whether it will impact on your role. You will need to undergo a Criminal Records Bureau check. If you have any doubts about your record, talk to the employer about your concerns, so that any potential problems or queries can be ironed out at an early stage.

## Supporting information

The supporting information section is the most important part of the form. Go through the job description and person specification thoroughly and make sure you provide evidence to show how you meet all the requirements asked for. Some NHS jobs will also provide a knowledge and skills framework outline. If you are completing a paper application form, ideally you should use a word processor to type this section, using a separate sheet of paper, if necessary. If you would like any further support, contact the RCN Career Service on 0345 408 4391.

## Sample supporting statement for a newly qualified nurse applying for a post on a respiratory ward

I am applying for a post on Beatrice ward as I have a strong commitment to meeting the needs of patients and families affected by respiratory conditions. I developed my attraction to this field during a 10 week management placement on a respiratory unit, where I particularly enjoyed teaching patients how to manage and control their symptoms through careful use of inhalers and the use of anxiety-reducing techniques. I have completed a case study on a patient suffering from asthma and achieved a grade of 70%. I also gained excellent feedback from my mentor and other staff on the unit and really enjoyed working with the multi-disciplinary team.

I believe that I meet the requirements mentioned in the person specification as follows:

### Qualifications and experience

I am an NMC registered nurse, who has recently completed degree level pre registration education, with an overall grade of upper second class. The course provided a strong emphasis on evidence based practice and I completed an extended essay on 'the impact of lung cancer NICE guidelines on nursing practice'.

### Skills and knowledge

I believe I have excellent communication skills and have always been able to deal with challenging situations – such as when a relative became angry about the treatment of their mother. I was able to allay the relative's anxiety by listening to and empathising with their concerns and arranging for them to discuss their mother's care with the senior nurse in charge. I have also developed teaching and mentoring skills when supervising the work of health care support workers and junior students. I am keen to pursue a mentorship course as soon as possible. I have taught students skills such as how to admit patients, perform dressings, use the Patient Administration System and monitor blood glucose levels. I always refer learners to relevant resources, such as teaching packs, and check the student's understanding of the topic by asking questions, supervising their practice and giving constructive feedback. I also enjoy promoting patients' health and teaching about the importance of healthy eating and smoking cessation.

I have learnt how to prioritise a busy workload and during my management placement I managed the care of eight patients and the work of two health care support workers. On a particularly busy shift I had to deal with three emergency admissions, arrange two discharges and initiate life support for a patient suffering cardiac arrest. I learnt the importance of affective delegation, communication, team work and referring to other health care professionals and senior staff when appropriate.

I am aware of the importance of key documents such as *Essence of Care* and have assisted in the auditing of nutrition and hygiene benchmarks during a placement nursing older people.

### Personal qualities

I believe that I am a cheerful, flexible and enthusiastic nurse who tries to be approachable at all times. I try to be respectful towards all individuals, from a variety of backgrounds and strictly adhere to all policies, including health and safety, infection control and confidentiality.

I hope you will agree that I meet the requirements for the post and look forward to hearing from you.

## Sample CV

Page 1

Jane Nurse  
2 Forest Road  
Dablington  
Dabingshire  
DSD 4XX

Telephone: (01234) 567 890 (Home)

An enthusiastic registered nurse with over 4 years' experience of providing expert nursing care in surgical and medical settings. A conscientious professional committed to improving standards of care through evaluation of practice, knowledge of research and life long learning. Keen to explore options in primary care.

### Key achievements and skills

- Promoted to senior staff nurse after three years' post registration experience.
- Gained expertise in nursing patients with a variety of conditions requiring medical and surgical interventions.
- Awarded 120 diploma level points through the Open University and working towards a BSc Health and Social Care.
- Consolidated recent completion of return to practice course with regular bank work in a variety of settings.

### EXPERIENCE

#### DABLINGTON NHS TRUST – NHS Professionals

**Bank nurse (band 5 - mainly medical nursing)**

April 2009 – present

- Undertaking at least two shifts per week whilst completing diploma level studies in welfare, community health and working with children and families.
- Plan, implement and evaluate patient care using a range of recognised nursing models.
- Supervise and assess learning of care assistants and pre-registration students.

#### DABLINGTON UNIVERSITY

**Return to practice course student**

January 2009 – April 2009

- Completed placement on a 20 bedded medical admissions unit, including management of the unit.
- Awarded 20 academic credit points at level 2.
- Renewed competence in areas such as implementing models of care, medical assessment, record keeping, teaching, safe drug administration, catheterisation.
- Completed training and assessments in safe patient handling, administration of medication (including intravenous therapy) and basic life support.

**Career break – raising family**

September 2003 – January 2009

- Ran a helpline for sufferers of prostate cancer (voluntary, part time), organised by the Prostate Cancer Awareness Group.
- Ran a youth group at my local church: organised a conference for 100 delegates, arranged speakers, venue and refreshments in December 2006. Regularly arrange social events for this group.

**BOBINGTON NHS TRUST****Senior Staff Nurse– 24 bedded surgical urology ward**

May 2002 – September 2003

- Planned, implemented and evaluated the care of patients with a wide range of urological conditions.
- Led the nursing team and deputised for the ward manager on a regular basis.
- Managed the ward's stock control system.
- Contributed to ward managers' meetings on a regular basis.
- Organised staff rotas.
- Mentored qualified nurses and students.
- Wrote a comprehensive induction programme for new staff.
- Initiated and devised a nutritional status assessment tool in collaboration with the multi-disciplinary team.

**Staff Nurse– 24 bedded surgical urology ward**

October 2001 – May 2002

- Managed the ward on a regular basis.
- Supervised, taught and assessed learning of pre-registration students.

**ENDINGHAM NHS TRUST****Staff Nurse– 21 bedded surgical ward**

June 1999 – October 2001

- Planned, implemented and evaluated the care of patients preparing for and recovering from surgical procedures.

**QUALIFICATIONS**

120 diploma level points: Care, Welfare and Community, Working for Health, Working with Children and Families, Open University	February 2010
Return to Practice (20 points, diploma level)	January 2009
ENB Urology course, Bobington College of Nursing	January 2002
ENB Teaching and Assessing in Clinical Practice course Bobington College of Nursing	April 2001
Registered General Nurse, Endingham College of Nursing Pin No: 111111 (Expires 2010)	June 1999
2 A Levels and 8 GCSEs, Endingham High School	1993 – 1995

**PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES**

Paper titled '*Principles of pain management after surgery*' presented to the RCN Pain Forum conference in June 2000.

If you would like any further support, contact the RCN Career Service  
on 0345 408 4391.

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[www.rcn.org.uk/direct](http://www.rcn.org.uk/direct)  
**0345 772 6100**

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*The RCN represents nurses and nursing,  
promotes excellence in practice and  
shapes health policies*

Published by  
The Royal College of Nursing  
20 Cavendish Square  
London W1G 0RN

**August 2005, updated July 2010**

Publication code 002 769