

Writing a CV for an Internship

STEP 1: SELF-ASSESSMENT

Your CV should illustrate your interests, experiences, skills, achievements and values. However, before you begin to list them, consider first the message you are trying to convey to your host organization. An important step in writing a CV for an internship is to take the time to reflect on what will be the most interesting, impressive and unique for the person reading it. What is your host organization looking for? Be sure to target your CV to these expectations.

For many students, an internship will be their first time putting their academic knowledge to use in a practical environment. This does not mean that your past experiences are unrelated to the position. When selecting interns, most host organizations are looking for signs of achievement, a willingness to work hard, good communication skills, creativity and leadership, initiative and problem-solving skills. These are all skills that you may have acquired through previous work, volunteer, extra-curricular and academic experiences. Your task is to communicate these relevant skills on your CV.

STEP 2: FORMATTING YOUR CV

There are many ways to format a CV. For an internship, the CV should be **targeted** and combine a **chronological** and **functional** approach.

A targeted CV is used when you know what experience you are seeking to gain and when you have some career-related experience. The structure of this kind of CV allows you to highlight this experience and align it with your stated career objective.

The combination of a chronological and functional approach allows you to rearrange your CV in a way that emphasizes relevant work experience and skills. It allows you to combine your employment and volunteer experiences based on the skills you want to highlight. Employment, education, career-related experience and volunteer experience are each separate headings. The information contained within in section is listed chronological order. This format prioritizes the skills and accomplishments you wish to highlight, while also providing a chronological work history.

STEP 3: STYLE

The appropriate language for a CV is different from academic and professional writing. Do not try to turn your CV into an essay. Instead, work on developing the standard grammar for a CV by keeping the following points in mind.

- ✓ Use short and simple phrases
- ✓ Use past tense throughout your CV for consistency
- ✓ Describe your experiences with action verbs
- ✓ Use accomplishment statements and quantify your results
- ✓ Repeat sentence structure to promote consistency
- ✓ Keep vocabulary articulate and precise rather than verbose

Purpose of a CV:

Your CV communicates your skills and experience relevant to the internship you are seeking. It is often the first thing your host organization will read and it may be scanned in less than 30 seconds. A strong CV will capture your reader's attention and increase the likelihood that they will continue to read your cover letter and invite you to an interview to learn even more.

Formatting Tips:

- ✓ List headings so that important information appears first.
- ✓ Don't hide headings such as Related Experience on your second page. Your reader may never make it there.

Writing Styles to Avoid:

- ✓ Slang or colloquialisms
- ✓ Abbreviations or acronyms
- ✓ Beginning phrases with personal pronouns instead of action verbs instead

STEP 4: BASIC COMPONENTS OF A CV

A) CONTACT INFORMATION

Your contact information should be placed at the top of the first page and may be incorporated into a header to make your CV look more attractive. Take advantage of the relative freedom of this section to design your header in such a way that your name stands out. You can use a larger font or bold typeface to draw attention to your name, but avoid overdoing it and keep the header tasteful.

Your Name in bold and/or large

Address

Phone number/McGill e-mail

B) LEARNING OBJECTIVES

A learning objective is one or two sentences that express your short-term career goal. In the case of an internship, this means what you hope to achieve as an intern.

Example: *"To utilize my education and experience to enhance organizational effectiveness and client relations as a Financial Administrator."*

C) LANGUAGES

This section should only be included if you speak more than one language. The purpose here is to highlight your skills, not draw attention to any limitations. List the languages you know in order of your fluency, starting with the languages spoken at your host organization. Always indicate your level of proficiency (fluent or mother tongue, conversational, working knowledge, or basic).

Be honest. There is nothing worse than being unable to deliver on a promise made in your CV. For example, before writing that you are fluent in Spanish, consider whether you would be able to perform in an entirely Spanish-speaking environment. If you are not fluent but are comfortable with the language, consider not mentioning your level of proficiency and wait until you get an interview to mention this to your host organization.

D) EDUCATION

Starting with your current degree, list your previous degrees in reverse chronological order. List each degree (including specializations such as major/minor, honours or thesis) followed by the name of the institution and its location (city, province/state, country). If you participated in an exchange, include a separate heading for that institution.

