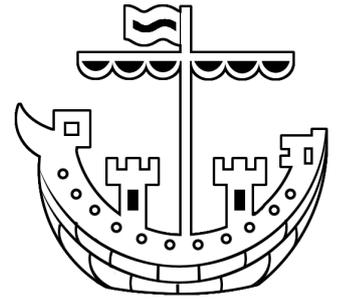


The  
**Folkestone**  
School for Girls



Employment starter pack

A small guide for students entering the world of work after Key Stage 5

## Creating the CV

To gain a job interview you may need to create a CV. You will need to have a copy of your CV with you to hand to the interviewer should you get an interview. They will want to see it and may well ask about it and scrutinise it (think Claude from the apprentice!). In reality, it is a document designed to market yourself to employers so should sell your qualities in the small snapshot it provides.

If you need a template, there is one beneath the CV rules.

Some CV rules to follow:

### 1. Applying for a position for which you've not researched

You may look at a job advert and think, 'I like the sound of that! I think I'll apply!'

However if you have not the right qualifications or experience then you are probably wasting your time. Make sure you read the job description carefully and any other additional information that may be available. This will help you tailor your CV to the job and the job specification. This will mean it is more likely to get you an interview.

### 2. Providing irrelevant personal information

You may be very proud of your membership of the local Hell's Angels chapter. You may also be proud of the fact that you voted Green in the last election, weigh 12 stone, and are 6ft tall and Buddhist. However unless your personal information is relevant to the job you are applying for, do not include it on your CV.

### 3. Burying important information

Remember, your CV will have little time to impress. The recruiter will look at your CV and think 'Why should I interview this person? What will they bring to the organisation?'

Therefore, when compiling your CV think 'Benefits, benefits, benefits!' and make them obvious. That does not mean putting them in all CAPS but it does mean making what you would bring to the role easy to find, easy to understand and, above all, compelling.

### 4. Spelling errors, typos and poor grammar

This 'no no' should be obvious, but it obviously is not. The number of CVs that recruiters see on a daily basis with spelling errors and other mistakes is appalling.

You have a spell checker. Use it!

### 5. Unexplained gaps in employment

Having unexplained gaps in your employment history is a big 'no no'. It makes recruiters nervous. If you are lucky, they will briefly wonder what you were doing during that mystery period as your CV is folded into a paper aeroplane and whizzed towards the bin.

### 6. Lying or misleading information

Obviously, you have to describe yourself in the best possible light. This often means adding a little 'sparkle' to your CV. However, avoid the temptation to go too far.

Recruiters are not stupid. They can spot information that does not stack up. For example, they are always on the lookout for inflated:

- Qualifications
- Salaries
- Job titles
- Achievements

Employers are conducting increasingly vigorous background checks on candidates. This can range from conducting a Google search on you to employing a specialist candidate checking service. Something that you think is just 'bending the truth' could really trip you up.

### 7. A long, waffly CV

Keep your CV short, punchy and to the point. This means it should not run to more than two pages of A4. When your CV is too long - and many of them are - , then this suggests that you have been either job-hopping (which is a 'no no') or you cannot write concisely (which is another 'no no').

## 8. Badly formatted CV

These days your CV will most likely be read on-screen before it is printed off. If indeed, it is ever printed. Therefore, format your CV so that it is easy to read on a screen.

Stick with fonts such as Arial or Times New Roman at font size 10 or 12. Use italics sparingly and do not use any colours, crazy backgrounds or, heaven forbid, flowery page borders.

These rules apply if you have sent your CV, as an attachment to an email - make sure it is a Word attachment by the way.

However, you may need to submit your CV via a web form. Most likely is that these web forms will strip out your document's formatting anyway. It is even more important, therefore, to ensure that your CV is laid out and formatted to look good stripped bare of its 'bolds', sub-headings and even bullet points.

## 9. Meaningless introductions

Does your CV have a paragraph at the top that goes something like:

"Dynamic, enthusiastic, sales oriented I.T. literate, results driven manager with several years people management experience seeking exciting and challenging new opportunities in the blah blah blah..."

Yawn.

Your CV has got to hit the recruiter smack bang between the eyes! It's got to make them sit up, spurt hot coffee from their mouths as they scramble across their desks for the phone to call you and appoint you on the spot!!

Alternatively, to put it another way, your CV has to get you noticed and invited in for interview. Therefore, an opening paragraph that says everything and nothing at the same time is not going to do it.

Ditch it.

In its place, consider constructing a short, simple and benefits focused headline about yourself. For example, "Senior Librarian with 10 year's experience of managing online resources in the health sector."

