How to write a CV

A step-by-step guide

A good CV is your best tool to communicate your skills and experience to a hiring manager.

This step-by-step guide tells you how to write a CV that highlights your most employable qualities.

You can do this by choosing one of the three CV templates in the job hunters' toolkit and filling it out with your own information.

Step 1: List your relevant skills, qualifications, and experience

Use the table below to write down all the skills, qualifications and experience you have.

Don't leave anything out. You can remove things later if they're not relevant.

You can use the completed table to decide which template to use.

ACTION: Complete the table below

My work experience

Employment	Volunteer and community

My skills

Technical skills	Personal skills

My education

Tertiary	Secondary	Other (eg, TEFL certificate)

What are technical and personal skills?

Technical skills are particular to a job, for example, nursing, software development or a heavy vehicle licence.

Personal or employability skills apply across jobs, for example, problem-solving skills, leadership and customer service.
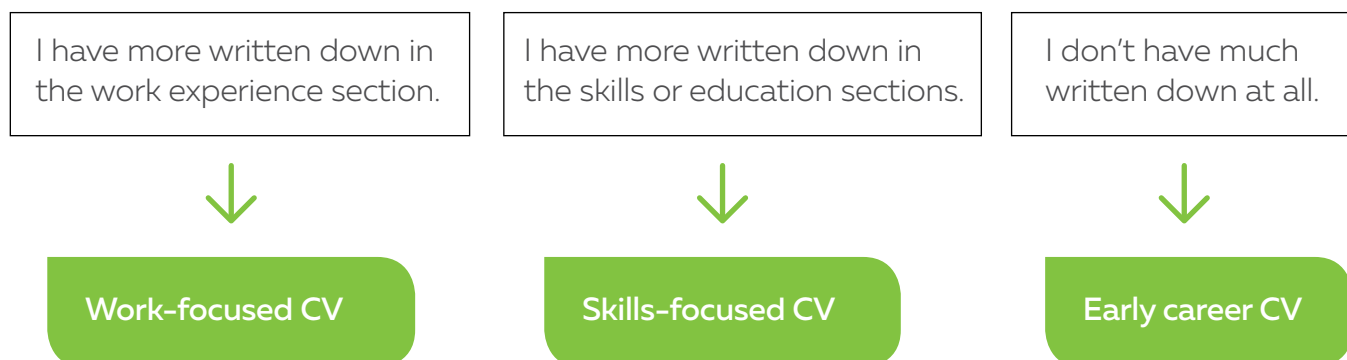
Step 2: Choose and complete a template

Take a look at your completed table. Which boxes have more written in them than others?

It's not bad to have lots of examples for one section and not many for another. It just means you need to structure your CV in a different way.

Now, we will select a template and use it to create the first draft of your CV.

ACTION: Use the diagram below to select a CV template and download it from the job hunters' toolkit.

I have more written down in the work experience section.	I have more written down in the skills or education sections.	I don't have much written down at all.
↓	↓	↓
Work-focused CV	**Skills-focused CV**	**Early career CV**

Now, go through your template and add in the information from your table. Do this slowly and thoughtfully, keeping these tips in mind:

- use only as many words as you need to describe something
- use a bulleted list instead of long paragraphs
- focus on the skills and experience most relevant to the kind of job you want.

ACTION: Use your selected template to write the first draft of your CV.

Step 3: Tidy up your CV

Now, let's improve what you've written. You want to make your CV visually interesting and easy to read.

You can also make simple changes so your CV will rank highly in the automated Applicant Tracking System (ATS) that many recruiters use.

Use the following checklist to tidy up your CV and prepare it for ATS software.

What is an Applicant Tracking System (ATS)?

This is a software tool that recruiters use to automatically rank applicants' CVs and cover letters.

A hiring manager chooses a few keywords and the ATS searches for them in the documents.

These keywords are usually the title of the position, the industry and a few of the most relevant skills.

ACTION: Use the checklist below to edit your CV.

General tips		ATS optimisation	
Do a thorough check for spelling and grammar mistakes.	◯	Remove text boxes – put all text in the main part.	◯
Remove any images or photos.	◯	Add clear subheadings to each section.	◯
Use a black, easy-to-read font in one size.	◯	Put any acronyms in brackets after writing the full version, eg, Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)	◯
Shorten your sentences and break up long paragraphs into bulleted lists.	◯	Insert keywords from the job advert into appropriate places.	◯
Double-check all the contact details – yours and your referees.	◯	Make sure all information is in the text – ATSs won't read infographics or diagrams.	◯