

CV skills lesson one: Writing a successful CV

Age range: 14-16



Contents

This is lesson one of two focusing on CV skills for young people aged 14-16. Part two is 'CV skills lesson two: Fine-tuning your CV to stand out to employers'. Students may find it helpful to complete the 'Exploring personal strengths for employment' lesson before creating their CV, so they can identify the skills, interests and personality traits they want to include.

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Always start the session by agreeing ground rules with the group. For advice on this and other ways to establish a safe learning environment, download the content guide at barclayslifeskills.com/educators



LifeSkills is pleased to have worked with The National Autistic Society to ensure the following lesson plan can be adapted to suit the needs of students with autism.

If teaching a lesson including students with autism, here are some key considerations when undertaking the following activities:

- Remind students with autism of the importance of looking for a realistic job that matches their current skills. Often people with autism can struggle to remember the need for a step-by-step plan and can only see the end goal
- Use concrete language and consider how what you say may be interpreted literally, for example when discussing the 'whole person'

Time needed: 60-90 minutes

Key learning outcomes

By the end of the activity students will be able to:

- Explain what a CV is used for and be familiar with two common formats
- Understand that a CV should highlight the skills, personal qualities, qualifications, interests and experience that a potential employer is looking for
- Create a draft CV

Resources

- [Student Sheet 1.1: Sample CV – Chronological](#)
- [Student Sheet 1.2: Sample CV – Functional/skills-based](#)

Cut copies of each sample CV into horizontal sections, to use with pairs of students in the task suggested in activity step 3.

- [Student Sheet 1.3: CV Template – Chronological](#) (one per student)
- [Student Sheet 1.4: CV Template – Functional/skills-based](#) (one per student)
- CV skills lesson one: Writing a successful CV PDF Presentation Slides

Activity steps

Note that the icons in these margins are not click-able.



Slide 1.1



Interactive

Before the session, invite students to bring in a job advertisement that interests them. It could be for a part-time or summer job, or a realistic first job; it could come from a local paper or an online job site (bring in spares for those who forget). Ask students to carefully read their advert and identify the skills and qualities the employer is looking for.

1. What is a CV?

- Ask students to share ideas about what they think a CV is for (CV stands for curriculum vitae, which is Latin for 'course of life')
- Show PDF Presentation Slide 1.1. Explain that a CV is like an advertisement, but it is selling a person rather than a product or a brand. TV adverts have just a few seconds to grab our attention and persuade us, and the same is true for CVs. Employers may take just 30 seconds to skim a CV and make a decision about whether they want to interview a person
- Ask students how they think they can make a CV stand out like TV adverts can – but without using gimmicks
- Explain to students that it could be something as simple as an inappropriate email address that could put an employer off from inviting you to interview. To illustrate this, show the first film on this page which demonstrates the importance of using a professional email address: barclayslifeskills.com/profiletips
- Use the Play the Boss interactive tool to help students understand what constitutes an appropriate CV (barclayslifeskills.com/playtheboss). You can also access the game from the lesson plan page, a splash page with a start button will appear on the whiteboard when it is loaded



Slide 1.2

2. What goes in a CV?

- Gather and list ideas for what information a CV should contain
- Discuss each one and identify why each piece of information might be relevant and important to an employer
- Which are the most important? Highlight and emphasise the importance of skills. Most employers think of these as equally important as qualifications, since students' skills are the tools they will use to do a good job for the employer
- Show PDF Presentation Slide 1.2 as a summary of what should go on a CV



Slide 1.3



Slide 1.4

3. How should we organise the information in a CV?

- Show and discuss PDF Presentation Slide 1.3
- Use copies of the sample chronological CV on **Student Sheet 1.1** cut into strips to help students think about how to organise the information. Hand out the strips and ask students in pairs to put them in the best order. Gather students' ideas then use the template CV to show the correct order
- Do the same with the functional/skills-based CV on **Student Sheet 1.2**, and PDF Presentation Slide 1.4
- Ask students what they think each type of CV highlights and to suggest some good and bad points of using each type
- Explore how each sample CV presents the same information in different ways. For example, ask students to underline on the chronological CV where the information about Alex's skills appear. Now ask them to find the same information in the skills-based CV



Sheet 1.1



Sheet 1.2

4. Write a personal profile

- Ask students to draft a personal profile, often also called a personal statement, that highlights their best skills and personal qualities. Encourage students to think about whether they have skills that might transfer to the world of work. Are they good at staying positive when under pressure at school? Do they excel at leadership, or thrive when working in a team? Do they enjoy presenting to a group, or being creative?
- Use the example from the sample CVs to give students an idea of what could go into the statement. If students have completed the 'Exploring personal strengths for employment' lesson already, encourage them to use those skills, interests and personality traits as inspiration for their profile
- Ask them to read their profile back to themselves, thinking about what an employer might think of it. Will it grab someone's attention and give them the right impression?



