



Galway Rural Development

**Tips and Advice on
Seeking
Employment**

Guidance and Advice on CV preparation, Job Interview
Skills and Job searching

INTRODUCTION

Galway Rural Development has produced this booklet as part of the SICAP Programme. It provides tips and guidance on putting together your Curriculum Vitae (CV) preparing for job interviews and job searching. This booklet is a guide only and you may need to seek further information from other sources referred to in the following pages.

For more information or guidance on any of the topics, please contact one of our Development Officers at your local GRD office. We are here to support you.

Galway Rural Development cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies within.



Rialtas na hÉireann
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Tips and Guidance: CV Dos and Don'ts

The order of your CV can vary, but leading expert Sinead English says: **“Lead with your best cards, get to the good stuff first.”** Put the most relevant information at the beginning of your CV; don't wait until the end of page two to highlight your relevant key skills and competencies.

(Sinead English, CV & Interview 101)

Remember:

- A CV is what differentiates you from others.
- A CV is an opportunity to sell yourself to the employer.
- It's your future! Put the appropriate time and effort into preparing and updating your CV.

General Guidance
Do
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep it simple.• Write it once and then rewrite it: a first draft will help you refine your CV.• Make it clearly presentable and easy to read.• Keep it relevant. It should be about 2 pages if possible.• Proofreading is important! Check it and check it again. If you can, ask someone else to proofread it as well.• Remember to mention key skills that are relevant to job description.
Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't use photos, colour paper, or fancy fonts.• Don't go over two pages unless you are in a medical or academic profession.• Don't lie. You have to expand on your CV in an interview and you may get caught.

Personal Information and Profile/Summary

Do

- Make sure it's relevant to the job description. Keep it short and to the point, highlighting key skills required. Much like a cover letter, it's the first part of CV that an employer reads, so highlight how you can add value to employer.
- Use bullet points.
- You can change your profile summary to suit different jobs as you apply for them.

Don't

- Don't include personal details. Dates of birth and children's details aren't needed.

Key Skills and Expertise

Do

- List the key skills outlined in the job description. Make sure to use the same key words; your CV could be scanned by a computer system looking for specific terms.
- This section can appear either at the start or the end of the CV.

Education and Training

Do

- Write this section in reverse-chronological order. This means you start with your most recent course and work backwards. Keep it relevant.
- Use bullet points.
- Keep it positive. Highlight achievements in your education, and note any current professional development.

Don't

- Don't omit dates. Detail the months and years you were in education and training.

Work, Career, or Professional Experience

Do

- Your Employment History section should be in reverse-chronological order. Start with your most recent job and work backwards.
- Use bullet points. Keep your sentences short and do not write long paragraphs.
- Be positive. Highlight employment achievements. Name figures, organisations, and target groups you have worked with to show evidence of your success.
- Highlight skills relevant to the job description and back them up with an example.
- Keep your employment history up to date.
- Give detail on your previous employer and link to their website.

Don't

- Don't use abbreviations and initials. Use company names when possible.
- Do not include your current salary or expected salary.
- Don't leave any gaps in your career. If you do have big gaps in your employment history, read the section "Tips and Guidance: Filling Gaps in Your CV."
- Don't omit dates. Detail what months and years you were in employment.

Interests and Achievements

Do

- Make some of your hobbies and interests relevant to job description. Show how even in your personal time you are keeping your skills active.
- This is another opportunity to promote your skills to employer, and it will help them remember you!

Don't

- Don't exaggerate the truth to sound impressive. If you say you are, for example, a champion rower and you're not, this may be brought up in the interview. You never know what your potential employer's interests are!

References

Do

- Say you have excellent references available on request.

Don't

- But don't list references unless specifically asked.

Tips for Constructing a Good Personal Profile Summary or Statement

“Think of the summary as a snap shot of your skills, accomplishments, and knowledge” (careereducation.columbia.edu).

A Summary profile/ statement is a professional introduction that you add to the top of your CV to highlight your skills and experiences. The summary can help employers quickly learn whether you have the skills and background they require (indeed.com/career-advice).

