Why use a scannable CV?

Normally scannable CVs are used when being submitted to large companies or recruitment organisations where the volume of CVs being processed demands an automated approach.

Scannable CVs are submitted, either in paper form or by Email and are designed to be scanned into an automated applicant tracking system.

Regardless of whether CVs are scanned in or entered electronically into an automated applicant tracking system or CV bank, they will be searched and ranked by computer as openings occur.

In most cases the CV will not be looked at by the human eye until the computer selects it from the data bank as being "worthy" of reading.

To allow the scanning system to accurately read the document, CVs created in various word processor formats (e.g. Microsoft Word or WordPerfect) need to be converted to "text only" format.

Based upon the requirements of an opening, a human reviewer will decide which keywords best identify the skills needed in a candidate.

Once these keywords are entered into the system a search of the CV database based upon these words is performed.

When the search engine recognises a keyword in your CV, it is called a "hit." Your CV is then ranked according to the number and type of keyword hits.

CVs that rank the highest will be selected to be read by a human reviewer.

While it is important to modify paper CVs so they are "scanner friendly", and to correctly convert electronic CVs to "text only" for on-line submission, it is equally important to create a keyword CV for both formats.

Ultimately, your success in being selected and ranked will be determined by how effectively you have used keywords in your CV.

How to create a Scannable CV

- Remove all graphics as they confuse scanners. This includes art, shading, and to be safe, boxes, horizontal and vertical lines/rules. Bullets confuse some systems; so to be safe, replace bullets with asterisks.

- Be sure your name is on the first line of the CV and no other text is on that line.

- Tabs and centred text work on many systems, but to be safe, move all text to the left margin, remove tabs and use the space bar to indent.

- Use common and easily recognisable fonts. Ideally use a sans-serif font such as Arial or Helvetica, or a common serif font such as Times or Times New Roman.

- Keep all point sizes between 10 and 14 points. Use standard line spacing.

- Do not compress lines of text.

- Remove all italic, script and underlining. While bold will probably not confuse newer and high-end systems, to play it safe, use all capitals as an alternative to bold.

- Keep "To" and "From" dates on one line. Use only a single date on educational qualifications.

- If you have separated lines and sentences with ellipsis (...), a helpful device to make long blocks of text easy to read for a human reviewer, change them to full stops to be safe.

- Remove brackets around dialling codes in telephone numbers and replace with a hyphen to be safe, for example 0171-831-3546 instead of (0171) 831-3546.