



Information for Trainee Solicitors on CV Preparation



PRODUCING A CV

The purpose of a CV is to grab a prospective employer's attention, interest them, and motivate them to invite you to an interview. A good CV goes beyond just listing job responsibilities. Ideally, it should include information on achievements you've had too and, where possible, an outline of any benefits that were enjoyed as a result.

When drafting your CV, remember it is more than just an introduction to a potential employer. It will most probably also guide much of what is discussed at interview.

Of key importance is to provide the kind of information that your targeted reader is likely to be interested in. Illustrate types of work that you have worked on and provide named examples where possible. This will facilitate the interview to flow better and you also have more chance of predicting, and therefore preparing for, interview questions.

Short, succinct bullet points are the best format for a CV. Don't write long sentences and bulky paragraphs. Clarity is essential - the reader will not spend the time trying to decipher the point you are trying to make.

Make sure that your CV contains your full career and academic history and that any chronological gaps, including years spent abroad, travelling, sabbaticals etc, are explained. Identify career highlights, real successes you have had and also what you have enjoyed.

Give thought to the interests section of your CV. Leaving it blank is a wasted opportunity for you to sell yourself and to give the interviewer the chance to ask you about what you do outside of work to identify whether you will fit into the team / business.

It is becoming increasingly important for law firms to recruit rounded individuals who they believe have the potential to be client relationship partners in the future. It is important you illustrate all your potential in this regard within your CV.

- Consider presenting your work experience ahead of educational & qualification details. Your experience is what employers are most interested in.
- If you have other legal work experience apart from your training contract feature this with adequate details.
- If you have had achievements in work, include details and, where possible, quantify any benefits your achievements delivered and include details of these.
- Do not include statements that cannot be substantiated at interview.
- Avoid jargon and non standard abbreviations.
- Do not use clichés and avoid the over-used claimed words found in so many CVs.
- Ensure your CV is carefully proof read, first by yourself and then by someone else, skilled at proofreading. Don't send your CV anywhere with errors on it.

Important Disclaimer – Please Note

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Items That Should Not Be In Your CV

- Salary Requirements
- Leaving Cert / Junior Cert subjects and marks
- Political affiliations, membership of bodies not related to your career etc.
- Personal details such as age, marital status, nationality and health status.

Profile / Summary Section

Profiles or summary sections are usually placed just under name and contact details and are often highlighted in various ways - such as with a text box. The profile / summary draws the reader in and encourages them to read further.

As covering letters become less relevant, the importance of a profile / summary section has grown. For instance, recruiters generally pass on CVs, but not covering letters to employers. Within these circumstances, the profile / summary section can introduce the reader to the CV, in the same way that covering letters used to.

The profile / summary can also be used very effectively to clearly link an application to a particular type of job, for example, 'Solicitor with family law experience seeking role in this area'. The profile / summary can also be used to target particular concerns or needs of an employer, for example, 'Go-getter who enjoys new business development'.

The profile / summary is of significant importance to 'about to' and recently qualified solicitors. You have a particular need to creatively differentiate yourself from other 'about to' and recently qualified and the profile / summary is very useful at this.

A good profile summarises what you have achieved and / or what you are looking for in the most succinct way possible. If it is running over several lines, it is too long. Avoid subjective descriptions too, such as 'excellent communication skills' and clichés such as 'capable of working on own or as part of a team'.

For example, the following profile / summary, compromises rather than benefits the CV it was incorporated into:

An experienced and results orientated professional. A decisive and persuasive leader with excellent communication skills and a proven ability to effectively manage complex change projects through to completion. Motivated to work to full potential, either on my own or as part of a team.

SYLVIA ANYONE - Curriculum Vitae

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SUMMARY

Solicitor who trained in large law firm with a wide range of experience in banking and financial services, debt collection, commercial property and company law.

EDUCATION

- April 2011 PPC II Completed - Qualified as a solicitor with Law Society of Ireland
- 2003-2007 Trinity College Dublin - BCL - 2.1 Honours
Awarded scholarship in University of Florida in 2003/2004 as part of BCL.
- To 2003 Oatlands CBS Secondary School, Mount Merrion, Dublin

CAREER

Sept 2008 – May 2011 Trainee Solicitor, Haughey O'Brien Solicitors, Dublin

Haughey O'Brien is Ireland's largest law firm and employed 800 people when I joined. Trainees moved between different areas of work and are provided with lots of challenge.

Banking and Financial Services

- Involved in wide ranging commercial transactions acting on behalf of both financial institutions and borrowers.
- Drafted mortgage debentures, board minutes, corporate certificates, company resolutions.
- Reviewed and drafted opinion on syndicated loan agreements, mortgages and guarantees.
- Drafted C1 and G1 forms, amended memorandum & articles of association of companies.
- Reviewed section 60 documentation & representations & warranties in loan agreements.
- Drafted security reports for financial institutions.

