CV GUIDE

How to write an effective CV that stands out from the crowd.

Open Doors

Creating Work
Opportunities For All

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide was created by the Open Doors Initiative to address additional challenges that jobseekers from marginalised groups face in Ireland.

These can include migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, people with disabilities, travellers, LGBTQIA+, young people with educational barriers, and more.

In this guide, you will find tips for how to create a CV that will stand out from the crowd but also follow key principles expected in the Irish market.

The Open Doors Initiative offers information, resources and guidance to support people to access employment, education/training and self-employment in Ireland.

Our website offers more information that might help you find a job in Ireland, as well as free training/courses and a list of available jobs from our member companies.

You can also sign up to our mailing list to receive the most recent job opportunities from our members in your inbox every Thursday.

CV LAYOUT

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Your CV summarises your experience and qualifications for a hiring manager or recruiter.

You should always start with your personal information:

- Full name
- Email address
- Phone number
- LinkedIn profile (if you have one)

Make sure to use a 'professional' email that includes your first and last names.

Irish Employment Equality laws prohibit discrimination on many grounds, including age, gender, race, and marital status. Therefore, you should not include these in your CV.

It is also not common to include a photo on your CV in Ireland

IF YOU ARE NOT AN EU CITIZEN

It is not recommended that you include your visa/stamp type on your CV. Simply add 'Eligible to work in Ireland full-time' (or part-time) under your personal information.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

Below your personal information, it is important to include a short statement. This shouldn't be longer than 100 words.

Think of this as your opening pitch and an opportunity to convince an employer to keep reading your CV.

Your personal statement should explain why you are the best person for that specific job (so it should be different for each job you apply) and what value you can bring to the company.

Start by introducing yourself - focus on relevant experiences and skills.

EXAMPLE

"A highly-skilled Software Engineer with eight years of experience in web and mobile app development."

"A recent graduate with consolidated expertise in Digital Marketing and Web Design."

"Skilled and passionate professional with a diverse background, having over five years of experience as a barista, waiter, bartender and other customer-facing roles."

Next, detail what you can offer to the company. Ask yourself why you are suited for that particular role and cover any relevant skills or experience.

Make sure to include relevant skills and responsibilities mentioned on the job description.

EXAMPLE

"Well-versed in supporting customers with politeness and care in fast-paced environments, having helped over 100 clients daily for over two years."

HIGHLIGHTS

After your personal statement, you should include a short list of your core competencies and achievements. It is recommended that you present these using bullet points.

Pay attention not to end up with a long list of cliches with no real meaning. Make sure to include examples as evidence for each highlight.

EXAMPLE

- *Team work: Member of a 20-person team that delivered exceptional results on time and under budget 100% of the time.*

- *Event management: Led a team of 15 to organise a charity ball for 300 people, raising €10,000 – a 20% raise on previous years"*

- *Customer service: delivered exceptional support to thousands of clients, successfully closing more than 50 daily tickets with zero complaints.*

DID YOU KNOW?

On average, recruiters only take

🕐 7 seconds

scanning a CV before making a decision.

Your personal statement and your highlights will be the first thing the recruiter will see. Make sure your best selling points are at the top.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Your current and previous jobs should be listed in reverse chronological order, which means you will have your most recent work experience at the top. You then continue with the one before that and so on. You should include the start and end dates (month and year) for each position you have held.

In Ireland, recruiters expect to see a description of your key responsibilities and achievements in each position. Present them using bullet points, not long paragraphs.

EXAMPLE

Business Development Manager (May 2019 - July 2021)
COMPANY XYZ
- *Responsible for selling over 500 software packages annually, resulting in more than €1M in turnover.*
- *Managed employee training for all new recruits over a 12 month period, offered continuous advice, guidance and mentorship on duties and best practices.*
- *Increased department revenue by 13% in 12 months in 2020*

Make sure to add numbers when possible.

EXAMPLE

"Managed a team of five people over the period of 12 months"

"Achieved a client retention rate of 96%"

"Managed over 1,000 inventory items"

"Served over 150 customers per week"

"Provided high-quality care to 10 clients in their homes daily over five months"

EDUCATION

You should include the various qualifications you got in third-level education and further education. Include secondary education if it's your highest achievement or if it's relatively recent (last five years).

Try to pick the three or four pieces of education that are most relevant to the position you are applying for, the rest can be summarised below.

Mention the title of your qualification, the place where you got it, and the dates (month/year) you started/finished the course. You may list the main subjects of your study.

IF YOUR CV HAS INFORMATION IN OTHER LANGUAGES

Remember to translate all the details into English.

For example, translate "Universidad de Barcelona" to "University of Barcelona".

