

# A Word in your ear



Do you ever get “writer’s block”? Sometimes when I sit down to write, the words just flow and I struggle to contain them. At other times, I have no idea what to write about!

I sit and stare at the computer, willing it to tell me something, and nothing happens!

Luckily it wasn’t like that this month. I was chatting to a friend of mine, also a pharmacist, who had recently received a number of applications for a job. She told me how she had been forced to reject quite a few CVs, because the information was so jumbled that it was impossible to find the facts that she needed in order to make a decision about shortlisting candidates. That’s such a pity, and it seems unfair (and silly) to put yourself at a disadvantage before you even start.

I’ve also spoken to many other people about CVs, and what employers look for, so when I started to write, the words came tumbling out and the article was written pretty quickly.

Ask yourself the important questions. Have you got a CV? Do you keep it up to date? (And if your answer to those two questions is “No”, I have another question for you – why not?) Have you submitted it to a potential employer? Did you get an interview?

I guess one of the problems is that it’s the sort of thing you need to begin doing when you’re young, but it seems daunting if you see the CV of someone much older and more experienced. Of course they have more to write about. Hopefully, they haven’t spent their lives doing just one thing. Boring! They’ve had more time to develop areas of special interest, so of course their CV is longer. As a young person, you may feel that you’ve done nothing exceptional

– gone to school, got a job, did a bit of studying, not much experience. The art of writing your CV is to examine your life and reflect on what you’ve learnt about yourself from your different experiences. Why did you choose the subjects you studied for matric? Was the knowledge gained useful in your choice of career? Sometimes the subject material can be pretty useless, but at the same time the way you went about studying can be important, especially if it taught you skills like how to analyse a situation or how to be patient. And if you really learnt nothing useful at all, at least you learnt how to pass an exam and get it behind you! (And it was probably good to know what you *don’t* want to do with the rest of your life!)

And don’t even think about the type of CV that’s presented when you go to a CPD meeting or an academic conference. Have you seen CVs from lecturers? They’re scary! Their job requires them to publish articles and to present at conferences, so their CVs end up being a long, long list of articles they’ve written and presentations they’ve made. You and I could be totally intimidated by it, but it’s not so bad – remember that’s their job. Thank goodness you and I don’t have to do it, so we can do other things with our free time!

So make sure that, even if you don’t look at any of the other CPD questions, you have a good look at your CV. In fact, now that I think about it, it might make interesting reading if you analyse why you have decided to include some information and leave other stuff out. Is it important to say that your hobby is handraising snakes? Yes, if you want to impress the employer with your bravery and individuality. No, if you prefer snakes to puppies because you can’t be bothered to feed a pet every day – the boss wants to know that you’ll do your work every day, not just once a week!

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