

Using the correct CV format to suit your needs

By Samantha Pearce

There are a variety of acceptable ways to write and structure a CV. Occasionally a potential employer will request that you structure your CV in a specific way when applying for a job, but this is very rare and so nine times out of ten you will have the opportunity to dictate the structure and content of your CV. This is a fantastic opportunity to have, because it gives you the freedom to structure your CV in such a way that you can maximise your strengths, and minimise your weaknesses.

Lots of people will make small tweaks and alterations to a standard CV format to ensure the style works for them. However, you should choose an appropriate standard CV format in the first instance, to ensure that all the necessary information is contained in your CV. There are four main standard CV formats for you to choose from;

- The Chronological CV
- The Functional CV
- The Hybrid CV
- The Structured Interview CV

Choosing the best CV format for you can help ensure you get that all important interview! Let's start by looking at each format in turn:

The Chronological CV

The Chronological CV is the most commonly used CV format. It contains the following components, in the order stated;

- Personal Details
- Qualifications
- Professional development / training courses
- Employment history including employer, dates of employment, positions held and achievements

The Functional CV

The Functional CV focuses on skills and achievements as oppose to employment history and qualifications. It contains the following components, in the order stated;

- Personal Details
- Qualifications (in brief bullet points)
- Skills, Knowledge, attributes and abilities (approximately 5 skills are identified, with a paragraph on how the skills have been demonstrated in the past)
- Summary of employment history; a very basic list of positions held, employment dates and employer

The Hybrid CV

A combination of the Chronological and Functional CV formats; this is often the recommended format to use. It contains the following components, in the order stated;

- Personal Details
- Qualifications (in brief bullet points)
- Skills, Knowledge, attributes and abilities (1-2 paragraphs on key skills)

- Employment history including employer, dates of employment, positions held and achievements

The Structured Interview CV

In a Structured Interview CV a set of questions are set out, with full answers written in response to these questions. The answers reflect your skills, achievements and abilities. The Structured Interview CV contains the following components, in the order stated;

- Personal Details
- Qualifications (in brief bullet points)
- Training (just listed)
- Skills, Knowledge, attributes and abilities (approximately 5 questions are posed, with a paragraphed response against each; i.e. **How does your experience in marketing match our role requirements?**)
- Summary of employment history; a very basic list of positions held, employment dates and employer

Which CV format best suits your needs?

First of all you need to take a look at the company that you're sending your CV to, and decide what type of CV format they are most likely to prefer. Creative companies tend to prefer a skills-based CV format; so the **Hybrid CV** or the **Functional CV** formats are likely to be well received. Alternatively, the public sector prefers a traditional, familiar layout, so the **Chronological CV** is generally preferred. By choosing a CV format that is instantly recognisable and preferred is a good way to score additional points with your potential future employer!

Secondly, you need to think about which CV format type highlights your strengths and minimises your weaknesses. If you are a solid candidate, with a strong academic background, up to date qualifications and a consistent career history, then the **Chronological CV** or the **Hybrid CV** will work well for you. If your weakness lies in your academic history or if you have had gaps / inconsistencies in your career history the **Functional CV** format or the **Structured CV** format will suit you best as it will minimise these weak areas.

And remember, no matter what CV format you choose, examples of your abilities and emphasised achievements is always a must!



Samantha Pearce is the owner of Words Worth Reading – an editorial service for Job Seekers, Students, Writers and Businesses.

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