WRITING A CV / RESUME /ON LINE APPLICATION

Putting together a strong CV / online application with minimum work experience isn't easy but it can be done. The good news is employers rarely expect school / college leavers to have massive amounts of work experience - the length of your CV doesn't matter, it's the quality that counts in terms of content and presentation.

The main difference between a personal statement and a CV / online application is that for the CV you need to demonstrate that you are ready to TRANSFER into the WORLD OF WORK and these are the skills that you can demonstrate and that you have the attitude / aptitude to do it.

Apprenticeship applications involve demonstrating that you are ready for BOTH the world of work AND studying the subject so this will be a mix of both.

Skills that you have therefore gained from school for example sixth form, extra-curricular activities, work experience, voluntary work and so on, can all be TRANSFERRED into a career.

There are two main areas of a CV to consider:

- Content
- Presentation

Remember *– the average time a potential employer spends reading a CV is between six and 30 seconds; therefore, make it count!*

CONTENT

Make sure every word counts and that all the relevant information is there. **If you don't include it, no-one will know about it**. However, it's just as important to consider what to leave out. Ask yourself 'Will this help me get a job?

Personal Statement

This is a short paragraph about the skills you have and how they will fit into the role you are applying for and what sort of work you would like. Your personal profile should sit at the top of the page. Use it to summarise your 'best bits' and tailor for each application. Make sure it says something and adds to the document. Empty, generic statements won't impress. It can be easier to write this at the end, after you have set out the other information for example: experiences, skills, achievements and so on.

Skills

The employer is asking why you would fit into their company / apprenticeship scheme so make sure the skills and knowledge you do have, fit the role. Avoid trying to 'flesh out' your CV with irrelevant detail.

This is a very important section because here you are going to demonstrate what skills you have learnt and what your natural abilities are, and then demonstrate how you can transfer these to the job.

- **Hard / technical skills** are those that are practical and technical for the job, your ability to do something– for example numeracy, computing, writing, languages and so on. Include here your PC skills (even if basic) and any social media skills if needed.
- **Soft skills** are more about you and your personal qualities. Also known as employability skills; how you do something. Examples are: communication, team work, problem solving, initiative and enterprise, planning and organisation, self-management, open to learning new systems and procedures.

    Look at the World Economic Forum website for further information on top skills in demand – you will be surprised by what you read!

    https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/05/future-of-jobs-2023-skills/

Try to have at least six skills on your CV – three hard and three soft / transferable skills.

How can you demonstrate and 'evidence' your skills?

It is very important that you are able to demonstrate that you have these skills – and that you are not just writing them down and cannot back them up. You may not have extensive experience but that does not matter. All the skills you have learnt through school and college work, voluntary work, extra-curricular activities, part-time jobs and so on are all TRANSFERABLE to the work place.

Do not underestimate their importance, but think about each activity and what skill you have gained from it.

Example – pet sitting does not sound like the most employable activity, however, looking after someone else's pet / home is a responsibility with safety implications. No-one is going to take you on as a sitter if you never show up on time, leave early, don't listen while the parent / owner is giving you all the necessary information, leave the house a mess and ignore the children / pets completely!

However, if instead you are: listening to instructions, asking relevant questions, showing reliability and dependability, are honest and communicate well, then these are skills that you have gained and can be transferred to another job.

Some other ideas of how to demonstrate some soft skills are -

- **Leadership** – Do you lead any teams or projects? This could be inside or outside of school.
- **Creativity** – Have you thought of / designed / written something new?
- **Teamwork** – Which teams are you in? What makes a team work? (listening / communication / different strengths and so on).
- **Fast and willing learner** – Are you able to learn new systems and procedures quickly? Give an example of something you have just learnt.

Use the Job Description and Read about the Company Culture

The employer is asking why you would fit into their company / apprenticeship scheme so make sure your answers relate to the job description / company culture.

Using the job description and the person specification write down a list of what they are looking for.

Then, try and relate at least some of your skills / evidence to this. For example, if you are applying for a job as a marketing assistant, interpersonal skills will be very important so your role as a school leader / fundraiser / team player / church groups and so on would be relevant here.

Help with your words

For some ideas / help with personal qualities have a look at these websites:

https://www.cvplaza.com/cv-personal-profile/top-10-personal-qualities-on-a-cv/

https://helpfulprofessor.com/personal-qualities-examples/ (watch for American spelling!)

Action Verbs

Look at this website for some great ideas of words to use.

https://greatresumesfast.com/blog/50-strong-action-verbs-you-need-to-use-on-your-resume-now/

WHAT TO AVOID!!!

Unless absolutely necessary for the job stay politically neutral. Avoid any judgement comments and opinions.

Avoid self-criticism, clichés (for example: 'I am passionate about'), oversharing, poor wording, rude and offensive comments about others / organisations and so on.

Avoid 'I'm not very good at…' or 'I can't do…'

DO NOT lie! You will be caught out! **DO NOT** plagiarise or use ChatGPT! You must be able to back up what you say.

Check out this website for more.

https://www.graemejordancv.com/cv-say-anything-negative-heres-avoid/

PRESENTATION / LAYOUT

- At your age your CV should not be longer than two pages.
- Use a professional looking font that is easy to read. The CV must be easy to navigate.
- If you are going for a creative role e.g. graphics / art – do something a little bit more unusual with the layout but it MUST be easy to read and navigate.
- If you are sending a paper copy of your CV make sure it is not torn, crumpled or stained.
- If applicable for the job add links for example: portfolio / website / blogs / LinkedIn and so on.
- Make sure the layout of your CV is consistent throughout for example: headings, font, font size and so on. Avoid final sentences or stray words trailing onto another page. You can adjust the formatting depending on whether you have a lot to squeeze in, or less to say, which might need spacing out to fill the page.
- Bullet points are recommended when listing job responsibilities / skills and so on as they are easier on the eye and therefore more likely to catch employers' attention. They will also help you to keep the wording brief.
- Check and double check spelling, punctuation and grammar. First impressions really do count – if you can't get it right on the CV this will not create confidence in the employer about you and may even see your CV rejected.
- Ask someone to proof read your final version to check for any grammatical errors and also to see that the CV 'flows' and all makes sense. Do a SPELLING AND GRAMMAR CHECK.

- For references always ask your chosen referees for their permission before adding them to your CV / application.
- There are lots of different CV formats; you can Google many for free. Just remember, it must be easy to navigate.
- Your picture on your CV remains a discussion point so maybe have a look at the company ethos / culture to gain whether this is appropriate or not.

Sources and useful websites

- www.unifrog.org for a CV creator
- https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/cvs-and-cover-letters
- https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/cv-sections
- https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/student-outcomes-and-employability/graduate-employment-and-skills-guide/