

'The essential toolkit for a winning CV!'

Lee Biggins, founder and managing director of CV-Library

THE CV BOOK

**How to avoid the most common
mistakes and write a winning CV**

THIRD EDITION

JAMES INNES

The bestselling careers author and founder of The CV Centre®

Praise for *The CV Book*

'The essential toolkit for a winning CV!'

Lee Biggins, Founder and Managing Director of CV-Library

'A perfect and effective guide to getting your CV right, this book contains everything you will ever need to know about writing your CV.'

Steve Slocombe, Co-owner, GRS Recruitment

'James Innes' highly anticipated CV Book is an essential guide to building the right CV format in today's competitive and globalised marketplace. Innes packs his book with fascinating case studies, relevant questions and anecdotes, mistakes to avoid and most importantly, it provides an effective blueprint for creating an outstanding CV.'

**Jorge Marcano, Strategic Communication Expert &
Inter-Cultural Specialist, Multilingual HR Advisor at
Barclays Lithuania**

Institution names

If you have any qualifications gained at university then you should always name the universities concerned. However, with the exception of legal CVs, unless you previously attended a particularly well-known school or college, it is generally not necessary to provide its name. As with everything else on your CV, if they're not selling points, leave them out.

If you're not a graduate then by all means list the name of the school or college you most recently attended, but it's not necessary to list the names of all the institutions you attended. Your prospective employer really won't care.

Case study

Jane summarises her qualifications as follows:

Education and qualifications

BA (Hons):	Marketing and Advertising, University of Sussex (2009)
3 A Levels:	English, English Literature and French (1997)
10 GCSEs:	Including English and Mathematics (1995)

Further training

I'd often recommend following the main *Education and qualifications* section with either a *Further training* and/or a *Further skills* section. Inclusion of this will depend on whether or not you have undertaken additional training subsequent to your formal qualifications and whether or not you can demonstrate specific additional skills for which you have no formal qualification.

The *Further training* or *Vocational training* (or maybe even *Technical training* or *Continuing professional development*) section should make mention of useful classes and courses you have undertaken during the course of your career. Employers place a lot of value on continuing professional development (CPD); in many professions (medical, teaching etc.) you are expected to be continually learning. I'm not saying you should necessarily list every class, course or seminar. If you've attended them by the dozen then focus on those which will be of the greatest interest to a prospective employer.

EXAMPLE

Further training

- Management Development Programme
- Marketing Management
- Presentation Skills
- Finance for Non-Financial Managers
- Effective Man Management
- Appraisal Training
- Team Building
- Creativity Training

Qualifications such as NVQs are best listed within your main *Education and qualifications* section, whereas professional qualifications such as the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) and the RSA Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT) qualifications are best placed within *Further training*.

Case study

Jane has undertaken a couple of valuable courses and lists them as follows:

Further training

- CLAIT Level 1: Including optional unit in Database Manipulation (2009)
- Commercial Awareness & Marketing Intelligence (2007)

Further skills

The *Further skills* section can be used to provide details of IT skills, linguistic skills etc.

On the subject of IT skills, ensure you get the names, spacing and capitalisation of IT packages correct, e.g. QuarkXPress, PowerPoint (this convention is known as 'CamelCase' or medial capitals, BiCapitalisation, CapWords and InterCaps, and originated within the IT sector, although it has now spread to other areas). If in doubt, check!

Case study

Following completion of her CLAIT course, Jane has a range of valuable IT skills, and, having lived in France for a time, speaks French fluently. She also studied German at GCSE and can still 'get by'.

Further skills

IT Skills: MS Office including PowerPoint & Access, QuarkXPress and PhotoShop
Languages: Fluent French; basic German

Language skills are always of interest to employers and your level should be specified as basic, intermediate/conversational or fluent.

If the only skills you need to highlight within the *Further skills* section are IT skills then you can simply retitle the section *IT skills* or *Key IT skills* and bullet point the list.

EXAMPLE

IT skills

- MS Office including PowerPoint & Access, QuarkXPress and PhotoShop

However, if your IT skills are extensive (for example, you work within IT) then it's best to make them easier to scan by breaking them down by category; for example, hardware, software, programming languages, network protocols.

You should also highlight your accreditation with Microsoft, Cisco etc.

Other information you could place under *Further skills* include details of driving licences if that is of particular importance to your work; for example, if you're a HGV driver. However, generally this is best left to the *Other details* section that we'll come to in a later chapter.

If you are in a nonmedical profession and have completed an appropriate First Aid at Work qualification, then you could also include this under *Further skills*. Or you could just include it under *Other details* (see Chapter 12: Other details). It's up to you!

Chapter 9

Career history

The *Career history* section is, in most cases, the most important section of a CV. The exception being those individuals with little or no work experience, for example, recent school leavers and graduates.

There are a variety of possible headings for this section that you can use instead of *Career history*. If you feel the word 'career' isn't applicable to your circumstances, or if you are a recent graduate and haven't even started your career, then you might prefer to say *Employment history* or *Work experience*.

Whatever you choose to call the section, the basic principles stay the same.

Focusing on what matters

Just like your *Education and qualifications*, you should always work in reverse chronological order (start with your present or most recent job and work all the way back to your very first job).

As with the *Education and qualifications* section, focus on recent information and summarise older information. Your current or most recent job should always have the most detail.

Prospective employers are interested in points that are most relevant to them, so be concise when describing roles that aren't particularly relevant to the job you are applying for, and, conversely, make sure that you highlight and elaborate on any roles that are relevant.

TOP TIP

If you have a multi-page CV, ensure that your current or most recent employment features on the first page.

If you're struggling to fit your CV onto the recommended maximum of two pages, then it is very likely that you are putting too much detail into your *Career history*.

Structure

You need to specify:

- The name of the organisation you worked for, along with its location.
- The dates you worked for each organisation.
- Your job title or function, e.g. head of marketing.
- A compelling description of what your role entailed.

Dates

Unexplained gaps in your employment record can raise concerns in the minds of recruiters. They may think you have something to hide!

A useful trick is to cover up brief chronological gaps by listing only years, not months, within your *Career history*. I'd recommend doing this regardless of whether or not you have any gaps. I consider listing all the months to be unnecessary detail. Some recruiters, especially some recruitment agencies, still insist on all the months being listed. Medical professionals should always provide full details.

If you have larger gaps that can't be concealed by simply omitting the months then that can be problematic. But there are solutions, which we'll cover in Chapter 15: Ten solutions for ten potential problems.

And if you're still in the role then you can use the term 'to date'. For example, '2007– to date'.

Your job title or function

This is fairly self-explanatory. My only word of warning is not to embellish. Remember: the prospective employer may well contact previous employers for references and you don't want the prospective employer to refer to you as a project manager when you were in fact just an assistant project manager!