

Media careers hints & tips

Writing a CV for performers

Whatever your area of performance you will need a CV to promote yourself. Remember, a CV is your introduction to a potential employer; it is an important marketing document. It should be clear, concise and show your experience. This is almost certainly the first chance you have to make an impression, so make sure you present yourself well.

You will probably need more than one CV depending on the recipient – casting director, agent etc. Tailor it to the individual or at least to the type of employer you are approaching:

- DO write it with the agent/casting director in mind.
- DO use only the most relevant information about your career, training and skills. For instance, being good at gardening is probably not relevant unless you are applying for a horticultural programme. Likewise, if you have been employed for a time in another field other than performance, that job may not be relevant and could be misleading to the reader.
- DO be truthful.
- DON'T worry about not having enough to put on your CV. Employers are professional CV readers and are looking for quality not quantity.

If you have a long list of roles to include, consider having one CV for your film and TV roles and another for your theatre roles. If you have more than one CV available you can indicate this, eg. Theatre CV also available on request. Bear in mind that most agents and casting directors like to see flexibility as well as specialisms.

A CV is your
introduction
to a potential
employer

Thorough
research is
essential



Helpline Numbers:

England & Northern Ireland 08080 300 900 | Scotland 0808 100 8094 | Wales 0800 0121815

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Keep it short

Use one side of A4 only and use the space wisely. Take some time to plan it out to make sure it looks professional.

- DO type on good quality white paper.
- DO check the spelling, grammar and punctuation (don't just rely on spell check!).
- DO leave plenty of white space on the page - it makes it easier to read.
- DON'T use more than one font - Arial or Times New Roman 12 font is a safe bet.
- DON'T overdo capitals, italics, etc. Be consistent. If in doubt, leave it out.

Employers will be looking for the following information:

- Physical attributes;
- Whether or not you are an Equity member (for safety reasons please do not put your member number on your CV);
- Your Spotlight number, if you have one;
- What work you have done;
- Who you have worked for who has industry credibility;
- Where you can be contacted;
- If you are a recent graduate, where you have trained (see layout notes).

Your CV has to work on 4 different levels:

- When the employer/agent receives it – a good point to remember when you are starting out is these professional CV readers are looking for quality not quantity, so don't worry about not having enough information;
- On shortlist selection;
- When you get the interview;
- When it's held on file for later referral – for those last minute castings or just before the employer advertises for a part.

Your CV should always be sent with a covering letter

- DO remember that this is a business that is largely about people, so it should be addressed to the right person. Research this thoroughly beforehand. Look in the Actors' Yearbook, or telephone the agency to see who your letter should be addressed to.
- DO consider breaking your covering letter down into three 'acts.' Act one: who you are and what you've done; Act two: what you can offer that company/agent; Act three: supporting evidence (showreel, CV headshots, website etc), and then close.
- DON'T photocopy standard letters and hand write the names in afterwards – this looks shoddy.
- DON'T repeat information on your CV, but make sure the experience on your CV supports your covering letter. Your letter should be brief and to the point.
- AVOID gimmicks and don't try to be funny – this rarely works, eg. don't send your last Rolo. This isn't original and agents/ employers can buy their own sweets.

Your CV must also be accompanied by a photograph. It must be:

- Current, look like you and not be misleading, ie. not overly glamorous (if you can't look like this at 9am, it's the wrong photo);
- In black and white (although presenters' photographs are normally in colour);
- 10" x 8" (254mm x 203mm);
- Clear and in focus.

Your photograph should emphasise your face, so keep your clothing neutral. Take both dark and light clothing along with you for the photo session. Most performers will only need a headshot. Some artists, such as dancers and presenters, will also need full or mid length shots (referred to as 'body shots').

If you decide to put a small repro photo on your CV it **MUST** be accompanied by a 10" x 8".

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Performers' headshots are 10" x 8" as this is the closest size to real life, so employers can get a good impression of what you look like up close. Casting directors and agents prefer neutral headshots because it makes it easier for them to project whatever character they are looking for: lover, parent, Barrister, Doctor etc. If the photograph is too posed it makes it difficult to interpret past that 'pose'.

When looking for a photographer, ask friends and colleagues for recommendations or look through the Actors' Yearbook, Contacts or Spotlight for names of photographers on pictures you like.

If you want your photos returned, enclose a large enough stamped addressed envelope (SAE) with the correct postage.

Check the Actors' Yearbook for up to date information of what form to send your information in, eg. some agencies will not open e-mails, some only want headshots after an initial letter.

Layout notes

Order of information is important. At the top of your CV have your professional name in large bold lettering, followed by your primary contact details, ie yours or your agent's.

Don't write Curriculum Vitae – it's obvious what the document is.

- **Physical details**
eg. Height, hair and eye colour, measurements/size/build
- **Playing age**
eg. 20-35, 50-65 (this information is optional)
- **Voice type** (if applicable)
eg. Soprano, Tenor or voice range
- **Spotlight number**
Indicate whether or not you are an Equity member/student member
- **Professional website address**
- **Where you trained**
For graduates of three or more years this information can be omitted or placed at the bottom of the CV (see template overleaf).

Where you've recently trained and/or specific professional training is likely to be of direct interest to the employer/agent/casting director because they probably know the institution you attended and to what level you have been trained at. Training and relevant qualifications should come after your experience **only if you graduated less than three years ago.**

It is also useful to mention any awards or relevant competitions that you have won or participated in.

- **Experience**
Start with your most recent relevant work. Include the title, role, and where performed/company, name of the Director and/or Choreographer if you are a dancer, and, if applicable, the Musical Director.
Split this section by medium, eg. Theatre; TV and Film; Concerts; Radio, etc. Start with the area which is most relevant to the person you are sending your CV to.
- **Styles**
Singers/dancers should include styles of work; eg. pop, classical, jazz, gospel etc.
- **Skills**
List your key skills, starting with performance skills and then other skills, eg. musical instruments, sight reading, combat abilities, swimming, driving, accents, etc. Be honest, and make sure that the skills you are including are up to date. For example, don't include horse riding unless you are very experienced and confident you can ride any horse that is put in front of you!

Overleaf is a suggested template for your CV. These notes are intended as a guide, not as fixed rules.

Be honest and make sure the skills you include are up to date

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Suggested template for your CV

NAME

Agent/contact details

Height

Spotlight details

Hair

Equity Member

Eyes

Website

Film and Television

Date	Production	Role	Director	Company
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Theatre

Date	Production	Role	Director	Company
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Radio

Date	Production	Role	Director	Company
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Training

Styles

Skills

Also available in large print, Braille, audiotape and PC formatted disc formats.

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