

# The Basics – Applying for a Job

## Preparing a CV (curriculum vitae)

If you are serious about your job search you will need an up to date CV which you can send out to prospective employers and companies at a moment's notice.

A CV is your passport to getting your foot in the door. It provides a platform upon which you can display your skills and highlight your achievements. A well presented CV should get you through to the next stage – the interview!

### CV

Sheila Matumba  
75 Any Road, Sutton, London SM2 6PJ

Phone:

020 866 7555

Mobile:

07009 300 000

Email:

sheila.matumba@example.co.uk

### Profile

An experienced childcare worker, qualified at Level 3. Seeking a suitable full-time position in a range of childcare settings. A good team player, self-motivated, responsible, and able to work on her own initiative.

### History

5 – present  
nursery nurse, Sunshine Child  
include planning children  
of children under  
telling. P

## General Rules of a CV

- Keep it concise and to the point (two sides of A4 paper maximum).
- Make sure that your personal contact details are at the top and clearly visible.
- Begin with your personal profile – a few lines about yourself, experience and skills.
- Bullet point your key skills for example – “Excellent communication and organisational skills”.
- Begin your work history section with the most recent job you have worked in.
- If you have limited work experience, highlight any voluntary work that you have undertaken.
- List your most recent qualifications first.
- Include a short section on your leisure interests and hobbies, towards the end.
- It is always a good idea to end your CV with the line: “References can be made available upon request”, rather than displaying the personal details of your referee.
- Generally CVs are printed in black ink on white paper.

Some employers will request a CV to be accompanied by a covering letter. Overleaf you will find different layouts for a CV and covering letter.

Once you have chosen your preferred layout, keep your CV and covering letter on file and always have a few printed out for instant access. Many employers ask for CVs to be sent electronically but some still ask for them to be sent through the postal system.

## Positive language to use when creating a CV

Pro-active      CO-ORDINATED  
Reliable      Confident  
Responsible      Enthusiastic  
Organised      Arrange      Flexible  
Prioritise      Productive      Managed  
Conscientious      Trustworthy  
Self-motivated      Hard working  
Focussed      Attention to detail  
HIGHLY MOTIVATED      Leadership  
Creative  
PROBLEM SOLVING      Team player

If you have been out of the labour market for some time you may feel that you don't have many skills or qualifications to add to your CV. If this is the case make sure you add any experience or skills that you have gained either as a parent/carer of a child or as a volunteer.

For example you may have gained budgeting experience from running a household or event organisational skills by assisting at your child's school fete. The Into Recruitment Project can assist you with creating a CV and also assist you in accessing a volunteer placement, contact:

**020 8770 6849** for more information.



## CV Template

Name  
Address  
Telephone (home)  
Telephone (mobile)  
Email

### Personal profile

Summary about what you have done for example your qualifications, relevant experience and/or skills you have gained. Target this information towards the advert or job description and towards what you are looking to do, (3-4 lines max).

### Key skills (for example)

Languages  
IT skills  
Other relevant skills

### Career history (most recent first)

Date  
Company name  
Job title  
Main responsibilities  
Skills gained  
(communication, team work, interpersonal skills, problem solving, etc).



**Education and qualifications** (most recent first)

Date

University

Course/subject

Qualification (grade or predicted grade)

Modules studied, dissertation

Date

School / FE College

A Levels (grades if good) / Other qualifications

Date

School

GCSE – list subjects and grades if appropriate

**Interests and activities**

Try to make these relevant to what the employer is looking for – eg Travelling around Europe helped develop my communication skills through meeting a variety of people.

**References**

Available upon request.





## Sample CV

Sheila Matumba  
75 Any Road, Sutton, London SM2 6PJ  
Phone: 020 866 7555  
Mobile: 07009 300 000  
Email: sheila.matumba@example.co.uk

### Profile

An experienced childcare worker, qualified at Level 3. Seeking a suitable full-time position in a range of childcare settings. A good team player, self-motivated, responsible, patient and able to work on her own initiative.


### Work history

January 2008 – present

Sunshine Children's Centre, Wimbledon Merton  
SW19 2PQ

Part-time, Early Years Practitioner.

Duties include planning children's learning, supervising small groups of children undertaking different activities for example, story-telling and creative play. I am also responsible for organising indoor and outdoor play, undertaking and recording observations, helping to organise and take part in outings and updating children's portfolios. I also attend staff meetings, interact and liaise with parents.



September 2005 – present

Voluntary Co-Chair of the Morden community neighbourhood forum.

Responsible for the chairing of monthly meetings and for co-ordinating community events.

### **Education and Qualifications**

September 2005 – June 2007

Merton College, London SM4 5QX

NVQ Level 3, Children's Care, Learning and Development

September 2000 – June 2005

Raynes Park High School

NVQ Level 1, Early Years Education, NVQ Level 2

Children's Care Learning and Development

### **Languages**

I speak fluent French and plan to learn Spanish in the near future.

### **Interests and activities**

I enjoy cooking, reading, music and salsa dancing.

### **References**

Available upon request.



