

HELP NOTES

Essential tips for CV writing



If you're going for a job in the creative sectors, whether as staff or freelance, a strong CV is a vital component of your marketing toolkit. This guide will help you to get your CV right, as you develop the tools you need to get noticed in a crowded field. Work on your CV is time well spent; a well-crafted CV will get you the interviews you need to sell yourself in person to secure the opportunities you seek.



www.creativetoolkit.org.uk

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Your toolkit

- 1) A CV, sometimes called curriculum vitae. Think of it as an overview of your experience and qualifications.
- 2) A covering letter. No more than a page this is your letter of introduction.
- 3) Any supporting material, like samples of writing work, showreel, portfolio etc. This displays to the employer the standard and quality of your work.

You can use the job specification (job spec) for the job you're applying for as a checklist against your current skills,

this is called doing a skills audit. A skills audit will show where there are any gaps and where you might need to consider any retraining. The creative industry moves so fast retraining is inevitable at some stage, especially if you want to be taken seriously; how can you compete with your rivals if they're more technologically savvy than you?

Don't be tempted to get 'creative' with your CV - i.e making an origami surprise of your CV or using wacky fonts. Professional CV readers have seen it all before and won't be

impressed as they take up far too much precious time to read and look sloppy.

If you imagine the response to an average job advert can run into the hundreds, sometimes thousands, it's easy to see why this approach can be counterproductive.

Employers want to find the relevant information they are looking for at a glance, therefore the first thing they need is a quick easy read, this means the order of information is essential.

Example CV

Jan Morgan

Junior animator

Crosskeys, Shoreditch,
London EC2 5EW
tel 098999 334 5552
jan.com

OBJECTIVE: To continue to improve media experience. To work in an environment where creative initiative and a genuine passion would allow media progression.

PERSONAL PROFILE: A pro-active, junior animator wishing to take her career to the next level, having excellent art and 2D drawing skills with experience in 2D drawn animation. Heavily involved with local animation festival. Own animation website and You Tube daily animated blogs.

KEY SKILLS:

Flash. Photoshop. Cel Action. Maya.
Adobe. Word. Mac. 3ds Max. HTML.

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE/CAREER SUMMARY:

September 2014 – present 2016. Junior animator
2D line drawing/cartoon with ability to animate within both a fully graphical scene and live action.

Key Responsibilities

- Tracking and compositing elements on live action footage
- Liaising with key animators
- Mock up basic animation elements at pitch stage

Jan – May 2013. Script and Screen. University Online Animators Journal
Writer/Critic:

Key Responsibilities

- Writing cover article of 'What CAN'T Adobe do?'
- Comprehensive research and working to deadlines.
- Keeping website up to date using animated memes.

Jan 2011 – Sept 2013. University Animation Society production runner/
animator/script writer.

Started as a runner, ended up working on several projects.

Putting your name in a large bold font can help to make it stand out from the crowd. Always include contact details here. Don't forget to include a job role – the employer may have more than one job ad out there. Never put 'CV' or 'curriculum vitae' on this document, what it is is self-explanatory. CV means 'the course of life.'

Written in the absent third person, a clear well written objective is good for entry level workers. Your personal profile should be written in absent third person narrative for the simple reason that written in first person it will appear as only your opinion of yourself whereas in the third person it forces you to be objective about you as a potential candidate.

A personal profile acts as a teaser to the rest of the CV. It is a summing up of who and what you are. Avoid generalised phrases such as 'good communication skills and works well in a team', employers may think 'so what? Doesn't everybody in this industry?' Give them something to get excited about, tell them what you've done, what you've achieved, make them want to read the rest of the document. Personal profiles should be about what you have done not what you are like. Make it punchy, concise and relevant to the job you are applying for.

Students and new graduates should put their degree before their key skills. Always include supporting material if you can; showreel, links to websites etc. – it helps showcase your work. Never lie about your skills or your past. The media industry is very small and you will be found out! Avoid repetition, use your thesaurus; there are more than seven ways to say 'skills'.

This is where you put your experience in your chosen field and any previous employment. These are your main responsibilities in this job role. Always write your CV with the employer in mind – think: What do they want to see? A good

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Five tips for a good CV

Ultimately, your CV has to go through five different stages to deliver for you.

1) When the employer receives it.
2. On long list. (This is the beginning of selection).
3. On short list. (This is when they whittle the long list down).
4. At interview
5. On file. (An employer may go to the file instead of advertising to fill a new vacancy).
Here are five tips to help your CV pass through all five stages:

- 1) Keep it to two pages or less, remember quality is better than quantity.
- 2) Spell check.
- 3) Keep your CV relevant to the

employer. All CVs must be written with individual employers in mind. Yes, that means a different CV for each application!

- 4) Make your CV easy to read, no smaller than font size 12, Arial/Times New Roman. Use bullet points.
- 5) Do a skills audit. Can you creatively match your skills to the job?

Six mistakes to avoid with your CV

1. Sending a CV with no covering letter.
2. Sending a CV that is far too long or way too short.
3. Not matching skills to a job specification. All CVs must be

written with individual employers in mind. Yes, that means a different CV for each application!

4. Major spelling or grammatical errors; use spell check or get someone to do it for you. Also, for new entrants, check out industry specific glossaries to help you with the right terminology.
5. Lying.
6. Sending a CV with no contact details.

