

An essential guide to completing your first aerospace Curriculum Vitae

By Al Pinner, Gulfstream G650 Line Training Captain

With the aerospace industry facing the greatest challenge in several decades, the future careers market is going to be highly competitive. To share my experience over many years, I was asked to write a short article on producing a CV for a career as a professional pilot aimed at giving advice to entry level pilots. While I have some knowledge of requirements for entry into military and business aviation, I have never flown in the airlines, so I needed some insider knowledge from an expert, hence I got to meet Lucy Silvester the Talent Acquisition Manager at British Airways. Lucy was cabin crew for several airlines before she moved into training roles and then management. She sees many thousands of applications each year and agreed to give me her thoughts on how to write a standout CV.



Even in challenging times, do not lose sight of your dream job.

There are many Pilots and others on social media platforms and forums such as PPrune that you can follow. They document the highs and lows of flying and are usually willing to answer questions posted. Having completed your research it is time to write that knockout CV. Your CV is critical to this first stage of application process. It has to take you from an applicant on paper, to in the office at an interview. While the interviewer will have their own objectives, including what you really want to talk about in your CV will help you be more relaxed and personal during the interview. So here is Lucy's personal advice on how to get through that first screening:

PREPARE YOURSELF

Know exactly what you want to do, who you want to work for, and apply yourself to finding and meeting the requirements of that company.

Research the company in depth. Follow it and other companies, regulatory bodies and key people in industry on LinkedIn so you can keep up to date with aviation news but also any new opportunities.

Look at professional publications and aviation news publications to stay up to date with the latest occurrences in the industry.

The purpose of your CV is twofold – it gets you through the screen to interview and then the interviewer will ask you questions on almost all that you have included.

Your CV should have clear layout and structure, nothing too fussy. We could read 100s of CVs a day and want to be able to understand someone's experience quickly.

Anything you write on a CV you need to be able to fully support with examples at interview. Everyone exaggerates a little, but we will catch you out if you've lied!

Head and shoulder shots aren't necessary, but I always feel worse saying no when there's a picture! It makes it a little more personal and it certainly seems to be becoming more common.

Lucy Silvester

*When any Pilot entry level roles are advertised, we are inundated with applications and the hardest part tends to be getting through the initial screening process. **Anything an applicant has on their CV to make them stand out will always help.***

For a young person we'd expect a CV to be one page of A4, if they happen to have a lot of experience, they can go on to a second page but it should be no more than two pages.

For each role considered the CV should be tweaked to adequately address the requirements in the job description. Highlight the main points on the Job Description then ensure that they are covered somewhere. It may seem obvious but if any reference is made to the airline you are applying to, make sure you write the correct one down. We often get CVs stating that someone has always wanted to work for another airline.



CV Structure:

Personal details – name/ address/ contact details. Make sure these are correct, you'd be amazed how many people have typos and we are unable to contact them. There is no requirement for D.O.B or marital status. Following this you should write an **opening statement** about yourself. It is quite common now to incorporate a list of **key skills & qualities** but this is not necessary. However, any skill / quality written here should be highlighted in your experiences below to show how they have developed / demonstrated what you have listed. Next comes **relevant experience**, in reverse chronological order starting from the present and highlighting what you can from the following:

Jobs - can be Saturday or evening jobs. It is great to be able to show initiative, drive, focus and customer service on a CV. Customer service experience is one thing a lot of young people tend to lack but something that is very important. While a Pilot is behind a locked door for much of the time they still interact with the customers and huge teams of people on and off the aircraft.

Volunteering – likely to develop teamwork experience and shows they are willing to put themselves out.

Extracurricular activities – any clubs they are involved in, even better if they are aviation related like RAF Air Cadets but not a necessity.

Work experience say what you did, why you chose that, for how long and what you gained from it.

Any **flying experience** or lessons whether fixed wing, rotary or gliding. Obviously if you are already commercially licenced or rated, details of qualifications, ratings and hours should go in here and this should be the first paragraph of this section.

Academic qualifications

The suggested format would once again be in reverse order, starting with the highest qualifications. eg. BSc (Hons) Economics 2:1, A-Levels: Maths A*, Economics A, Business Studies B. 10 GCSEs including Maths and English.

Any awards / career highlights e.g. DOE award. If this is on their CV we know at interview they will have good examples about team work/ leadership and communication. Head boy / girl etc. **Competitive sporting achievements.** Details of any flying or gliding scholarships awarded. There are many and varied Flying Scholarships available to young pilots and an incredible 20% are not awarded annually – research them through the useful contacts section of the Aerospace Careers Programme Annual Reviews and by following the Newsletters on www.aerospacecareersprogramme.co.uk and apply!

Hobbies – less important but could note aviation fairs attended. There are several aviation careers fairs each year with representation from the major employers and these are well-worth attending to give yourself a head start. You could also list air shows attended to demonstrate interest and any noteworthy team sports or charity involvement.

Don't waste a line writing references available on request as any company worth applying to will request references if you are successful at selection and will be subject to you starting in role. You can have short one-liners from teachers/group leaders etc if you absolutely want to, but you are always going to choose the best ones!

Lucy expanded on the above advice stressing that companies are not looking for clones of Pilots they already have and that diversity on the Flight Deck is really important, so any different experiences applicants show on their CV will help them stand out. When interviewing young aspiring Pilots, she is frequently impressed by their drive and dedication to push themselves to be the best they can. However, they also need to be able to communicate confidently and interact with others easily in group situations and recognise that team skills and empathy are equally important as individual excellence. **Being well-researched, motivated, having good interpersonal skills and demonstrating an interest and ideally involvement in aviation are all more important than outright academic achievement.**



Al Pinner MBE BSc

Al was educated as a boarder at Stamford School from 1973 to 1983 before going up to Kings College London to read Physics and Electronics. He joined the RAF in August 1983 as a University Cadet and on completion of his degree he went to Initial Officer Training. Following flying training Al was posted to be the first ab initio pilot on No 1 Harrier GR5 course at RAF Wittering. Completing the course he was posted to No 1(F) Sqn and at the end of the tour was selected for the Qualified Weapons Instructor course before posting to No IV(AC) Sqn at RAF Laarbruch in Germany. During his tour at Laarbruch he flew on the first RAF Harrier II operational missions over both Iraq and Bosnia in those respective conflicts.

Subsequent tours were on exchange to Canada on the CF18, during which he was promoted in 1998, and a tour as a Fit Cdr on IV (AC) Sqn at RAF Cottesmore followed during which time Al's tally of operational sorties surpassed 100, encompassing the roles of Reconnaissance, Close Air Support, Air Interdiction and Air Defence. Following this tour he was posted to No 20(R) Sqn again at RAF Wittering as a staff QWI, and subsequently was trained to become an A2 QFI on the Harrier. Al became OC BBMF in Jan 2006 after 3 seasons as a volunteer fighter pilot. After leaving the RAF Al moved into corporate jet operations and is now the Gulfstream G650 Fleet Manager for Flexjet Operations (Malta) Ltd. He has around 8300 flying hours, of which over 3900 have been on single seat fighters.