

Creating a great CV

It is worth spending time reflecting on yourself and then writing, editing and updating your CV until you are confident that it presents you in a professional and comprehensive manner.

Here are some tips to help you develop a CV that you will be proud of:

What is the CV for?

If your CV is for a particular job or bursary, make sure that you have the requirements or the job spec. This is like a blue print for your CV and will help you to know what is important and how to tailor your CV.

Choose your headings wisely

Choose headings that fit your experience. Don't just use headings from a template, or those that are commonly used. Headings should be eye-catching and be fitting to what you have done and achieved. Look at our example for ideas.

What skills are required?

These are often outlined in the job spec. Identify examples of where you have used skills drawing from all your activities (studying, part time work, cultural or sporting activities, community involvement or voluntary work).

Use evidence to strengthen your skills section

Many students claim to have skills but give no examples that act as evidence of what they have done. Evidence is powerful and shows that you have thought about how you can transfer a skill from one area to what you are applying to. See our examples in this handout.

Avoid repetition

Try not to repeat information. Some of the same information could go under different headings. You need to decide where to put information so that your CV is not repetitive.

Check spelling and grammar

Your CV needs to be error free. Applications can be rejected if they have spelling errors and typos. Also make sure that your formatting, style, spacing and headings are consistent.

Include a cover letter

Always send your CV with a cover letter. A cover letter enables you to write in prose, which you should not do in a CV. See our Cover Letter resource for tips.

A CV is a marketing tool, which is intended to put across your best points. You might have a lot to offer, but if your CV is poor, you may not get past the first stage in the selection process.

What employers tell us makes a good CV:

- Targeted, relevant content
- Simple, consistent layout
- Easy to read
- Unique to individual
- Error free
- Concise
- Reflects ability to do the job/fulfil bursary requirements drawing from all aspects of life.



Giving evidence in your skills section

Let's use the example of a position that requires someone to have organisational skills. Look at the following two examples that candidates used in their skills section:

Candidate A:

- *Demonstrated strong organisational skills as Secretary of the UCT Mountain Club*

Candidate B:

- *As Secretary of UCT Mountain Club, organised three-day hike in Cedarberg for ten new club members, including arranging transport, budget and payment, permits, catering and equipment*

Can you see that Candidate B is more effective? This is why:

- ✓ She gives evidence of the skill by using examples
- ✓ She starts with an action word
- ✓ She provides metrics and details to make the example concrete

Examples of graduate skills:

Communication
Interpersonal
Teamwork
Leadership
Problem Solving
Project Management
Organisation and Management
Teaching and Research
IT/Computer Literacy
Technical
Numeracy
Business
Entrepreneurial
Adaptability/Flexibility

Some help with language:

- ✓ Use professional, appropriate and relevant language - no clichés or jargon
- ✓ Avoid using "I"
- ✓ Start with action verbs, like organised, initiated, managed, improved, co-ordinated, led, budgeted, developed, designed, created, researched
- ✓ Use present tense for current activities and past tense for previous ones
- ✓ Do not use paragraphs in your CV
- ✓ Use bullets for sub-points
- ✓ Use acronyms to save space, but first write the name of the institution or company in full followed by the acronym
- ✓ Use spell check, but realise that spell check will not pick up ambiguities
- ✓ Get someone to read over your CV with a fresh eye, as you may not pick up mistakes yourself

Tips on Layout and Formatting

- Put all activities in each section in reverse chronological order
- Use the same font throughout and consistent font sizes for headings and text
- Font size for body text should not be smaller than 11
- Be careful of templates - they may not serve your purpose
- Avoid using CAPS other than in headings
- CVs are typically two pages, but employers may request otherwise, so always follow instructions. Academic CVs can be longer and resumes are one page
- Use your space wisely, but don't overcrowd the information
- Adjust your margins if you are trying to keep to two pages and are one or two lines over
- Only include a photograph if the employer specifically requests one

This is optional, but if you choose to include a profile, be specific and concise about your unique selling points. Should be no longer than 4 points.

Here is ONE example of a CV

Ayanda Kula

A formal email address, not hotlips@hotmail.com

Cell: 084 237 1400 email: ayandakula@gmail.com

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ayanda-kula-01807a6b/>

Date of birth, marital and health status and nationality not necessary under equity legislation. But you may choose to put nationality if there are visa/work permit implications.