Slide 1.5

5. Students complete their CVs

- Show PDF Presentation Slide 1.5. Guide and support students as they complete the rest of a sample CV using the format of their choice (chronological is easier, starting with the most recent elements)
- Help them use active words, like 'produced', 'helped', and 'achieved'
- List a good range of skills and positive qualities, drawing on previous activities such as the 'Exploring personal strengths for employment' lesson and the Wheel of strengths. You could bring up the skills screen of this tool as a reference if helpful, or if students haven't already done so, they can spin the wheel to help them complete this section of their CV
- Encourage them to pay attention to accuracy and spelling
- Challenge students to highlight and emphasise the skills they identified in their job adverts at the beginning of the lesson in their draft CV

6. Look at covering letters

- If you have time, discuss covering letters. Ask students whether they know what a covering letter is
- When you have established that it is the letter that you send alongside your CV, ask how important it is. Students often underestimate how vital this letter is to a job application: it is their opportunity to explain why they want a job and the benefits that they can bring to a company, whereas the CV provides information about their skills and achievements to date
- Explain that although many job applications are made online, they still need a covering email, which serves the same purpose. Applications that are made using an application form won't need a covering letter
- Using the job advertisements students have brought in and/or the adverts you collected before the lesson, and their draft CVs, ask students to write some notes for a covering letter for a job. Give students a few minutes to do this, then discuss their thoughts
- Collect ideas on the board for what should appear in the covering letter, such as highlighting key points from the CV, explaining why they want the job and acknowledging where they saw the job advertised
- You can also use the 'How to write a cracking cover letter' interactive tool to inspire students with a variety of hints and tips: barclayslifeskills.com/coverletter

Extension activities

- Ask students to think about alternative ways of presenting CVs, which may be relevant to some industry sectors. This might be in video format if applying for certain types of media roles or a portfolio of work if applying for a design/artwork role
- Why not get students to log on to LifeSkills and use the CV builder (barclayslifeskills.com/cvbuilder) to inspire them to write their CV. This interactive tool also demonstrates the positive and negative impact of social media on their employability. By collecting information about the students' most popular posts and likes from their Facebook and Twitter profiles, it shows students what employers might see about them online
- If students are still unsure about where their skills can take them, get them to try the Wheel of strengths (barclayslifeskills.com/wheelofstrengths), or spin it again if they've used it already. This will provide them with a selection of jobs that suit their skills, interests and personality traits. They can then choose one of the suggested roles to write a tailored application for and to practise using the knowledge they have gained in this lesson

Summary discussion

- Invite students to share personal profiles, asking the other students to identify all the skills, qualities and other attributes in each statement
- Remind students that a good CV (and covering letter, if appropriate) is tailored to each individual job so it highlights what that job requires
- Emphasise the need for neatness, accuracy, honesty and good spelling. Discuss ideas for achieving this, such as keeping one all-purpose version of the CV saved on a computer and using it as a template to create job-specific versions

Sample CV: Chronological

Student Sheet 1.1



Mary Smith
 24 Maple Road, Cardiff, Wales CF10 XXX
 Telephone: 0207 536 253
 Mobile: 077-283522
 Email: mary.smith@address.co.uk

Personal profile

I am a very positive, proactive and enthusiastic person who works well both on my own and as part of a team. I am confident and motivated to aim high, I have a strong desire to develop a career in customer service.

Education and qualifications

2014–2019	Northvale Park Secondary GCSEs: Maths	C
	English	B
	Science	C
	Design & Technology	D
	Geography	C

Employment and work experience

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 2019–2020 | Customer Assistant, Tesco Express |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collected, replenished, organised and managed stock, and dealt with a range of customers Worked under pressure and learned to stay positive and adapt in a diverse environment Strengthened my communication, numeracy, listening and customer service skills |
| | 2017–2019 |
| 2017–2019 | Mentor, Poplar Youth Club |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Led a group of young people aged 9–13, working to promote an interest in learning Helped them improve their self-confidence and academic achievement, and assessed their work to help them set targets |

Other skills and achievements

- Leadership: a successful captain for the school football team, with a proven track record
- Employee of the month on three occasions during 2018
- Class President during 2018–19
- Level 3 certificate in 'Introduction to Mentoring Skills' (2017)
- Team working: reliable, honest and capable, helping teams complete learning tasks and projects properly and on time
- Short story published in 'Write Now! Expressions of Youth' (YOUNG WRITERS 2016)

Interests

- I enjoy team and individual sports including football, cricket and badminton
- At present I play league football for Newark FC. This involves me training once a week (Thursday)
- Keen on technology, in my spare time I like to research this industry to keep myself up to date

Referees

Available on request.

