

# How to write a CV

A CV should not be a list of everything you have ever done, but a marketing document that should promote your skills and experience. In a 20 second scan the recruiter should be able to see evidence of your ability to do the job.

## Steps to a great CV

### 1. Start with the job specification

The starting point for CV writing should always be the skills and experience the recruiter is seeking. You will find this on the list of job requirements in the job advert, job description or person specification.

Your task is to clearly evidence each of these requirements on your CV using examples to convince the reader of your ability to do the job. If you are applying speculatively and there is no job description, search for similar roles to find out the relevant transferable skills.

### 2. Active language

Use action words in your CV and covering letter to convey achievement and impact. Consider starting sentences with a verb rather than using pronouns (such as "I") too much. Avoid passive terms such as "I had to" "I was involved in" "I was required to".

#### Examples of active words

achieved analysed coordinated  
created demonstrated designed  
developed evaluated improved  
increased initiated liaised managed  
negotiated planned persuaded  
prioritised researched supervised

### 3. Brainstorm your skills

Think of examples of the skills you have gained and how you acquired them. Draw examples from your work, internships, volunteering, study, and interests. Match your skills to the job you are applying for to create a CV that clearly demonstrates you possess the skills they require.

### 4. Attention to detail

One spelling or grammar error can be all it takes for a CV to be rejected, as many employers regard it as an indication of carelessness and poor motivation for the job. Triple check *all* spelling and grammar and ask someone else to proofread the final draft. Reading it out loud to yourself is a useful technique that can help you identify any errors.

## 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. Exceptions are in investment banking where a one page CV is generally preferred (see the second example in this guide) and academic CVs tend to be longer (see the title CVs for PhDs for guidelines). Always follow the recruiter's instructions on length.

# 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](mailto:b.coan@frog.co.uk)

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" "problem solving".

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.

## Jo Sharma

41 Great Queen Street, London, E1 8QP  
07700 900717 [jo.sharma@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jo.sharma@yahoo.co.uk) [linkedin.com/josharma](https://www.linkedin.com/josharma)

### 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

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

- 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

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

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

### MARKETING EXPERIENCE

#### Marketing Officer, Geography Society Sep 2014 – present

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](http://www.facebook.com/kggeogsoc), which now has 330 active users. Develop engaging content and post twice a week using Hootsuite.

## FURTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

### P/t Sales Assistant, Curry's, Wapping

Jan 2015 - present

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.

### Volunteer, local children's football team, Wapping

Summer 2014

- 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 jobs 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 listed 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, evidence based, 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 team working 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 a 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 convincing

Including a tangible outcome e.g. grade, increased responsibility or hours to prove the impact of your contribution (in this example a completed stock-take)

# Example job advert: Porticum Investment Bank

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.

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

Consider whether certain modules in your masters are particularly relevant to the job you want to apply for. Is your final dissertation/project on a topic related to the area of work you are trying to get into? If so, include the title and the type and scope of the research involved.

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.

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

Clear section headings make the document easy to read.

## Sam Chester

41 Great Queen Street, London, E1 8QP Mobile: 07797 345621 Email: sam.chester@yahoo.co.uk

### EDUCATION

**MSc Banking and Finance, Queen Mary, University of London (2.1 expected) 2016-2017**

Modules include: Commercial and Investment Banking, Investment Management, Quantitative Methods in Finance, Financial Derivatives

- Dissertation topic: Impact of low interest rates on global asset prices (72%)

**BSC Economics, Queen Mary, University of London, (2.1) 2013-2016**

Modules include: Corporate Finance (80%), Econometrics and Macroeconomics (75%), Mathematical methods in Economics and Business (70%)

**Hart Secondary School, Poole 2006-2013**

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

### WORK EXPERIENCE

**Associate Member, QUMMIF September 2016-Present**

- Developed theoretical and practical understanding of financial markets, trading strategies and risk management
- Demonstrated analytical and technical skills, carrying out the research and valuation of chosen equity stock
- Analysed vast amounts of data on Bloomberg Terminal and other resources
- Worked in a team of four to compile detailed investment report
- Developed strong communication skills, presenting to Senior Fund Management
- As a result of research and presentation investment proposal was included in fund's portfolio

**P/T Sales Assistant, Topshop, London September 2013-Present**

- Ensured efficient running of shop area in highly demanding and busy environment
- Provided excellent customer service – awarded Customer Service Star award after three months
- Collaborated with colleagues in order to ensure constant stock replenishment during peak times
- Demonstrated strong ability to multitask, dealing with customer queries while keeping shop area organised

### POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

- **Economics Society Committee member:** Role involves working closely with a team of five to increase society membership, organise and run social and careers events and liaise with the department. We currently have 100 members and I have worked with two others to run three events off-campus with a turnout of 40-50 at each.
- **Football coach for local youth team:** This position involves organising training and matches, teaching, motivation and encouraging young people aged 12-14

### OTHER SKILLS

- **IT:** MS Office Suite (Word, Excel, Access, and PowerPoint), Bloomberg Terminal
- **Languages:** Conversational German

### REFERENCES

Available on request

# 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.

### Mike Canics

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

#### Education

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

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

**International Baccalaureate Diploma - St John's School, Bahrain 2008 - 2011**

Grade: 37 points (523 UCAS points); Bilingual Diploma (English and French)

**British International School of Istanbul, Turkey 2002 - 2008**

11 GCSEs (including A\*s in Mathematics, Sciences and Languages)

#### Work experience

**JCB - Reliability Engineer Summer Internship, UK July-September 2014**

- 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.

### Essilor - Marketing and Sales Intern, France June-August 2014

- 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.

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

### Indiana Cafe Restaurant - Waiter, France Summer 2011

- 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

#### Commerce Club - Secretary, Grove University 2013-2014

- 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

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

### 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

Usually employers will want one academic reference and one from a former 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? 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 department 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.