CV and application workshop

West Sussex County Council Recruitment Team

BUILDING YOUR CV

First - Include your personal information, name, email, generic location (town) and contact number at the top of your CV

Next, add your personal statement. The first paragraph on your CV – explain who you are, what you're offering and what you're looking for. Keep it short and sweet

Then add in your work experience. A different heading for each role, starting with most recent and listing in reverse chronological order

In this section, include job title, name of organisation and your time in post (dates), then your key responsibilities. Bullet point the **main** duties instead of solid text

If you had two roles where your duties are similar, perhaps pick different duties to bullet point for each role

Then, list your education. This includes dates, qualification, grade achieved and where/when you studied

Under education list relevant skills/ achievements i.e. volunteering, learning and development courses, non-paid work experience that would be valuable for the role. Show how this has given you skills that make you a suitable candidate

Hobbies and interests – mention these if relevant to the role i.e. you have a passion for reading and are applying for library role

TIPS FOR YOUR CV

- Check the key skills and qualifications listed on the job description of the role you're applying for and tailor your CV
- Ensure that you include clear headers throughout – breaking up personal statement, each work experience, education and hobbies and interests
- Please be aware that you don't need to include things like your nationality, date of birth, marital status etc. on your CV
- Whilst it's important to include all employment history, for some roles that you may have left over 5 years ago you can talk about them briefly/mention the date, job title, rather than bullet pointing all duties
- Ensure your CV is clearly formatted and short enough for a quick scan – two sides of A4

EXPLAINING A GAP IN YOUR CV

A career gap is a period spent out of work or between roles. This could be voluntary or may not have been your choice i.e. redundancy

You don't have to explain the reasons you left previous employment on your CV, but you may be asked about this at interview so do prepare to answer questions about your career gap.

There is nothing wrong with having a career gap on your CV, however companies may ask for more information about a career gap due to safer recruitment practices.

It may be better to address gaps on your cover letter rather than on your CV

Honesty is always the best policy!

Depending on the reason for your career gap, you could use it as an example for personal growth, for example, if you took time from your career to raise a family, talk about all the skills that raising a family has given you, e.g. time management, multi-tasking

WRITING A COVER LETTER

Cover letters are usually in support of a CV and should be formatted like a letter

Give an introduction, why do you think you'd be perfect for the role, is there something in the role your particularly passionate about or interested in? What are your motivations for applying?

Discuss why you're the perfect candidate. Talk about how you meet the key skills and qualifications listed in the job description (this is downloadable on the job advert)

Structure your answers by giving an example of how you meet the key skills/qualifications. You may find the STARR technique useful for this

Situation

Task

Action

Result

Reflect

You should end your cover letter with a short paragraph reiterating how you're the best person for the role, and thanking the hiring manager for their time

Add your signature and type your name underneath

Cover letters should be one side of A4 – 2 maximum.

APPLICATION FORM

- **Some of our roles ask for an application form instead of a CV and cover letter but the process is similar**
- Download the Job Description
- Refer to the key skills and qualifications listed in the Job Description to structure your application form, explaining how you meet these key skills and qualifications
- Make sure your answers are centered around what YOU did, not what WE did
- Structure your answers using different techniques such as CARL (Context, Action, Result, Learning) or STARR:
  - **Situation:** Describe the situation or problem you encountered
  - **Task:** describe the task that the situation required and why it was important
  - **Action:** describe the actions you took, obstacles that you had to overcome
  - **Result:** highlight the outcomes achieved and how success was measured
  - **Reflect:** sometimes it's appropriate to say how you reflected on what happened and how you would tackle the problem next time

TOP TIPS Part 1

Don’t be afraid to contact the hiring manager and ask questions you may have about the role

Draft answers to the application questions in a Word document, then copy and paste when you’re ready

Check for spelling mistakes/typos – getting someone to double check can be helpful or if using Microsoft Word, you could use their read back feature

Check the accessibility of your cover letter and cv – you can use the accessibility feature on word to do so easily

Save the job description so you can refer to the key skills and essential criteria – refer to these in your application and make sure your CV matches. You may also need to refer to the Job Description if invited to interview

Make sure your CV is up to date

Avoid acronyms or explain what they are before using them

Whilst AI can be positive, it takes away the human aspect and is often easy to tell if it’s used. AI can be helpful for inspiration rather than the final product

TOP TIPS Part 2

What email address are you using? Professional emails are always best. Some people find it useful to have an email address strictly for job applications

Make sure you keep track of what you've applied for and the closing date – if someone calls to offer you an interview, you want to know which job is making that offer

How can you make your CV stand out? If the role you're applying for is creative, you could format your CV in a creative way etc. However, we'd advise not adding photos.

Instead of listing personal information about your referees, state "References are available upon request"

If you're not sure where to start Word has templates for CV's

Our Libraries have digital support sessions where you can have a helping hand, you can also book desks for computers etc. if you don't have a computer at home this could be useful

State the obvious – don't assume that people will know you have a certain qualification i.e. if you're a social worker, state that you have a Social Work England qualification

If you're unsure if the role is authentic, check the WSCC website

Useful Links

If you're looking for a new start the best, most up to date place to search for a job with us is our website: Search for a job - West Sussex County Council

For further information and support with the application process, please visit: The job application process - West Sussex County Council

Our Library digital volunteers offer help and support for people who aren't confident online: Digital Support - West Sussex

If you'd like to get in touch with one of the recruitment team for more information, email HRRecruitment@westsussex.gov.uk

Any questions?