

How to Build a Strong CV: Engineers

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TALENT BEYOND
—BOUNDARIES—

How to Build a Strong CV - Engineers

To build a strong CV, make sure it addresses each of the following points, and includes facts that back it up:

- Know how – ability both technical and personal
- Can do – proof of ability in practice, via successful examples (projects or achievements)
- Want to – desire to work, via words in summary, passion for field of expertise, relevant extracurricular work

Remember, building a strong CV takes a lot of time, but is well worth the effort!

Your CV should include the following sections:

1. Contact information
2. Personal summary or profile
3. Skills
4. Education
5. Professional experience
6. Project experience
7. Accomplishments (optional)
8. Languages
9. Interests and hobbies (optional)
10. References (optional)

Contact information

What is the best way for employers to contact you?

- Name, email address, phone number, and country of residence

Personal summary/Profile:

A brief summary of who you are, what have you done, and what you want to do.

- The top portion of your CV is important, as it is the very first thing a recruiter or hiring manager will see when they look at your CV. A well-developed summary will show employers that you are right for the job. Mention:
 - Your area(s) of expertise (Ex. hydraulic engineer, structural engineer, etc)
 - A quality that makes you unique and easily distinguishable
 - Ex. **Passionate about irrigation and improving access to water for all people**
 - Ex. **Developed a patent for a particular tool or created a new technology**
- The personal summary is a brief description about yourself, how many years of experience you have, your specializations, career goals, and ambitions. Use information that you discuss in your CV, and edit each personal summary to be relevant for the position you are applying to.

- Each CV should be customized for each job opportunity you are applying for. DO modify your CV to include relevant skills and experience for each position; DO focus on your skills and experience relevant to the role; DON'T focus too much on skills and experiences that are not as relevant to the role. Mention them briefly but keep the focus on skills and experience that the employer finds important for the role.
- Break up your personal summary into three sentences. The summary should be from 50-200 words. Additional context about who you are outside of this summary can be written into the separate cover letter.
 - 1. Who you are: use examples from your current position
 - Ex: **As a mechanical engineer, I have worked in various workshops throughout Lebanon to design and create customized auto parts for leading automotive companies.**
 - 2. Your achievements and value: highlight job specifications to show you are the right person for the job.
 - Ex: **I have experience balancing several projects and tight deadlines; I coordinate between my team and external contractors to ensure that we meet deadlines and maintain the highest standard of quality. I completed one project 2 months ahead of schedule.**
 - 3: Your career goals: a short summary of why you are applying:
 - Ex: **I am looking for a position in civil engineering where I can continue to build on my skill set and develop particular expertise in hydraulic engineering**

Skills

Describe your skills relevant to the job description. List out in Keywords or Bullet Points.

- Technical skills: keep relevant to role, e.g. **Risk Control/Project Management of Large Jobs (\$30M USD), wastewater and wastewater infrastructure design, building construction, AUTOCAD, C++, etc. Avoid “MS Office” and other generic unrelated skills.**
- Soft skills: Highlight strengths and characteristics that might differentiate you from other candidates (communication skills, teamwork, critical thinking, problem-solving, etc.)
- Leadership Skills: Show examples with data to support and clear examples of value added due to your work, Ex: **Team Leader responsible for 15 people and their professional development, Quality Control Management of >\$30k of product each week.**
- Training Courses and Certifications (same rules above apply)
 - Ex: **Certified Planning Engineer, Certified HVAC Designer**

Education

List educational achievements.

- Include name, date of graduation and place of education. Add memberships here for any professional engineering or charterership bodies e.g. Union of Civil Engineers
- Include:

- Degree, major, awarding body, year obtained (please mention all studies, even incomplete ones)

- Example:

Master of Mechanical Engineering **May 2020**
American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon

Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Engineering **May 2015**
University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas

Professional Experience

This section will show how your offshore experience relates to the context of the job description or a hiring manager. Use this as an opportunity to clearly describe and explain roles, responsibilities and achievements. Aim to achieve examples for the “Can Do” and Know How” goals.