For each entry, include any awards or academic mentions you have received. You can also highlight specific courses or honours work if it is relevant to the position for which you are applying.

If you have received many awards, you may consider listing them under a separate section called "Awards and Scholarships."

E) AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

If you include this section, list your awards and scholarships in reverse chronological order. If space permits, include a short sentence to describe the nature of each award. This will provide more context for the reader and draw attention to particular achievements.

Tips:

- ✓ Always use your @mail.mcgill.ca email and check it frequently.
- ✓ Be sure that you can be reached at the number you provide. Your voicemail greeting should be professional and brief.
- ✓ Host organizations can easily look up your contact information on social networks. Be sure that your profile reflects the image you want to portray.

- ✓ Keep a master CV that lists all of your experiences. Refer back to it every time you draft a new CV and pull out the relevant items.
- ✓ Research industry buzzwords and vocabulary to include throughout your CV.

D) SKILLS

The “Skills” section allows you to highlight these hard and soft skills more directly than is possible in any other section of your CV. List the skills that are the most important for the internship for which you are applying. These can include communication skills, research skills, computer skills, managerial skills, etc.

Communication Skills

- Facilitated small group discussions as a Teaching Assistant
- Created weekly e-bulletins for McGill students as a Publications Assistant
- Worked with students to improve their cover letters and C.V.’s as a CAPS Peer Educator

Computer Skills

- Adobe Creative Suite (InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop and Dreamweaver)
- XHTML and CSS

Tips:

- ✓ Organize your sections in an order that best supports your internship objective.
- ✓ Not every CV will include every section listed here. Some sections should only be used if you have sufficient material to allow them to stand on their own.

J) CERTIFICATION AND ADDITIONAL TRAINING

This section can complement the information listed under “Education.” You may want to use this section to highlight relevant skills and educational training that would not be apparent from your school experience. Include workshops, seminars or certifications you have received. List these educational training in reverse chronological order.

STEP 5: REVIEW, REVIEW, REVIEW

Leave plenty of time to review it for content and grammatical and structural improvements. Consider having a peer review your CV to ensure that you are using the appropriate language for your field. Also ask someone who is less familiar with your field of study to review your CV to see if they can understand what you wrote. Someone with less experience may be more likely to catch inappropriate use of abbreviations or assumptions that your host organization may be unfamiliar with. It is easy to become attached to what you have written and to lose objectivity when editing.

STEP 6: THE FINAL LAYOUT

Your CV should be cleanly formatted and easy to read. It can be tempting to squeeze margins and use small font size in order to include more information, but remember that you want to make it easy for the reader to quickly scan your CV. Keep margins to ½” and font to 11 point. Use clear headings, spacing, underlining, italics, bold, and capitalization for emphasis but be careful not to overdo it.

Standard CV length varies from region to region. In Canada, the standard is 2 pages. In the US, it is often 1 page. If you are unsure about the length requirements, be sure to ask.

Unless otherwise specified, laser print your CV on good quality 8½” x 11” paper. Type labels to address envelopes rather than writing them by hand.

Tips:

- ✓ To retain original formatting when sending your CV electronically, convert it into a PDF.
- ✓ Use a basic text editor, like Notepad, to convert your CV to a text-only version when copying into online applications.
- ✓ Do not fold your CV. If mailing it or dropping it off, use a large envelope.

SAMPLE - TARGETED C.V.

Use this sample when you know what area you would like to work in and/or have some career-related experience you can highlight.

Your Name in bold and/or large

Address

Phone number/e-mail

CAREER OBJECTIVE

Outline your short-term career objective using some of the following criteria: position title(s), department, specialization, and industry. Your CV should focus on how your education, experience and activities relate to this objective. This section could be anywhere from 2 to 3 lines.

LANGUAGES

English and French (Fluent)

Describe varied levels of fluency according to the following: Fluent, Intermediate, Basic. If you are unilingual, leave this section out.

SKILLS

Depending on your skills, this section could also be entitled or subtitled Computer Skills, Technical Skills, Laboratory Skills, or Research Skills. Include all software and hardware knowledge, lab techniques, equipment and specific methodologies you are familiar with.

