

Explaining a gap in your CV because of your disability

Introduction

It is important that your CV provides a clear and accurate picture of your education and employment history, including any periods away from school, university or work. Wherever possible, avoid leaving gaps unexplained, as employers are likely to notice them and may make assumptions if no explanation is provided.

If a gap in your CV was related to a disability or health condition, you may choose to include a brief explanation. This can help employers understand the context of your application and focus on your skills, experience and potential. How much you share is entirely your decision, and you only need to provide enough information to explain the gap.

This guide will help you think about how to explain any gaps in your CV confidently and professionally. You can also use the accompanying downloadable, editable template to draft and refine your own explanation.

Step 1: Describe your disability / health condition

Start by choosing a few words that describes your disability / health condition; avoid using negative words such as unfortunately, suffer, sadly.

Please see some examples below:

Poor mental health

I experience anxiety and depression

Or you be less specific and say: I have poor mental health

Eating disorder

I have an eating disorder

Or you be more specific and say: I have anorexia

Visually impaired

I am visually impaired.

Or you can be more specific and say: During my second year at university, I lost 50% of my vision in a short period of time

Step 2: What were the circumstances that resulted in a gap in your CV?

Poor mental health

I experienced anxiety and panic attacks during a particularly stressful period while taking my A-level exams.

Eating disorder

Due to the impact of having anorexia, I spent some time in hospital.

Sight loss

I took some time out from my studies whilst my condition continued to change, and I adapted to my new situation before returning to my studies.

Step 3: What was the outcome?

Concentrate on the strategies you took to overcome the challenges you faced.

Poor mental health

This led me to take some time to better understand the causes of my anxiety and to develop effective coping strategies. With those support mechanisms in place, I made the decision to re-take my A-levels, demonstrating my determination to continue my education and achieve my goals.

Eating disorder

I worked with a specialist team to help me to identify triggers, build regular eating routines into my schedule, and put in place coping mechanisms; with this in place I decided to repeat the school year.

Sight loss

During my time out from my studies, I went through intense medical treatment. I also worked part-time in a small law firm. As a result, my confidence grew and I felt ready to return to university.

Step 4: Pull this together in one short paragraph

Poor mental health

During my A-levels, I experienced anxiety and depression during a particularly stressful period, which resulted in panic attacks. I took some time away from my studies to better understand the causes of my anxiety and to develop effective coping strategies. With those support mechanisms now in place, I chose to re-take my A-levels, demonstrating my resilience and determination to continue my education and achieve my goals.

Eating disorder

As a result of having an eating disorder I spent some time in hospital. During this period, I worked with a specialist team who helped me identify triggers, establish regular eating routines, and develop coping strategies. With this support in place, I was able to make the decision to repeat the school year and continue my education.

Sight loss

In my second year at university I lost 50% of my vision over a short period which led me to take time out from my studies. During this period I underwent intensive medical treatment and I also worked part-time in a small law firm both of which helped rebuild my confidence and resilience, ultimately enabling me to feel ready to return to university and continue my studies.

Step 5: Make it yours

Read your draft out loud or practice it with friends and family.

Ask yourself: Does this sound like me? Would I feel comfortable saying this out loud? Does it focus on resilience rather than limitations? Am I happy / proud to share this with an employer?

You may find that different versions of your statement work better in different situations; this is normal and it may evolve over time.

Top tips

- Only share information that is relevant; you don't need to go into all the details of your disability
- Don't use complicated medical terminology when talking about your disability
- Be confident in sharing your experiences, the challenges you faced and how you resolved the situation

Final thought

Your disability does not define your limits however your experiences can shape powerful skills and strengths despite having gaps in your CV. Taking the time to recognise and articulate them is an important step in owning your value and advocating for yourself with confidence.