## Sample CV

Samantha Ward

Address: 1 Any Road, Anytown AN1 1CV

Telephone: 01632 960 326

Mobile: 07700 900 285

Email: samward@example.com

### Personal profile

An enthusiastic and professional Web Designer, who enjoys being part of a successful and productive team. Quick to grasp new ideas and concepts, and to develop innovative and creative solutions to problems. Able to work well on own initiative and can demonstrate the high levels of motivation required to meet the tightest of deadlines. Now looking to build on extensive range of technical skills within a suitably challenging role.

### Key skills

Technical Design Skills

Adobe Photoshop

Microsoft Excel

Microsoft PowerPoint


### Personal skills

Excellent presentation skills

Experienced in negotiating and product marketing

Good organisational and planning skills





## **Career summary**

2007 to-date                      Webmaster, Graphics UK, London

### Web Designer

- Working within a major print design company, tasked with developing their fledgling Web Department
- Assessing initial set-up requirements and implementing hardware and software solutions accordingly
- Liaising closely with Account Executives, actively soliciting new clients and nurturing existing client accounts, ensuring their needs and requirements were not only accommodated but surpassed

2006 – 2007                      Dolphin Housing Association, London


### Voluntary Web Designer

- Working for a national association as their in-house web designer
- Implementing initial set up and liaising with clients and colleagues to establish systems.
- Maintaining and updating the website on a daily basis

## **Education and qualifications**

2003 – 2006                      National Diploma in Graphic Design  
and Multimedia  
(Second Class Honours) Dublin  
Institute of Technology, Ireland

Key Modules: Web Design, Visual Communication,



Multimedia, Print Design, Typography and Photography.  
Won the Multimedia Student of the Year Award and Best  
Use of a Mac Award.

### **Professional development**

- Team Leadership (Management Training Centre, 2010)
- Presentation Skills (Management Training Centre, 2009)

### **Interests and activities**

Currently include: Photography, Theatre and Amateur  
Dramatics and a member of the local  
Historical Society.

### **References**

Available upon request.

### Tips on writing covering letters

- Covering letters should be written on one page only
- You might find it useful to type up a draft first
- Always check grammar, spelling and punctuation
- Get someone else to read through the letter if you're not confident about your spelling or writing skills
- Use good quality paper
- If you start Dear Sir or Madam – end with “Yours faithfully”
- If you start with the name of the person you are writing to – end with “Yours sincerely”



### **Sample covering letter**

75 Any Road  
Sutton  
London SM2 6PJ

Mary Brown  
Tree Tops Children's Centre  
Park Road, Sutton, Surrey SM1 2QQ

14th April 2011

Dear Ms Brown

Vacancy reference CDM/PCT 001

I would like to apply for the position of Deputy Manager at the Tree Tops Children's Centre as advertised in the Sutton Advertiser on 12th April 2011.

I am currently employed as a part-time Early Years Practitioner at Sunshine Children's Centre and am seeking a new challenge. I am qualified to Level 3 and will be starting my Level 4 qualification in September 2011.

Please find enclosed my CV. I am available for interview on the dates given in the advert. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Sheila Matumba



### **Sample speculative letter**

75 Any Road  
Sutton  
London SM2 6PJ

Mary Brown  
Tree Top Primary School Park Road, Sutton, Surrey SM1 2QQ

14th April 2011

Dear Ms Brown

#### Opening of New Children's Centre

I have read in the local paper that a new Children's Centre will be opening at Tree Tops Primary School in September 2011 and I would like to register my interest in any vacancies that you may have.

I am currently employed as a part-time Early Years Practitioner at Sunshine Children's Centre and am seeking a new challenge, ideally as a Centre Deputy Manager. I am qualified to Level 3 and will be starting my Level 4 qualification in September 2011.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss any employment opportunities you may have and enclose my CV. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Sheila Matumba



## Applying for a job

Once you have a CV and covering letter prepared you are ready to take the next step – applying for a job!

You may need to send your CV and covering letter out to a number of prospective employers before you get a positive response. Try not to get despondent it may take some time before your CV gets to the right person and that is matched to a suitable vacancy. There is no harm in contacting the prospective employer to check that they have received your CV.

**THE KEY IS NOT TO GIVE UP AS SOMETHING WILL USUALLY COME UP!!**

## Application forms

Some companies will require you to fill out an application form instead of sending in a CV. If so, follow the steps below to make sure that your application form stands out from the rest.

A good application form should convince a prospective employer that you are worth inviting to an interview.

Filling in an application form can be daunting and deciding what to put in and what to leave out can be difficult. Remember the application as a marketing tool to promote your strengths and experience.

### What does a 'typical' application form look like?

Whilst there is no such thing as a typical application form, most of them ask for the same type of information. The application form should be tailored to the specific job. There will be some standard information required but there will probably also be a section where the applicant is asked to describe themselves and their experience.

Standard information includes personal details, qualifications, work history, leisure interests and referees.

The Personal Statement is the place on the form where you can explain, in your own words, why you are suitable for the job. This section is the most important, and most difficult, part of the form to complete. In this section it is vital that you address each point on the "person specification" in chronological order.

