

How to write a CV

A CV should not be a list of everything you have ever done. It is a marketing document. In a 20 second scan the employer should be able to see evidence of your ability to do the job.

the
Careers Group
University of London

Steps to a great CV

1

Identify the specific skills and experience that the employer is looking for. These are the job requirements - the criteria against which your CV will be assessed - and will be listed on the job advert, job description or person specification. For graduate training schemes, you are likely to find these job requirements on the employer's website.

2

Think of examples from your work, internships, volunteering, study, interests, travel or home life that prove you have these job requirements. Try to choose examples that show you using the skills in a way that is similar to how they would be used in the role. See our information sheet *Demonstrating Skills and Competencies* for some examples.

3

Plan the sections you need in your CV, then decide on section titles and order. Consistency of formatting is key and makes it easy for employers to pick out information quickly. See the following sample CVs for guidelines.

4

Incorporate your examples into the most relevant section/s of your CV, remembering that unpaid activity (e.g. volunteering, involvement in clubs and societies) can be as valuable as paid work. What matters to employers is the skills you have developed. Make sure you have provided evidence for every job requirement. The following sample CVs show you how to do this.

5

Triple check ALL spelling and grammar and ask someone else to proofread the final draft. Many employers will regard even one error as an indication of poor motivation for the job and reject you on that basis.

Tip

Use action words in your CV and covering letter to convey achievement and impact. Avoid passive terms such as "I had to", "I was involved in/required to".

Examples include: achieved, analysed, coordinated, created, demonstrated, designed, developed, evaluated, improved, increased, initiated, liaised, managed, negotiated, planned, persuaded, prioritised, researched, supervised.

Guidelines on CV length

There is no one rule about CV length, but in general two pages is the norm for a UK graduate CV. There are one or two exceptions: Investment Banking generally prefers one page (see second example in this guide); academic CVs tend to be longer - see the information sheet *CVs for PhDs* for guidelines. Always follow the recruiter's instructions on length.

The starting point for CV writing should **always** be the skills and experience the recruiter is seeking. You will find this list of job requirements in the job advert, job description or person specification. Your task is then to clearly evidence each of these requirements on your CV, using examples to convince the reader of your ability to do the job. The CV example below has been tailored to the role in the job advert opposite.

You don't have to include a profile. Jo has used hers to make a strong first impression by highlighting some of her most relevant and impressive examples.

For most students and graduates, 'Education' comes before your work history. However if you have a lot of relevant industry experience, you might choose to swap these sections.

Focus on the elements of your degree most relevant to the job. Include the same terms for skills that the employer has used to attract the recruiter's attention e.g. "client service" "communication".

Minimise the space taken up by school as this is now less relevant than university.

If you already have experience in the field, draw attention to it in the section heading - here "Marketing Experience". Otherwise group all of your experience together using the title "Work Experience" or "Work History".

Quantify and show results where possible. These details help to persuade the employer of your skills.

EXAMPLE JOB ADVERT

Part-time Marketing Assistant

In 2014 Frog Marketing helped over one hundred clients grow their brand through creative communication of values to the consumer. We're looking for someone who is **passionate about marketing and building brands**. To support our projects you'll be **well organised** and a **problem solver**. **Excellent client service** and **communication skills** are essential. **Experience of writing creative content** is desirable. To apply send your CV and a covering letter by 15 Sept to b.coan@frog.co.uk

Jo Sharma

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PROFILE

- Passion for marketing and building brands: created new Facebook page and events programme resulting in 20% growth in membership for University Geography Society
- Client service: exceeded sales targets two months running at Curry's through up-to-date product knowledge and quick response to needs of clients
- Organisation skills: won the Wapping Community Award 2014 for my management of a children's football summer school

