

## Create a winning CV

Creating a winning CV is a feat of strategy involving focus, wording, design and content selection. To achieve a career marketing document that wins interviews, all areas of the strategy must be spot-on and consciously used in the most effective manner. One of the most common mistakes job candidates make when writing their CVs is not paying attention to strategy and word selection.

There are words that can have a detrimental impact on the effectiveness of the CV. When most job candidates write them, they don't consider word choice because they are primarily worried about getting down the basic information. Wording is critical and the wrong one can sabotage your CV.

The average agent and/or hiring manager sees hundreds of CVs from qualified candidates. CVs begin to look and sound the same to them. Here are some words and phrases to avoid:

### Soft-skill descriptions

Job seekers feel they need to communicate their soft-skills to the employer because they believe they are the traits that make them unique, but this couldn't be further from the truth. Soft-skills are so common that recruiters pay no attention to them.

*Phrases to avoid or severely limit:*

- Excellent communication skills
- Strong work ethic
- Personable presenter
- Detail-oriented

Do not bore the reader to tears with these trite, overused and tired phrases. After all, no one will write that he/she takes long lunches, is lazy and argues a lot with peers. Hence, it is much more effective to write a description that is action-based and demonstrates these abilities rather than just laying claim to them. For example, rather than just stating you are an "excellent presenter," you could say "Developed and presented 50+ multi-media presentations to prospects resulting in 35 new accounts, totalling £300,000 in new revenues."

### Age, health, appearance

Many seasoned job seekers are facing that scary time warp known as pre-retirement and fear age discrimination. They feel they can counter this perceived hurdle by giving a description of their age or health. But this can be death to a CV.

*Phrases to avoid:*

- Youthful
- Athletic
- Fit
- Healthy
- Mature



Additionally, unless specifically requested, there is no need to include personal details such as date of birth, marital status or whether you have children. This information is typically used to exclude candidates from consideration in the hiring process rather than include them. Unless the employer specifically asks, keep this information confidential.

### **Passive voice**

Many people write in the passive voice because that is how we've been taught "formally" in school composition. The problem with the passive voice, however, is that it is just that passive! A CV needs to have punch and sparkle and communicate an active, aggressive candidate. Passive does not accomplish that.

*Indicators of the passive voice:*

- Responsible for
- Duties included
- Served as
- Actions encompassed

Rather than saying "Responsible for management of three direct reports" change it up to "Managed 3 direct reports." It is a shorter, more direct mode of writing and adds impact to the way the CV reads. On the flip side, whilst action verbs are great, don't overdo it.

### **Take your time**

A CV is a marketing document for your career just as a brochure is a marketing document for a product or service. Companies put careful thought and consideration into each and every word that goes into marketing copy and you should do the same in your CV. These words stand in your place with the employer and need to showcase you in a powerful way. In a perfect world, these things would not matter, but in the reality of job search today, they matter a great deal. Be wise - stop and give some thought to the words you choose.

