

Youth Direction: Careers

How to write an Apprenticeship CV



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Looking for an apprenticeship? Wondering what to put in your CV? Do not fear help is at hand! Follow the tips below and you'll be well on your way to writing a world-beating apprenticeship CV.

An apprenticeship CV doesn't have to be as long as a normal CV. The person reading it isn't expecting you to have heaps of experience. A single page CV is fine. It shouldn't be longer than two pages anyway!

You should create a basic CV and then tailor it to for every job application. That means picking out the skills, abilities, qualifications and experience that you think will most interest them and are most relevant to the apprenticeship to which you are applying. It certainly isn't a case of one size fits all. It's all about showing them why you would make a great addition to their team.

A word of warning: no one likes to see flabby bits on a CV. It should be as trim and fit as an Olympic athlete. Resist the temptation to pad your CV out with useless information. Yes, your CV might look a bit on the skinny side, but short and sweet is better than long and irrelevant.

Presentation

When it comes to picking a font, don't go smaller than point size 11. Don't go wacky, but maybe try something other than Arial and Times New Roman. However, these are tried and tested fonts that are used by so many people because they work. Since so many CVs are sent via email or through online application systems, you might want to use a font designed to be read on screen such as Verdana or Tahoma.

However, if you are printing out your CV, and dropping it in at shops etc, you may be better off using a font designed to be read on paper – such as Bodoni, Garamond, or the classic Times New Roman.

Never, ever use Comic Sans! You are not advertising a church jumble sale or creating a worksheet for primary school children.

Layout is incredibly important. A clear, well laid out CV will impress. Use headings to split your CV into sections so the reader can easily find what they are looking for. Bold, italics and bullet points will help make your CV more readable - but don't go mad with the bullet points! Clear and simple is the way forward.

“...many CVs are sent via email or through online application systems, you might want to use a font designed to be read on screen...”

What you should put in it?

At the very top of your CV should be your name. You might want to put your name in a larger font, in bold and centre it. Underneath should be your address, telephone number and email address.

Below that, you could write a brief personal profile detailing what your career aspirations are, why you want to work in this particular sector (i.e. if you are applying for an engineering apprenticeship, write about the things that attract you to engineering), and any personal attributes or skills that you have that'll make them want to employ you. Your personal profile should only be a few lines, so don't bore them with a great long essay. Try to avoid clichés. This is difficult but employers often see hundreds of CVs a year and you may need to think of something more creative than;

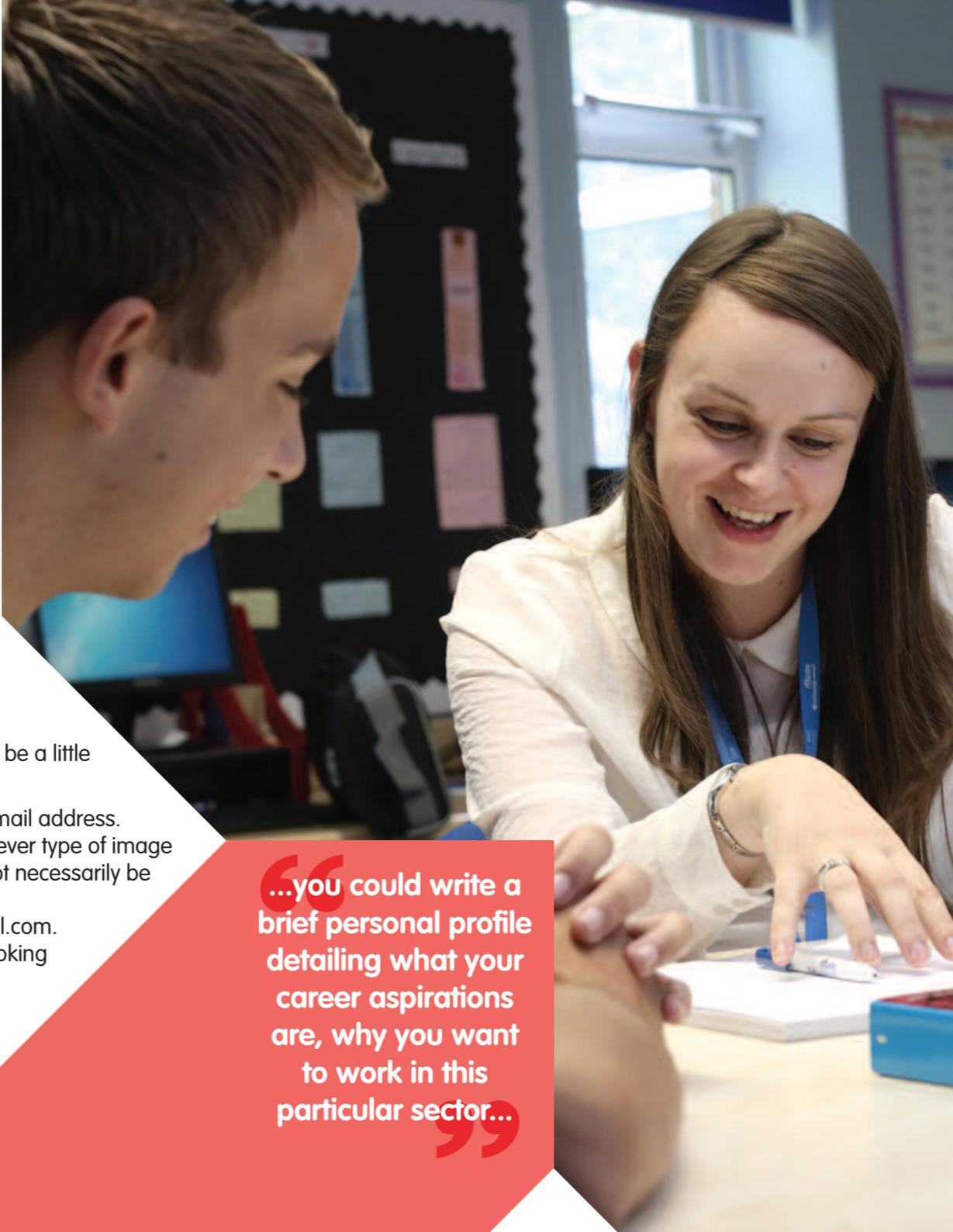
"I am good at working in a team as well as under my own initiative"

