



# MIND THE GAP: CREATE A CV THAT WORKS

How to create a CV that will help you  
return to work successfully

MAKINGWORKWORK.SCOT

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# INTRODUCTION

Scrolling through job ads and finding one to apply for is one thing, but actually writing the application is a different one. Women returners often worry about how to write an up-to-date CV in general, not to mention how to address their career gaps. The Making Work Work – for Women Returners team at The Challenges Group has helped around 100 women return to work.

Here are our top tips on where to start and how to create a cracking CV that will get the attention of recruiters and hiring managers for all the right reasons.



# BEFORE APPLYING

Are you sure this is the right job for you? Do you really want to apply for this role, in this organisation? Is the job a good fit for you in terms of both the skills and knowledge you can offer and the stretch you may need as well as the terms, such as location, hours, salary? Does this organisation and the work they do spark your interest?

Before you spend your time producing large numbers of applications, make sure you do your homework first. Spend some time researching what it is like to work at an organisation you want to apply to. Make yourself a checklist of your needs. Think about what is negotiable and what is not. Do they typically offer the working pattern you need? Would there be progression opportunities (if this is a priority for you)? What about training? Do their values seem to align with yours? Do you feel you will be supported and encouraged to be you and to develop professionally? Check them out on review sites such as Glassdoor, or see if someone in your extended network already works there.

Sending a handful of thought-through and well-written, bespoke applications for certain roles and organisations of interest to you and where you know you could be a good fit because you have done your research, will be time and effort well spent. Your passion and interest will shine through. Sending out piles of standard applications for jobs that you are only vaguely interested in and where you aren't even sure will be a good fit for you (or vice versa) usually only leads to as many standard rejections, or sometimes no response at all, which is not only time-consuming, but also frustrating and confidence-destroying.



# WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A CV?

Your CV needs to get you to the next stage, usually the interview - nothing else. It is a piece of communication with an aim, which is to show the recruiter/recruiting manager that you have the right skills for the advertised role. Think about your audience – your CV needs to appeal to the reader so that they are interested to know more.

The CV is only one part of the application; see it as a map showing what you have to offer. In addition, you should send a cover letter to lead the reader on a journey through your career history. Your cover letter should highlight certain aspects in your career which are relevant to the role and brings you, the person behind the facts listed on the CV, to life.

## EACH AND EVERY CV IS DIFFERENT!

Every job is different and so are the job specifications provided with the job ads. Your CV needs to be tailored for every single job application to show the recruiter that you are the right candidate, providing the skills and experience necessary for this particular job. Generic CVs only listing the applicant's work history will be sorted out and rejected first. Don't make the reader hunt for the information they are seeking – make it clear and obvious how you are a great candidate for the job. Make sure your relevant skills, experience and achievements shine through.





## THE DESIGN AND FORMAT OF YOUR CV

There are a lot of CV templates available online, so have a look at what others do and take some inspiration on layout and format options for your CV. But in the end, it is the content that counts and not the design: even the best-looking CV won't get you to the interview stage if you are not able to show your skills.

On the next page we've included some tips to get started.

- Use the full width of the page for your CV.
- Use a minimum font size of 11 so the recruiter can read it.
- Keep your CV to 2 pages max.
- Add your contact details at the top; your date of birth and your photo are not necessary.
- If you switch to a new role or into a new sector, or had a longer career break, create a skills-based CV which highlights your skills and achievements before listing your work history.
- If you are applying for a creative role, you may feel the need to use a more complex format. Otherwise, a clear layout with paragraphs and section headings in bold will be fine.
- Always send your CV as a PDF and check the formatting before you hit send.

## BE FACTUAL ABOUT YOUR CAREER BREAK – AND MOVE ON!

There is no need to be apologetic for your career break, to explain why you had one, or what you did during the time you were out of employment – unless it is relevant for the role or job you apply for, e.g. further education or volunteering which is dependent on you being unemployed.

## SHOW, DON'T TELL – AND BE SPECIFIC

Be specific about your skills and achievements and the impact you had in your last role. Just stating you were a programme manager responsible for a conference series, doesn't show the recruiter that you used your excellent management skills to plan and execute X sell-out conferences with Y participants increasing the annual income by Z%.

Use the STAR method to demonstrate how you developed and used your skills relevant for the role: describe a Situation or a problem that needed solved, the Task you were assigned, state the Action/approach you took and the Result/impact your action had.

## A FINAL PRACTICAL TIP

Create and keep a master CV which contains your full work history, listing all your transferable skills and achievements, with examples and measurable impact. Use this as a bank of information which you can copy and paste into new versions of your CV or applications in other formats. This way, you don't have to remember all the detail from scratch each time you apply. Remember, you can move less relevant work experience further down the page, or highlight certain skills, summarise them in bullet-points, or leave them off entirely.

# ABOUT MAKING WORK WORK

Making Work Work – for Women Returners is an award-winning online, peer-led skills refresher programme to support women in Scotland looking to step back into the workplace who face difficulties in finding work that fits with all the commitments and fun of life following a career break (e.g. for maternity, caring, health issues/disability, redundancy, relocation or other reasons).

51% of our participants left our six-week Making Work Work programme with a CV they were happy to send out anytime and a further 41% had a reasonably up-to-date CV which only needed a bit of work (which, of course, we would advise for each and every application!) While the remaining 8% still had an old CV, they had an idea how to update it.

45% of our participants found employment or started their own business or freelance work within 3 months of finishing their training, a further 20% were actively applying for roles, had started further training or were volunteering to gain more experience.

For more information about Making Work Work please follow this link.  
<https://www.makingworkwork.scot/>

For support on flexible working join the Flexible Working Scotland Facebook group:  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/flexibleworkingscotland>

# LOOKING TO RETURN TO WORK AFTER A CAREER BREAK?



***JOIN US FOR MAKING WORK WORK!***

**Making Work Work - for Women Returners** is a FREE, FULLY FUNDED, ONLINE GROUP PROGRAMME running throughout the year.

The programme supports women looking to step back into the workplace and who face difficulties in finding work that fits with all the commitments and fun of life following a career break.

**FOR MORE INFO AND TO APPLY VISIT:**

***MakingWorkWork.scot***