That will do nicely. It might not be perfect but it is better than what you had before.

Journalists do this all of the time of course. They write headlines that tell you what the story is about but tease you just enough in order to encourage you to read on. Your opening, personal headline should do just the same.

## 10. The 'So What' CV

We end where we started. Your CV has a tough job. It will probably be in the hands of the recruiter for a very small amount of time - unless, that is, you smeared it in Super Glue before you sent it (that would be an inventive touch but is also a 'no no').

To give yourself the best chance of it actually being read, make sure that it 'looks right'. Make sure that it is not too long, that it is laid out correctly, is properly formatted and so on. If you do all of these things then you have a chance. The recruiter will lean back in his or her chair, take another sip of coffee and start to digest - not scan - what you have written.

So do not throw this moment away!

Making sure you do not do the CV 'no no's' simply gets you to the first base. Whilst this is an achievement in itself, if your CV does not convince and persuade then you have again wasted your time.

Your CV has to sell you.

It has to make you sound interesting. It has to make you sound as though you will fit into the organisation and that you will make a quick and substantial difference.

Because if all your CV does is make the recruiter think, 'so what?' you will have dropped the biggest CV clanger of all.

## Name

### Address

01234 000000 • 0113 000 0000 • name@mail.com

## Personal statement

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The purpose of your CV is to capture the attention of busy recruiters and employers when your CV is first opened. You do this by writing one detailed sentence or headline at the very top of your CV that explains your suitability for the roles you are applying for at a very high level. Not too long as a CV is a snapshot.

This is boring and too long: A conscientious and professional personal assistant with extensive experience in administration, PA and secretarial roles, currently seeking a new position as an Executive PA. A highly organised and efficient individual, whose thorough and precise approach to projects has yielded excellent results. Recent achievements with my current employer include the implementation of an innovative new filing and indexing system.

This is more like it: **Professional personal assistant with extensive experience in administration in a market leading business**

## Key Skills

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List your key competencies and other useful skills such as first aider, European Computer Driving License, Driving license etc. Competencies might include: Teamwork, responsible, committed, motivated, communication, leadership, decision making etc.

- 80 words per minute typing
- Proficiency in all areas of Microsoft Office, including Access, Excel, Word and PowerPoint
- Excellent communication skills, both written and verbal
- Accredited member of APA (Association of Personal Assistants)
- Fully qualified first-aider

## Employment History

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This section is to list your relevant work experience- doesn't always need to be everything but long gaps in your employment will raise questions

### **PA to Personnel Manager, Company Name, Location**

*(April 2011 – Present)*

Achievements and responsibilities:

- Implemented a change of stationery supplier, reducing costs by 20%

- Reorganised the meeting booking process, implementing an online system which all staff can access, leading to reduced diary conflicts within the team
- Devised and implemented a new filing and indexing system for files, resulting in greater ease of access and a more time-efficient process
- Helped provide a safer workplace by cataloguing and dispatching health and safety information and posters for the whole company
- Diary management, typing correspondence and documents, creating presentations and creating meeting minutes

## **Front of House Receptionist, Company Name, Location**

*(June 2010 – April 2011)*

Achievements and responsibilities:

- Presenting a professional and friendly first impression of the firm to all visitors and clients
- Managing incoming phone calls and mail
- Organising stationery orders and liaising with suppliers to meet business requests
- Replenishing and restocking the bar, always ensuring high level of stock management efficiency
- Also assumed the role of fire/health and safety officer for the entire office staff

## **Secretary, Company Name, Location**

*(October 2007 – May 2010)*

Achievements and responsibilities:

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- Maintaining and organising the company filing system
- Answering incoming calls
- Typing all necessary documents and correspondence as required
- Printing any supplementary notes as required
- Running professional errands

## **Education**

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### **College/School Name**

*(September 2004 – June 2006)*

A-levels:

- General Studies – B
- English – C
- Mathematics – C

### **School Name**

*(September 1998 – June 2004)*

10 GCSEs, grade A-C, including Maths and English

## **Hobbies & Interests**

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This is a section to show your wider contributions and interests. Think about your professional image here! Saying you love to go out to the pub, even if true, does not make you an ideal candidate!

I am involved in a local amateur dramatics society, where I volunteer as a lighting and sound technician. I have been involved with this society for three years and very much enjoy being part of the team. More recently, I assumed the role of Stage Manager for a two week production and relished the chance to take control of performances and react to a high-pressure environment.

