

HINTS & TIPS SHEET VOL:5

# HOW TO EXPLAIN A GAP IN YOUR CV



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The dreaded “gap in the CV” is something many of us have been taught to fear. However an employment gap is more common than you think, and if handled in the right way can actually be viewed as a positive! Below are some tips on fielding questions, to help you feel prepared.

## WHAT IS A GAP ON YOUR CV?

A career gap is a period of unemployment that cannot automatically be obviously explained – for example, ‘full time student’. This includes travelling, caring for a relative, personal circumstances and redundancy. After 2020, many candidates will find themselves in a similar boat regarding redundancy.

Countless employers had to make cuts due to COVID 19 and many were unable to find work, which will have resulted in a break in employment. If you have found yourself in this position, do not worry. This is the case for many candidates, and any employer who would hold that reason against you is likely someone you would not want to work for.

## EXPLAINING AN EMPLOYMENT GAP ON YOUR CV

Unless the gap was significant in length, recent or both, it is best not to launch into an explanation on your CV. If they are, a brief one sentence summary is fine. You do not have to disclose your reasons for leaving, and this helps to keep your CV succinct and to the point.

If you do need to provide more detail, a better place to explain would be your cover letter, rather than in the middle of your resume. This is covered in our Should

I Write a Cover Letter cheat sheet. Another point to note is that omitting the month and only showing the year in your duration of employment is considered acceptable.

Extending employment durations with previous employers is tempting, but a bad idea – it is likely the interviewer will call and check these dates. When talking about your CV and employment in general, the best approach is always honesty. Employers don't need great detail, but completely overlooking or lying will make an explainable situation worse, and you will get caught.

## USE YOUR TIME WISELY

An important aspect to think about is how you made use of your time during your gap. No one is expecting you to learn a new language whilst looking after a newborn, but demonstrating you can use your time effectively will set your CV apart. If you can, use your time to do a course to further your skills, take on freelance work or volunteer.

Keep up to date with the latest news in your industry and research the company as a whole, so you can show your absence has not affected your passion or ability to stay informed. Something as simple as writing a blog can show you have made the most of your time.

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## EXPLAINING AN EMPLOYMENT GAP IN AN INTERVIEW

Many worry that the smallest gap will make them unemployable, but in reality you should be prepared to explain anything longer than 3 months. Gaps that are more recent are likely to be questioned, but the further back your gap gets the less likely you are to be quizzed on it.

The most important thing is how you tackle the subject when asked about it. Preparation is the key to success here, in an interview it is almost inevitable that you will be asked about any gaps. If you enter the interview expecting this and with a prepared answer, you can address it early and the interviewer can focus on the rest of your CV.

If the circumstances around your career gap were beyond your control, tell the employer. If you were fired – be honest. Explain briefly what happened and your role, but focus mainly on what you learned and what you would do differently now. The reality of the situation is some will hold it against you, but many others will be impressed by your honesty, especially if you can show personal development.

## LAST BUT NOT LEAST

The important thing to remember is it is not unusual to have a career gap – it only stands out if you don't explain it! Focus on what you learned from your time out and what emphasise on how this will benefit your employer. Don't apologise for your gap – be positive! Optimism is always a good look and confidence and honesty are desirable qualities in a candidate, and this will be the overwhelming takeaway for potential employers, rather than any breaks in your employment.



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