

Writing a CV

An RCN guide for health care assistants and assistant practitioners

Whether you're applying for a first job, or moving to a more senior position, the RCN is here to help you get that perfect role



Royal College
of Nursing

Why write a CV?

There are several reasons why you may need to write a Curriculum Vitae (CV):

- Small or medium sized employers may not have a formal application form and may ask you to 'apply in writing'
- To contact a range of employers seeking job opportunities – this is called a 'speculative CV'
- Some employers may request you to submit a CV along with their application form.

Preparing to write a CV

Start by making a list of your work experience and posts held, beginning with the most recent. For each post held, list the date of employment, name and location of employer, job title, your responsibilities and your main achievements such as gaining vocational qualifications or promotion.

You can also include unpaid activities, such as voluntary work, helping out at school events or tasks undertaken when caring for a relative with a long term illness.

Next, gather together all your educational certificates and make a list, working backwards chronologically, of the courses you have undertaken and qualifications gained, including names of the educational establishments or course providers and the dates when the course was undertaken.

Basic guidelines

Format

There is no one perfect format for a CV. Ideally it should be logical, clear and concise and should ensure maximum attention is given to your strengths.

Personal details

Include your name, address, preferred contact telephone number and email address, if applicable.

Opening statement

Provide a couple of sentences that summarise your career history, personal qualities and career aspirations. If you have a lot of experience, either paid or unpaid, you can include two or three achievements in the statement.

Experience

Begin with your most recent post and list dates, position(s) held and the name of your employer. Include three or four of the responsibilities held in most recent posts and two or three examples of duties, relevant to the position for which you are applying. Your most recent position should have the most detailed information.

Explain gaps in paid employment – for example, taking a career break to raise a family.

Qualifications

Provide details of your qualifications and education to date, starting with the most recent.

Personal

You may want to include extra information, such as your interests, but do so in general terms and only if they are relevant to the job. You may also include that you hold a driving licence.

General tips

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

Identified	Performed
Assessed	Co-ordinated
Organised	Improved
Implemented	Completed
Produced	Supervised
Achieved	Delivered

- Try to omit the pronoun 'I'
- Try to use numbers to create an impact. For example, 'organised care for a group of seven patients on a daily basis'

- Do not exceed two A4 pages. If you have a lot of experience, simply summarise any positions held more than ten years ago. If you have attended a lot of short study days, select the most important ones relevant to your target audience, and summarise the others – for example, ‘More than 20 in-house study days attended, covering areas such as diabetic foot care, safer patient handling, basic life support, palliative care and infection control’
- Avoid the use of too many font styles. Fancy type faces and borders are not needed
- Avoid the use of abbreviations that will not be recognised easily
- Inclusion of contact details for referees is optional.
- 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.

RCN members can obtain further guidance, advice or feedback on getting the perfect job by calling **RCN Welfare Rights and Guidance on 0345 408 4391**.

Membership of the RCN also offers an abundance of further support and information both online and over the telephone, and a whole host of learning and development opportunities to help you progress with your career, including HCA specific workshops, funding towards study days or conferences, and the largest nursing-related library in Europe.

To join the RCN or for more information and advice, **call RCN Direct on 0345 772 6100** or visit **www.rcn.org.uk/membership**

Also in this series: The RCN guide for HCAs and APs on **application forms** and the RCN guide for HCAs and APs on **interview skills**.

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

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