

Knowledge capsule

The CV

Context

Your CV is a tool to sell yourself during the job-hunting process. It represents your calling card or first contact with the organisations that you wish to work with. This means that you need to ensure your CV is of a high standard. You should also bear in mind that the image you project may influence your professional future.

Key to achieving your professional objective is understanding the main formats used for CVs and the function that each one plays, and having the resources to articulate yourself correctly. The first positive effect could be being invited to a job interview.

The CV: the first contact that makes the difference

What is a CV and what is its objective?

A CV is a written communication tool that plays a key part in the job-hunting process. Its role is to establish the initial contact with organisations or companies that you aspire to work for. It is a structured summary of your career and training, laid out in a way that highlights your suitability to fulfil a specific job.

The principal objective of a CV is to get an interview. Your CV is therefore a personal marketing tool: you have to attract the attention of the person reading it, make them interested, generate a desire within the company to meet you and - the end result - get them to invite you for an interview. This is why it is essential to tailor your CV to each job application.

When are CVs used? CVs are used on different occasions when the person looking for work wants to get in contact with organisations and companies. This may be for different reasons:

- In response to a job advertised on any of the job-search channels (job bank, in the Press or through an intermediary/agency).
- When making a speculative application to a company.
- To strengthen or expand your network for possible jobs.

How are CVs structured? CVs contain personal, training and professional details about you, structured in a clear and concise way into sections of information. While there is no one single layout, CVs are generally structured to include set blocks of information together with other optional information.

- The following are the set blocks that should feature in your CV:

Personal details: Highlight your name and surname, telephone number so that you can always be contacted as well as your e-mail address. Details such as tax number, place and date of birth and marital status are not strictly necessary. Foreigners are advised to include their national identity number and state whether or not they have a valid work permit.

Training information: You should separate out state-approved education (obligatory secondary school education, professional training, university courses) and supplementary training (specialist courses, seminars, conferences and so on). You should give the date on which you qualified, the name of the qualification, the issuing school or university and, for supplementary training, the number of hours.

Professional experience: For each of your different work experiences, you should highlight your job title and the name of the organisation or company, the period you worked from and to, and the main functions you were responsible for.

Language skills: Highlight the level of your skill (oral and written) as well as any qualifications and significant time spent abroad.

Computer skills: Include the different operating systems and computer programs and the level of your skill.

- In addition to these set sections, you might include the following optional information:

Professional objective: This section is optional; it consists of a specific, concise statement about the kind of work you are looking for. It helps the person short-listing candidates to pre-select based on knowing what candidates' areas of interest are. It can help candidates applying for very specific positions or conversely it can limit them to specific types of job in the company and restrict them from being able to apply for other vacancies in the company. You should assess it depending on each application.

Key competencies: The personal characteristics that differentiate people with superior results in their job, and demonstrated through conduct that can be observed and evaluated. During the selection process, companies give increasing importance to candidates' competencies profiles in order to differentiate between candidates that are very similar in terms of training and experience. These competencies can therefore be included in your CV, associated to the tasks that have enabled you to put them into practice, develop and improve them.

References: Only include references if they are expressly requested.

Organisations and associations that you are a member of: List these if you think that they are relevant to the job you are applying for (for example, if you have been a scout supervisor and you are applying for a job that involves working with young people). It is not advisable to include any political, religious or union membership.

Hobbies: List any hobbies that might strengthen your profile (for example, if you like painting and you are going for a job where creativity is important), or where the hobby is directly related to the job that is to be filled.

Publications, scholarships and distinctions or awards: Include these if they are related to the job you are applying for or if they involve a set of skills or abilities that are useful for the job you are applying for (for example, if you have won writing prizes and the post that you are applying for involves a need for analytical capability).

What formats of CV are there? Depending on your career and training, and the job or company that you are sending your CV to, it is worth using different formats. This helps to generate a more positive image of yourself and one that is more in line with the job you are applying for.

There are a number of different CV formats, depending on which aspects of your background you want to highlight or avoid:

✓ **Chronological CV:**

This type of CV emphasises dates and time. Professional experience is listed chronologically with the oldest date shown at the top down to your most recent professional experience. This is a fairly standard form of a CV.

