

CV Guidance for Adults

A clear, practical guide explaining what to include — and why

Purpose of a CV

Your CV is a professional marketing document. Its job is to show employers why you are the right person for the role by presenting your experience, skills, and achievements in a clear, relevant way. Employers spend 6–10 seconds on an initial scan, so clarity and structure matter.

Essential Principles

- Maximum 2 pages — employers prefer concise CVs that highlight only relevant experience
- Consistent layout and font — this improves readability and shows attention to detail
- No personal details such as age, gender, marital status, or photos — these are not required and help avoid unconscious bias
- Professional tone and formatting — your CV should look clean, modern, and easy to skim

Work History (Last 10 Years Only)

Employers want to see your recent and relevant experience. Going back 10 years keeps your CV focused and avoids overwhelming the reader

How to present it:

- List roles in reverse chronological order:
- Job Title
- Employer
- Dates
- Key responsibilities
- Achievements (quantified where possible)

Why this matters

- Employers want to understand your career progression quickly
- Listing achievements shows impact, not just duties
- Keeping to 10 years avoids including outdated or irrelevant roles

If you have gaps

Briefly explain them — employers value honesty and clarity. Examples:

- Caring responsibilities
- Full-time education
- Career break / relocation

Short explanations prevent assumptions and demonstrate transparency

Achievements

Achievements help you stand out because they show results, not just tasks.

Examples of strong achievement statements:

- Increased customer satisfaction scores by 18% through improved service processes
- Managed a caseload of 120 clients while maintaining 98% compliance
- Delivered training to 40+ staff, improving onboarding efficiency

Why achievements matter

Employers want evidence of what you can deliver. Achievements demonstrate:

- Impact
- Initiative
- Value to previous employers

Professional Development

Include training, courses, and certifications from the last 10 years (you can go further back if relevant)

Examples:

- Leadership training
- Safeguarding qualifications
- Industry-specific certifications
- IT or software training
- CPD courses

Why this matters

Professional development shows commitment to growth and staying current in your field

Skills

Use skills that genuinely reflect your strengths and match the job description.

Examples:

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Organisation
- IT proficiency
- Problem solving

Why skills matter

Employers scan for keywords that match the job advert. Including relevant skills increases your chances of passing both human and automated screening.

Education

For adults, education is still important, but it should be concise.

Include:

- Degrees
- Apprenticeships
- Professional qualifications
- Relevant vocational training
- Older qualifications (e.g., GCSEs) can be summarised unless specifically relevant.

Why this matters

Education shows your foundational knowledge and any specialist training relevant to the role.

Interests (Optional)

Include interests only if they add value or demonstrate positive qualities.

Examples:

- Volunteering
- Coaching or mentoring
- Creative projects
- Sports or fitness
- Community involvement

Why this matters

Interests can show personality, commitment, and transferable skills — but avoid generic hobbies that don't add insight.

Final Tips

Tailor your CV for each application — relevance is key

- Use active language (managed, delivered, led)
- Proofread carefully — errors can create a poor first impression
- Keep formatting simple: bullet points, clear headings, consistent spacing