EDUCATION

2014 - 2017 **BA Geography, King George University, London**

- Focus on ethics and the consumer: interest in this area developed through Year 1 project on the developing role of Corporate Social Responsibility in businesses (grade A achieved)
- Writing skills: researched and delivered 5000 word essay on how CSR can build brand loyalty for presentation in Business Ethics Workshop (82% achieved)
- Problem-solving: managed the analysis and interpretation of complex data using SPSS statistical package

2007 - 2014 **Hart Secondary School, Poole**

A Levels: Geography (A), Business Studies (B), Biology (B) AS Level: Maths (B)
10 GCSEs including Mathematics (A*) and English (B)

MARKETING EXPERIENCE

Sep 2014 - present **Marketing Officer, Geography Society**

Responsible for ensuring Society is promoted across both university campuses

- Passion for marketing and building brands: surveyed members to analyse preferences, and using results built brand of Society through three new alumni networking events and a Facebook page. Resulted in a 20% increase in membership and events series is now part of annual Society programme.
- Writing creative content: set up and maintain society Facebook site www.facebook.com/kggeogsoc, which now has 330 active users. Develop engaging content and post twice a week using Hootsuite.

FURTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

Jan 2015 - present

P/t Sales Assistant, Curry's, Wapping

Responsibilities include handling financial transactions, advising customers, dealing with complaints and ordering products.

- Client service: exceeded sales target in June and July through actively listening, responding quickly to needs of client and staying up-to-date with product knowledge.
- Communication: received positive feedback from client after negotiating with external supplier to speed up late delivery. Invited by line manager to train new staff.

Summer 2014

Volunteer, local children's football team, Wapping

- Organisation skills: booked pitches, arranged transportation and equipment for Summer School. Promoted closing tournament, liaising with community groups. Attendance was over 75, a 25% increase on the previous year. Won the Wapping Community Award 2014.

OTHER SKILLS AND INTERESTS

- IT: intermediate level Word, Excel, Access and PowerPoint
- Languages: conversational Spanish
- Music: write creative content for a friend's music reviews blog once a month. Develop organisation skills scheduling concerts and weekly practice sessions for the band I play with.
- Travel: planned independent travel around Spain this summer to develop language skills and cultural awareness.

REFERENCES

Ms. Jennifer Kol (Personal Tutor)
Geography Department
King George University
Gant Lane
London E2 3JR

Mr. Malcom Jolnisch (Line Manager)
Curry's
Boleny Way
Wapping
London E3 SJP

Start with the most recent activity and work backwards.

Use your part-time job and volunteering to give evidence of the skills the employer is looking for. Add a third party endorsement if you can (e.g. grade, promotion or as here added responsibility).

This experience only lasted a few weeks, but is still a useful showcase for one of the skills the employer is looking for (organisation).

Even hobbies and interests can demonstrate relevant skills.

Ask your referees before you list their details. If you do not wish to disclose names or don't have space, you can state instead: "References available upon request".

How to write persuasive examples

When writing a CV it can be useful to put yourself in the shoes of the recruiter. Imagine you are looking to hire a graduate with strong teamworking skills. Consider the excerpts from two CVs below. Who would you choose?



Candidate A

"Demonstrated strong team working skills during stock-taking at STL Retail".



Candidate B

"Teamwork - supported team of four to achieve full stock take of STL Retail in 16 hours by: arriving early to receive briefing on behalf of team; taking on extra tasks for a colleague who was unwell; and organising night out to keep us motivated."

The second example is more persuasive. You can achieve this by:

- Placing the skill word at the start to make it easy for the employer to pick out after a quick scan
- Allocating maximum space to *how* you applied this skill
- Using action words to convey achievement and impact
- Adding quantifiable data (e.g. numbers, timescales) to make your examples more concrete and believable
- Including a tangible outcome e.g. grade, increased responsibility or hours to prove the impact of your contribution (here a completed stock-take)

One page example CV for Investment Banking

You don't need to add the title Curriculum Vitae. It is clear what the document is.

Clear section headings make the document easy to read.

Avoid simply listing skills. Use examples to provide evidence that you have used a skill successfully in the past. Recruiters will look for this to confirm your ability to do the job.