EDUCATION

Bachelor of ____: Major area of study, Minor area of study

date - date

McGill University, Montreal, Quebec

- add academic awards and any subjects taken relevant to your career objective
- add research undertaken with results if possible

Diploma of Collegial Studies, Discipline

date - date

Dawson College, Montreal, Quebec

- add academic awards and any subjects taken relevant to your career objective

High School Graduation Diploma

date - date

It's usually not necessary to include high school unless:

- it shows that you have studied in another language or you studied abroad or you went
- to school in the same town where you would like to work (i.e. you're a "local")

CAREER-RELATED EXPERIENCE

List all experience relevant to your career objective including your paid employment, extra-curricular activities and volunteer work.

Position Title (in bold)

date

Name of company, organization or club, City, Province

- use "one-liners" to describe your activities and "action verbs" to give more impact
- at least one of these should describe an initiative you took or an achievement you had with results
- consider using the P.A.R. formula (problem, action, result)
- emphasize your "transferable skills": leadership, organization, communication, creativity, etc.
- you can specify if the position was contract, part-time or summer if you like

CAREER-RELATED EXPERIENCE (continued)

News Editor (summers)

date - date

The McGill Daily – McGill University, Montreal Quebec

- Oversaw and planned the news section
- Researched and compiled news leads, and conceived story ideas
- Edited articles and instructed reporters on effective writing techniques
- Wrote general and investigative articles concerning today's health issues, eg. "The Link between Hot Dogs and Memory Loss"
- Created first International News section resulting in a twenty percent circulation increase

(Add other positions if applicable)

OTHER EXPERIENCE

List other jobs, extra-curricular activities and volunteer experience that are not directly relevant to your career objective in this section or under separate headings if there are many to include.

Position Title (in bold)

date

Name of company or organization, City, Province

- describe what you did in this position
- emphasize your "transferable skills"

(Add other positions if applicable)

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS

List your awards, scholarships and distinctions here if they are numerous. If you have only a few awards or if they are prestigious, you may include them under the relevant degree program, under education.

ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS

This section will include any additional information about activities you are involved in or interests you have that are not included above. Avoid "reading, sports, films" which is too general. Be creative and specific. This is often the section where employers look to start an "icebreaker" conversation. Some activities could include the following:

- Sports Activities – mention levels of competition and any prizes awarded in a particular sport.
- Travel Overseas – mention places traveled, length of stay and any independent trips
- Personal Improvement – mention organizations and what you learned

(Add other activities if applicable)

REFERENCES ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Do not list references, but prepare a list with all contact information. Be certain to contact your references in advance and inform them of the position for which you are applying.

Note: Depending on your combined education, experiences and activities, your C.V. can either be one or two pages in length. Be sure your second page is at least ¾ full.

ACTION VERBS

Communication

Advertised	Called	Circulated	Coached
Communicated	Conferred	Corresponded	Defined
Discussed	Displayed	Distributed	Drafted
Edited	Emphasized	Explained	Extracted
Familiarized	Informed	Instructed	Interested
Interpreted	Issued	Learned	Lectured
Listened	Lobbied	Mentored	Oriented
Perceived	Politicked	Presented	Promoted
Publicized	Questioned	Reasoned	Recommended
Redirected	Represented	Referred	Related
Responded	Showed	Spoke	Summarized
Talked	Transcribed	Translated	
Transmitted	Tutored	Wrote	

Initiative

Acted	Applied	Attended	Automated
Collected	Compiled	Conserved	Considered
Consolidated	Contemplated	Contracted	Delivered
Detected	Devised	Discharged	Discovered
Dispatched	Dispensed	Engaged	Engineered
Established	Examined	Expanded	Expedited
Founded	Handled	Helped	Implemented
Increased	Induced	Inspected	Instituted
Interviewed	Introduced	Inventoried	Investigated
Launched	Maintained	Manipulated	Monitored
Moved	Offered	Operated	Packaged
Participated	Performed	Problem-solved	Processed
Proposed	Provided	Received	Recruited
Reviewed	Risked	Shipped	Solicited
Sorted	Staffed	Submitted	Systematized
Trained	Troubleshoot	Utilized	Verified