- Fill out roles in reverse chronological order - start with the most recent experience on top
 - Include your most relevant experience at the top of this section, if your other work experiences aren't relevant to the position you are applying for.
- Include:
 - Title (position), Employer's name, Location, Start & End date (month and year)
 - Include the company size and purpose (e.g. Wellington Manufacturing Co, 3000 employees internationally, Large Scale Sheet Metal Manufacturer), avoid having the employer Google companies, and possibly add a link to the company's website if feasible. Example:

Mechanical Engineer

Al-Hamoud Contractors, Building Construction Company, 1200 employees internationally, Beirut, Lebanon, January 2019 – Present

- Adding your titles or position in your work experience section alone is not enough. You need to add the tasks and job responsibilities you have undertaken or overseen with suitable technical detail. Underneath the heading, include 2-3 bullet points with descriptions of your job.
 - Talk about the work you've done and how you've made the work better; the CV will feel light if you don't have details; demonstrate your know-how/expertise, demonstrate your added-value (ex. Improving safety)
 - Ex: Use words that are represented in the job description. Write in past tense for jobs that you are no longer working in. Examples:
 - **Managed a 10-person team. Coordinated weekly meetings with the team which increased team efficiency due to resourcing improvements.**
 - *This example shows leadership skills*
 - **Improved on-site workers safety by introducing random screenings.**

- *This example shows critical thinking and responsibility*
- Detail your tasks and quantify levels achieved; if managing people state how many, if managing projects include how many and what scale (\$). List achievements (or value adds) that were done e.g. **Projects delivered on budget, developed new workplace systems to better H&S.**
- List your experience with International Standards, show your understanding of requirements of working in UK/AUS/NZ/CA
- Avoid unclear generic task descriptions such as “Inspect project sites” (what sort? Construction? Operation? For what purpose?) or “Obtain all permits and permissions” (What for? From who?)
- Keep descriptions clear and concise, what is this line trying to demonstrate? Is it doing it effectively?
- Be clear about what your skill set is, what you’re applying (ex. If you are a structural engineer with some unrelated work experiences and you’re applying for a structural engineer role, make the structural engineering experience prominent in your CV)
- Gaps in your CV: Be honest about gaps in your CV but try to find a way to address it (e.g. you can gain life experience during gaps, or develop your technical knowledge in a particular area)

Project Experience

- Use this section to show what you “Can do.” This is your chance to show both previous experience and clarify your individual abilities. Project experience may not be feasible to use for every engineering field (manufacturing for example). For each project, include:
 - Title of project, dates you worked on it, value of project, location, client name (if applicable)
 - Title you held on the project should be included. This may be different from the job role. E.g. Engineers Representative, Site Engineer, Design Manager
 - Brief description of the project followed by clarification on the activities you undertook.
 - Summary of project success, what you did and how you added value. This can be written in bullet points or a paragraph.
- Consider explaining project experience in terms of:
 - S – Situation you found yourself in in the project/experience
 - A – Actions you took to address the situation
 - O – Outcome you obtained than benefited the project/experience. Outcomes such as saving time/money, make money, delivering quality should aim to have measurable metrics (e.g. 15% more profit, 2 months cut from delivery programme)
 - SAO can also be applied to the Professional Experience section of the CV

Example of how to include project experience in your CV:

Cullompton Re-Sewerage, July 2011 – March 2013 (£4m GBP, South West Water, UK)

Civil Design Engineer

Alex notably identified and designed a revised layout for the flow of the nearby pump station that resulted in a £200k saving to the project. Alex worked as a civil engineer in a 3-person team to design and support the build of a £4 million project to provide storm water and sewage capacity for Cullompton. The project won South West Water's sustainability award due the large changes imposed by the team during detail design which removed the need for the construction of a deep storage shaft and the use of any powered storm return pumps. Further developments by the design team also solved several DG5 flooding locations in the town which were initially set outside of its scope.

