

DRAFTING THE PERFECT CV

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Putting together a curriculum vitae can be a daunting task, regardless of your level of experience or qualification. Unfortunately there is no strict set of rules to follow, but if you put yourself in the position of your prospective employer and imagine what they would want to learn about you, you can't go far wrong. No two sets of experience are ever the same so don't try and second-guess what experience the employer will think that you have gained; while you get to collect your boss' dry cleaning and shop for a birthday present for his mistress, some of your peers will still be photocopying and making the tea. In addition, always bear in mind the nature of the job for which you are applying and tailor your CV accordingly.

The appropriate length of a CV varies with each individual case; the important thing is to be relevant and concise whilst thorough. Although £3.20 an hour made your Tesco checkout job especially important to you, the busy partner who is reviewing your CV whilst simultaneously eating lunch, drafting an affidavit and throwing a heavy file at an office junior might find your page-long description of your role a little less interesting. On a separate note, try and avoid leaving any gaps in how your CV reads chronologically. Missing years could be misinterpreted, such as time spent retaking failed exams.

It is essential to convey both the breadth and depth of your experience. Include information about all the different types of work that you have handled and give it a three-dimensional feel, such as briefly explaining the nature of a matter and your involvement. The best examples might involve a novel or particularly complex point of law, impressive sums of money, or a higher degree of responsibility/involvement on your part than might ordinarily be expected of someone in your position. **If you got to make the tea and photocopy on your first day, make sure you mention it!** If you have gained some or all of your legal experience abroad, it is worth briefly explaining how the relevant systems, processes and laws compare to those in the UK, to put your experience into some kind of perspective.

Education information should be included on every CV. The beauty of the legal profession is that no matter what your achievements are as managing partner of a global law firm, your next employer will want to be sure that you got your first class degree at a 'red-brick' university. A' Levels, BTECs, GNVQs and degrees (or their equivalents) should be listed, although it is probably not necessary to individually list all of your GCSE subjects and grades, or your 10, 50 and 100 metre swimming badges.

If you have been involved in any type of marketing / practice development or training / management activities, be sure to include plenty of information about these. Examples include entertaining clients, delivering seminars and writing for journals. If you have been involved in a fair amount of this work, then it is probably worth allocating a separate section on your CV. **Law firms love the concept of you running your own little army of lawyers and generating hundreds of thousands of pounds of new business for them, even though you only left school yesterday.**

Details of your interests and positions of responsibility are only worth including if they are likely to be a bit different from those included in the other fifty CVs that the partner is flicking through and it shouldn't look like you have had to scrape the bottom of the barrel. The Office's Gareth Keenan only impressed himself with the burden of responsibility that he shouldered as school milk monitor: **"if people were rude to me then I used to give them their milk last ... so it was warm"**. Your interests will always give you something to comfortably talk about at interview. A great example included on a recent CV was "World Shoe-shining record breaker raising several thousand pounds for charity".

Whatever information you include in your CV, remember that you may be called on to talk about it. It is therefore vital not to invent experience or refer to "working on a £multi-million international merger" when your contribution amounted to preparing and clearing the completion meeting room. It is all about referring to your experience in the best light rather than lying and if you are unable to be creative in this way, then you are probably in the wrong profession!