Interpersonal Skills

Accommodated	Adjusted	Advised	Agreed
Arranged	Assisted	Collaborated	Consulted
Contributed	Cooperated	Counselled	Empathized
Facilitated	Guided	Harmonized	Influenced
Mediated	Moderated	Modified	Motivated
Negotiated	Personalized	Persuaded	Provided
Reconciled	Related	Requested	Respected
Screened	Sensed	Served	Shared
Sold	Taught		

ACTION VERBS (CONTINUED)

Results			
Accomplished	Accounted	Achieved	Advanced
Altered	Answered	Attained	Attracted
Awarded	Benefited	Built	Changed
Combined	Completed	Constructed	Convinced
Critiqued	Decreased	Dismantled	Earned
Eliminated	Enlarged	Expanded	Finished
Generated	Identified	Improved	Integrated
Involved	Justified	Made	Manufactured
Marketed	Obtained	Ordered	Predicted
Prevented	Produced	Profited	Protected
Raised	Realized	Reduced	Rehabilitated
Remembered	Repaired	Replaced	Reported
Reorganized	Resolved	Restored	Retrieved
Revised	Separated	Solved	Tested
Turned around	Transformed	Traveled	Updated
Upgraded	Validated	Won	
Leadership			
Administered	Addressed	Allocated	Anticipated
Appointed	Approved	Arbitrated	Assessed
Assigned	Authorized	Awarded	Balanced
Chaired	Conducted	Controlled	Decided
Delegated	Designated	Directed	Disapproved
Discharged	Encouraged	Enforced	Enlisted
Evaluated	Executed	Gathered	Headed
Inspired	Governed	Hired	Led
Managed	Oversaw	Presided	Recommended
Regulated	Required	Selected	Settled
Signed	Spearheaded	Specified	Sponsored
Stipulated	Supervised	Team-built	Trained
Organization			
Arranged	Analyzed	Assembled	Budgeted
Calculated	Compared	Coordinated	Charted
Checked	Clarified	Determined	Disproved
Filed	Organized	Planned	Prepared
Purchased	Recorded	Reported	Scheduled
Technical			
Appraised	Audited	Catalogued	Computed
Diagnosed	Dissected	Experimented	Financed
Fixed	Hypothesized	Judged	Litigated
Modeled	Navigated	Observed	Piolted
Prescribed	Programmed	Researched	Served
Surveyed	Tabulated	Traced	

ACTION VERBS (CONTINUED)

Creativity

Adapted	Authored	Composed	Conceived
Created	Designed	Developed	Dramatized
Drew	Energized	Established	Estimated
Forecasted	Formulated	Illustrated	Improvised
Initiated	Innovated	Invented	Investigated
Originated	Painted	Played	Proposed
Researched	Revised	Shaped	Sketched
Studied	Set up	Symbolized	

Adjectives

Accurate	Active	Adaptable	Advantageous
Analytical	Artistic	Beneficial	Better
Bigger	Calm	Capable	Careful
Competent	Complete	Confident	Conscientious
Considerable	Creative	Critical	Decisive
Dependable	Desirable	Determined	Diligent
Diplomatic	Distinctive	Distinguished	Durable
Dynamic	Effective	Efficient	Empathic
Energetic	Esteemed	Excellent	Exceptional
Extraordinary	Flexible	First-class	First-rate
Flourishing	Forceful	Fruitful	Functional
Good	Greater	Helpful	Humorous
Illustrious	Imaginative	Important	Imposing
Improved	Independent	Industrious	Influential
Innovative	Insightful	Larger	Logical
Lucrative	Major	Methodical	Money-making
More	Notable	Noteworthy	Ongoing
Orderly	Organized	Original	Outstanding
Patient	Perceptive	Perfect	Phenomenal
Powerful	Practical	Prestigious	Productive
Professional	Profitable	Progressive	Prominent
Prosperous	Punctual	Reliable	Remarkable
Renowned	Reputable	Respected	Responsible
Resourceful	Rewarding	Satisfied	Sensitive
Significant	Singular	Sizeable	Skillful
Solid	Solvent	Sound	Stable
Strong	Substantial	Successful	Superb
Superior	Supportive	Thorough	Thriving
Top	Upbeat	Uncommon	Unique
Unparalleled	Unsurpassed	Uppermost	Useful
Valuable	Versatile	Winning	Workable
Worthwhile			