

# 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.

Education	
Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Civil Laws McGill University, Montréal, Québec	date-date (expected)
Bachelor of Arts; History Honours, Minor in Political Science McGill University, Montréal, Québec	date-date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Graduated with First Class Honours and a cumulative GPA of 3.7/4.0.</li> </ul>	
Awards and Scholarships	
Dean's Honour List	date-date
Chamber of Commerce Business Award	date
Rutherford Scholarship (value \$2500)	date

**Tips:**

- ✓ When listing years for your current degree, put your expected date of graduation.
- ✓ It may be unnecessary to list your high school unless you want to highlight its reputation or that you studied in a city that is relevant to your internship.
- ✓ If you hold a foreign diploma, find the name of the international equivalency.

**F) CAREER-RELATED EXPERIENCE**

List experiences that relate to your learning objective and the internship position. You may be combining work experience with volunteer experience, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Your experiences should be listed in reverse chronological order and include your position title, the name and location of the organization (or student group or association), and the dates of your involvement.

When describing your responsibilities, be sure to use action verbs and emphasize your accomplishments. Every entry should describe a transferable skill that you can bring to your internship, such as leadership, organization and communication.

Career-Related Experience	
<b>Marketing Assistant</b> Raven Truck Accessories, Edmonton, Alberta	<b>(date-date)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Led a marketing team with the goal of increasing sales</li> <li>Maintained and updated company website</li> <li>Oversaw production of company catalogue</li> </ul>	
<b>Corporate Development Assistant</b> RBL Warehouse, Edmonton, Alberta	<b>(date-date)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assisted the V.P. of Corporate Development in developing strategies to improve company growth and sales</li> <li>Developed and implemented company's privacy and health policy</li> <li>Launched company's intranet</li> </ul>	

**Tips:**

- ✓ 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.

**G) OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE**

List any additional work experience that may interest your host organization. Format this section like the "Career-Related Experience" entry above.

**H) OTHER VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE OR EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

List any additional experience that may interest your host organization. Format this section like the "Career-Related Experience" entry above. Depending on your experience, you may create separate entries for volunteer work, community involvement, academic activities and athletic activities.

## 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.