This format is recommended for...

People who have been working in the same company for a long time or people who have had a short career to date. It also helps to highlight the professional progress of somebody who has always worked in the same industry or professional area.

✓ **Reverse chronological CV:**

As with the chronological CV, this type of CV emphasises the dates associated with professional experience. In this case, your experience is listed in reverse order, starting with the most recent date down to the oldest date. This CV format is used frequently.

This format is recommended for...

Those who want to emphasise their more recent professional experience because they consider it to be more important, or because it is more closely related to their professional objective.

✓ **Theme/function-based CV:**

In this type of CV, professional areas take precedence over time aspects. Thus, professional experience is grouped into the different functional areas that the applicant has worked in (for example customer services or administration), or themed areas in which the applicant has experience (for example consulting, teaching or research).

This format is recommended for...

People who are thinking of changing profession or career, because this type of CV enables them to emphasise certain tasks or challenges from their professional experience. It is also useful for people who have worked in different industries, since this format enables them to organise their CV more clearly. It also helps avoid highlighting any periods when you have not been working.

✓ **Competency-based CV:**

In this type of CV, importance and emphasis is given to key competencies developed in different professional roles. These competencies are backed up by associating them with tasks and responsibilities. This type of CV can be adapted to a chronological or themed format.

This format is recommended for...

People who are thinking of changing career or do not have sufficient experience in the profile requested by the company, but who consider that, based on their previous experience, they have developed the key competencies needed for this new professional objective. This can also be useful for somebody aiming to be promoted

professionally in their field, as this format enables specific competencies to be listed.

✓ **European CV (Europass):**

Europass has its origins in the European Parliament and Council's [Decisión nº 2241/2004/CE](#), dated 15 December 2004, relating to a single Community framework for transparency of qualifications and competencies. This type of CV consists of five documents: the Europass CV and Europass Language Passport, both of which can be prepared by applicants themselves; the [Europass Certificate Supplement](#), el [Europass Diploma Supplement](#) and the [Europass Mobility](#), which is prepared and issued by the relevant authority.

This format is recommended for...

Those who are looking for work in Europe and who want their skills and competencies to be easily understood.

✓ **Video CV:**

Video CVs are very new. They add a more human dimension to the traditional paper CV. This is a good tool for standing out from the crowd and adding value compared to other candidates, enabling you to sell yourself through your image. It should be no more than three minutes long. This format is currently not used very much and it should supplement paper CVs, not substitute them.

This format is recommended for...

Those sending their CV for professional fields where personal image is important (for example marketing and communication), people looking for work in the audiovisual field (given that this form of presentation enables them to convey technically their knowledge on the subject), people who simply want to add value to their standard CV.

✓ **Digital portfolio:**

With this type of CV, the internet becomes the core means of communication and printed portfolios become a dynamic showcase that displays the applicant's professional activities and skills. Obviously, the information contained in the portfolio relates to the interests of the person creating and maintaining it. This information tends to be organised into categories such as:

personal information: personal details, interests, opinions, social activities, places visited, objectives and plans; education and academic qualifications: training, courses and projects; professional experience: roles held, tasks, responsibilities and so on. All of this is presented with photos, presentations, links, comments and so on.

This format is recommended for...

People looking for work in design and those who need to demonstrate the projects, designs and work they have done, in order to put forward a strong CV presentation and secure a face-to-face interview.

At Porta22, we offer a range of useful resources and advice to help you prepare your CV. For example, we have articles, books, internet resources and examples of the different CV models described above.

What are the main recommendations when writing your CV? It is worth bearing in mind some basic guidelines when putting together and writing a CV properly. You must pay attention to presentation and content, in terms of the following:

- **Advice regarding the presentation of your CV:**

In principle, use no more than two sheets.

Send companies original copies, not photocopies.

Use clear and concise language with short sentences that are easy to understand.

Check your spelling carefully.

If the company asks for a paper copy of your CV, use good quality paper.

- **Advice regarding CV contents:**

Adapt your CV to each job you apply to.

Remember that your CV must always be accompanied by a covering letter.

