

What does your CV say about you?



This annotated CV aims to give you some hints and tips on setting out your CV and selling yourself to potential employers. CVs are very personal things. What you include, what you exclude, how you present them and how you choose to evidence what you put in tell an employer something about you.

CVs can be written in two basically different ways:

1. using a “skills” approach (i.e. evidencing the skills and aptitudes you have and showing how you acquired or have used them); or
2. using an “experience” approach (i.e. detailing the experiences you have had, jobs, employment, hobbies) from which an employer might infer what knowledge, skills, attitudes and aptitudes you have.

There are of course a range of approaches between these two extremes which utilise aspects of both approaches. The example shown here sits in the middle of this range.

A CV should be tailored to the needs of the job to bring out what you have which is particularly important for the employment you are applying for. This means you need to analyse what is needed in the job and what strengths you have which are particularly relevant.



2. Degree title including if honours and university qualifications in reverse chronological order, with dates and grades (or better, marks where available). Failed or re-sat modules should be included. If you don't give accurate information here and your employer finds out when taking up your references it could cause trouble (even if you have been offered and accepted the job). You may also want to include overall grades for each year and a predicted degree grade if you are given one.

1. You may also wish to include an email address and your gender (if you have an unfamiliar first name), it isn't essential to include nationality but if you aren't from the UK or EU your prospective employer will want to know if you have a work permit.

3. Module titles chosen for next year but not yet taken (shows what you are committed to), and include your project title, or area, if known. You could choose to put in only modules that are relevant to the job you are applying for.

4. This CV has a problem; there is a gap in the dates. The applicant states their degree is 2005 – present (2009), four years, yet only three years are accounted for. Somewhere there's a year missing. Were they ill? On a placement or gap year? This raises a question about what they are trying to hide and would probably result in instant rejection.

5. GCSEs and A-levels with dates and grades (since it's more difficult to obtain each group in one sitting than to pick up one or two each year for several years).

7. Good formatting and presentation is essential, in this example CV it isn't easy to place the dates with the relevant job or work experience, text hasn't been lined up and one line carries over onto the next page. Also, the A and AS level results could be put on two separate lines, rather than jumbling the two together and the referee's details have been badly laid out. You should also check you are consistent, so, for example all dates are in the same format (14th September 2007 or 14/09/07?).

1 Joanna Smith

Address: #, King Street, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, NG13 1HG
 Telephone number: ##### (home): ##### (mobile)
 Nationality: British

2

Education

2005 – Present University of Leeds - Neuroscience Honours BSc. **3**
 Year 3 modules to be taken
 Ion Channels (1); Ion Channels (2); Receptor transduction mechanisms;
 Experimental project; Data Handling; Molecular Biology.

Year 2 modules: (credits) **4**
 CNS Anatomy (10) = 56%
 CNS Pharmacology (20) = 78%
 CNS Physiology (20) = 68%
 Introduction to Molecular Biology (10)
 Neurotransmitters (20) = 61%
 Physiology of Absorption, Metabolism and Excretion (10) = 60%
 Chemotherapy (5) = 57%
 Neuroendocrinology and Reproduction (10) = 51%
 Basic Data Handling and Statistics (5) = 79%
 Techniques in Biomedical Science (5) = 58%
 Experimental Techniques in Neuroscience (5) = 62%
 Healthcare, Ethics and Law (5) = 64%

Year 1 Modules: (credits)
 From Molecules to Cells (20) = 64%
 How the Body Works (10) = 58%
 Basic Laboratory and Scientific Skills (10) = 69%
 Basic Gross Anatomy (20) = 73%
 Fundamentals of Pharmacology and Neuroscience (20) = 70%
 Current Topics in Biology (20) = 71%
 Psychology of Sport (20) = 68%

1998-2005 Queens Grammar School, Mansfield **5**
 A levels, June 2005
 Religious Studies B, Biology C, Physics C and General Studies D AS levels, June 2003
 Chemistry C and Music C

GCSEs, May 2003
 Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, English, History and Technology at grade A, Music at A*, Spanish at B

Short course GCSEs, May 2002
 I.C.T at B and Religious Education at C

Employment

25th September 2005 – present	Star Recruitment, Leeds (part-time, weekends)
4th – 29th June 2006 6	Agency staff, waiting and setting up for functions Caesar's, Nottingham
18th December 2005 – present	Bar and restaurant staff (full-time) Red Lion, Nottingham
25th September 2005 - 18th December 2005	Bar staff in the university holidays People Recruitment, Leeds (part-time; weekends)
July 1st 2005 – present	Agency bar work and waiting at Leeds United football ground and Haydock Park race course
5th September 2003	White Lion, Mansfield 7 Bar staff (part-time, university holidays) Piano teacher (in spare time out of school)

6. Employment and work experience: Dates should be as accurate as possible since there is a great deal of difference in, say, laboratory assistant (June to September) if it's really June 1st to September 30th rather than June 30th to September 1st. ALL work experience and employment is included. Just because you are applying for a job as a library assistant it does not mean your experience as a waitress (or whatever) isn't worth mentioning. As a waitress you actually learned lots of things, to work as part of a team, to defuse difficult situations, to be there on time, to be flexible etc etc. This section can be linked to the skills and attributes you acquired or demonstrated in each job or the skills can be presented later.

8. Personal Statement: This gives you a chance to say what you value (honesty, hard work, the environment, tolerance, high ethical standards etc) and what you aspire to (what type of job do you want to be doing in 5 years? Head of European research? Partner in travel agent firm? Manager of a super-store?). This section is a double edged sword – it says what you want but equally, it might tell a prospective employer you don't intend to stay with them for long. This section could be included in a covering letter rather than your CV.

