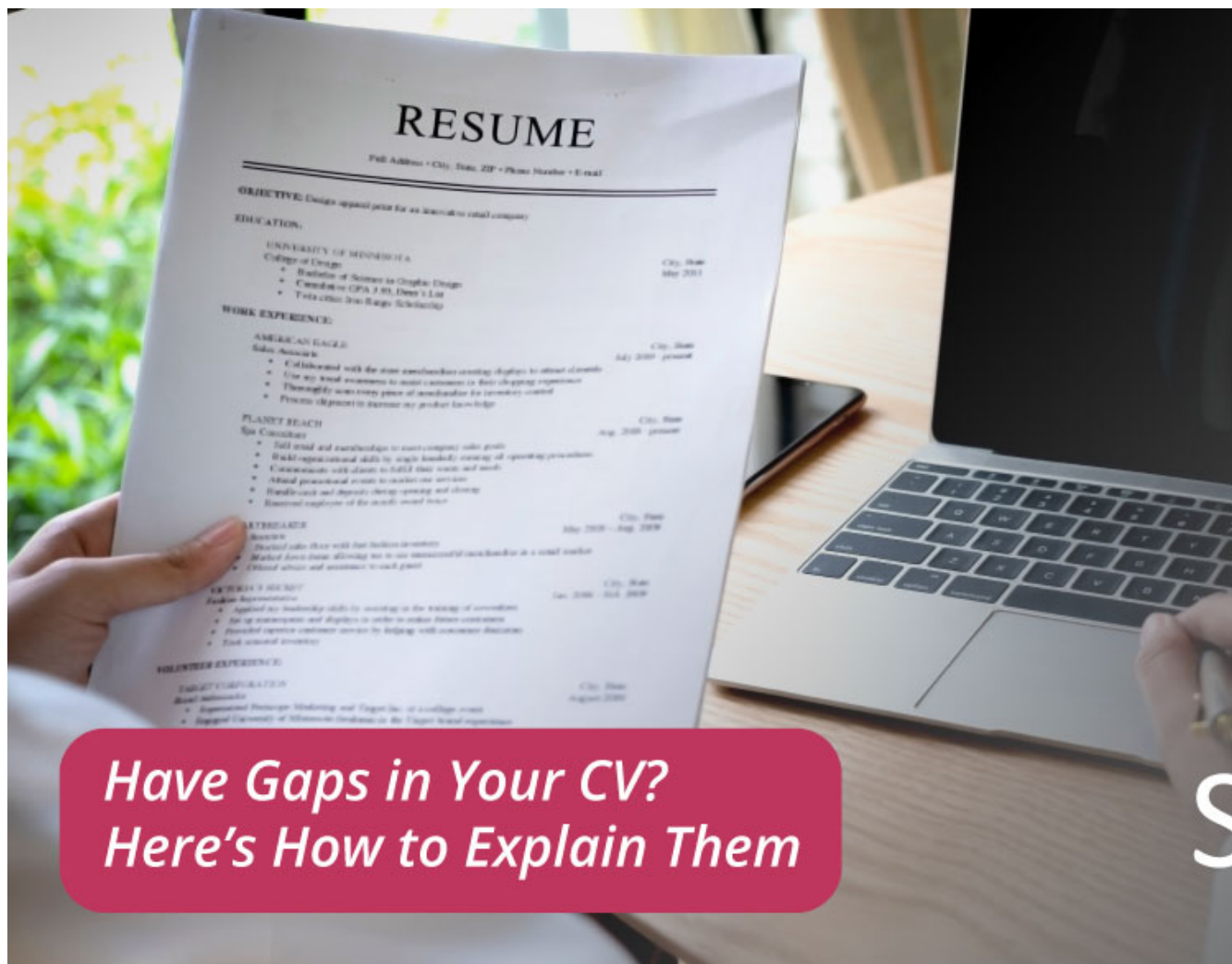


Have Gaps in Your CV? Here's How to Explain Them



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A gap on the resume is, for many people, one of life's inevitabilities. Not all professionals have a perfectly linear arc to their job history and career progression. Family commitments, major life events and unforeseen circumstances can pause careers for months or years at a time.

Breaks in work history experience can still be a source of embarrassment and stress when job hunting, however. The idea that it's detrimental to have space in your resume is a persistent one that stems from a time when employers were less forgiving about the issue.

