



# Aaron Wallis Career Success Masterclass

## Day One - How to Write the Perfect CV

### Free Top Twenty CV Hints and Tips

#### Foreword

The following is a true story! When I first started in the staffing business I decided to read some books that would enable me to help my candidate base. In the local bookshop was a book that was six centimetres thick on how to write the perfect CV! Goodness knows why anyone would read it, let alone have the focus to read it and put their advice into practise! The point I am making is this – you will read 100 different articles on the subject and get 100 different answers as CVs are objective – what one person likes another hates. However follow the simple instructions below and you will not give anyone any reasons to filter you out on the basis of your CV.

#### The Most Important Point First – The Purpose of your CV

Remember your CV is your sales tool. Your CV is your marketing collateral. Your CV is the key to a door – the door of the interview and your future career! Don't give a potential employer reasons to screen you out! Keep it unfussy, keep it logical and straightforward, keep it clean, keep it punchy, keep it easy to read and flow, don't use jargon and don't give a potential employer any reason to make negative assumptions about you, or to not take you seriously. I know that you will want your CV to stand out but believe it or not when it comes to CVs – be conservative, stick to standard formats and unless you are in the design industry, keep it simple.

#### CV Templates and CV Style

Google up CV templates or visit [\(link\)](#) and you'll find a wide range of straightforward and simple templates to follow. Save yourself time by using a 'classic' CV template – unless you are applying for roles where you need to demonstrate your design flair or eccentricity – don't be 'wacky'. Let other people be the ground breakers in CV design and let you be the one who gets the interviews and gets the jobs!

#### Competition with Other CVs

The responses to adverts placed by recruitment consultancies on job boards can be as high as 30-60 responses. A high profile colour advert for a senior well paid job in a national newspaper can generate in excess of 500 responses. Quite simply the greater the salary, the larger the response the majority of which are unqualified for the role. So how do you demonstrate that you do have the right qualities and experience for the role?

#### Top 20 Hints and Tips for CV's including 'Do's and Don'ts'

1. **HOW LONG:** Try and keep to two pages (three pages as an absolute maximum). If you feel it will support your case for a specific application attach a separate document as an appendix, separate attachment of case studies or detail specifics in the cover letter.
2. **GRAPHICS AND PHOTOGRAPHS:** Personally, I quite like photos – most hate them! It is a reason for people to make assumptions about you so advice would be don't bother unless it is relevant to the application. Use a subtle graphic or watermark if you choose to do so BUT keep it simple and appropriate, less is more!
3. **PAPER:** If posting your CV, which together with a handwritten cover note is still quite expected for the most senior roles, invest in some decent weighted paper rather than the thin stuff that you borrowed from the photocopier at work! Occasionally some candidates put a background to their electronic CV to give the appearance of paper but beware – many firewalls will not let it through, the file will be large and many recruitment software products will not accept it.



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4. **CONTACT INFORMATION AT THE TOP (WITHIN THE HEADER):** Put your name and contact details at the top of the CV or within the 'header' (however some recruitment software is unable to read headers)
5. **PERSONAL PROFILES:** The world is split on this one - some people love them, some don't even read them! Why not detail a short paragraph detailing your key skills and traits, core values and beliefs.
6. **CAREER OBJECTIVE:** Do not use specific job titles unless you are tailoring your CV to each and every role. i.e. "Graduate Aerospace Engineer seeks career role within a growing aeronautical organisation" could mean that you are discounted from the ideal graduate engineer role with an F1 team that you'd be ideal for! Use generic career objectives if placing your CV on a CV job board or with a recruitment consultancy.
7. **LIST OF SKILLS:** All recruitment companies and many employers now use CV parsing software that 'auto reads' your details and populates the database fields. The very latest software matches CV's to job specifications in an automated process and provides a shortlist and a percentage match to the specification using a combination of keyword matching, artificial intelligence and an algorithm that predicts suitability. Trust me it is unbelievably quick AND accurate. Detailing core skills is therefore a must in this digital age. [See tomorrows article - writing a CV for the Digital age](#)
8. **EDUCATION/QUALIFICATIONS/PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS:** Detail your highest level of education first. Then detail other formal qualifications, other education, Professional Memberships/Affiliations in the order you deem most necessary to your sector. Name your University and your classification if 2.2 or above (if you don't all employers will assume you failed or got a third class degree!) If you are a recent graduate detail your core subjects and dissertation title. Unless you are a recent graduate do not waste valuable CV space going into the depths of detailing the individual grades of your O-Levels/.GCSE's/A-Levels/CSE's, etc – detailing your passes in the core Maths, English subjects will suffice. i.e. Achieved '9 GCE 'O-Levels' at Grade C and above including English and Maths'. NB Some employers pay more credence to your 'A-Level' grades than your degree! If they're good – detail them! Do not under any circumstances tell an untruth about your education or memberships – they are incredibly easy to verify which is a standard step in any requirement process nowadays.
9. **OTHER INFORMATION:** Don't detail your marital status unless you are married, happily single or feel it wholly appropriate to the application NB It is actually illegal to discriminate on the basis of marital status. Detail your driving status if it's a requirement of the role or if you have a full clean driving license. Detail your eligibility to work in the EU for any employer or your visa/passport status if from outside of the EU. Do not put your passport number on your CV for reasons detailed in point 10. Due to recent age legislation more and more people are choosing to not put their age and date of birth on their CV – you don't have to and don't feel that you have to. (In fact it is likely to be illegal to put your date of birth on your CV in coming years)
10. **NATIONAL INSURANCE NUMBERS:** Do not ever, ever, ever put your National Insurance number on your CV! Together with your name, address, date of birth and employment information you are leaving yourself open to significant identity fraud.
11. **THE DANGERS OF SOCIAL NETWORKING:** More and more offers of employment and offers of second interviews are being withdrawn as employers can find out more about you searching through your social network 'footprint'. The famous example was the retraction of a job offer for a high flying city lawyer who boasted on his 'blog' that he did nothing at his employer but shop on the Internet, pick up a six figure salary and regularly partake in recreational pharmaceuticals. Particularly if you have an unusual name, amazing detail of your lifestyle, behaviour and beliefs can be uncovered with one Google search. Companies will not admit to doing this as part of their recruitment procedure – But, be warned, THEY DO!
12. **DETAIL YOUR CAREER IN REVERSE CHRONOLOGY ORDER:** Do the first job first and work backwards. Your most recent experience, the last 5 years, is perceived as most important and is given the highest 'weight' in deciding whether to invite you, or not, for interview.



