

# CV Writing

- One of the most critical employability skills is the art of writing a dynamic CV that enables you to stand out in a crowd of applicants. As a CV is something that is continuously developed, it's important that learners start to grasp this skill at school. Learning about the key components of a CV as early as Grade 10 means that learners will have a distinct advantage as they approach the tool proactively.

## What's new?

Keep up with current CV writing trends by sticking to the following:

- **The two page limit**

CVs used to look a little bit like a booklet, sometimes exceeding ten pages long! According to Richard Bolles, author of *What Colour is your Parachute*, it takes a skilled recruiter as little as eight seconds to scan through a CV. As recruiters are bombarded with CVs, save them the time of wading through pages of (often irrelevant) information by consolidating the most important details on to no more than an absolute maximum of two pages.

**How this applies to learners:** Without much (or any) work experience, it's likely that learners will struggle to fill even two pages of information, but it's a good rule to learn from the start. Encourage them to focus on quality, rather than quantity.

- **The skills-based approach**

The best tool for differentiation is to back-up what you have said in your CV with specific facts (and figures where possible). This is particularly pertinent for skills that you claim to have developed. The link between what skills you have developed and how you have developed them is an important one. For example, if you have developed excellent communication skills, back this up in your CV by listing the fact that you have conducted ten class presentations and are an active member of the debating society.

**How this applies to learners:** This is a fantastic tool for learners as it compensates for a lack of work experience. Encourage them to identify the key skills that they have developed and then to back these up with information regarding how they have developed them.

For example: Organisational skills

- Assisted in the co-ordination of the Leaver's Ball for 200 attendees.
- Organised a fundraiser for the ABC Volunteer Programme, resulting in raising R10 000 for the Pietermaritzburg Children's Home.  
(Using verbs in the past tense – as above, assists in sounding specific).

- **What's old?**

Avoid outdated CV writing by doing the following:

- Biographical details section  
In the past, it was customary to include a long biographical details section, with information such as health and marital status. With the two page rule this is no longer required.

**How this applies to learners:** The key component of the biographical details section is contact details. Learners can put this together concisely by using a 'header' in Microsoft Word. By inserting their details into a header format, they are repeated at the top of each page, meaning that the learner would still be contactable if the pages of the CV were to be separated for any reason.

- **Photos**

Generally speaking, photos should not be included in CVs. There are exceptions to this rule and it's important to research the industry to ensure that it's not a requirement.

**How this applies to learners:** If they are considering a gap year, learners should ensure that they research the CV requirements of the industry. Working as a stewardess or deckhand in the yachting industry is a popular gap year option and these are two of the few that do require a photo.

## TO SUMMARISE

Learning to write a CV is a fundamental employability skill and starting to do so as early as Grade 10, means that scholars will be able to identify areas for development and proactively work on these. ■



To find out about Achieve Careers' CV Workshops for LO teachers, please contact Joanne on joanne@achievecareers.co.za. If you are using the Achieve Careers' Careers manuals, please note that there is a step-by-step CV Writing Guide in the Grade 10 and 11 manuals.

# Lesson Plan

SACF has worked around the clock to help simplify the workload for LO Educators. You are allowed to use these lesson plans in the classroom, make photocopies for projects, tasks, whatever! No jokes. Just as long as you remember it is the property of your favourite career mag!

## Grade 11 Life Orientation How to write a CV

When applying for a position, you'll be in competition with many others. Applicants are requested to send in a CV. Your prospective employer doesn't have the time to read lengthy CVs. They tend to scrutinize CVs that are neat and convey an impression that the prospective employee is well-organised.

### Written CV

Write to impress. In today's competitive job market your CV must be successful and make the shortlist. In the past it was much easier to look for a job. All one really had to do was read the classified ads, phone the number listed and speak to the person telephonically to set up an interview. These days, job-hunting has become much more complex. Today CVs form a prerequisite when searching for a job.

### Tips for a winning CV

The CV is the primary document that will 'sell' you as a successful candidate. Your CV must grab the attention of the reader within 35–45 seconds upon reading it (this is the average time a reader spends reading a CV). A good CV will extend the reading period and prompt the reader to contact you.

1. **Error free** - Make sure that the document you are sending is error-free. Proofread your CV before sending it. Be thorough.
2. **Detail** - You're not writing an autobiography when compiling your CV. Complete the details about your education, work history and experience. Your future employer doesn't need to know everything in the finest detail, for example, the fact that you were the captain of your netball team in Grade 6.
3. **Grammar usage** - Avoid the use of personal pronouns such as 'I', 'me' and 'mine'. For example: 'I supervised four office workers in my department.' Rather write: 'supervised four office workers.'
4. **Achiever** - What makes you as a person stand out in the crowd? What skills, abilities and work ethics do you display that will grab the attention of the employer to put yours on the top of the pile?
5. **Positive attitude** - You must adopt a positive attitude when compiling your CV. Avoid things such as reasons for leaving a job, setbacks and failed initiatives. Your prospective new employer is looking for someone that has a positive and enthusiastic attitude.
6. **Be prepared** - A CV opens the door for an interview, but they don't guarantee you the job. Remember it's the person who ultimately gets the job. Be prepared for the telephone call or email setting up an appointment for the interview.

### CV mistakes to avoid

**Dates** - Leaving out dates in your CV may cause your CV to land in the bin. From an employment perspective if you leave out dates, you are trying to hide information such as long periods of unemployment or job-hopping.

**Achievements** - A mistake on a CV is to make too many unsubstantiated claims and to use too much industry jargon that doesn't sell you as a possible candidate for the position. Your CV must be designed with the relevant information about your achievements that will sell your skills and achievements for the specific position you're applying for.

**Out-dated information** - Avoid using job descriptions that will appear to be too old or outdated on your CV.

**Irrelevant information** - Do not include a photograph with your CV. The relevant information on your CV will help you to be selected for an interview from among the hundreds of other hopeful candidates. Every word on your CV must be relevant and meaningful and it must help sell your skills, talents and experience.

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