Crafting an Outstanding CV

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Why Do You Need a CV?

At its core, your CV is a sales tool designed to secure you an opportunity to speak with a potential employer. If the reader doesn't find the key information they're looking for within the first 15 seconds, you risk losing their interest and missing out on an interview. The quickest way to lose their attention is by being overly wordy, lacking numerical data, and failing to present a clear, structured format.

Keep in mind that the person reviewing your CV may not have a technical background. They will be looking for standout details, so be sure to include company names, job titles, and measurable achievements. Providing factual, results-driven key accomplishments gives employers something tangible to assess beyond just job titles, which can sometimes be misleading.

CV Format

- A traditional Australian CV typically ranges from 3 to 6 pages, plus an optional cover page.
- Use a clean, professional font and avoid excessive italics, underlining, or bold text.
- All content should be written in clear, professional business language.
- Your CV is often the first opportunity for a future employer to evaluate your written communication skills, which are critical in most white-collar roles today.

Cover Page: Yes or No?

If a cover page is requested, always provide one and ensure it includes the necessary details.
For general applications, a cover page can be useful if you have specific skills, qualifications, or experience that align with the employer's needs—but keep it concise.
Ultimately, all relevant information should be clearly presented within the body of your CV. Avoid writing a personal life story or being overly informal.

Below is an example of a structured CV format with an optimal sequence of data. While we provide hints and guidance, ensure your final CV is professionally formatted without using color.

1. Personal Details

Include your essential contact details: full name, phone number, and email address where you're comfortable receiving inquiries from potential employers. While adding your street address is optional, avoid including your date of birth. If you hold a work visa, mention the type and validity.

2. Summary

This is your elevator pitch—a brief and compelling introduction that highlights your strengths and value to potential employers. Keep it concise and impactful.
For inspiration, check out examples on "How to sell yourself in 25 words or less."

3. Education & Qualifications

List your highest qualification first, followed by others in order of relevance and recency. Include the institution name and dates.
Example:

- 2002 – 2006 | University of NSW | Bachelor of Engineering (Civil)
- 2008 | NABERS Accredited Assessor
- 2004 | Green Building Council of Australia | Green Star Accredited Professional

If you have an extensive list of qualifications, place them at the end of your resume. Avoid listing minor courses unless they are highly relevant to the role. If your qualifications are not directly aligned with the job you're applying for, consider positioning this section after your Career History.

4. Professional History

Format your work experience clearly:
Example:
11/2014 – Present
XXX Company
Role: Senior Development Manager
Use bold text for company names and roles, and keep font size slightly smaller than section headings for clear differentiation. Employers typically look for key details first: who you worked for, your role, and duration.
Avoid copying and pasting job descriptions—this is easily noticeable. Instead, tailor each entry to highlight unique contributions and achievements. If you've held multiple roles within the same company, list the total employment period first, followed by specific roles beneath it. The same applies if you've worked as a contractor across multiple subcontracting arrangements.

5. Duties & Responsibilities

This section outlines your primary responsibilities in each role. Focus on key, impactful duties rather than listing everything, ensuring you highlight the most critical and impressive aspects.
Be factual—include details such as the number of staff you managed, the scale of projects or facilities (e.g., square meters, value), and any notable classifications (e.g., A-grade, premium). Use a font size slightly smaller than the section heading for clarity.
Example:

- Led the development and delivery of three A-Grade commercial office towers (include addresses if applicable) totaling 76,000m² of lettable space.
- Directly managed a team of six along with 12 additional staff and contractors.

6. Key Achievements

List approximately three key achievements that are factual, relevant, and quantifiable.

7. Projects (if applicable)

Detail significant projects you've worked on, including:

- Project Name
- Size (m^2, $, etc.)
- Sector (e.g., commercial, residential, industrial, etc.)
- Your specific role and responsibilities (e.g., Masterplanning, Acquisition, DA Submission).

Follow this format for each relevant role.

8. Core Competencies

This section allows you to align your skills with the role, industry, or organizational requirements. Highlight key strengths relevant to the position.

9. Computer Literacy

List relevant technical skills and software expertise, such as:

- Microsoft Office Suite (Excel, Word, PowerPoint)
- Archibus
- Maximo
- SAP

10. Personal Interests (Optional)

Include brief, non-controversial personal interests if desired. Keep it concise.

11. Referees

Available upon request.

Additional Notes:

- Emphasise roles that are most relevant to the job you're applying for.
- Provide more detail for long-term roles rather than short-term ones.
- If a role was a contract position, clearly state it as a contract to avoid misinterpretation.
- Avoid leaving out short-term roles, as this can raise concerns about gaps in employment history.