## **Tips and hints on completing an application form and writing a personal statement:**

- **Before starting to fill in the application form**
  - Find out about the job and the employer
  - Allow plenty of time – set a personal deadline of a day or two earlier than the actual deadline
  - Read through the application form and all accompanying documents, particularly the job description and person specification
  - Highlight key words, activities or skill areas that might need to be addressed
  - For each criteria on the personal specification (Person Spec) make a note of examples that demonstrate your competence in these areas
  - Include other areas of competence that haven't been asked for but may be relevant.

- **When completing the application form**
  - Look at the person specification (person spec.) and/or short-listing criteria and make sure all of these have been addressed
  - Give relevant and specific examples e.g. if applying for a job as a teaching assistant don't just say 'I think I would be good at this job' but give examples of working with children or helping people to learn
  - Keep answers brief but comprehensive
  - Most employers expect application forms to be typed rather than handwritten.
  
- **Once the application form has been drafted**
  - Get someone else to read it through – preferably someone who knows you
  - Check spelling, grammar and punctuation very carefully and make sure you use the spell check function
  - Check that all areas of the Job Description and Person Spec. have been addressed
  - Set aside the personal statement for a day or two and go back to it. Most electronic forms have a "save" function so that you can return to an incomplete form and add to it at a later date
  - Some electronic forms need to be completed in one go, so be aware of this and check the application procedures before you begin to fill out the form.



# The Next Stage – the interview

## Interview types

- 1 **Telephone interview** – this type of interview is becoming more popular particularly for large retailers who use this as a first round interview stage.
- 2 **Taking a test** – some employers will ask you to take a test which they will send to you or ask you to come in and complete. This method is sometimes used by the Civil Service or large employers who may expect you to have attained a certain level in English and Maths or customer service.
- 3 **Face to face interview** – this is still the most frequently used type of interview method and you may be interviewed by one person or a panel of people. Depending on the job, you may be asked to give a presentation on a topic which the employer generally has provided information on in advance.
- 4 **Group interview** – you may be asked to attend an interview with other prospective candidates. Once at the interview they may ask you to work together to complete a task. The interviewer will be looking to see if you initiate ideas, if you are a leader, if you can follow instructions and how well you work in a group.
- 5 **The second interview** – sometimes companies may call you back to a more in-depth interview when they have prepared a short list of candidates from the initial interview stage.



Everybody is nervous to some degree at an interview. It is useful to remember that the interview is a two way process. As much as the employer may be making decisions on your suitability for the job, you too should be making decisions on whether this is the right role or company for you. Do not be afraid to ask questions towards the end of the interview with regard to your role or to find out more about the company.

A list of appropriate and inappropriate questions at an interview can be found later on in this booklet.



## Top ten tips for interview success

- ✓ Find out as much about the role, the job and the company in advance – this should help calm your nerves as there should be no surprise questions.
- ✓ Make sure you know where you are going! Find out in advance where the nearest train station or bus stop is and how long the journey should take.
- ✓ Take out your interview outfit well in advance of the interview – not the night before. Any dropped hems or split seams need time to be mended!
- ✓ Take a copy of your CV with you. The employer may also request you to bring your exam certificates, a passport and proof of address. Check this with them in advance.
- ✓ Practice answering possible interview questions with a friend or family member in advance – they will be able to provide vital feedback on how you come across at an interview.

- ✓ Body language is important. The way you sit, stand or even shake hands gives a first impression to an employer – you need to ensure that it is the right one!
- ✓ Answer questions fully, clearly and concisely. Don't waffle and don't give too short an answer either. You need to feel assured that you know your stuff and that you can hold a conversation with others. Answer questions in a clear, concise and confident manner.
- ✓ Take a deep breath and remember that you have skills to offer which will be an asset to the company!
- ✓ Use the interview as a chance for you to find out if the company and role are right for you. View the interview as a two way process.
- ✓ Ask appropriate questions at the end of the interview. Some are listed in this booklet.

## **Possible interview questions you may be asked and can prepare for in advance**

- Why have you applied for this post?
- What experience do you have in this field?
- Can you tell us about yourself?
- Which unique qualities can you bring to this role?
- Have you ever been responsible for managing a project on your own?
- Do you consider yourself to be a team player?
- When was the last time you implemented a positive change?
- How would you ensure you kept information obtained through work confidential?
- What do you understand by the terms; equal opportunities and diversity? How would you implement this in your role?
- How could you see this role and your career develop?
- What do you consider to be your main strengths/weaknesses?
- What motivates you?
- Describe a situation where you influenced somebody positively: how did you go about it?
- Can you describe a situation that you find particularly challenging or difficult but where you persisted?



- How do you plan and prioritise your work?
- What have been your key achievements in your career?





You can never predict all the questions an employer may ask you but if you are able to practice with a friend or family member it will give you confidence for the real interview and also give you an idea of answers you may need to build upon. Remember practice makes perfect! It's better to make mistakes in a mock interview than in the real thing!

At the interview itself make sure you include examples, if possible, of what you have achieved and how you accomplished this. The interviewer may put a scenario to you and ask how you would handle a certain situation which arose at work so be prepared to think on your feet!