Civil Litigation

- Gained experience across a broad range of sectors and types of work.
- Drafted documentation for lodgements in High Court proceedings.
- Organised and prepared documents for both large and small scale discovery.
- Attended at initial consultations with clients and prepared briefs for counsel for matters to be heard at District, Circuit and High Courts including the Commercial Court.
- Advised clients from Ireland and abroad in relation to debt collection.

Commercial Property

- Drafted commercial and residential leases, raised and replied to pre lease enquiries, attended at closings and dealt with all stamping and registration requirements.
- Advised clients on all aspects of conveyancing transactions including purchase and sale of commercial property, mortgages, leases and private residential letting agreements.

SYLVIA ANYONE - Curriculum Vitae continued

Oct 2007 – Feb 2008 Debt Collector, Black Horse Services, Dublin 1

Black Horse Services is a specialist debt recovery service that operates internationally and provides subcontract support to banks and consumer debt businesses.

- Reviewed leasing and hire purchase files with a view to retrieving debt.
- Calculated debt balances.
- Reconstructed and assessed files for debt collection litigation.
- Prepared termination and repossession notices.

June 2006 – Aug 2006 Florida City Attorney's Office, U.S.A.

Gained experience of USA law in this posting and others below as part of scholarship I was awarded during my third year in college. I gained extensive family law experience in this role.

- Represented Florida City social workers in relation to cases before the Children in Need of Protection and Services Court, which dealt with abuse and neglect of children.
- Researched specific areas of family state law in Florida.
- Reviewed cases, interviewed clients and prepared files for court.
- Negotiated with public defenders in relation to rehabilitation, visitation and supervision rights for their clients and eventual reunification of their clients with their children.

Jan 2006 – April 2006 Federal District Court of Florida, U.S.A.

Selected to work as a judicial extern in the Federal District Court of Florida. Responsibilities ranged from review of civil and criminal cases to preparation and presentation of briefs.

Sept 2005 – May 2006 University of Florida Law Library, U.S.A.

This was the initial work experience assignment during my scholarship and I was involved in legal research and general administration work in this very substantial library.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND INTERESTS

- Free Legal Advice Centre (Trinity): committee member involved in organising fellow law students to meet weekly in order to advise university students regarding legal issues.
- Involved in organisation of collections for and raising awareness of different charities including Simon, Irish Cancer Society, Chernobyl Children's Project and Law Day.
- Compete in triathlons and in hill climbing events during the summer months.
- Keen interest in basketball and have played at junior and senior club level.
- Enjoy reading and learning new languages. I have conversational Spanish and French.

Power Words

The use of action words / power verbs, are very effective in presenting your skills and experience. Using these words at the start of each bullet point under the details of your employment will work towards enthusing the reader.

The words you use will depend upon your experience. For example, a candidate applying for a managerial position will want to make use of words such as "oversaw, developed, improved and reduced", whereas someone looking for a more creative role will want to use words such as "designed, compiled and created".

Power verbs to accentuate organisational skills:

Arranged	Categorised	Collected	Compiled
Corrected	Distributed	Filed	Incorporated
Logged	Maintained	Monitored	Observed
Ordered	Organised	Prepared	Recorded
Registered	Reserved	Responded	Reviewed
Scheduled	Screened	Supplied	Updated

Power verbs used to highlight achievements:

Achieved	Built	Created	Developed
Established	Expanded	Founded	Identified
Implemented	Increased	Initiated	Instigated
Launched	Led	Managed	Reduced
Solved	Streamlined	Supervised	Supported

Other power verbs:

Administered	Advised	Analysed	Approved
Completed	Conducted	Controlled	Coordinated
Defined	Delivered	Demonstrated	Designed
Instructed	Introduced	Maintained	Negotiated
Oversaw	Performed	Planned	Presented

Common Mistakes in CV Writing

Spelling mistakes: Circa 50% of CVs contain spelling errors. This easy mistake will make you seem careless and could also distract the reader's attention from the content.

Jargon: Using jargon and acronyms risks having your CV not understood.

Qualifications: A common mistake is to over detail subjects and marks gained, right back.

Employment: There is no need to provide the address of employers. All you need is the company name, your job title and the dates you started and finished.

Hobbies: Everyone likes 'reading, listening to music, keeping fit and socialising with friends'. Try coming up with something that portrays you as more interesting.