Sample CV: Functional/skills-based

Student Sheet 1.2



Alex Brown

72 Red Lane, Limehouse, London E14 XXX

Telephone: 0207 536 253

Mobile: 077-283522

Email: alex.brown@address.co.uk

Personal profile

I am a very positive, proactive and enthusiastic person who works well both on my own and as part of a team. I am responsible, thorough, respectful, confident and motivated to do my best. I have a strong desire to develop a career in customer service.

Skills and personal qualities

Customer care	Served and helped customers of diverse ages and backgrounds. Level 3 certificate in 'Introduction to Mentoring Skills' (2017).
Communication	Worked with young people aged 9–13 to promote an interest in learning and helped them improve their self-confidence and academic achievement. Short story published in 'Write Now! Expressions of Youth' (YOUNG WRITERS 2015).
Numeracy	Handled cash and credit transactions. Helped young people with numeracy tasks.
Proactivity	Employee of the month on three occasions in 2018. Received certificate for work experience (Trident), in recognition of my high standard of work (2016).
Organisation	Collected, replenished, organised and managed stock. Stayed positive while working under pressure in a busy retail environment. Helped teams complete learning tasks and projects properly and on time at school and college.
Leadership	Successful captain for the school football team. Class President at school (2017–2018).

Education and qualifications

2014–2019	Langdon Park Secondary GCSEs:	Maths	4
		English	5
		Science	4
		Design & Technology	5
		Geography	3

Employment and work experience

2019–2020	Customer Assistant, Tesco Express
2017–2019	Mentor, Poplar Youth Club

Interests

- I enjoy team and individual sports including football, cricket and badminton
- At present I play league football for Newark FC. This involves me training once a week (Thursday)
- Keen on technology, in my spare time I proactively research this industry to keep myself up to date

Referees

Available on request.

CV Template: Chronological

Student Sheet 1.3



A chronological CV makes your education and work experience stand out first.

Name [Write your full name.]

Address [Write your full address including postcode.]

Phone [Include both a home phone number and mobile number if you can.]

Email [Check you spell this correctly.]

Personal profile

[A few sentences about your skills, achievements, personality traits, interests and career goal. Link these to the job you're applying for. The advertisement may list what the employer is looking for.]

Education and qualifications

[In reverse order (most recent first) list each school or college you have attended, the dates you were there, the courses or qualifications you took and your grades, and any other awards or achievements.]

Employment and work experience

[If you are already in a job put this section first, above 'education and qualifications'. In reverse order, list each employer and their location, your job title, what you achieved and what your main responsibilities were. Don't go into too much detail.

If you don't yet have a job, find other things you have done that provide work experience such as voluntary work, planning an event at school, running a snack shop at a youth club, Young Enterprise projects, etc.]

Other skills and achievements

[List any other skills or achievements here. Make them relevant to the job you're applying for. Don't repeat things you put in your personal profile.]

Interests

[List any interests, clubs or leisure activities that might be relevant to the job you're applying for, or ones that showcase your skills and personal qualities.]

Referees

[Either write 'Available on request', or include the names, addresses and contact details here of two people who can back up what you have said. Make sure you get their permission to be listed as referees first.]

CV Template 2: Functional/skills-based

Student Sheet 1.4



A functional or skills-based CV makes your skills stand out more.

Name [Write your full name.]

Address [Write your full address including postcode.]

Phone [Include both a home phone number and mobile number if you can.]

Email [Check you spell this correctly.]

Personal profile

[A few sentences about your skills, achievements, personality traits, interests and career goal. Link these to the job you're applying for. The advertisement may list what the employer is looking for.]

Skills and personal qualities

[Describe the skills you most want the employer to notice. Give evidence for each one, e.g. your experience, how you used each skill, and what you achieved.]

Education and qualifications

[In reverse order (that means most recent first), list each school or college, the dates you were there, the courses or qualifications you took and your grades, and any other awards or achievements.]

Employment and work experience

[If you are already in a job put this section first, above 'education and qualifications'. In reverse order, list each employer and their location, your job title, what you achieved and what your main responsibilities were. Don't go into too much detail.

If you don't yet have a job, find other things you have done that provide work experience such as voluntary work, planning an event at school, running a snack shop at a youth club, Young Enterprise projects, etc.]

Other skills and achievements

[List any other skills or achievements here. Make them relevant to the job you're applying for. Don't repeat things you put in your personal profile.]

Referees

[Either write 'Available on request', or include the names, addresses and contact details here of two people who can back up what you have said. Make sure you get their permission to be listed as referees first.]