IF YOUR QUALIFICATIONS ARE FROM ABROAD

NARIC Ireland provides advice, free of charge, on the academic recognition of a foreign qualification by comparing it to a major award type and level on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), which sets these qualifications clearly in an Irish context.

If you plan to work in a regulated profession, such as Medical Doctor, Engineer or Barrister, you must contact the competent authority that regulates the profession. There are usually steps that non-Irish professionals need to take before exercising their profession in Ireland, which may include exams and proof of English proficiency.

You can find a complete list of regulated professions and the competent authorities that regulate them on the Pathways to Progress website: www.pathwaystoprogress.ie

TRAINING AND SKILLS

This is where you can mention any additional training and short courses that you have taken, like:

- Proficiency in Programmes (Adobe Illustrator, Excel)
- Languages (Native Ukrainian, Fluent English, Basic Spanish)
- Certifications (First Aid, Manual Handling, Online Courses)
- Driving Licence (Type D - Bus)

Choose skills that are relevant to the job you are applying for.

If possible, provide evidence of when you demonstrated the skill and how it led to a positive outcome.

HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

You can demonstrate here that you are an active person and that you do activities that would be relevant for the position. Pick hobbies that are interesting and show aspects of your personality and skills that are relevant to the job you are applying for.

You can list recent membership in a club, society or organisation or fundraising activities and charity events you have been involved in. It is good to list a hobby that involves teamwork and another one that you do on your own.

Make sure you give concrete examples. Don't say 'I like music and computers' but give an example such as 'singing in choir; editing blogs'.

ACHIEVEMENTS

An achievement is a task that you have successfully completed, or an activity that stands out.

You can include prizes, awards, medals, membership, publications, media coverage or special events you organised.

REFERENCES

Referees are the people who give you a reference. They have to be available and willing to speak about your performance, attitude, and personality. They should be someone who has supervised your work and will say good things about you. You should warn your referees that they should expect a phone call or email.
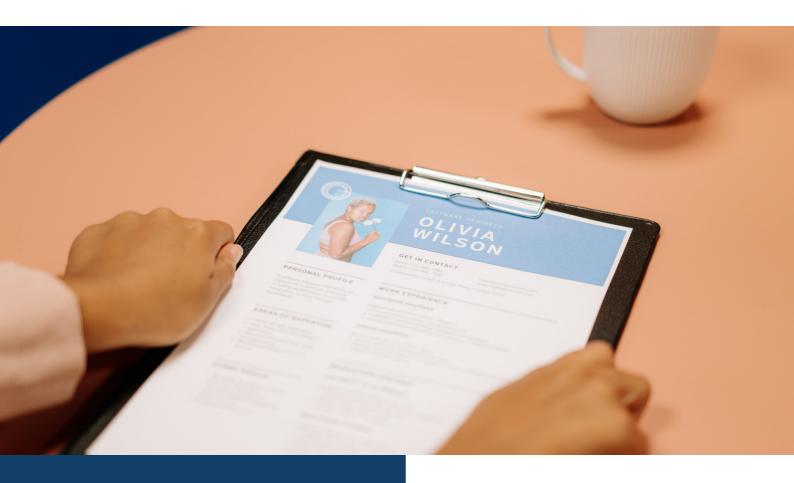
Candidates usually have to give two references to their potential employers to support the information in their application. You should have these ready in case you are asked to provide them.

There is no need to include your references on your CV. Just say "References provided upon request."

IF YOUR REFERENCES ARE FROM ABROAD

In Ireland, employers might expect Irish references as opposed to foreign references.

A good strategy to gain experience in Ireland is to volunteer with a local non-profit. However, choose the organisation and your role strategically. Think about the job you want and find something in the same area.

GENERAL TIPS

PAY ATTENTION TO HOW YOU PRESENT YOUR CV

How your CV is presented is very important. You have to draw attention to your CV in a very short period of time.

Good presentation can create a good impression and help to get you to an interview.

Poor presentation can hide important information from the reader and suggest that you have not taken care in presenting the information properly.

There are many free CV templates online.

We recommend using a template to save time, ensure you use an appropriate format and avoid mistakes.

You can find a CV template on our websites: Open Doors Initiative, Pathways to Progress, and Towards Work.

Indeed has a free CV writing tool.

If you have a well-written LinkedIn profile, you can use the LinkedIn Resume Builder to extract it in a CV-appropriate format.

KEEP IT SHORT AND SIMPLE

Ensure your CV is clean, easy to read, and in a simple layout.

In general, your CV should be **no longer than two pages**. If your CV is longer than this, you should consider removing information that is not as relevant or aggregating information (for example: two similar work experiences, where your responsibilities and achievements were not too different).

