Guide to Writing a Psychology CV

For undergraduate students

This document is intended to aid psychology undergraduates in writing CVs for summer internships, post-baccalaureate jobs, and graduate school. There is a lot of variability when it comes to the "right way" to write a CV, students should ultimately personalize their CV to speak to their individual strengths.

What is a CV or *Curriculum Vitae?*

- A comprehensive summary highlighting your relevant experiences in the field of psychology
    - Some jobs may prefer resumes to CVs. Most often, the hiring manager will specify whether a CV or resume is preferred.
    - For **research and academic** positions, a CV is almost always preferred

Difference between resume and CV?

	Resume	CV
Intent	Represents your skills and experiences that are most relevant to the position you're applying to Easily customizable and dynamic (changes depending on position applied for)	Demonstrate academic accomplishments, including research, field experience, and skills Comprehensive and cumulative. You can change the order depending on position applied to, but all content remains.
Position	Non-academic positions	Research, academic positions, scholarship or funding applications
Length	1-2 pages max	Unlimited length (but no fluff, only important info)

Content for undergraduate CV

- Primary emphasis:
    - Show that you have **strong work ethic** (extracurricular experiences and responsibilities, showcase commitments over time (i.e. volunteer roles))

- ○ Show how you are a **good student** (grades, rigor of coursework, breadth of coursework (i.e. taking a challenging statistics or language course), out of class experiences like volunteering with a faculty member)

CV for graduate school

- Shows that you are ready for the **academic intensity** of graduate school
    - ○ Examples: Upper-level seminars, projects or courses where you challenged yourself, personal commitment to pursuing higher education
    - ○ For research programs:
        - ■ Emphasize your research experiences and experience with statistics coursework and software (e.g. R Studio, SPSS)
- Your **interests** are apparent through the points on your cv:
    - ○ If you're interested in social psychology graduate school, emphasize the aspects of your experiences relating to that
- For specific psychology programs:
    - ○ PhD: Show research experiences
    - ○ PsyD: Show clinical experiences
    - ○ MSW: Show clinical experiences
    - ○ MA: emphasize your strengths as a student and experiences in the intended field of study

What does not belong in an undergraduate CV?

- **High school information:** graduation year, GPA, sports, etc.
    - ○ Exceptions:
        - ■ A prestigious scholarship you received for college that you were awarded as a high school student *(put this in your "Honors and Awards" section, not education)*.
            - "Student of the year" is not an example, but a merit scholarship funding your undergraduate education can be included
        - ■ An experience you started in high school that you are **still doing** today (e.g. volunteering with a non-profit)

General structure of a CV

- **Order will depend on what information is most relevant to what you're applying for**

- Some of this is not applicable to all undergraduates, or is specific to those pursuing different paths (jobs in research, MSW, clinical vs social psych: it's all different!)

- - It's ok to not include these sections if you don't have the experiences!

- Sections to include (if applicable):
    - Name and contact information
    - Education (this one is *always* first)
        - Show all institutions if you have transferred or studied abroad
    - Honors and Awards
        - Scholarships, prizes, honorable mentions for awards
    - Grants and fundings
        - Funding is different from awards! Have you been granted money for an unpaid internship? Have you submitted a grant for a research project?
    - Research experience
        - Labs, independent studies, etc.
    - Poster presentations
    - Paper publications
    - Invited talks and presentations
    - Field experience
    - Teaching experience
        - Includes being a teaching assistant, tutor (for any education level)
    - Service
        - Volunteer work in your community, university, etc.
    - Relevant skills
        - Examples of relevant skills (+ explanation):
            - Statistical softwares like R Studio, SPSS ("hard skills" for data analysis make you competitive for research positions)
            - Coding languages (if you have any programming experience, include proficiency in languages in addition to application domains (e.g. creating a website, data analysis, etc.)
            - Intermediate spanish speaker
        - Examples of irrelevant skills:
            - Really good conversationalist (or other "soft skills" that don't directly relate to your job)
            - Advanced juggling (totally irrelevant skills to the field of psychology; things that may make you cool, but not employable)
            - Writing and citing in APA style (certain things are assumed skills or field standards, it is not notable or unique to have this)
    - Certifications
    - Professional affiliations

Additional advice

- Use phrases rather than complete sentences
  - **Example** (+ explanation):

    Cognition Lab at Smith College, *student research assistant*
      - Recruited and enrolled participants (short and simple!)
      - Cleaned and analyzed data (if you want to specify what software you used, do so briefly in the SKILLS section, not here!)
      - Developed and presented posters with lab
                          V.S.
    Cognition Lab at Smith College, *student research assistant*
      - I worked as a student research assistant for Dr. xyz in the cognition lab at Smith College. (don't restate what you've already said)
      - I worked hard to recruit and enroll participants for our study. (no need to describe qualitative effort and personal attributes)
      - I cleaned and analyzed all of the data for our study. (write as phrase not full sentence)
      - I personally developed and presented an independent poster at a regional conference for student research, it was such a fulfilling experience. (if you present a poster, you can include in your POSTER section)

- Use verbs to describe specific duties and responsibilities throughout the CV, stay consistent with style and tense
  - [List of strong verbs when writing a CV or resume](#)
  - Tense: do not switch from saying "Was a research assistant in ___ lab, cleaned data…" to "Working as a research assistant in ___ lab, cleaning data…"

- Only include things that, if asked about, you can give a strong response to
  - If you were the 10th author on a poster that you did not have a huge role in, could you answer questions about the project if someone asked?
  - If you were asked "tell me about your experiences volunteering for __", could you respond? If you volunteered just once and don't have much to say for it, don't include it!

- Don't lie or embellish. If you feel like your CV is sparse, that is not a bad thing! Most undergraduates don't have pages and pages of information to share.
  - It is 1000x better to have a readable CV that is **short** than a repetitive, poorly written CV that is 10 pages long

- Don't double count things. For example, an unpaid clinical internship could go in "field experience" but could also technically be considered volunteering…**pick one section only and don't repeat just to have a longer document**.