CV and Job Application Tips

1. Keep it real!

Usually a CV should be no more than two pages – and that's two pages of A4 paper! Employers spend, an average, just 8 seconds looking at any one CV, and a surefire way of landing yourself on the no pile is to send them your entire life story. Keep it punchy, to the point, and save those niggly little details for the interview.

If the company uses a job application form, the size of the boxes should give you an indication of how much information they are expecting. Many applications have a section for 'any other information'. Use this to sell yourself!

2. Tailor it

We've all done it. Whizzed the same CV out to lots of employers to save time... Stop! Take the time to change your CV for each role that you apply for. Research the company and use the job advert to work out EXACTLY what skills you should point out to them. They will appreciate the obvious effort.

3. Include a personal statement

Don't just assume an employer will see how your experience relates to their job. Instead, use a short personal statement to explain why you are the best person for the job. This should be reflected in your cover letter as well – tell them what you want them to know about you and be really positive about yourself.

4. Don't leave gaps

We are a cynical bunch and leaving obvious gaps on your CV immediately makes employers suspicious – and they won't give you the benefit of the doubt, so be honest about any employment or education gaps. If you've been out of work it can be a worry but just put a positive spin on it. Did you do a course, volunteer work or develop soft skills such as communication, teamwork or admin skills? If so, shout about it!

5. Keep it current

You should keep your CV up-to-date whether you're looking for a job or not. Every time something significant occurs which could be relevant to your career, record it so you don't later forget something that could be important.

6. The error of your ways

Employers DO look for mistakes on CVs and if they find them, it makes you look really bad. Spellcheckers are good, but don't rely on them and if you're unsure, ask someone else to double-check what you've written and be critical about spelling, grammar and your use of language.

7. Tell the truth

Everyone lies on their CV, right? NO! Stop! Blatant lies on your CV can land you in a whole heap of trouble when it comes to employers checking your background and references. The last thing you want is to start work and then lose your new job for lying. You also may get caught out at the interview stage when you suddenly can't answer questions on what you claim to know. And that can be VERY awkward! Putting a positive spin on things is fine, but outright lying isn't.

8. Paper vs technology

Different employers will expect CVs or applications in different ways. Some will expect a paper application or CV, others will only use their own online application forms or expect you to upload a CV. Make sure your CV works both as a paper or electronic version and have a plain text version so you can copy and paste sections into an online application form. I'm afraid you'll just have to write out paper applications but having something you can copy from will save you time.

9. Make it look good

We live in a world where image is everything, and that also goes for your CV. Take some time to pretty it up... Use bullet points and keep sentences short. Use the graphic design trick of leaving plenty of white space around text and between categories to make the layout easy on the eye. It's okay to use a bit of colour, but keep it simple and stick to dark fonts that are easier to read.

10. Be a social butterfly

Think about the image you portray on social media. Many employers might look at your profiles and can get the wrong impression of you. Make sure your profile picture shows you at your best and if you want to keep your social media and work life separate, keep your settings private. LinkedIn is a useful social media site that you can use just for work purposes. Set up a good profile and include a link on your CV.