

A GUIDE TO CREATING YOUR CV

Your CV should help an employer understand the experience, skills and results you can bring to their team. This guide takes you from choosing a structure to checking your finished application, with practical examples you can adapt to your own career.

The purpose of your CV

Give the reader a clear reason to invite you to an interview. Show what you have done, the difference you made and how your experience fits the role.

1. Start with the opportunity

- Read the job description and identify the main requirements. Choose examples that show how you meet them.
- Keep a master CV with your full career history and achievements. Save a tailored version for each application.
- Put the most relevant information early. Use specific evidence instead of general claims such as “excellent communicator”.

2. Choose a clear structure

Reverse chronological: list your most recent role first. This is a useful starting point for most candidates because it makes your career history easy to follow.

Skills based or hybrid: lead with relevant skills and evidence, then include a dated career history. This can help if you are changing career, returning to work or have limited paid experience.

Early career: bring relevant qualifications, projects, placements and volunteering higher up the page when these provide your strongest evidence.

3. Keep the presentation simple

As a practical guide, aim for two A4 pages. One page may suit a first CV; senior, specialist or academic applications may need more. Follow any length or format instructions in the advert.

Use a readable font, ideally 11 pt or larger, clear headings, short bullet points and consistent spacing. Allow white space and keep the layout easy to scan. Prioritise relevant evidence when deciding what to shorten.

WHAT TO INCLUDE

4. Contact details and professional profile

Start with your name, telephone number, professional email address and town or region. Add an up-to-date LinkedIn profile or relevant portfolio link if useful. A full street address is usually unnecessary.

Write a short profile of three or four lines. Summarise your specialism, relevant experience and the contribution you can make. Tailor it to the opportunity and avoid unsupported adjectives.

Example profile

Finance professional with experience in month-end reporting, reconciliations and credit control. Confident using Excel and finance systems to improve reporting accuracy and resolve queries. Seeking an accounting role with scope to support process improvement.

Use this as a structure only. Include skills and experience you can evidence.

5. Key skills and employment history

Select around six to eight skills that matter to the role, such as management accounts, HR systems, procurement or diary management. Support these with evidence in your employment history.

- For each role, give your job title, employer and dates, using a consistent month and year format. Identify temporary, contract or interim roles clearly.
- Add a short line explaining your remit or the employer's sector if it helps the reader understand the role.
- Use three to five focused bullet points for recent relevant roles, balancing responsibilities with achievements. Give older experience less space unless it is directly relevant.
- Include relevant placements, self-employment and voluntary work. Keep job titles and dates accurate and consistent with your application form and LinkedIn profile.

6. Education and additional information

List relevant qualifications, awarding institutions and completion dates, most recent first. Distinguish completed qualifications from those in progress. Include grades where helpful or requested; experienced candidates can summarise older school qualifications.

Add current professional memberships, relevant training, systems knowledge and languages with an honest proficiency level. Include a driving licence only when relevant. Interests are optional and most useful when they demonstrate skills or a meaningful commitment.

Provide referee details separately when requested and with the referee's agreement. You can omit a references section or simply say "References available on request".

SHOW THE DIFFERENCE YOU MADE

7. Turn responsibilities into evidence

A job title tells the reader where you worked. An achievement shows how you contributed. Choose examples that relate to the vacancy and explain your own part in the outcome.

A useful formula

Action + what you worked on + result or benefit.

For example: "Introduced a supplier review process that reduced purchasing costs by 8% over 12 months."

Use figures when you can verify them: time saved, costs reduced, accuracy improved, customers supported or the size of a team or budget. If no reliable figure is available, describe the improvement clearly. Respect confidential information.

Examples to help you get started

Accounting and finance

Reduced overdue debt by 20% over six months by introducing weekly account reviews and a consistent follow-up process.

HR and recruitment

Coordinated onboarding for 35 new starters, introducing a checklist that helped managers complete documents before each start date.

Supply chain and procurement

Introduced weekly supplier reviews and an escalation process, improving on-time delivery from 89% to 96% in six months.

PA and business support

Coordinated complex diaries for three directors and introduced a shared meeting tracker to reduce scheduling clashes.