You will need to get this type of information across but try to be a little more original.

Since this is no longer the 80s you are bound to have an e-mail address. But what you need is an **appropriate** e-mail address. Whatever type of image or personality you may wish to convey to your friends will not necessarily be appropriate for a potential employer. So... that means; no xxxsexy_babexxx@hotmail.com or COD_noobhunter@gmail.com. In fact, you may wish to create a whole new professional looking e-mail address just for job related stuff.

Whilst I'm on the subject ...Facebook, Instagram etc. Employers can and do look on these sites to have a look at potential employees. Is your profile and the embarrassing pictures available for the whole world to see forever?

“...you could write a brief personal profile detailing what your career aspirations are, why you want to work in this particular sector...”



Education

After your personal profile, comes your education. Put in a header 'Education' and then underneath it list your education. You can list it in date order, with the last school you attended at the top. You should only list your education from the age of 11, so you don't need to mention your primary school.

Play around with how you present it, but just make sure it's readable and you've got all the right information. All your qualifications should be listed along with the grade you achieved. Remember to specify what the qualification is, e.g. GCSE, BTEC etc. and don't include any subjects that you have failed – but remember that a D or E grade is NOT a failure. Obviously most qualifications can't be stated as you have not taken final exams yet – predicted grades are fine but you should state that they are predicted and not actual. You might want to add in any other academic achievements too; for example, if you gained a scholarship or achieved a gold award in the 'Maths Challenge'.

Work experience

Below your education, you should put in any work experience you've got. This could include any jobs you've done and any work experience placements. It's a good idea to put this in reverse chronological order. Put the dates you worked there (e.g. August 2013 to January 2014), the name of the company you worked for and your role (e.g. Part-time Sales Assistant at The Hairy Chipmunk Pet Shop). Underneath, you should detail what your duties were and the skills that you developed whilst working there. For example:

"My duties involved: assisting customers, giving product advice, cleaning the shop, helping with stock control and ordering, answering the telephone, and working behind the till. Dealing with particularly tricky customers really developed my customer service skills. I also learnt to work efficiently under pressure during busy Saturdays and developed a professional and exemplary telephone manner."

The main thing, in this section, is to demonstrate the kind of skills the employer is looking for. For instance, the list of duties above would be great for someone wanting to get an apprenticeship in a call centre as it shows: customer services skills, telephone skills and working well under pressure. Make sure you adapt your CV every time to reflect the kind of skills they are looking for in the apprenticeship to which you are applying.

If you haven't had any formal Work Experience through school you could also mention anything you have done with family members or friends. This is where you can mention that you have helped your dad fix the car, put up a shed, style your friends hair or the babysitting you do. Just make it relevant to the job you are applying for by stating what you have learnt rather than just a list of what you have done.

But don't worry if you don't have much work experience, they won't be expecting you to have too much.

Interests & Out of School activities

Underneath work experience, you might want to detail your interests. Talk about interests that are relevant to the apprenticeship you want to apply to or things that will interest the reader (definitely not: "I like hanging out with my mates and playing C.O.D. on the Xbox"). You might also want to mention any other non-academic achievements, such as getting a Brown Belt in karate or getting a Silver Duke of Edinburgh award.

Skills

Depending on what apprenticeship you are applying for, you might want to mention language skills and computing skills. Tell them if you can speak another language. If you aren't, but you can hold a conversation in a foreign language, then say that you're an intermediate or conversational speaker. If you are applying for an apprenticeship that requires practical skills, you might want to briefly outline any technical skills you have got.

If you are applying for an office based apprenticeship, this is the place to discuss your general and specialist computing skills. Do you have a good working knowledge of Microsoft Office, Adobe Dreamweaver or Photoshop? What is your typing speed? Can you use both PCs and Macs? Whatever you can do, put it down.

References

You'll only need to provide two references at the most. You can ask your teacher or tutor for a reference and you can get references from previous employers or people you have worked for in the past, often during work experience placements. Always contact your referees first to make sure they are happy to give a reference and to have their contact details shared.

CV Websites

A quick search online will bring up a host of websites offering to help you with your CV – some of them even charge! These websites vary in quality and often are just a way of formatting the information you supply. If you are reasonably proficient in Word you should be able to manage without. Most of them are not geared towards the specific needs of young people and are more for people with lots of previous work experience they need to get across. Remember... all CVs are personal and often trying to fit your information into an awkward format may mean your CV will suffer.

Finally...

Please, please, please scour every inch of your CV for mistakes. We mean spelling mistakes, grammatical errors and wrong contact details etc. Get someone else to check it through as well. There is nothing, and we mean nothing, worse than a CV riddled with spelling mistakes and grammatical errors.



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