By following this easy step by step method you can construct a comprehensive Personal Profile in a systematic manner that showcases your relevant skills, competencies, and valuable experiences, and matches the job description. State:

- **Who you are,**
- **The skills you offer,**
- **The value you can add to the employer.**

You can amend this summary easily when applying for different jobs. Furthermore, you won't forget the important stuff!!

Example:

- **Who you are:** "An experienced secretary, keen to return to an office administrator role following a short career break to raise a family."
- **Skills you offer:** "Combines extensive industry expertise with recent completion of a course in Payroll and Accounts."
- **Value you can add:** "Previously delivered significant cost reductions by renegotiating office supplier contracts and minimising wastage. Now aiming to deliver similar results in a challenging new role."

(CV and Interview Workshop presentation and Pack, GRD)

Profile Summary Writing Tips

- Mention how many years' experience you have, its relevance to the job and the number of years you have worked in the area.
- Profile Summaries are usually four sentences long and no more than six.
- If you use bullet points in the summary, use a maximum of 3 to 4 bullet points. A bullet point should be no more than 2 lines (English, 2019).
- Summarise your relevance to the role. You must keep the summary relevant to the job you are applying for.
- Back up statements with supporting evidence. This will show an employer what you can do for them and the benefit of employing you.
- Depending on where you are in your career, put your strongest cards first .Leading expert Sinead English highlights this by using the following examples:
 - If you are newly qualified in your field mention your education, work experience, and the skills you demonstrated.
 - If you have changed careers mention how you have reskilled in this area and the training and education you have obtained.
 - If you have years of experience mention the key words/skills relevant to the job description, and show you have them with examples.
- Avoid CV clichés. These include phrases like "works well independently", "a great team player", "a hard worker", "a fast learner", "strong attention to detail", and so on.

Remember, you want to tell them:

- **Who you are,**
- **The skills you offer,**
- **The value you can add to the employer.**

Tips and Guidance: Filling in Gaps on Your CV

Why is it important to fill in gaps on your CV?

- It shows and highlights how you used or are currently using your skills and competencies.
- It describes how you kept busy by highlighting what you were doing and how you used or are currently using your skills and learning new ones!
- If you leave a gap in your CV the employer may question or even make assumptions about what you were doing during this time: so explain! Tell them what you were doing and what skills you obtained.

How can you fill these gaps?

Gaps can be filled with unpaid work as well as with paid work. Here are some examples of how you can eliminate gaps in your CV:

- Casual Labour such as helping family and friends.
- Support work such as caring for a family member.
- Volunteering.
- Training and upskilling.
- Job searching and networking.
- Travelling.

Casual Labour

Including casual labour shows the employer you're actively using your skills.

Do

- You can mention working on the family farm, and time spent actively supporting the family business.
- If you are a carpenter, electrician, IT technician, or a similar trade profession, highlight how you used your skills during this gap.
- Any other business support. If you were self-employed for a period of time explain what you did.

Support and Caring Work

Support and caring work shows the employer you have strong multitasking skills.

Do

- If you took a career break to care for family or to be a parent mention the years you took this time.
- If you're applying for a carer position and have cared for a family member you can talk about the tasks you performed as long as they're relevant to the role.
- If you were doing or had previously done a similar job before, say that you have actively enhanced your skills and knowledge during this time.

Don't

- Don't give too many details explaining or justifying the amount of work you did as a parent or carer if it's not relevant.

Volunteering

Like casual labour, volunteering shows the employer you're actively using your skills.

Do

- Include any unpaid work. This is work experience as well so include it in your CV.
- Name relevant skills that you maintained or enhanced. Back all skills up with an example. This can also be included in the work experience section.
- Mention internships and work placements completed.
- Name practical experience to highlight key skills: e.g. Leadership and Organisational skills: setting up a local committee to organise the establishment of a Men's Shed in my area.

Don't

- Don't be vague. Nameless figures and undefined success makes your skills sound unconvincing to the employer.

Training and Upskilling

This shows the employer that you are committed to further upskilling and training. It shows an aptitude for online training as you have expanded your knowledge through virtual training and improved your technological skills.