How to show evidence of experience in technical engineering:

- A statement like: "*I designed a structure.*" is **broad** and **non-specific**.
- The following statement gives us much more confidence that the candidate has technical capabilities:

I designed the footings for a structure. The soil had a low bearing capacity (which I determined using Terzaghi's method) and was therefore very large. Because of the large surface area, punching shear governed the design process which I accommodated with both a thicker footing, and a reo cage. Concrete cover of the reo was only 40mm because the soil was not particularly aggressive.

Accomplishments (optional):

- What is the thing you are proud of that you have accomplished in your work? (this can be a technical accomplishment, soft accomplishment, or successfully completed/built project)
- This can be leading an entire team successfully or diffusing a hostile situation between coworkers, minimizing project costs with optimum quality, etc.

Languages:

- Add the languages you know and the level of proficiency
 - Ex: **Kurdish (Fluent), Spanish (Beginner), English (Intermediate)**

Interests & Hobbies (optional):

- If you want to include this, you can click on the link above for more info.
- Keep these short and in bullet point format.
- Including interests and hobbies can be useful to show skills like dedication (guitar for 10 years), planning (planned biking trips for groups), creativity (photography, drawing or graphic design)

References

- You can add all relevant references to your work experience, names, position, and contact information - if available

General Tips:

- *Clarity, Organization and Consistency*: use specific language, organize the CV so that the most important information is prominent, and be consistent with the organization.
- Be consistent in terms of formatting (e.g same font/size, using 10 to 12 size fonts is advised, same colors)
- Try to keep your CV to 2 pages, including references. If Project Experience is extensive it can be added as an attachment to the CVs first 2 pages.
- Use a professional email address.
- Follow a reverse chronological order, starting from the most recent and going backward.
- Sell yourself! This is where you need to make sure you add whatever makes you stand out as a candidate.
- Use buzzwords that were included in the job description to highlight relevant skills.
- CVs are never written once. You should always keep modifying and editing your resume to make sure it's up to date. Each new job application is an opportunity to submit a new copy. There is always room for you to edit your resume in a way that matches the job description. This will increase your chances in securing an interview.
- Check spelling and grammar (then check again). If possible, have another person read your CV to check for errors.
- Attach a portfolio (if applicable) of your work. Or link it if you have a publicly available online portfolio.
- Send your CV and material as a PDF, not as docx format.

Don'ts:

- While expectations may slightly differ from one country to another, it is highly encouraged that you don't add your personal picture to your CV. Employers hire based on skills, not looks.
- Don't add your birthdate or any other personal information like nationality and marital status, etc. Keep it simple with only your name and contact information.
- Don't copy-paste from the internet. We know most of us take some content online, however, you should never copy-paste any content into your resume, instead you can rephrase. Make sure you edit and adjust by adding your own touch.
- Never be dishonest in your CV, be factual: make sure to add correct information. Including information that is not true will reflect negatively on both you as a candidate and us as an organization. Employers will be verifying your background.

What is the difference between a CV and a Cover Letter?

- *CV – Specific detailed document that lists your work experience, skills and educational background. Contains facts and data applicable to the job application.*

- *Cover Letter – A short letter covering key points of who you are, your experience, related interests and why you are applying for the job. Provides additional background information to show how your background and motivations relate to the role. Can also be used to show writing ability.*

Additional resources and references:

CV Personal Summary

<https://www.topcv.com/career-advice/personal-statement-for-cv>

Templates

<https://cns.utexas.edu/career-services/students/resume-cover-letter#purpose-3>

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VXAwXfVKcn6_Biysh1NsmjhZ0Zm1_iVjxvF3Ufe8SjE/edit

https://ugs.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/resume_1.pdf

Template examples

<https://career.berkeley.edu/Tools/ResumeSamples>

Differences between UK and Australia Cover Letter

<https://www.people2people.com.au/blog/2015/02/how-do-resumes-differ-between-australia-and-the-uk>

[Examples of CV job descriptions](#)

Examples of CV templates [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#)