

5 STAR Futures Programme

A guide to CV writing and interview preparation

dwfgroup.com

The logo for dwf, consisting of the lowercase letters 'dwf' in a dark purple font inside a white circle with a slight shadow.

dwf



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Knowing yourself

Introduction: Knowing yourself

Knowing yourself

- What are the things that motivate you currently?
- What are your hopes and fears for the future regarding your job search?
- Think about any key achievements you have been part of, or contributed to, of which you are proud. These can be things you do well day by day, in a consistent way or these could be one-off achievements where you felt you made a difference.

Achievement 1

- What did you do?
- How did you do it?
- Which skills and behaviours did you demonstrate?

Achievement 2

- What did you do?
- How did you do it?
- Which skills and behaviours did you demonstrate?

Putting together an impactful CV

A hand holding a pencil is writing on a notepad. The notepad has some handwritten notes and diagrams. In the background, a laptop is visible. The scene is lit with a soft, blueish light.

Key principles for your CV

CV as a passport to an interview and your next career step.

- Tailored to suit you
- Honest
- Tailored to the role you apply for
- Use the content to sell your expertise and skills
- Ideally no longer than two sides of A4



Your CV: best practice

Your CV is your first impression to a recruiter, and making your CV stand out is key to getting to an interview.

Job searches can be very competitive, and you want to catch the recruiter's eye by submitting a CV that instantly shows how you fit what the recruiter needs. Here are seven ways to make your resume stand out from the pile:

1. Tailor your CV for each job

Small tweaks may be all you need to do. Be sure to incorporate the same keywords that are in the job description and your skills, titles and certifications that match the position's needs.

2. Be Specific

Showcase your experience by including specific accomplishments, awards and key projects. Include jargon and industry-specific language to demonstrate you have industry knowledge.

3. Proofread

Spelling, grammar and punctuation errors show an inattention to detail. Ask a friend to read your resume to make sure you haven't missed anything.

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a laptop keyboard, showing keys like 'S', 'X', 'Z', and 'Enter'.

Your CV: best practice

4. Write a cover letter

Sometimes a cover letter makes all the difference. In your letter, highlight specific accomplishments and use this space to expand on any work experience that's relevant to the job you're applying for.

5. Format for effect

Your cv needs to be concise, simple and clean. There are many different ways to order your cv, but highlight what matters most at the top. If you're a recent grad, for example, start with your education, but for those with more than a few years work experience, highlight your career accomplishments instead.

6. Include soft skills

Recruiters look for candidates who will fit into the corporate culture and work well with existing employees. Examples of your teamwork, problem-solving, communication and interpersonal skills provide a glimpse into your personality. You want to show that you're a well-rounded employee who is easy to work with and can both help achieve company goals. Be proud of the skills that you have and see each and every one as a way to progress in your career.

Your CV: think about your skills

Transferable skills

These are skills which have been acquired in one setting but can be used in many different sorts of businesses.

Example: Reading or writing related skills, computer skills, management experience, commercial skills, deadline success.

Job-relates skills

These skills are specific to a certain line of employment or trade and may require you to have received training to perform.

Example: Accountancy qualifications

Adaptive skills

These sorts of aptitudes are sometimes less obvious and harder to quantify because they rely on personality traits rather than learning.

Example: Team working, loyalty, positivity, creativity, tenacity.



Your CV: main chapters

1. Your personal details

- You should include your name, address and contact details.
- It's up to you whether you include your marital status and nationality. If you're adding your email address to your contact details make sure that it sounds professional and creates the right impression. Potentially, add a link to a professional social media website like LinkedIn. A date of birth is no longer needed, owing to age discrimination rules

2. Your personal profile (also known as a personal statement)

- Your personal profile is a mini-advert for you and should summarise your skills and qualities, work background and achievement, career aims. It should only be a few lines and must grab the reader's attention. This profile helps the reader build up more of a picture of your skills, knowledge and experience. Be brief - you can go into more detail and highlight examples of your skills in later sections.
- When you're summarising your career aims, think about the employer you are sending the CV to. It will hit home with employers if your career aims sound exactly like the kind of opportunities they currently have.



Your CV: main chapters

3. Employment history and work experience

- If you've been working for a while, you could put your employment history first. If you don't have much work experience, you might like to highlight your education and training.

Include:

- Employer
 - Dates you worked for them,
 - Job title
 - Your main duties and achievements.
-
- Use bullet pointed lists and positive language. Try thinking of 'action' words that you can use to describe what you did in your job, like achieved, designed, established, supervised, co-ordinated, created or transformed.
 - Don't forget to include any relevant temporary work and volunteering experience.
 - Avoid unexplained gaps in your employment history.



Your CV: main chapters

4. Education and training

- Start with your most recent qualifications and work back to the ones you got at school.

Include:

- the university, college or school
- the dates the qualifications were awarded and any grades
- any work-related courses, if they're relevant
- interests and achievements
- any professional qualifications

5. Additional information

- Anything else that's relevant (example: explaining a gap in your employment history mentioning other relevant skills here, such as a have a driving license, knowledge of any foreign languages, any hobbies that are relevant to the job you're applying for).