Do

- Include this in the Education Section of your CV as well.
- Include Online Training and all courses during this gap - both short and long.
- Mention if you have participated in online webinars to further advance your knowledge on a particular topic. Name the webinars if they are relevant.
- Mention any research projects undertaken.
- Mention time spent studying abroad.
- You can avail of the free online courses available through GRD and other online training institutions during this time. Contact GRD for more info.

Don't

- Don't use months if it's a big gap. Use years instead.

Travelling

Travelling can highlight key skills like planning, organising, and researching. It shows the employer that you are determined, eager to complete tasks, and work well in a team.

Do

- Highlight what you did when travelling and mention how, during this amazing experience, you maintained your key skills and learned new ones.
- If you volunteered while travelling, mention how you used particular skills to support the charity or organisation you were working with.
- Make sure all skills mentioned are relevant to job you are applying for!

Don't

- Don't add details of the route you took or any other irrelevant information.

Job Searching and Networking

Networking displays an interest in enhancing your social connections and knowledge within your profession.

Do

- If this comprises a small gap in your work history, you can simply say you were searching for employment.
- You could describe this time as a period of training and upskilling instead.
- You can also say that you were networking with potential employers or professionals via LinkedIn, networking events, and webinars.

Don't

- Don't describe this period as job searching or networking if the gap is large. Your employer may wonder why you couldn't get a job.

Remember: When you name a skill, back it up with an example!

This will make your story more interesting and more convincing for the employer!
Make sure the skill you are naming is relevant to the job description outlined by employer.

Tips and Guidance: Cover Letters

Cover letters explain why you want the job and what makes you the right person for it.

Paragraphs	Tips
Opening Paragraph	
<p>1. Say which position you are applying for and where you saw the position advertised.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mention the company's name throughout - you want to join their team after all! • Remember to watch your spelling.
Middle Paragraphs: 2 or 3 and short	
<p>2. Say why you are applying for the position and what you know about the company.</p> <p>3. Highlight key skills that are relevant to the position and would add value to the employer or company.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge about the company shows you have researched them and are interested in joining them. • Summarise your work experience and its relevance to the role. • Education and training can be included here if it's relevant.
Closing Paragraph	
<p>4. Emphasise your availability for interview. Say you would welcome the opportunity to further discuss how you can benefit the company. Thank them for their time and say that you look forward to hearing from them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think of it from the employer's point of view: how can you contribute to their company? • End on a strong and positive note.

Preparing for Job Interview Questions Using the STAR Approach



By using this step by step method, you will be able to highlight your skills and answer each question in a systematic manner, without forgetting the important stuff!

S: Situation

Describe a situation or problem you were faced with. Keep your examples recent and relevant to the question,

T: Task

What task did you have to complete in this situation?

A: Action

What action did you take to complete this task and why did you act in that way?
What challenges did you face?

R: Results

What was the result?

Remember:

- Connect how this skill is of value to your potential employer.
- When answering, remember that the interviewer wants to know what you as an individual delivered and achieved. Avoid over-using "we" examples.

Tips and Guidance: The 5 steps of an Interview

1. Opening statement/Introduction

"Tell me about yourself. Tell me about your CV. What do you know about the company?"

- The "tell me about yourself or your CV" question is also known as the CV Screen.
- This means you need to highlight how you meet the list of requirements on the job description (English, 2019).
- Emphasise the skills you have that they need. Show them you can do the job.
- Use the information you have prepared in your cover letter and profile summary to highlight the key skills, work experience, and education relevant to the position.
- You need to tell them about as many achievements as you can in the smallest amount of time possible. Remember: you are giving them a short summary.
- They don't want to know about your personal life, family or hobbies.

Leading Expert Sinead English highlights the following steps:

- **Work Experience:** Start with your current role and work backwards. Mention how each is relevant to the job you are interviewing for
- **Skills:** Mention the relevant skills and competencies.
- **Education:** Summarise your qualifications and explain how they're relevant.
- **Finish on a strong note:** Make it about what you can do for them.
- You need to show that you are interested in the job and enthusiastic about joining their team. Show them that you have thought about why you want to work here.
- There are 5 areas you need to research: competitors, where the company makes their money, recent company developments, key challenges the company faces, and the employees.

(English, 2019).