Draw out the skills listed in the job advert, providing examples of exactly what the recruiter is looking for.

EXAMPLE JOB ADVERT

Porticum Investment Bank: Analyst Graduate Programme

We are looking for someone who is a **confident communicator** with **strong analytical** and **project management** skills, together with the **drive to succeed under pressure**. We are looking for innovative individuals who **think creatively** and are **able to build relationships**, both across internal teams and with external clients. To apply send a one page CV and cover letter outlining your suitability for the programme. Application deadline 10th November.

Anton Novikov

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Profile

- **Motivation for banking:** selected to take part in five workshops run by Citi, Morgan Stanley and Credit Suisse at their offices
- **Client relationship-building:** responsible during internship for sales of the new 'E Brokerage' facility offered by Citibank, securing a £5000 investment from a client
- **Project management:** set up and managed a university gaming competition, involving 860 people

Education

BSc Economics & Statistics, Queen Mary University of London Sept 2013-June 2016

- **Relationship building:** built working relationships with three team members to undertake two group projects, presenting results to seminar groups (68% and 70% marks achieved).

St Dominic's High School

Sept 2006-June 2013

A-levels: Economics (A*), Mathematics (A*), History (B), AS Level Geography (B)
10 GCSEs: Grades A*- B including Maths (A*) and English (B)

Finance Experience

Sales and Business Development Intern, Citibank, London

July-Aug 2015

- **Client relationship-building:** responsible for sales of the new 'E Brokerage' facility offered by Citibank, securing a £5000 investment from a client.
- **Analysis and creative thinking:** analysed the geographic sales profile of Citibank in comparison with its competitors; presented recommendations to the Head of Business Development for potential new initiatives to close the gap with competitors.
- **Written communication:** analysed client feedback and wrote a 10 page report on findings.

ELBA Insights Club, London

Oct-Nov 2014

- **Commercial awareness:** learned about trading floor functions, operational support around Compliance and Risk and about current sector issues; networked with employees.
- **Working under pressure:** came third in a business competition, working in a team of two to assimilate information and complete multiple tasks in a very short amount of time.

Other Experience

Gap, London

Nov 2013-Present

- **Customer service & communication:** answer customer queries and advise them on clothing; identify where items desired by customers are stocked in other stores, to assist with sales.
- **Teamwork:** work closely with seven colleagues to cover all shop floor functions.

Extra-curricular Activities & Achievements

Vice President of the Gaming Society (2014-15).

- **Project management & innovation:** ran the first University of London inter-College gaming competition, with 860 competitors. Led the project team of three and coordinated all aspects of the competition from marketing to technical logistics.
- **Drive:** ranked 111th in the world in the FIFA 2012 game on PlayStation

References available upon request

Use part-time work as another way to demonstrate ability to use the skills the recruiter is looking for in a professional context.

EXAMPLE JOB ADVERT

Graduate Field Operations Engineer (Mechanical)

To work at locations around the UK and overseas, installing and commissioning structural health monitoring systems.

Principal Accountabilities:

- Compile Risk Assessments and Method Statements (RAMS)
- Lead installations onsite and install a wide variety of sensors and logging systems
- Compile technical reports based on system measurements

Job Requirements:

- Ability to adapt to changing technical and business needs
- Ability to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing
- Good organisational skills, self-motivated to learn, successful experience working as part of a team.

Example CV targeted to the job advert above

Mike Canics

25 University Road, London, E4 2LD | Mike.o.canics@googlemail.com | 07700 900418

Education

2011 - 2015 **MEng Mechanical Engineering** - Grove University, London

Relevant modules: Mathematical Techniques for Engineers, Computational Risk Assessment and Mechanical Sensory Feedback

Second Year Project: 76%. Combustor testing for a microgas turbine in collaboration with Rolls Royce. Technical report presented to senior engineers.