Gaps in work timelines and career sabbaticals have become more common, as many hiring managers and technology and digital recruitment specialists will attest. Shifts in attitudes towards work in recent years have also allowed for more understanding of people who have empty spaces in their CVs.

While gaps on a CV are not inherently negative it's always wise to account for them when applying for a job. Being proactive in explaining breaks between dates will help to demonstrate your self-awareness and attention to detail.

What to Consider When Explaining a CV Gap

There doesn't have to be a big secret surrounding open spaces in your work history but there's a good chance that

you will be asked about them. Some of the things that you could discuss include the following:

1. **The length of empty time.** To be clear, none of your career gaps are 'empty' because you were busy doing *something* – even if that something is a break. When writing a CV it can help to think about the recency and duration of the gap in question. If the break occurred more than five years ago, it is unlikely to warrant much attention from hiring managers. If you were out of employment for years, ensure you include an explanation.
2. **Formatting.** Explaining a gap is easier when it's incorporated into the structure of your CV. One approach is to create an entry for the pause itself as you would with a specific role, including the date range and a description of what you were doing at the time.
3. **Underline the positive aspects.** Although it can seem difficult to reframe something like an illness or redundancy in a positive light, you can make this an opportunity to highlight your strengths and resilience. Focus on the future and what has motivated you to look for your next role.

For guidance on how to address a work gap when writing a resume, consider the category your career break falls into. We've got some of the most common examples of why people take time away from their careers below:

Parenting and Caregiving Responsibilities

Taking time off to raise a family or care for a family member is a normal part of life and the most frequent reason for CV gaps. You are not obliged to go into details about your family, but you can mention that you wanted to spend precious time with your children while they were young, or that you wanted to devote time to an ageing parent in their final months.

Taking Time to Study

Major and multiple career changes are becoming more frequent, especially for millennial and gen-Z workers who must adapt to a fast-changing jobs market. These job swaps are often accompanied by a return to university or other training.

As it is likely this gap relates to an area of study relevant to the job you're applying for, use it as an opportunity to mention the skills you gained and the experiences you had as a result.

Travel Plans

Pressing 'pause' on your career to explore the world or live abroad can be an advantageous move for your CV. If you departed your home in Auckland or Christchurch to teach English in another country, this is a positive for you!

Maybe you used the time to enrol in an overseas volunteering program for a year. For these adventures, you can describe the skills you used to navigate an unfamiliar environment and connect with strangers.

There's also nothing wrong with travelling for leisure – sometimes you just need a break. If you took time to holiday and see unfamiliar places, there is no shame in that at all. It's just as likely you had to use exceptional communication, organising and budgeting skills to stay on the road for as long as you did.

Finding ways to connect your experience to practical applications in a business setting can highlight your transferrable skills.

Redundancy

Layoffs and redundancies can affect professionals at any point in their careers. As redundancies were widespread during the COVID-19 pandemic this type of gap will not surprise recruiters or Hiring Managers.

If you have experienced a sudden job loss, be honest about how your employment ended. Focus on what you did

to get back on your feet and ready for your next role. This might include online training courses, learning a new coding language or platform, or freelancing for example.

Career Break

The concept of a 'career break' has surged in popularity in recent years. Although the term can encompass the other categories included here, such as parental leave or travel, it can be much broader.

Working on a passion project, launching a start-up, or taking time out for hobbies and self-development are a few examples of what a career break could entail – and each of these are as valid as the next.

When it comes to describing this break on your CV, similar principles apply. Include a summary of your activities and the skills you used or developed along the way.

Illness

There are occasions when illness – physical or mental – can disrupt your job for an extended period. Stress and burnout have also caused many lead professionals to step away from regular work to recharge and reassess their priorities.

As [AUT research shows](#), work-related stress has soared for New Zealand workers in recent years.

When referring to a work gap due to illness, keep it brief but be sure to mention you have recovered and are looking forward to returning to work.

Summary

A CV gap is not a guaranteed handicap to your job search. By framing your experience in a positive light (where possible) and emphasising your strengths and professional abilities, you can put your best foot forward in any job application.

Still unsure about how to explain gaps on a resume when applying for a job? For advice tailored to your needs, talking to one of our friendly Technology and Digital recruitment specialists can help. Here at Sourced, we connect technology professionals of all stripes to a wide network of employers in Auckland, Christchurch and beyond.

[Contact us](#) today to take the next step in your career.