2. CBQ

Competency Based Questions or Behavioural Interviewing

- This makes up the bulk of the interview. It's the main part where you highlight your relevant key skills, work experience, and education.
- Tell them your skills such as whether you're a team worker, diligent, or work on own initiative. You must have examples to back these up.
- Remember to use STAR - Situations, Tasks, Actions, Result! Refer to the STAR section for a refresher on how to use it!
- Connect how each skill is of value to your potential employer.
- When answering, remember that the interviewer wants to know what you as an individual delivered and achieved so avoid over-using examples of 'we'.
- Expect Case Study Questions such as "what would you do in this scenario." Again, use the STAR method for these.
- When the interviewer asks how you handle conflict, teamwork, or leadership, they want specific examples of experience so they can measure how you might handle a similar situation within their organisation (Indeed.com).
- Remember nameless figures and undefined success can make answers unconvincing.
- Quantify your success: mention the number of people benefitting, names of people involved. Quantify clients and contacts. This makes story more interesting and will help the employer gauge your success.
- As there are many questions, don't spend too long answering. Keep your answers concise using the Star Method.

3. Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths:

- Highlight your strengths with other people's perspectives. For example: "feedback from previous employers/family/friends is that I am trustworthy and I have good interpersonal skills." Remember to give an example that illustrates this.
- Link your strengths to the job description. Showcase their relevance.
- Always back your skill up with an example. You are being confident not cocky or arrogant.

- Focus on quality, not quantity
- Select three to five of your individual strengths to focus on and prepare answers for the interview. Consider the skills required in your industry and identify personal strengths that complement them (Indeed.com).
- Identify stories you can share to demonstrate previous experiences. Start by directly answering the question, then follow that up with a personal statement.

Weaknesses:

- Name an area that you needed to upskill in and state that you did a training course to enhance your skills and knowledge. This shows you're willing to learn and to expand your skills. You are therefore turning a weakness into a potential strength!
- Now is not the time to be modest; it's time to highlight your best skills and competencies so don't name a weakness without showing how have made improvements.

4. Any Questions?

- "In a year's time where do you think this role will be? When will I hear back from you?"
- Ask a question that shows you are interested in the company and joining the team, and how you will fit in with the structure of the team.
- Mention a company achievement that was in the media such as a news article about funding or expansion and how this will impact the company or your position (English 2019).
- Don't ask a question that makes you sound difficult
- Questions about things like flexible working hours can wait until you get the job!
- If don't have any questions, don't just say no. Be polite. Say that you have done a lot of research and you don't have any questions at this stage (English 2019).

5. Closing Statement:

- Finish on a positive note so the overall impression is strong and shows your determination to get the role. Even in the last minute of the Interview show how you have the skills to do the job successfully.
- Thank them for the opportunity to meet. Say that you look forward to hearing from them.
- You don't have much time here so make your closing statement short and strong.

Top Tips:

- The best interviewees are those that **pause and think before answering**. Remember, you don't lose marks for pausing. You can then **execute a solid answer that is backed up with examples** highlighting key skills and competencies relevant to the job description.
- Remember the STAR Method. A good story with specific, varied examples of your skills and competencies will **prepare you to answer** any form of job interview question, will **leave a lasting impression**, and is the best way **to market your skills and competencies** (CV and Interview Workshop presentation and Pack, GRD).

Tips and Guidance: Phone and Video Interviews

Remote job interviews are likely to be the new normal during the Covid-19 Crisis.

Preparation for all of these is exactly the same as an in-person interview. This guide contains preparation tips for the 3 most likely scenarios of a remote job interview:

1. Phone Interview
2. Video Call/Conference Interview
3. Video Interview

Phone Interview

These are usually used as a screening step before the invitation to the next stage.

Do

- Dress the part! You perform better in the interview and feel more focused.
- Go somewhere where you can concentrate, preferably against a blank wall.
- Test and check your headset. Ring someone to make sure your equipment works.
- Check your phone signal, battery, and credit beforehand.
- Put a voicemail message on phone, just in case you get cut off in the middle of the interview. The interviewer knows it's you, and it makes you sound professional.
- It's best to stay in one position, preferably sitting down.
- The interviewer can tell if you're distracted. Turn off your phone notifications to avoid pinging noises.
- Have an index card on hand with your key competencies listed and glance through when necessary.