CV Check List

Indicate with a '√' or an 'x' how your CV rates against each of the questions below

<u>Mark</u>	<u>Appearance</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Is it no more than two pages?▪ Are the margins, headers and footers all close to standard size?▪ Is it neatly laid out?▪ Is a standard style used throughout the document?▪ Is the font size large enough and is there sufficient white space?
	<p><u>Content</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Is the CV format used the best one given your circumstances?▪ Are details provided focused enough on achievements?▪ Are verbs used in the 'active' tense?▪ Does content include achievements outside work?▪ Are there any 'gaps' which might cause the interviewer concern?▪ Have you avoided splitting up a block of content with a page break?
	<p><u>Clarity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Are all spellings, grammar and syntax correct?▪ Is it jargon free?▪ Are words used all easy to understand?▪ Is the profile clearly and succinctly stated?▪ Are contact details (address, telephone number) easy to see?▪ Is there a logical flow to the document?▪ Has your CV been carefully proofread by at least 2 people?

WHEN A DIFFERENT KIND OF CV IS REQUIRED

Planning a significant change in career direction often involves being perceived as 'overqualified' for the job you're interested in. Being overqualified often presents more problems than people expect. Employers and recruiters can have suspicions as to why you're interested in the position and it can be easier and safer to just hire someone who more closely fits the job description.

In these circumstances, your CVs should be constructed to take focus away from your qualifications and try to accentuate the reasons behind your interest in the position being applied for. This can be done in a number of ways:

- Tone down job titles / achievements / keywords. If your CV is full of law related matters, tone this down so that details irrelevant to the job being applied for do not crowd out other more relevant matters.
- Use a CV format that takes the focus away from qualifications (maybe including them lower down in the CV) and highlight relevant skills and experience instead.
- Demonstrate in any way possible that your skills are related to the company's growth plans and which you're looking to develop in the job applied for.
- Accentuate your team working skills. Doing so will demonstrate the success of the team (and the company) is of more importance than your own concerns.
- Demonstrate enthusiasm for the job applied for. Look at presenting previous responsibilities and achievements in a way that is relevant to this role.

Drafting a Functional CV

In this format the main information is presented in terms of job functions rather than in chronological order. It is not as popular with recruiters as it can suggest there may be hidden gaps in employment. It is very useful however if you want to place emphasis on skills / strengths that you have that are relevant to a specific job / sector.

Reasons for using a functional CV include:

- If you are aiming to sell your skills to target specific competencies.
- If you do not have a consistent employment history.
- You are / have recently changed careers.
- You have experience but it is not related to the position you are interested in.

The functional format enables the writer to combine experience gained in several jobs under one heading, (e.g. 'sales experience' 'training provision' etc.). This is useful where someone has held several different posts within a short period of time. The functional format is also useful for someone who has recently held jobs that are less relevant to what they are now seeking.

The functional format is useful for someone to use who has gained experience in several different jobs or sectors, and who is seeking an employer who has an open / flexible approach.

The main problem with this format is that it is not always well received because it looks different to the conventional, chronological CV. Sometimes the finished product can look lightweight and plotting the career path of the applicant can be difficult.

BARNEY EVERYONE

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FUNCTIONAL
FORMAT

Having recently completed Psychology studies I am seeking a challenging role in working with disadvantaged young people. Considerable experience with youth work, I am also a solicitor with knowledge of family law and the judicial system.

KEY SKILLS

- Managing and administering youth and community projects and resources.
- Assessing the needs of young people, and planning and delivering programmes related to, e.g. health, fitness, smoking, drugs, relationships and bullying.
- Running arts-based activities, community/environmental projects, residential activities, outdoor education and sporting activities.
- Befriending and supporting individuals in various settings.
- Mentoring and counselling individuals to encourage social inclusion.
- Recruiting and training volunteers.
- Undertaking administrative tasks, verifying information and responding to queries.
- Meeting, liaising and networking with police, educational establishments, social services, to address issues and promote opportunities for young people.
- Working with parents and community groups to win support for improved provision and acting as an advocate for young people's interests.
- Identifying and pursuing sources of funding for projects to improve services and/or resources for young people.
- Drawing up business plans, writing reports and making formal presentations to funding bodies.

SKILLS RELATED TO TRAINING AS SOLICITOR

- Advised clients on family law and on wide ranging criminal law matter.
- Gained experience across a broad range of sectors and types of work.
- Drafted documentation for lodgements in High Court proceedings.
- Organised and prepared documents for both large and small scale discovery.
- Consulted with medical experts in respect of finalising their reports.
- Liaised with counsel at motions; supported clients at counsel meetings.
- Attended at initial consultations with clients and prepared briefs for counsel for matters to be heard at District, Circuit and High Courts.

EDUCATION & QUALIFICATIONS

2006	BSc (Hons) Psychology 1st Class Honours	Open University
1999	Qualified as a Solicitor	Law Society of Ireland
1995	BCL Law Degree 2.1 Honours	University College Dublin