Organise the sections of your CV according to what you most want to emphasise (remember that recruiters read CVs starting from the top downwards). If you think that your experience is more important than your training, you should put it first; the same is true for the other sections: language skills, computer skills, etc.

Use your name as it appears on your identity card.

Give an e-mail address that has a serious name.

If you attach a photograph (remember this is optional unless you are asked for it) make sure that it is recent, good quality and looks like you.

If the advertised job requires a driving licence or any other kind of license, include it in your personal details.

If you include an "Other details" section, do not include unusual information - include for example personal skills, hobbies and driving licence.

If you have been educated to higher level (further education or university studies), you don't need to include details of your primary or secondary school, except if you have studied abroad or there is somewhere that you wish to mention.

Remember that you do not need to include personal details such as your marital status or whether or not you have children.

Bear in mind that you should not put reasons for dismissal, change of job or periods of inactivity in your CV as you will be asked about this during your interview.

Paragraph 2 and 3 of Article 7 (Especially Protected Data) of the Data Protection Act 15/1999 of 13 December, legally regulate the protection of personal information, such as: ideology, union membership, religion, racial origin, health and sex life. They do not therefore need to be on your CV.

Conclusions

The CV forms part of the whole job-search process. Personal self-awareness, exploring the job market and the use of job-search channels are key steps in the process before writing a strong CV and increasing your chances of getting an interview.

To write a good CV, you need to structure the details well and select a format that enables you to emphasise your professional success.

Adapting your CV for each job application means understanding what you want and what is entailed in the job you are applying for.

Paying careful attention to things such as the visual appearance of your CV and the different elements in it, gives a more positive image of yourself and helps you to sell yourself better.

Key concepts

CV: A CV is a written document that helps establish contact with organisations and companies that you would like to work for. Its objective is to get an interview. The structure that you use and the layout you choose enable you to sell yourself with more chances of success and more in line with your professional objective.

The Job Interview: A job interview is a tool used by organisations as a means of evaluating candidates during the staff selection process. It consists of a formal, in-depth conversation that has a dual objective. For the person looking to fill the position, the objective is to evaluate to what extent the applicant's profile meets the requirements of the position. For the applicant, the objective is to evaluate to what extent the characteristics and conditions of the position meet their work-related needs and expectations.

Professional experience: Technical and key competencies acquired from doing one or more jobs in one or more organisations or companies.

Job-Search Process: The planning that is needed in order to get a job; it starts with studying the job market and ends with a presentation as part of a selection process.

Selection Process: A set of activities used to learn about, evaluate and decide upon which candidate is most suited for the job. The success of this process is based on aligning as far as possible the needs and expectations of the candidates with the needs and expectations of the recruiting organisation.

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Puchol, Luis (2002) The CV Handbook. Madrid: Editorial Díaz de Santos, S.A.

Puchol, Luis (1997) Selling Yourself. Madrid: Editorial Díaz de Santos, S.A.

Webography

Infojobs. Advice Folder

<http://comunicacion.infojobs.net/recursos/consejos/index.jsp>

Laboris.net. News and advice.

<http://www.laboris.net/static/recursosandidato.aspx>

Create a winning CV. Don Empleo

<http://www.donempleo.com/curriculum-vitae.asp>

A CV format for each professional profile.

http://www.laboris.net/Static/ca_curriculum_perfil.aspx

Europass. The European CV format.

http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/europass/preview.action?locale_id=11

Digital portfolios. Article.

<http://mosaic.uoc.edu/articulos/intro1107.html>

Video CV. Diari de Barcelona - Article.

<http://www.diaridebarcelona.com/reportatges-a-fons-diari-de-barcelona-directe.php?id=media/0000003500/0000003953.swf>

Webography for Human Capital

We offer a number of options within the Human Capital website to help you build on the information relating to CVs

[Tools > CV and covering letter](#)

[Tools > Other job-hunting resources](#)

[Market > Economic Sectors > \(Choose sector\)](#)

[Person > Key competencies](#)

Use the SEARCH FACILITY for a more complete list of resources: books, articles and useful links. It's very easy - simply open up SEARCH and enter a keyword.