



Your CV is your personal advertisement. Together with a covering letter, it gives you an opportunity to sell yourself to and impress a potential employer and/or its recruitment consultant.

"Most employers take no longer than 15 seconds to read your entire resume" - Cool Careers for Dummies (IDG Books, 1998)

Always remember that the employer may have another 50 CVs in the in-tray. Lots of CVs don't even get read because they are too long, too boring and badly laid out. You need to make your CV stand out from that pile. Do this by making it easy to read and easy to find out what you are.

The Golden Rules for your CV:

1. Start with a SUMMARY
2. Keep it SHORT (and don't use tables or boxes)
3. Keep it FACTUAL
4. Keep it LOGICAL and include clear headings for the following sections:-
 - Employment History
 - Education History or Qualifications
 - Languages - state whether basic, proficient or fluent
 - Computer literacy
 - Professional memberships and offices held
 - References
5. Make NO spelling mistakes or grammatical errors

Start with a Summary

Always include a short factual summary at the very beginning. This grabs the reader's attention within the first 10 seconds of reading your CV. Don't be tempted to mention subjective points such as "good team player" or "enthusiastic".

Some examples:-

A British solicitor and Master Mariner with command experience. Presently employed by a leading City law firm as an assistant solicitor handling mainly admiralty work and some charterparty cases, I was previously at sea gaining experience of VLCCs, product tankers, ro-ros, reefers and chemical tankers (command). Speak fluent German.

A Malaysian graduate (2:1) in Maritime Business and Law, with 18 months experience in dry bulk operations following graduation and periods of vacation experience totaling 4 months with a tanker broker. Based UK, with a UK certificate of right of abode and speak fluent Malay and Mandarin.

A British Chartering Director with 15 years' high quality shipping experience, beginning with 4 years as a shipbroker with a medium-sized shipbroking house in the London dry bulk and general market, followed by 6 years in Hong Kong and Australia, initially fixing a fleet of handysize and panamax geared bulkers for a leading shipmanagement company and then chartering in and operating tonnage for a major steels principal. Presently a board director and running a regional office and fleet for a major dry bulk shipowner. Good negotiator, well connected and with an excellent record of achieving profit.

Keep it short

Your CV should be no more than 3 pages in length - 2 if possible. You may be desperate to include every detail, but this will take attention away from important information.

Just lay out your text nicely and neatly. Don't use formatted boxes or tables - many employers have HR software that stores CV in plain text format. If you use tables, the text is stored in the wrong order!

After the factual summary, list your personal details
e.g. John Smith, British, Married

Include your address, telephone number and contact details. If your e-mail can be read by colleagues at work, then do not include it. If you are a student, state your permanent address.

Your employment history should be in reverse chronological order, i.e. the most recent job first. Use a clear bold heading, e.g.

1989-1993 Insurance Manager, XYZ Shipping Company SA, Geneva

Don't forget that when applying for a job in shipping, an employer will know what various standard shipping jobs entail. Therefore, do not explain in detail what a second officer or second engineer does.

By all means describe what the company does, but don't overdo it and don't forget to describe (a) what you do and (b) whether you were any good at it!

State the title of the position you held, relevant information such as vessel types involved, categories of work carried out, responsibilities, achievements (quantify if possible such as into financial terms, improvements in safety figures or sales figures) and any additional experience or projects that are not usual for the job.

If you are or were a seafarer, list both the level of certificate you hold and the job title you have held. It is confusing if you just state that you hold a Class 1 Deck Certificate of Competency as we cannot tell what rank you have achieved, i.e. have you sailed as Master?

Do not give detailed descriptions of jobs held 20-30 years ago.

Do not repeat yourself if several jobs held have included similar responsibilities.

Your education history should also be in reverse chronological order. The younger you are or the more recently you attained your qualifications, the more important it is to list the grades you achieved.

Keep it factual

Don't tell us you are hard-working, enthusiastic, a team-player, ambitious, etc. Let the facts, achievements (and references) speak for themselves. By all means refer briefly to statements made in employment appraisals. An example:-

Jan 1983 - June 1994

Senior Operations Manager, J.S. Smith Shipping Ltd.

A gradual progression through the organisation from operations assistant to operations manager (since 1991), handling a full range of operations duties, including claims (insurance and demurrage / charterparty problems), instructions to vessels, bunkering, scheduling, appointment of agents and management of a team of 7 people, with responsibility for hiring my own staff. The department is responsible for a fleet of 6 chemical tankers and 9 bulk carriers (20-45,000 dwt). Referred to as "unflappable" in my last annual appraisal and received a performance bonus based upon my department's cost savings, improvement in debtor days and vessel turnaround times.

Global Shipping Recruitment

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- Sales & Marketing
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- Consultancy
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