

Points to Note When Preparing Resumes/CVs

People receiving your resume or curriculum vitae (CV) will only spend a few seconds to glance through it at the initial stage, and would have built up impression on you in those few seconds. Hence, getting your CV “appearance” right is very important at least in keeping people’s eyes on it so they could actually get a chance to know more about you. Hence, please keep the following 20 points in mind.

1. Keep Your CV to Two Pages

If you cannot fill up two pages, you probably are a very fresh graduate, without many extra-curricular activities. Relax! You cannot change anything about your past! Relax! You can still have time to build yourself up if you are determined! But if you think you have way more than two pages, you should pause and think if you are putting too many trivial items in, trying to show off or boast yourself too much. After all, you have not really had much work experience to bring you many different achievements. Keeping your CV within two pages means you can cut a lot of trivial items; and in no time, you will find a lot can actually be omitted.

2. Avoid Too Short CVs

Contrasting to point 1, trying to maintain a short CV in two pages means you will have to cut many important points is not good either. This is usually true if you have already worked for some years and have accumulated some good achievements that should not be omitted. It is true that you can mention your achievements in interviews, but only if you have the chance to be interviewed.

3. Choice of Template

Many of you like to search online for the proper format templates. Make sure your choice is neither too boringly simple and plain, nor too fancy and eye-catching graphically. Remember, the CV reflects your personality. Make sure your template choice fits the application you are working on. For example, if you are applying for a job or a degree program related to arts, creative design would help (though not too fancy and complicated). What do you think a job as lawyer will need?

4. Choose the Right Font

Like point 3, the font you use reflects you. “Extravagant” font reflects lack of professionalism, and difficult to read. “Times New Roman” and “Arial” are always associated with a stable and calm personality. “Courier New” and “Georgia” are associated with “mature”.

5. Avoid Inappropriate or Wrong Format

Imagine you reading a CV that is crowded with words. Do you feel annoyed? Or will be uninterested in reading it? Too much information cramped in one paragraph drives readers away! Make sure you have clean and tidy format, with adequate (not too narrow nor too wide) spacing in between lines, and appropriate font sizes. Distinguish titles from contents with different font sizes, and bold if necessary. But do not put **Bold**, *Italics*, and underline, and even **different colors**, all on the same page. People are not reading paintings!!!

6. Careful Use of Colored Fonts

Even if your application is related to art, do not overuse colors. Do NOT use yellow and other glaring and light colors as they are very difficult to read. You do not want people to guess your words as they won't have the interest or time. If you are applying for a traditional job or degree program, the safest font color is black!

7. Avoid Typos and Wrong Tones

Make sure you proofread your CV. Wrong spelling will only lead people to think you do not care about the opportunity, worse than showing you are careless. It always helps to find someone to read your CV and critique on it. Avoid wrong tones, or usage of words. For example, never use short forms like "UM" before you mentioned "University of Macau" at the beginning. In fact, it is not a problem if you keep using "University of Macau" because people might not be interested in finding what "UM" stands for. Do NOT use short forms like "Don't", "aren't" in formal documents, that is, your CV. Actually, "i.e." is less preferred to "that is", or "etc." versus "and so on".

Try also to avoid passive tones. That however does not mean you should pretend to be highly optimistic. Stick to the fact! Do not over-exaggerate with phrases like "I have loads of experiences ...", "totally cool with working in high pressure environment", or "super reliable". Do you feel irritated when you hear these?

Similarly, try to use simple words. Some people like to dig in the thesaurus to find synonyms in order to impress readers. But if the reader is your potential employer or someone at the university which you would want to study, I doubt that he/she would be impressed. After all, your CV could reflect your English proficiency. Suddenly having some difficult words will (1) not conform to the rest of the CV style, and (2) leave readers not understanding what you want to mention (they will not have time to check the dictionary because of you!).

8. Include Professional Profile

Even if you want a short CV, it always helps to include a "Professional Profile" where you could briefly summarize your skills, strengths, and important experiences, what you are aiming and what you can offer. To avoid similarity with other applicants, perhaps you could mention more about how you would fit the opportunity (job or program of study) and what you would hope to see from the opportunity.

9. Avoid “Third Person” Writing

In some writing, a “third person” style might be good. But when you start with your professional profile like “Rose Lai is a passionate teacher ...”, when you are actually talking about yourself (imagining you are Rose Lai), you actually give people an impression of being arrogant and self-centered. Furthermore, without “I”, it sounds like the readers cannot associate the CV to a person, meaning YOU.

10. Update Your CV

Even if you are not in search of new jobs, it is always helpful to constantly update your CV so you will not miss any important achievements. Likewise, when you have to submit a CV, make sure you update it to be most up-to-date!

11. No “One Size Fits All” CV

If you are applying for different jobs with different nature, make sure you prepare different CVs for different jobs! Be sure to include keywords, if any, that are particularly useful to certain jobs. However, do not use unnecessarily technical terms.

12. Do NOT Lie

Do not lie about any experience or skill that you have never had. Do not lie about the period of your experience. Do not exaggerate the above either!

13. Mention Measurable Outcome if Possible

Just like including your GPA for your degree, it always helps if you could include some key performance indicator when you provide a brief description of your experience. Rather than only narrating what you do, you can mention some good outcomes, or some of your work that led to some consequences. For example, you can mention that your suggested solution led your team to win an award. Again, do NOT lie!!!

14. List Interests and Hobbies

Very often, “Interests” and “Hobbies” could help your potential employer know more about your personality. But make sure they are really your interests and hobbies. Do not lie!

15. Avoid Missing Links

Try to be careful when entering dates of your experience and study. Make sure your timeline is continuous without gap, unless this is unavoidable. For example, you do not want to have September 2016 – July 2020 for your Bachelor degree, and then August 2021 – July 2022 for your master degree if the fact is August 2020 – July 2022 is the period for your master. If you really have a gap for a reason, make sure you can somehow explain it on your CV, such as some work

experience in between. However, do not lie! If you really have some gaps in between which you cannot explain, do not invent something just to avoid gaps.

16. Your Photo

Whether including your photo actually depends on the practice of the company or country custom. Check before you include your photo! Some companies turned down applicants simply because they included photos.

17. Use Professional Email Address

Avoid using gmail or yahoo account as your contact email address, as they are not professional mail addresses. Show professionalism!!! Remember that the University of Macau provides email addresses even for alumni.

18. Names of Files Attached

If you have to send your CV as an attachment in an email, be careful in choosing the right file name. People will judge you by the file names. Do NOT use names like “CV-draft.doc”, or “CV-template. Doc”.

19. Social Media

Some companies actually search for your Facebook, Instagram account, and so on. Hence, before applying for a job, check your social media platform if you have anything very embarrassing, or improperly accusing someone, something, or some organizations, that could potentially affect your job application. You can actually avoid all this if you always use your social media platform carefully and properly, and be a decent person who respects others!

20. Application Letter

Do not think you are wasting time! Spend time on the application letter for each job. By doing so, you will not only impress your potential employer because you would mention some points particular to the company, the job, or the program you are applying for, you also allow yourself learn more about the job or the program, and about whether you suit it.

Good Luck!!!