No physical address necessary.

Profile

Graduate with Bachelor of Arts in Media Studies and Sociology, currently completing Honours in Sociology at the University of Cape Town. Particular interest in social media; vacation work experience in publishing and marketing. Avid blogger (studentponderings.blogspot.com) and winner of Alan Paton Short Story Award in 2017.

Education

2018: **Honours (Sociology)**, University of Cape Town (UCT)

2015-2017: **Bachelor of Arts (Sociology and Media Studies)**, UCT

- Dean’s Merit List (2016,2017) – awarded in recognition of consistent academic excellence

2014: **National Senior Certificate**, South Peninsula High School, Cape Town

- Achieved four A’s; awarded English trophy (top student in subject)

2017: **Writing for Social Media** (8-week online course), Coursera

Achievements/Roles of responsibility/Leadership/Community work/Cultural activities/Sport

2015-2018: 1st team Basketball, UCT

Choose suitable headings.

2017: Alan Paton Short Story Award (National writing competition for tertiary students)

2017: Humanities Exclusive, UCT (6-week Career Development programme)

2015: Member of Students’ Representative Council, South Peninsula High School

Work Experience

December 2017-February 2018: **Intern**, Media 24, Cape Town

- Assisted with logistics, editing, administration and wrote article “Hungry Students” (Drum, March 2018)

December 2016-February 2017: **Receptionist** (holiday job), Feed the Hungry, Cape Town

- Feed the Hungry is an NGO that runs feeding schemes at township day-care centres and shelters
- Responsible for food orders, client communication and logistics of daily soup kitchens

June 2015-November 2016: **Marketing Assistant** (part-time), SWAT Marketing, Cape Town

- Main tasks included arranging launch event, social media marketing, running focus

Most recent qualifications first.

If you completed a thesis or major project that may be relevant, include the title.

You can mention academic achievements here, or in a later separate section.

Work experience can be full time, part time and voluntary.

Also include information about a business of your own, or a family business.

Briefly describe the organisation and/or responsibilities if not clear from the title.

Some of what you might bullet here could also appear in your skills section.

Avoid repetition in both sections.

Any non-degree or additional courses or training if relevant to your application

groups and conducting surveys

June 2014-current: **Waitress** (part-time), Brian's Burger Palace, Cape Town

Publications and Conferences

November 2018: Africom Conference, Cape Town: Co-presented paper on "Do Student Voices Make a Difference?: Exploring Outcomes of Student Activism at the University of Cape Town."

Include if appropriate to your application or if you are applying for an academic position.

Membership of Professional Associations

2016-current: Member of Golden Key International Honour Society, UCT: connects high-achieving individuals locally, regionally & globally

If you belong to professional associations or societies, include a chronological list here.

Skills

Teaching and Facilitating

- Tutor for five first-year Sociology 1 students
- Facilitator of 20 Grade 11s for extra Maths lessons every week as SHAWCO volunteer

Marketing and fundraising

- As SAX Appeal magazine committee member, responsible for liaison with all corporate advertisers (e.g. Mr Price, FNB, SAB) and exceeded target profit by R5 000
- Raised R10 000 in sponsorship for House of Hope by doing the Argus Cycle Tour on a unicycle

Social media and web development

- Initiated, set up and managed Twitter account while interning at Rhino Africa
- Designed website for Ballroom Dancing committee at UCT

IT and computer

- Proficient in the use of MS Office, MS FrontPage, Access and web design using HTML

Communication

- Languages: English, Xhosa (fluent) and Afrikaans (good)
- Public speaking skills developed through class presentations and Toastmasters Course (2016)

Additional Information

Referees

Professor Percy Davis, Head: Botany Department, UCT: percy.davis@uct.ac.za, cell: 076 426 4912

Mr Vincent Mabona, Manager: SWAT Marketing: vincent@swat.co.za, tel: 021 655 4782

You may choose to mention additional experiences and information not covered elsewhere in your CV. Don't include interests or hobbies, unless relevant or unusual.

Your referee should know you fairly well, and must have agreed to serve as your referee.

Ask a referee beforehand for permission. Inform them of the position you are applying for, and send them your latest CV.

Ideally you should include at least two referees, but no friends or family members.

Include their name, position, organisation and contact details. At least one of them should be able to comment on your recent academic performance.

Choose your top 5 skills that are relevant to the opportunity you are applying for.