These examples are illustrative. Replace the details and figures with your own verified experience; do not copy results you have not achieved. Team outcomes are useful, but make your personal contribution clear.

Choose precise action words

Leadership: led, coached, managed, coordinated.

Improvement: simplified, introduced, streamlined, resolved.

Analysis: analysed, reconciled, evaluated, forecast.

Delivery: completed, implemented, negotiated, supported.

CAREER GAPS AND APPLICATIONS

8. Explain your career story clearly

Career breaks, redundancy, caring responsibilities, study and changes of direction are part of many careers. Explain a significant gap briefly and honestly, using the level of personal detail you feel comfortable sharing.

For example: "Career break for caring responsibilities, March 2024 to January 2025." Include relevant learning, volunteering or projects undertaken during a break when these strengthen your application.

If you have completed several assignments, you can group them under a heading such as "Temporary and contract assignments". Keep dates, employers or assignments and the nature of the work clear. Do not change dates to hide gaps.

9. Personal information and support needs

For a typical UK CV, leave out your photograph, date of birth, age, marital status, nationality, National Insurance number and bank details. Follow any instructions for an anonymised application.

Whether and when to mention a disability or health condition is a personal choice. You can contact the recruiter separately to discuss support or adjustments you may need during the application or interview process. Keep the CV focused on the experience and skills you want to highlight.

Salary history and expectations are usually better discussed separately, unless the application specifically asks for them. Avoid unnecessary personal information about yourself or other people.

10. Make your CV easy to process online

Some employers use applicant tracking systems to help manage applications. A straightforward layout helps both the reader and the software find important information.

- Use standard headings such as Profile, Key Skills, Employment History and Education. A single column is a sensible default.
- Avoid text boxes, graphics, skill-rating bars and complex tables in the CV. Put essential contact details in the main body rather than only in a header or footer.
- Use relevant terms from the advert naturally and only where accurate. Spell out an unfamiliar abbreviation on first use. Do not repeat keywords without evidence.
- Follow the requested file format. Otherwise, use a Word document or a PDF with selectable text, and check that copied text reads in the correct order. Avoid scanned image-only CVs.

11. Use AI thoughtfully

AI can help you organise ideas or improve clarity. Check every suggestion and keep your own voice. Never invent qualifications, employment or results. Remove identifying and confidential information before sharing text with an AI tool, and follow the employer's instructions on AI use.

YOUR FINAL CV CHECKLIST

Before you send your CV, read it alongside the vacancy. Make sure the reader can quickly see why your experience is relevant and what you could contribute.

Content

- My profile and strongest examples match the role I am applying for.
- My recent roles explain both my responsibilities and my contribution.
- Every claim, date, qualification and figure is accurate and can be discussed at interview.
- Career breaks and contract assignments are clear, with appropriate personal detail.
- I have removed repetition, outdated details and information that does not help my application.

Presentation and accuracy

- Headings, dates, bullet points, fonts and spacing are consistent.
- I have checked spelling, grammar and UK English, including “licence” and “organised”.
- The file opens correctly and no text is cut off or stranded on an extra page.
- My telephone number and email address are correct, and any profile or portfolio links work.
- I have checked comments, tracked changes and document properties for anything I should remove.

Submission

- I have followed the employer’s instructions, including any anonymisation or file-format requirements.
- I have used a clear filename, for example Firstname_Surname_CV.pdf.
- I have asked someone I trust to proofread it and saved the version sent with the vacancy details.

A final thought from Halecroft

Your CV does not need to tell your whole story. Give the reader a clear, honest picture of the experience and strengths that matter to this opportunity, and be ready to build on those examples at interview.

Further guidance

Speak to your Halecroft Recruitment consultant about the role you are targeting. If you use a professional CV writer, agree the cost, scope and revisions first, then check the finished CV carefully.

Useful reading: [National Careers Service - How to write a CV](#); [University of Oxford Careers Service - CVs](#); [Scope - Disclosing disability to an employer](#); [Prospects - Using generative AI in job applications](#).

Updated October 2026 | Guidance for typical UK job applications.