Useful resources:

www.bectu.org.uk/training-development
www.hiive.co.uk/job-roles
www.creativeskillset.org
www.ccskills.org.uk

ACHIEVEMENTS:

JAN 2012 Metropolis awards

Selected by the International Festival of Video and Digital Arts and nominated for *The Road* – Animated Production for degree coursework. Ravensbourne College.

Adapted a version of a well known TV soap;

Wrote the script. Animated using online and mobile ad sizes as the canvas.

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Diversity in the Media Ravensbourne.

Health and Safety Cert L2 Ravensbourne.

QUALIFICATIONS:

2011 – 2013 Ravensbourne College BA (Hons) Animation 2:1

2008 – 2011 Blytons Academy, Hackneyed

A Levels: English, French, Politics Art; A* Maths B

2011 – 2008 Bosworth High School

11 GCSEs including 10 at A grade (including Maths),

2 at B grade (including Science)

INTERESTS:

Social media, cross culture animation, journalism, graphic magazines are of a particular interest to me. Internet; I blog daily using images and words and to research software trends. Festivals. I like to attend as many festivals as I can. Music I VJ.

REFERENCES:

Rupert Lively

CEO

Animation NOW!

Paris Avenue

Soho, London W1P 3XJ

r.l@animationnow.com

Tel 020 7444 4444

Jon Hart

Art Director

hartard@hartad.com

way to find that out is to carefully go over the job spec; can you match the skills required?

There is a flaw in the example CV, which is an entry level CV targeted for a job in animation.

Can you spot the error? (Click to enlarge, or skip to the next page to see the answer!)

Including your achievements/awards and any element of CPD (continuing professional development) shows the employer that you are up to speed with this fast changing industry and can be as wide ranging as you like; from Health and Safety certificates to taking an evening class to learn the latest software - as long as it is relevant to your discipline.

The more experience you have the less relevant these qualifications become and the more relevant CPD becomes.

Your interests help employers to see you as an all-round person not just as a worker. Here they can see if you will fit in with their team, if you have the same philosophy as they do, and also where your passions lie. Passion, enthusiasm and initiative count for a lot, particularly in the media and arts. What you do outside of your job tells the employer what sort of a person you really are. For instance a seemingly mundane recreation such as gardening can show an employer that you have staying power; the ability to see a project right through from the seed of an idea to the final stages of growth.

Don't worry if your CV seems too factual, it's supposed to be. Save the conversation for the covering letter where you can flesh out who and what you are and why you are applying. Here you will also be able to punch up your commitment and passion.

You must supply at least two references; they speak volumes. These are great currency for your CV and the more senior your referees are the better. Your CV must not be longer than two pages.

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There are two flaws in the example CV, did you spot them? First, Jan hasn't expanded on 'Heavily involved with local animation festival.' What did she actually do? Plus Jan has said she started as a runner and ended up leading a team of animators, but she hasn't said what skills and responsibilities that journey involved. This means she might have missed out vital experience that the employer could be looking for.

CV Writing: FAQs

- **How can I make my CV stand out?**
- Remember, employers are looking for quality not quantity. This can be evidenced by what you've done outside of college or work; voluntary work etc. Don't be afraid of white space on the page, it lets the text breathe. Remember, sometimes less is more.
- **Help! I can't write a personal profile!**
- Ask someone else to do it for you – that way you can get true objectivity about yourself. Or think of how a movie is sold on the back of a DVD case; it's the same deal – selling the product. In a personal profile YOU are the product!
- **How should I deliver my CV?**
- Most employers will state a preference on their website, whether by email or hard copy. If in doubt, ring up and ask.
- **Do I have to put my date of birth on my CV?**

- No. Legislation makes it illegal to discriminate on age.

Tips on covering letters

Think of your covering letter as an introduction to you and your talents. Here are some tips on how to make your cover letter do its job.

- Remember, the covering letter is not an autobiography; employers don't need your total life history and will be put off if you waste their time. Stick to facts of your work life - that will stop you rambling.
- Put yourself in the position of the employer when writing covering letters. All they are looking for is how to fill the job. Make sure you are covering the points they need to see. If in doubt go back to the job spec.
- Always write to a specific person, Dear Sir or Madam will not do. If in doubt call and ask.
- Structure your letter into one page. Employers have to read hundreds of letters at recruitment and don't have time to read pages and pages of irrelevant material. Get someone else to read it over for you. Remember, good writing lies in the rewrite.
- Don't be afraid to ask for feedback if you are rejected. This could be a real help when writing another application.

NB: Your CV might get separated from your covering letter so make sure you

put your contact details on your CV as well as your covering letter.

Suggested template for experienced employees

When you have enough experience you don't need to be so conversational. Setting your skills out like this (see below) helps you to become less conversational and makes the CV very easy to read; you should also tailor your credit list to make it most relevant to each employer you're targeting.

Break down form as below, for example, Film and TV, Corporate, music videos etc.

Film/TV includes

Date (optional), Role, Production Company, Producer/Director.

Corporate includes

Date (optional), Role, Production Company, Producer/Director.

Music Videos include

Date (optional), Role, Production Company, Producer/Director.

Written by Beverley Hills,
media CV and careers advisor
beverleyhills@btinternet.com

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