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- 13. USE SHORT PARAGRAPHS AND BULLET POINTS:** Be succinct – do not waffle or pontificate and definitely don't try to make your sales job more exotic by preposterous waffle, i.e. 'initiating strategic partnerships and management process initiatives aimed at restructuring procurement decisions in the favour of my organisation!' Remember this is your sales tool – use it to sell yourself – think careful about the words that you use. Read it aloud, can anyone who doesn't know your industry understand what you did, what you sold? People don't like reading more than three sentence paragraphs so use short paragraphs and bullet points. The average recruiter will skim read CVs looking for applicable points and experience. Decision makers want to read facts – how have you increased sales, decreased costs, improved systems, increased customer satisfaction, built a database, increased investment, drove down supplier rates, etc. Particularly use facts that you can back up at interview with evidence – case studies, testimonials, league tables, P60's, etc. (many employers will expect to see evidence of your claims at interview stage and it is imperative that you know your own facts and figures at interview)
- 14. KEYWORDS:** By thinking of the kind of keywords that recruiters and hirers will use to find your details before writing your CV you will have a dramatically more successful experience. Detail your skills, client accounts, different terms for your role, etc. For greater explanation and some neat tricks [See tomorrows article - writing a CV for the Digital age](#)
- 15. JARGON:** Do not use jargon or abbreviations. Even abbreviations such as KPI's and TQM, whilst widely used in business are not understood by everyone.
- 16. REASONS FOR LEAVING:** Many employers like to be able to see why you have taken logical career steps to this point. However if it is not a pretty story don't bother!
- 17. CURRENT SALARY:** Again many employers like to see this progression; however it can work against you. For instance if you were in a £45K international sales development role and left to take a £30K UK based salary to breathe life back into your work life balance it may be perceived or assumed as a backwards step. If it is continuous progression then detail it. Don't overstate your earnings as many employers require P60s as part of their referencing process and they will see your earnings YTD on your P45 anyhow.
- 18. INTERESTS/HOBBIES:** Many books and CV advice sites say that this is superfluous information. However I use it extensively as a hirer to get a 'flavour' of a person and start every interview with a discussion around the hobbies/interests to put the candidate at ease. DO NOT solely detail 'reading and socialising with friends' but I would advise detailing one intellectual interest, one team sport, perhaps another sport and perhaps an art/creative interest. If you are interested in reading expand upon it, i.e. reading 1950's crime fiction novels. Do not ever detail an interest that you are not knowledgeable about – it really, really can backfire!
- 19. REFERENCES:** If you do not wish to detail your references don't even waste valuable CV space on 'References: Available upon Request'
- 20. LINKS TO PUBLICATIONS/WEB SITES:** It is becoming more popular to attach links to personal websites, blogs, articles published, publications, etc. This is absolutely fine but think about the content – does it portray you in your very best light?!?! Links to companies that you've worked for and projects that you've completed will certainly do no harm

#### Summary

Your CV is an amazingly important document – it will help further your career and reach your aspirations. However let's also put things into perspective. It shouldn't take any more than 6-8 hours to prepare MAXIMUM. Should you not have the desire or the inclination to write your own CV it's relatively inexpensive to get someone to write one for you from £150 upwards. [Click here to find out more](#)

It is imperative that you get someone to 'proofread' your CV. Spell checkers are exceptional but are not foolproof. Many a candidate has been declined on the basis of spelling or grammatical errors – YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!

**Tomorrow: How to optimise your CV for the digital age and truly make your CV work for you.**