psr: Public Sector Resourcing
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Your Guide to a Standout CV

What is a CV?

A CV is your professional story summarised on paper. It's a snapshot of your skills, experience, education and, subtly, your character.

It's also your first impression, and for most employers, the only representation of you before an interview.

A strong CV isn't just helpful, it's essential.

Make your CV work for you.

Focus on:

Contact Details
Keep them up to date and easy to find.

A Tailored Opening Statement
A short, punchy introduction written specifically for the role you're applying for.

Work History That Matters

- Include **dates, job titles**, and **key responsibilities**
- Focus on the last **10 years**
- Highlight **achievements/ deliverables**, not job descriptions

Skills, Tech & Tools
List capabilities relevant to the role, especially specialised systems or software.

Education & Training
Include degrees, certificates, or training relevant to the position.

Optional Extras
Hobbies and interests can go at the bottom, but only if meaningful.

Quality Check Everything
Flawless spelling. Strong grammar. Clean formatting.

Keep It Concise
Aim for a clear, professional document, **5 pages** is ideal.

Language & Presentation Tips

- Use positive, confident language
- Write from your perspective: think “I achieved…” not “we”
- Use bold only for headings
- Stick to one clean, professional font
- Avoid boxes, unnecessary graphics or over-styled templates
- Check punctuation carefully
- Proofread after spell check and get someone else to check it too
- Be specific: Instead of “arranged meetings”, write: “Co-ordinated diaries for five managers using Outlook, securing rooms, managing availability and arranging catering with external suppliers.”

Common CV Mistakes *(and how to avoid them)*

1. **Spelling & Grammar Slips**
   Typos stand out and suggest a lack of care. If English isn’t your first language, ask a native speaker to review.

2. **Clichés & Filler Statements**
   Avoid lines like:
   - “I work well individually or as part of a team!”
   - “I’m a quick learner!”

   These add nothing, show your strengths instead.

3. **Jargon & Abbreviations**
   Not everyone will understand internal terms. Spell out uncommon abbreviations the first time you use them.

4. **Oversharing Personal Details**
   Keep hobbies brief. Skip marital status or family specifics.

5. **Unhelpful File Formats**
   Use a standard format, preferably an **MS Word document**. Flashy Canva or Word templates can look cluttered and break when opened elsewhere.

6. **Poorly Named Files**
   Don’t date your CV. Save using your name, e.g.:
   Joe_Bloggs_CV.docx

   PDF is optional but increasingly common for security and consistency.

7. **Over-relying on AI Tools**
   AI can help with wording and structure but copying AI-generated text without editing can make your CV sound generic or mismatched to your experience. Use AI for inspiration only, always personalise, fact-check and rewrite in your own voice to ensure authenticity.