## References

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This section is for your references. Ideally your most recent employee should be included or a relevant employer. Most companies want two so it may be that you use the school as a reference. You should ask your referees to be references first.

References are available upon request.

## *Preparing for the interview*

### 1. Research!

Before you go on a job interview, it is important to find out as much as you can about not only the job but also the company or course you wish to study. Research is a critical part of interview preparation. It will help you prepare to both answer interview questions about the company/ job/ course and to ask the interviewer questions about the company/ job/ course. You will also be able to find out whether the company and the company/institutions culture are a good fit for you. A simple Google search is a good place to start.

Also, spend time tapping into your network to see if you know someone who can help give you an interview edge over the other candidates.

### 2. Practice Interviewing

Take the time to practice answering interview questions you will probably be asked during an interview. This will help give you a chance to prepare and practice answers, and will help calm your nerves because you will not be scrambling for an answer while you are in the interview hot seat.

Practice interviewing with a friend or family member ahead of time and it will be much easier when you are actually in a job interview.

Try to conduct the practice interview in the same format as the real interview. For example, if it is a phone interview, ask a friend to call you to practice answering questions over the phone. If it is a panel interview, ask a couple of friends to pretend to be a panel.

Review common job interview question and answers and think about how you will respond so you are prepared to answer.

### 3. Get Your Interview Clothes Ready

Do not wait until the last minute to make sure your interview clothes are ready. Have an interview outfit ready to wear at all times, so you do not have to think about what you're going to wear while you're scrambling to get ready for a job interview.

Regardless of the type of job you are interviewing for, that first impression should be a great one. When dressing for an interview for a professional position, dress accordingly in business attire.

### 4. What to Bring to a Job Interview

It is important to know what to bring (and what not to bring) to a job interview. Items to bring include a portfolio with extra copies of your resume, a list of references, a list of questions to ask the interviewer, and something to write with.

It is also important to know what not to bring, including your phone (or at least turn your phone off), a cup of coffee, gum, or anything else beyond yourself and your credentials.

### 5. Practice Interview Etiquette

Proper interview etiquette is important. Remember to greet the receptionist, your interviewer, and everyone else you meet politely, pleasantly, and enthusiastically.

During the interview, watch your body language – shake hands firmly and make eye contact as you articulate your points. Pay attention, be attentive, and look interested. This is something you can work on in your practice interviews.

There are also specific etiquette tips depending on the type of interview you have. Read here for tips on handling a lunch or dinner interview, a panel interview, a phone interview, and a video interview.

#### 6. Get Directions

It is important to know where you need to go for your job interview – ahead of time. That way, you will avoid running late to the interview. Use Google Maps or another app to get directions if you are not sure where you are going. Your one will be in the MSH so that should be easy enough to find!

If you have the time, it is a good idea to do a practice run a day or two before the interview. That way, you will be sure about where you going and how long it will take to get there. Give yourself a few extra minutes and arrive a little early to the interview.

#### 7. Listen and Ask Questions

During a job interview, listening is just as important as answering questions. If you are not paying attention, you are not going to be able to give a good response.

It is important to listen to the interviewer, to pay attention, and to take time, if you need it, to compose an appropriate answer. It is also important to discuss your qualifications in a way that will impress the interviewer.

Also, be ready to engage the interviewer. You want there to be a give and take in the conversation, so you are building a relationship with the interviewer rather than just providing rote responses to questions.

Have questions of your own ready to ask the interviewer.

8. Identify some key areas that you consider your strengths or areas you would like to discuss so that if the right opportunity comes up you can manoeuvre these in to the interview and really show your qualities.

### *Possible interview questions*

#### **Personal**

Tell me about yourself.

What do you do in your spare time?

How do you relax?

How do you organise yourself?

What books do you read?

What are your musical interests?

What sports do you like?

Tell us about your part time job - what have you learned from this?

What are your qualities and what are your "bad" points? (Your strengths and weaknesses)

If you have a problem, how do you cope with it?

What are your main ambitions?

What are your career aims?

What challenges are you looking for?

What is management?

What is leadership?

What are the key qualities of a good leader?

Who has had a major influence on you as a person?

What is your greatest achievement?

What are you most proud of?

How do you cope with criticism?

How do you cope with conflict?

Tell me about a situation where you were a leader.

Tell me about a time when you disagreed with a team member and how you tried to resolve the situation.

Tell me about a time you failed and how you dealt with that situation

Tell me about the last book you read?

What book would you recommend I read?

What has been the most interesting news story you have followed recently?

What have you learned from any positions of responsibility you have held?

Tell me about a team you were in and what was your contribution?