

Guidance for Producing a Medical CV

A. The Basic Principles

Your CV is an important tool in the recruitment process whether it is asked for at application stage or as part of your portfolio during interviews and assessment centres (see leaflet CPIS/3 in this series). The purpose of a CV is to present relevant information about yourself and show how you meet the requirements set out by the employer. For this reason, it should be tailored for purpose and targeted in its design. Both Foundation and Specialty applicants can access person specifications on www.specialtytraining.hee.nhs.uk which set out what is required of them. Make it easy for the reader to see how you meet all of the requirements.

There are no definitive rules for CVs, and it needn't look the same as everyone else's. You won't have much time to impress the reader so it needs to be well thought out. Use positive language and aim for a confident tone.

Due to the high levels of competition within medicine, and the fact that many students and trainees will have similar levels of experience and qualifications, you need to set yourself apart in some way. Consider what it is about you and the things you have done that make you different. It doesn't need to come from your clinical experiences alone. Your ability to reflect on your own development and personal rewards from common activities like electives will help to distinguish your CV.

B. Structure

It is largely up to you how you design your CV and the degree of information you choose to include. Always check any instructions or guidelines you are given very carefully as they may ask for particular things or insist you limit the length of your CV.

The length of your CV is likely to be determined by your stage of your career. Undergraduate CVs are unlikely to comprise of more than 2 pages, while experienced consultants may have a CV that stretches to many pages. However, you should ensure that every piece of information is relevant, in the best place, and concisely written. It is important to include dates for each activity, and to account for any gaps in your career.

C. Content

What do you need to include?

- **Personal details** - Name, address, e-mail, phone numbers. Your GMC number should be added when applicable. Nationality and age are optional. Marital status is best not included. If applicable, candidates from overseas can add visa and work permit information on their right to work in the UK. This will be checked and must be accurate.
- A **Career Aim** or **Objective** is used to highlight your motivations and desired career direction. It is also a useful way to define your aim if you are changing careers. It should be short, sharp and purposeful, demonstrating your direction – not a list of adjectives about you. Be sure to update this if you are applying to different areas. No-one in Surgery will want to know about your aim to work in Paediatrics! As an alternative to a career aim statement you may wish to include an impact statement at this stage of your CV that sums up what you can offer in terms of experience or achievements that sets you apart from the competition.
- **Qualifications** with dates and results. For your degree, you could elaborate to include information about research projects undertaken. It is up to you whether or not you include the institution where you studied for all your qualifications, but it is advisable to include your Medical School. Spare just one line for A-levels and at this level it is not appropriate to refer to GCSEs.
- **Clinical Work Experience** – you may wish to include information about the things you have experienced, but try to place emphasis on what was particularly motivating and situations where you achieved. This is one of those sections that could sound very similar to other candidates. Be reflective about what you personally gained.
- **Non Clinical Work Experience** – don't undersell these activities - pick out the transferable skills including leadership and management skills. Include dates, company name, your role and some information about what you did there. Concentrate on how you contributed to the role and what you gained – don't just list the activities.
- **Prizes, Bursaries, Awards and Scholarships** from your undergraduate medical degree can be included below your qualifications. Ensure that you use a description that the selectors will be able to interpret.
- **Special Study Modules and Electives** – when, where, what you did and who you worked for. You should draw out relevant clinical and transferable skills from each experience but also reflect on what you gained personally from each activity.
- **Audits / Quality Improvement Projects** - it is advisable to be specific about your personal role- did you initiate it or lead it? What were the findings and where were these presented? Was patient care improved?
- **Publications** - the Harvard model of referencing is recommended when referencing these

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- **Research**- even if you have no formal research experience or publications it is advisable to include a short statement to evidence active involvement and understanding of research and practice.
- **Courses**- should be listed with the most recent first
- **Teaching / Clinical Education experience** - include the type, level and scope and if the experience is local, regional, national or international.
- **Management and Leadership** (responsibilities, achievements and interests) – everyone arranges these differently depending on what they have done. Include activities within and outside of medicine
- **Volunteering** – any voluntary work that you have done will be highly regarded as it shows motivation and commitment. You can arrange the information in a distinct section, or incorporate it into your work experience or responsibilities sections as long as you clearly show it as a voluntary activity and show the transferable skills
- **Additional Skills** – such as IT and languages. You should name the packages and/or languages and indicate your level of proficiency.
- **References** – It is usual to provide three references. Check with your medical school as to whom you should include, for specialty training applications there are usually clear guidelines about who should be included. Always get permission first. Make sure they haven't moved and provide their name, title, address, phone numbers and e-mail address

D. Skills

Clinical and transferable **skills** should be imbedded throughout your CV wherever you evidence activities. For example, “**managed** and **motivated** a small team of people.....” As your CV grows in length, you may choose to include a skills profile on the first page (a short evidenced list that focuses the reader on your main skill areas) or to produce a skills based CV (see Styles below). For applicants with lots of experience, a chronological CV might begin to sound repetitive. A skills based CV allows the writer to arrange information within relevant headings to avoid any overlap, and focus the reader on specific information.

E. Presentation

The appearance of your CV will influence how interested the reader is, and whether they can glean the key information that they are looking for:

- Put your information in reverse chronological order (most recent first)
- Use a minimum font size of 10 in a plain font style
- Limit the effects you use. Underlining can be untidy and distracting to the eye. For headings, try bold and capitals, and use bold to highlight information within your sections.
- You can use bullet points to break up information. Avoid long paragraphs or poorly headed sub-sections as this is hard for the reader to follow
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- Use the tab key, rather than the space bar, to get your alignment right and be consistent throughout

F. Styles

CVs can be formatted in a number of styles:

1. **Traditional** or **chronological** CV - probably the most common style for medical CVs, and includes the information outlined above, usually in the order it appears. It can be useful if you have relevant experience, but it is also the simplest format to produce and it is easy for the recipient to see what you have done over a period of time.
2. **Targeted** – to some extent, all CVs should be targeted for their purpose. This style is hard to define, but it is based on a candidate's ability to understand the requirements of a particular job and arrange their information in the most appropriate way.
3. **Skills-based** - focuses on the skills developed through a range of activities (not necessarily clinical). To highlight these, the information is arranged within subheadings relating to the main skill requirements of the job, usually outlined in the person specification. Although this format is used far less frequently for medical CVs, it can be a powerful way to highlight how the skills criteria for certain posts are met, especially for experienced Doctors or Consultants who may have lots of directly relevant experience that would appear repetitive if presented in the traditional style of CV. However, it can be complicated to organise all information in this kind of format without omitting vital data

G. Dos and Don'ts

Do

- If you are printing hard copies, use good quality white paper
- Get it checked – by a careers adviser, friend or colleague
- Pay attention to spelling, grammar and presentation – otherwise it will find its way to the bin
- Ensure the CV is in a format the reader can access if you e-mail it
- Use positive language that will enthuse the reader – they need to know you are interested and confident

Don't

- Use a CV unless asked. If you are asked for an application form, don't send a CV!
- Expect the reader to make assumptions. If you omit any information, they cannot give you credit – e.g. they will not know your class of degree unless you tell them
- Use the same CV for every application or make it sound too general. Maintain a standard copy and adapt it for each application

H. Useful Resources

- **Styles of CV** – look at www.prospects.ac.uk (use the search facility)
- There is further useful advice regarding CVs on www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk
- Preparing The Perfect Medical CV ISBN 9781-4453-8162-6

Leaflets in this series

1. Medical CVs – CPIS/1
2. Medical Portfolios – CPIS/2
3. Specialty Assessment Centres – CPIS/3
4. Working Abroad – CPIS/4

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