Don't

- Don't use hands-free. It can make you sound like you're shouting.
- Don't stand up; you may be inclined to move around and affect the signal.
- Don't rattle through sheets of paper.
- Don't have your laptop open.

Video Call or Conference Interview

Similar to a phone call, these involve you meeting the interviewer on a platform such as Skype, Zoom, Google Hangout, WebEx, GoToMeeting, Facetime, Whatsapp, etc.

Do

- Install or download the application for the web call beforehand and test it out.
- Make sure you activate your camera and sound/mic.
- Make sure you check your surroundings. Don't let the interviewer be distracted by something behind you!
- Audit the background behind you and tidy up!
- Get the lighting right. Different lighting affects the picture; natural light fades images and light overhead creates shadow.
- Skype has a blur my background option. Click on the option, sharpen your face, and blur everything else out.
- Be somewhere that you can focus.
- Disable notifications and alerts.
- Look at camera not the screen to maintain eye contact with the interviewer.
- Remember – the interviewer can see you on the screen!
- Put the post-it notes with key words beside the camera.

Don't

- Don't download app and on the day of the interview! You won't have time and it looks unprofessional to be late for a video call as you weren't properly prepared!
- Don't have alerts pinging.
- Do not allow members of your family to come in. Make sure you are alone and have privacy for the interview.
- Don't look down at your notes because the employer can see your screen!

Video Interview

These usually include a link sent by the employer, which you can click on to begin a recorded interview. You normally have a few days to complete the interview. Your answers are recorded and sent directly to the employer for review. There is also the possibility that your recorded answers may be analysed by Artificial Intelligence.

Do

- There is often a time limit of 1 - 3 minutes to complete the answers. Be aware of the time and keep your answers concise.
- You are talking to the camera so remember to be enthusiastic and energized even though you are talking to the wall.
- Imagine the Green Light dot is someone, so get your individual personality across!
- All of the companies provide you with practice videos. Use these videos to check the lighting and your background.
- Remember the key competencies and key skills required as per the job description.

Don't

- Don't have alerts pinging.
- Do not allow members of your family to come in. Make sure you are alone and have privacy for the interview.
- Don't look down at your notes because the employer can see your screen!

Job Searching: Where Do I Start?

“No matter how your job search has begun, **an important first step is considering what you really want to do at work.** You may want to progress in the same career, change career paths, or not be sure of the course you’re on. In any of these cases, you’ll need to get specific about the job you’re looking for next: both to decide **where to focus your search** and so you can confidently answer interview questions about why you’re attracted to a particular role.” (indeed.com)

Where to Look When Job Searching

GRD Jobs Bulletin

- The GRD Jobs Bulletin is a weekly publication containing jobs from different on-line and printed job adverts. It covers Galway County and some bordering counties.
- GRD has information on how to apply for jobs on different job sites.
- You can read the Jobs Bulletin on our website at grd.ie on your computer or smartphone. You can also get the Jobs Bulletin sent to your email each week. Please contact us to sign up.
- The bulletin also includes vacancies from different schemes such as Community Employment, Tús and Rural Social Scheme.

Job Searching Websites Relevant to Your Career

- Start your search by creating an account with a website or app that is relevant to your job sector.
- Consider your individual or family needs, and filter the jobs on the site to suit your criteria. Filters can include full time, contractual, seasonal, part time, and voluntary work. For example, you could filter out all jobs except permanent positions on www.part-time.ie.
- You can also use filters to refine your search.
- You can save jobs that you want to apply to. Once you’ve applied, you’ll be able to track your status from the same page.

- You can [set up job alerts](#) as you explore jobs to make sure you are first to see new job postings. Job alerts are regular email updates about new jobs that fit the criteria you're interested in. You can create multiple job alerts to be sent to you either daily or weekly.
- Some job searching companies have LinkedIn profiles also to promote services and jobs.
- A comprehensive list of these sites can be seen below.

Recruitment Agencies

- Some jobs can only be applied to through particular recruitment agencies who filter ideal candidates for the organisation to review.
- Some recruitment and HR Services also have LinkedIn profiles also to promote services and jobs.
- A comprehensive list of these agencies can be seen below.