Don't be afraid to delete experiences that are not relevant to the role. Use clear headings and make them stand out with bold type, capital letters and/or a different colour.

Make it easy for people to find the most important information on your CV. Make sure there is enough white space, as an overstuffed CV is difficult to read and might put people off.

CUSTOMISE YOUR CV

You should change your CV slightly for each position you apply for. Highlight what is relevant for that specific job at the top of your CV. This catches the attention of the person reading it.

No matter what format you use, your CV should focus on the criteria of the job description. it is important to go through the job description thoroughly and find keywords that the employer expects to see on your CV.

Tailoring your CV connects the dots for hiring managers who are inundated by a flood of generic applications. Your goal should be to prove that you are not just a skilled professional in general, but a perfect fit for that specific role.

CHECK FOR ERRORS

You should consider using a spellchecker like Grammarly and asking someone else to double-check everything you have written.

Check for spelling mistakes, typos, dates that conflict with one another, and incorrect email address and phone number.

SENDING YOUR CV

While most employers accept resumes through online job applications, some job postings may include a requirement to submit your resume via email.

Generally, you should follow the given instructions. Carefully read the job posting to know:

- The email address to send your CV to
- The subject line
- The questions they want answered in the body of the email
- The file name
- Anything else they specify

Take care when naming the file - avoid generic names.

If these items are not specified in the job description, you should:

- Make the name of your file clear, concise and meaningful. Avoid generic names like "Resume" or "CV". Instead, use your name, like "CV_Olena_Krasun"

- Avoid using files that are too large (keep it under 10MB)

- Write a brief, clear subject line, such as 'Resume: Name and Job Title'.

WRITING THE EMAIL

Include the name of the hiring manager if you know it, or simply start with a "Hello".

Send it from a professional email address including your first and last names. For example, sara.perez91@gmail.com, instead of coffeelover45@gmail.com.

Conclude with a proper signature, including your first and last name, email address, and phone number (and LinkedIn profile if applicable).

EXAMPLE

Hi John,

I came across the posting for your account manager opening on the Open Doors jobs board —it seems like a great opportunity.

I've attached my resume and cover letter here, and I would love to be considered for the position.

Please let me know if there is additional information I can send to you and your team.

Thanks so much for your time.

Best,
Olena Krasun
(123) 456-7890

WANT TO RECEIVE JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN YOUR INBOX?

Open Doors has over 115 members and partners who advertise their open roles on our website and via our weekly newsletter.

Sign up on our website or send us an email at info@opendoorsinitiative.ie

DISCLOSING PERSONAL INFORMATION

You may wish to share personal information with the company - for example, if you have a disability or are part of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Disclosure is a personal decision, and one you should take time to consider. You are not obliged to share personal information, but doing so may have benefits for you in the longer term.

If this is something you want to do, we recommend first checking if the employer has a diversity and inclusion statement on their website and/or job description.

IF YOU HAVE A DISABILITY AND HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT DISCLOSURE

Towards Work has put together a list of frequently asked questions about disclosing a disability for work or education.

It includes information about whether or not to share information about your disability, when to do it, how to do it, and more.

COVER LETTER

Many hiring managers rely on cover letters to learn more about the applicant's personality, attention to detail and written communication skills.

Make sure to send one with every job you apply for. Only a small number of candidates do this, so it will help you stand out from the crowd.

Taking the extra time and effort to draft a well-written, compelling cover letter might be useful if the hiring team is hesitating to choose between you and another candidate at the final stage.

Your cover letter is an opportunity to show how passionate you are.

A good cover letter will be short (1 page) and tailored specifically for the role you are applying for.

It should contain:

- A greeting (use the person's name if you know it)
- A short introduction
- Key reasons why you are the right person for the job, based on your skills and experiences
- The reasons why you want to work for the company
- Closing

ADDRESSING WORK GAPS

If you have any gaps in your CV, your cover letter is a great place to explain them.

Be honest - explain the reason why you left the workforce and what you did during the gap. If you completed a course, or gained any relevant skills, make sure to let them know.

You should also make it clear that you are ready/excited to return to work now.

SELL YOURSELF

Use this opportunity to highlight your skills and experience, but make sure your cover letter is not just a different way to show the same information that is on your CV.

Tell meaningful anecdotes that show your skills and tangible results you have achieved.

SUPPORTS

Open Doors offers free resources and advice to marginalised groups in Ireland to support them in accessing employment, education and self-employment.

These include:

- Career mentoring: individual support from an experienced professional from one of Open Doors members

- Migrant Hub: general information and resources, available in 7 languages

- Internship/work placement: 6 to 12 month paid placements with Open Doors members.

Contact us at info@opendoorsinitiative.ie