Industrial Visits: Independently arranged a visit to Merstham Design. Work shadowing highlighted the importance of adaptability as the firm restructured its efforts away from alloys to composites for sensory systems.

Technical Systems Used: MATLAB, Creo and AutoCad

2008 - 2011 **International Baccalaureate Diploma - St Christopher's School, Bahrain**
Grade: 37 points (523 UCAS points); Bilingual Diploma (English and French)

2002 - 2008 **British International School of Istanbul, Turkey**
11 GCSEs (including A*s in Mathematics, Sciences and Languages)

Work experience

07-09 2014 **JCB - Reliability Engineer Summer Internship, UK**

- **Adaptability:** After six weeks of compiling risk assessments for new sensory installations, observed that client team was overloaded, so volunteered to take on weekly client caseload alongside installation duties. Also used knowledge gained as secretary of the Commerce Club to draw up strengths and weakness business case and replicate this for all clients.

- **Communication:** Liaised with upwards of 30 clients to better understand increases in their failure rates. Compiled and presented a report to senior management recommending changes to sensory circuits.

- **Organisational skills:** Maintained an accurate timeline document to include all relevant information and milestones for Russian, Kazakh and Global Marketing teams.

- **Second Year Project:** 76%. Combustor testing for a microgas turbine in collaboration with Rolls Royce. Technical report presented to senior Rolls Royce engineers.

Grades for relevant modules have been added to show achievement in these topics.

Use your degree to emphasise skills relevant to the job.

Allocate space on your CV according to importance and relevance. For example keep GCSE details to a minimum, as your degree is now more relevant.

Clear and consistent formatting makes the document easy to read. Bullet point lists make best use of space and keep sentences concise.

06-08 2014

Essilor - Marketing and Sales Intern, France

- **Self-motivated:** Interpreted feedback reports from a product-training scheme for opticians using meaningful statistics and graphics to identify most successful marketing approaches

- **Written communication:** Wrote a scientific pamphlet to inform a community of 400 ophthalmologists of the latest innovations at the company

Summer 2011

Indianna Cafe Restaurant - Waiter, France

- **Communication:** Liaised with upwards of 400 customers a day in one of the busiest districts of Paris. Engaged with queuing customers from diverse international backgrounds

Leadership and team experience

2013-2014

Commerce Club - Secretary, Grove University

- Established and led a six-person committee to ensure the smooth development of the club. Oversaw a 26% membership boost compared to the previous year

- Coordinated two charity fundraisers, and single-handedly organised a four-day team trip to Paris, where we competed in the "Les Parisiennes" international commerce convention

Additional information

Languages: French (native), English (fluent), Spanish (business proficient)

Applications: MS Office Suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) and Minitab

Interests: Travel, sports

References

Mr. Duncan Eastham (Personal tutor)
Engineering Department
Grove University
South Drive
London SE5 1AL

Ms. Anna Linford (Line Manager)
JCB
Boleny Way
Staffordshire
ST3 9SJ

Quantifiable results have been used throughout the work experience section to communicate the impact of actions and prove successful use of skills.

Extra-curricular experience has been used here to demonstrate relevant skills.

Normally employers will want one academic reference and one from a previous employer, but you can also use a personal referee. It is advisable to ask your referees in advance.

FINISHED?

- Look at your CV as if you were the recruiter. After a quick scan, can you pick out evidence of each of the job requirements?
- Is your CV two pages in length? Remember, some UK employers request a one-page CV, and academic CVs can be longer, but most UK graduate CVs are two pages in length.
- To ensure your CV is easy to read, is there about the same amount of text on both pages, and have you avoided large chunks of text or large areas of white space?
- Have you used formatting tools e.g. bold, italics, capitals and spacing consistently? Have you proofread for any spelling or grammar mistakes?
- Have you asked your Careers Centre for feedback on your CV and cover letter? Please take a list of job requirements with you.
- Are you on LinkedIn? If so, upload your checked CV with your evidenced skills to LinkedIn.