Networking to get work

- Ask family, friends, and neighbours about work.
- Ask old work colleagues about work: "Reach out to people you know who work at the companies on your target list" (Indeed.com).
- Volunteer.
- Use social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter to network with companies and employers.

LinkedIn

- You can use LinkedIn to connect with other people in similar professions and organisations.
- Companies are using LinkedIn regularly to promote upcoming positions and training.
- You may be headhunted by an organisation or recruitment agency if your skills match a new vacancy. Organisations and agencies search LinkedIn to find ideal candidates and may message you inviting you to apply, so check your notifications!

- Before you begin your job search, review your social media profiles and check your privacy settings. Potential employers may look at these pages(indeed.com).
- Leading expert Sinéad English highlights that LinkedIn only works well when:
 - “You are 100 % sure that your profile is excellent.”
 - You are applying for a role that closely matches your past work experience. English states “it’s all about the keywords and ensuring the skills you have listed on your profile match what the job advert is looking for. Most profiles are incomplete and this doesn’t look good for the employer.”
 - Most employers will give you the option to attach a CV. Ensure you do this to maximise your chances.

(English, 2019)

Research Companies That Capture Your Interest

- Glassdoor.ie lets you search companies and see how employees rate them. You can search millions of jobs and get the inside scoop on companies with employee reviews, and personalised salary tools.
- Indeed.com recommends that you “create a target list of employers you’d like to work with.”
- Visit company career pages and their Indeed company page (if they have one)to get information like reviews, videos, and current job openings. You can choose to “follow” employers on Indeed company pages to get email updates when they post new jobs.
- Visit company social media pages to learn more about the day-to-day activities of their business
- Use a search engine to search for recent news articles about the company so you’re “up-to-date on the latest developments”(indeed.com).

Useful Job Searching Websites

Website	Sector
Indeed.com www.jobsireland.ie www.jobalert.ie , www.irishjobs.ie www.recruitmentplus.ie www.recruitireland.com www.careerjet.ie www.jobbio.com www.countyjobs.ie www.monster.ie www.part-time.ie	Variety of jobs nationwide Part-time jobs nationwide
www.facebook.com/Galwayjobconnector/ www.facebook.com/GalwayStaffWanted/ www.classifieds.advertiser.ie/jobs	Local job listings The Galway Advertiser also features Athlone and Mayo
www.publicjobs.ie www.localgovernmentjobs.ie	Public Sector Government and council jobs (site under construction)
www.constructionjobs.ie	Construction
www.techlifeireland.com www.computerjobs.ie	IT Jobs
www.activelink.ie	Community and Voluntary Sector Jobs
www.nuigalway.ie/career-development-centre/careersconnect/	Student and Graduate jobs Funding opportunities also advertised
www.jobsguideireland.com	Guide on different jobs by area and other information

Recruitment Agencies

Recruitment Agency	Sector
www.icejobs.ie	Used by Medtronic and Boston Scientific
www.unijobs.ie	Public Sector
www.servisource.ie	Nurses and Care Assistants
www.pjpersonnel.ie/contact	Construction and Manufacturing
www.eflexes.com	IT, Engineering, and Electronics
www.sigmarrecruitment.com www.adecco.co.uk www.hero.ie www.careerwise.ie www.hays.ie www.cpljobs.com www.ireservices.ie www.frsrecruitment.ie www.collinsmcnicholas.ie www.headhuntinternational.com www.noelgroup.ie	Variety of sectors

References and Further Information

125 Common *Interview Questions* and Answers (With Tips) -

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/top-interview-questions-and-answers?from=careeradvice-US>

Columbia University Center for Career Education - www.careereducation.columbia.edu

CV Clichés To Avoid At All Costs - <https://social.hays.com/2017/10/02/cv-cliches-avoid/>

CV and Interview Workshop presentation and Pack - GRD

GRD Jobs Bulletin - grd.ie

Indeed Career Guide - <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/>

Sinead English. "CV & Interview 101." Polaris, 2019.

Sinead English. Webinar on How to Prepare for a Phone or Video Call Interview -

<https://wearehilt.com>