

CV checklist – *S.U.C.C.E.S.S criteria™*

Does your CV pass the **30 second test**? Are you getting the **interviews and attention you deserve**? The best jobs are won by job seekers who can demonstrate quickly that they are the best candidate.

Here are our **top seven tips** to help you create a CV that gets you to interview.

Sign Posts - Easy to read and navigate

"Is the CV easy to navigate and can you understand what it contains at first glance?"

Recruiters and employers typically spend around 30 seconds reviewing each CV. So if your CV is unstructured, lacks headings and logic you'll most probably fail at this stage of the selection process. This is important to remember as it often doesn't matter whether your content is any good as it will never be read.

Here are the 3 things you need to think about to score well and pass this check:

- **Clearly defined sections:** Have you defined sections clearly with headings?
- **Format, layout and length:** Have you been consistent with the font you have used throughout your CV? Have you used bullet points and indentation to make the text easier to read at a glance? Is your CV between 2 and 3 pages long?
- **Sensible prioritisation:** Have you ordered your CV logically so that it would make sense to someone who doesn't know you? Does the reader get an immediate idea of what you are good at and what's relevant to them?

Underwritten - Evidence to back up the claims you make

"Does the CV give a sense that the person at interview will be the same as the one on paper?"

Most people don't believe what is written on CVs! So if your CV lacks real evidence to support the claims you make or substantiate what you can bring you'll most probably fail at this stage of the selection process. This is important to remember and overlooked by most job seekers.

Here are the 3 things you need to think about to score well and pass this check:

- **Claims backed up by responsibilities and achievements:** Are the claims you make in your personal statement or skills/expertise section supported by the responsibilities or achievements you describe in your career history?
- **Strong professional referees:** Have you included referees or referenced them against claims or achievements? You don't necessarily need to include referee details, however, you need to confirm that you have references to back up what you claim.
- **Reference to documents or verifiable outcomes:** Have you provided proof, where you can, of what you have achieved by referencing documents, websites or verifiable outcomes?

Common Threads - Clearly highlighted transferable skills

"Can anyone reading the CV understand the relevance of the person's skills?"

Most people simply list their skills somewhere on a CV without explaining why those skills are relevant or meaningful. This makes it very difficult for the reader to understand how the applicant's skills apply to their business.

Here are the 3 things you need to think about to score well and pass this check:

- **Evidence of a skills section:** Have you included a clear section for your skills?
- **Logical grouping with relevant language:** Have you grouped similar or related skills together and removed any duplicates? Have you prioritised your skills according to what is most relevant to the employer and used language they will recognise?
- **Qualification of skill level included:** Have you included the level to which you obtained an important listed skill?

Character - Presence of personality, passion and motivation

"Can the reader understand what makes the person behind the paper tick?"

Most CVs are factual lists of the things people have achieved in their career. They tend to be a historic account of information considered relevant to the act of finding a job. You need to remember hiring managers are always looking to understand whether you'll fit into their team or working environment. CVs without character make it almost impossible to judge your fit and so rarely stand out.

Here are the 3 things you need to think about to score well and pass this check:

- **1st person consistency:** Have you been consistent with the use of the 1st 'I' person or, if preferred, the 3rd 's/he' person?
- **Personality:** Have you shown in the personal statement what it is you care about or included a forward-looking sentence demonstrating your motivation or passion?
- **Personal Development Plan:** Have you referenced a Career Plan or PDP to demonstrate how you challenge yourself, how you follow through and that you have a vision for your career?

Error Free - Perfect spelling, punctuation and grammar

"Has the CV been written with care, checked properly and does it communicate a professional image?"

FACT - Most CVs contain errors of some sort. Fail this check and your CV will almost certainly end up in the bin. A little preparation and help can go a long way to making sure your CV communicates a professional image without errors and lets the reader concentrate on the CV content.

Here are the 3 things you need to think about to score well and pass this check:

- **Spelling:** Run a spell check now on your CV. There is no excuse for spelling mistakes.
- **Punctuation:** Get someone to read through your CV out loud and see how many times they had to reread a given phrase or section.
- **Grammar:** Run a grammar check now on your CV, get a suitable friend or relative to read it or use a CV appraisal service.

Successes - Tangible, measurable achievements

"Does the CV show what the applicant will be able to achieve for me (the employer)?"

One of the most challenging parts of preparing a great CV is describing achievements and successes. Well-written descriptions of achievements that convey the role you played and the impact or output attained are critical to making it through to interview. Employers want to understand what it is you are going to do for

them and your past achievements are the evidence upon which they will base their decision.

Here are the 3 things you need to think about to score well and pass this check:

- **Achievements vs Responsibilities:** Have you separated achievements (what you actually made happen) from responsibilities (what you were supposed to do - your duties) for a given role or project?
- **Supporting evidence:** Have you tried to back up the claims you make, where you can, with detail or measures such as time taken, people involved or the impact of your involvement?
- **Team vs You:** If you were part of a team, have you explained briefly what the team achieved and given more detail about your specific part in it?

So What - Communicate the value you bring

"Does the CV clearly explain the relevant value that the applicant will bring?"

Most CVs tell the reader about the things the applicant has done, the qualifications they have achieved and the places they have worked. The best CVs go one step further. They explain the value that the applicant will bring and how it is relevant to the employer.

Here are the 3 things you need to think about to score well and pass this check:

- **I will bring...:** In your personal statement and your career history are you getting across the value you believe you can bring now to the type of organisation/role you are applying to/for?
- **I have the potential to bring...:** Have you included references to what you want to achieve in the future, skills you wish to acquire, responsibilities you want to take on, developments you want to make?
- **What that means...:** Ensure you translate both of the above into what that means for the organisation that employs you. How will your skills and experience benefit them?

If you consider the three points in each section when creating your CV template you will be on your way to a successful CV.