6. References

- At least one referee should be work-related. Or, if you haven't worked for a while, you could use another responsible person who has known you for some time.

Your marketing campaign

Approaching your job search



Which elements to use during your job search

Advertisements

- Newspapers
- Internet – company websites, newspaper listings, LinkedIn ...
- Job boards: Indeed.com, Total Jobs, Jobsite, Reed, Thelawyer.com., CV Library, Lawcareers.net. Legal Support Network.
- Trade magazines and press

Recruitment agencies: high street agencies, specialist agencies, executive search

Networking: best route in to the “hidden” job market. Use your contacts to find out about potential vacancies. Networks include: professional associations, family&friends, business contacts, clubs, colleagues etc.

Speculative approaches: another route in to the “hidden” job market. Think about target companies.

Make yourself visible in the candidate market

Job board

Post your cv and be contactable by recruiters and employers

Examples:

- Indeed.com
- Legal Support Network
- Total Jobs
- Jobsite
- Reed

Job board tips

- Flesh it out – use it as an online CV
- Have a picture and show personality
- Be active and get connected
- Use Keywords to increase your visibility
- Indicate your level of job search activity. If you're actively looking for a new job, use a phrase that shows that in your headline.
- Ask for LinkedIn recommendations

Twitter

Twitter also allows you to build a network of contacts, to take part in discussions, and to be visible in a community of industry professionals. A Twitter profile comes up high in google searches.

Which channels are you aware of which allow you to make yourself visible to employers / recruiters?

Interviews: preparation and best practice



A few thoughts...

...from a candidate's and employer's perspective.

Candidate

CV – first step towards your next career step

Interview – next step in getting you there

Don't forget that:

- With the right amount of preparation, you can anticipate the type of questions you are likely to be asked and prepare your answers.
- You are in control of the answers you give and the information you share.
- Not every applicant is being interviewed, so you have a chance of getting the role.
- You never get a second chance to make a first impression.

Employer

The key aspects an employer is trying to find out is:

- Can this person do the role?
- Will the person fit in?
- Can we afford this person?
- Will the person want the job?

Interview preparation



1. Ensure you have all the basic information regarding your interview:

- Name and title interviewer
- Location, how to get there, length of interview
- Need to bring any certificates or identification



2. Research:

- The company: gather as much information as possible about the firm and list in particular their main activities, directors, new product launches, recent successes and awards etc.
- The interviewer: Google or look the person up on LinkedIn and familiarise yourself with his / her background



3. Prepare answers and questions:

- Consider the most likely questions that you are going to be asked and prepare answers.
- Consider how you'll explain problematic aspects of your CV, such as leaving an employer.
- Prepare any questions you would like to ask



4. Print your CV and bring it along



5. Review the job specification in detail

- Link your experience and achievements and relate them to the role
- Write down how your skills and experience match what is required in the job specification.



Structuring your interview answers

Competency based questions: an employer will be seeking specific examples of your skills, knowledge and experience.

Why not trying the **STAR** way for answering such questions?

- **Situation:** Describe the context briefly, where were you? what were you doing?
- **Task:** Describe the problem you were facing or your task, what needed doing?
- **Action:** Describe what your approach was, what did you do personally?
- **Result:** Describe the outcome of your actions and initiatives, what did you learn? What was the result? Would you do anything differently next time?

Let's put this in practice:

- Team work is very important in our organisation. What evidence do you have to prove that you are a good team player?
- Tell me about a time when you have been involved in implementing change.
- Tell me about a time when you felt particularly effective, what was it and why?
- What was the biggest problem that you have had to overcome – what was it and how did you deal with it?



The interview – best practice

- Focus. On the day of an interview, allow plenty of time to get there without rushing or being stressed by delays
- Walk in to the room with confidence and introduce yourself.
- Eye contact and firm handshake
- Highlight your strengths and achievements but also be prepared to talk about your weaknesses.
- Give short, simple and positive answers when talking about challenges.
- Answer questions clearly and concisely. Avoid jargon.
- Don't do yourself down- sell yourself: no one else is going to! Be positive about yourself and your experiences.
- Make notes. Even if you are taking everything in, making a note creates the impression that you are paying full attention.
- Don't criticise previous managers, colleagues or employers
- Check what happens next and when, thank the interviewer and close positively.



Preparing questions you might ask

- Demonstrate your interest in the role and the company
- Ensure your questions are of relevance and importance.
- Concentrate on questions which will create a good impression.

Examples:

- What do you expect me to achieve in the first 3 / 6 months?
- How did this vacancy arise?
- What are the long term career prospects in this role?
- What is your approach to learning and development?

Careers at DWF

A hand is shown holding a glowing, rectangular object that emits a bright blue and purple light. The background is filled with various geometric shapes and colors, including shades of blue, purple, and pink, creating a futuristic and abstract atmosphere.

Contact us

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