9. This CV has a problem. In spite of claiming to be careful and accurate there are typos in their personal statement. They are not walking the talk.

10. Both subject specific skills and knowledge (e.g. lab skills, statistics, information retrieval) as well as generic skills (e.g. time management, team working, presentations, written communications) are important. You need to evidence these skills and include details of where you have acquired or used them successfully. See how the skills and knowledge learned in the formal university course, in university extra-curricular activities, in paid employment and in hobbies and other activities have all been included.

11. Make sure you explain any abbreviations and what an uncommon award or qualification actually means, your prospective employer may not have heard of it.

12. Bright active people who make good employees are interested and involved in lots of things. Gym, societies, evening classes, voluntary work, working for a charity as well as travel, cinema, theatre, clubbing and other social activities. Give an idea of the extent of your personal interests. There is a world of difference between doing judo once a term when you remember and doing it every week, acting as treasurer for the university club and completing your black belt. If you've done it, flaunt it!

- 18th September 2005 I taught piano and music theory to eight pupils and organised concerts three times a year

5th September 2002 Rainbows, Mansfield

- 20th November 2004 Helper (voluntary). I helped to organise and lead games and activities for girls aged 5-7 every Tuesday

Work Shadowing Mansfield Woodhouse GP Surgery (two days); Queen's Medical Hospital, Nottingham Clinical Laboratory (2 weeks)

8

Personal Statement

I am a cheerful, polite and hardworking person who gets satisfaction working both in a team and on my own. I am enthusiastic and pick up new concepts quickly allowing me to deal with any problems I face. I am ambitious, I set myself high standards and I intend to achieve my aims in life. My aspiration is to work in a laboratory context to contribute to research that leads to finding cures for conditions such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Addison's diseases. I have always been interested in medical conditions and when I developed diabetes, which although treatable has no cure, decided that I would love to play a part in discovering treatments and cures for illnesses which affect mankind.

9

Skills

- Team Working: gained through the ABCDE Award Scheme, Young Enterprise activities, playing in the brass band
- Improving own learning and Performance: gained through the ABCDE Universities Award Scheme
- Problem solving: gained through the ABCDE Universities Award Scheme
- Intermediate I.T. skills gained from Short course GCSE
- In addition to these formal skills qualifications my experience both in work and in education has enabled me to develop skills in time management, dealing with difficult situations, communications, problem solving, managing myself, organising events, responsibility, negotiation and others.

10

11

Achievements

- I was the Managing Director of a Young Enterprise Company which won the Nottinghamshire County finals and I gained distinction in the Young Enterprise examinations
- Duke of Edinburgh Bronze award
- British Association Promoting Science and Technology Young Investigators Science Awards, Bronze A, B and C
- Gold award in the UK Junior Maths Challenge and Silver award in the UK Intermediate Maths Challenge leading to participation in the European Kangaroo Maths Challenge
- One of four winners of the UK Biology Olympiad, 2004
- Grade 5 piano and Grade 5 Theory with the Royal Associated Board of Music

12

Interests

- Playing Trumpet in the university brass band. We play two to three concerts every year including a weekend trip to Manchester where we played a concert with their brass band
- Fitness classes, yoga, squash and the gym (usually twice a week)
- "Give it a try" sessions in the Student Union where I have learned a variety of skills such as Aromatherapy massage, Swedish massage and crochet
- Going to rock concerts and festivals
- Organising social events such as barbecues and paintballing

13

Referees

Mrs S Smith Headteacher Queen's Grammar School Nottingham Road Mansfield Notts, NG14 5DR Tel: 01623 755856	Miss Jane Doe White Lion 101 Station Street Mansfield Notts NG19 6NE Tel: 01623 842192	Dr Joe Bloggs University Tutor Faculty of Biological Sciences University of Leeds Leeds West Yorkshire, LS2 9JT Tel: 0113 3434228
--	--	---

13. Referees: At least one from your degree (or there will be a question about what you did there you are trying to hide), make sure they are not relatives and they all have recent knowledge of you (your year 10 form teacher probably does not know much about what sort of a person you are now). Give contact details, preferably telephone as well as email and a complete postal address with postcode. If you can't be bothered to find these things out for your own CV you probably can't be bothered to do a good job as an employee.



Some general points to consider:

- Check and double check spelling — don't rely on the spell checker — and get someone else to proof-read your CV
- Print a clean, fresh copy of your CV for each application
- Be careful if you use colour, whoever reads your CV may not get the copy you sent, but a photocopied version, in which case using blue or red to highlight something won't work
- Is it readable? Have you used a tiny font to try and cram everything in? Have you used a font that makes your CV more difficult to read?
- Set information out in clear sections so someone scanning your CV can quickly find, for example, your employment history. Your potential employer may only have a few minutes to scan your CV, try to make it easy for them to read and pull out the most important points.
- Aim for a maximum of two sides of A4 for your CV

There are many ways of laying out your CV, this is just one example, your careers service and the websites listed below will have more examples.

Where can I find out more?

- **Prospects.ac.uk** have a section on writing your CV, covering letters and advice about interviews and applying for jobs (go to: Jobs and Work > Applications, CVs and interviews)
- The **Biosciences Federation** link to a number of careers related websites and their leaflet "Biology a Subject for Life" highlights the wide range of career paths taken by bioscientists, www.bsf.ac.uk/careers/careershome.htm
- The **Biochemistry Society** has advice about writing your CV; www.biochemistry.org/education/university.htm
- The **Student section** of the Centre for Bioscience website contains some career and employability materials, including "13 reasons why I binned your CV", www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/networks/students.aspx
- The **Institute of Biology** has CV and careers advice on their website: www.iob.org/general.asp?section=education_careers/education_iob/he
- **Guardian** Graduate CV clinic - www.guardian.co.uk/money/graduates

