



PG Essentials: Beyond the Basics Presenting yourself in writing

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What we'll cover

- The Basics – Revision: a test!
- Curate your life
- From description to insight
- Make every word count



CV Rules – Revision test

- How long should a CV be?
- Personal profile at the top of your CV – yes or no?
- Achievements/qualifications - should you go back to your school days?
- Is there such a thing as a “CV rule”?

www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/postgraduates/howtoguides/writecvsandapplicationsasapostgraduate



Curate your life

- “About me” ... what would you include, for a panel reviewing:
 - Applications for a Presidential Scholarship?



- Applications for a PGR Wellbeing Officer with the Students' Union?

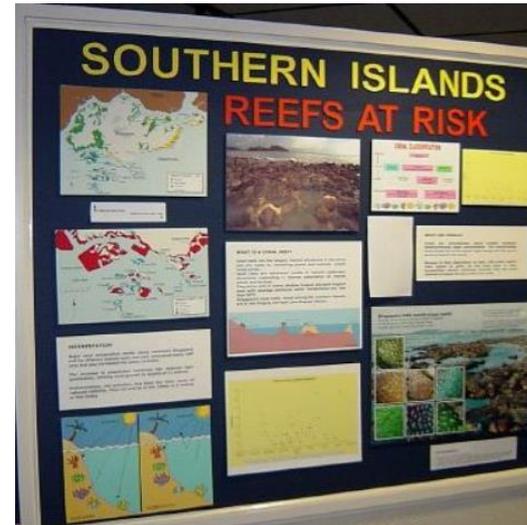
Curate your life – Select, Describe, Promote



or



or



Select

- What is the reader looking for?
- For each part of your life:
 - Will it reassure them you've got the experience, knowledge, skills they need?
 - Will it give them an idea of who you are and why you might “fit in”?

If not, then



Promote

University

- 2013-2017 BSc Biology
- 2017-2018 MSc Management

School

- A levels
- GCSEs
- Young Enterprise competition

Skills

- SDS-PAGE, western blotting, antibody staining, RT-PCR ...
- Teamwork, communication, sewing
- Projects ...

Work experience

- November 2012 Work experience, Greater Manchester Police
- April 2013 Lab experience, Syngenta

Work experience (continued)

- Summer 2014 Retail assistant, Trinkets
- 2015-2016 Researcher, Astra Zeneca
- Summer 2017 Set up pop-up shop retailing vintage & vintage-inspired clothing

Positions of responsibility

- Chair, Young Enterprise team, High School
- PASS coordinator, Faculty of Life Sciences

Awards

- Winner, Faculty Enterprise competition

Interests

- Travel
- Reading
- Making vintage inspired-clothing

Promote



- Balance convention with presenting your story effectively – risk management!
- Help the reader navigate using helpful headings and bullets
 - In general, summarise/group experiences rather than omit them
- Change the order - get the good stuff on the front page
- Allocate space according to how relevant an activity is to the reader (not how long you did it)

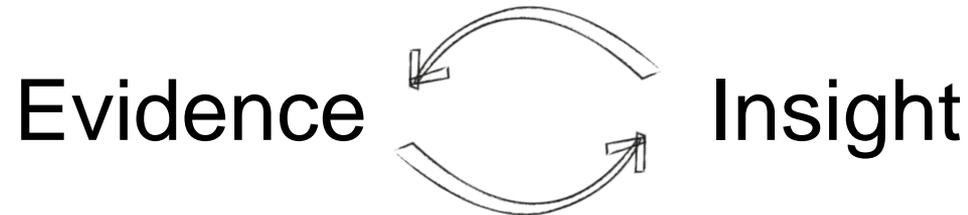
From description to insight ...

“ I am a hardworking, motivated & energetic individual with excellent communication and team work skills. I have unparalleled numerical skills and a fierce ambition to succeed.”



“Economics postgraduate with over 3 years retail experience and commercial skills gained from a successful internship with PWC. Seeking a graduate project manager role within your organisation.”

From description to insight ...



- It's not just what happened which is important
 - Why is it relevant to the reader?
 - What does it say about you?

It's your job to make sense of it
for the reader

Uncovering insights



What you're looking for, eg:

- Why something worked well
- What you learned from an experience
- Why you enjoyed or hated something, what that tells you – and the reader - about your skills, motivation, values ...
- Business or organisation insights

Uncovering insights



Enlist the help of others

- Explain a situation – get them to ask questions
 - Why do you think they ...? Why did you react that way? What made you decide to ...?
- Get them to replay what they heard or put their own interpretation on it
 - So, what you were doing was ...
 - Do you think they might have been worried about ... ?
- Get them to simplify/sum up
 - Cut to the chase: takes out the fluff, great for editing

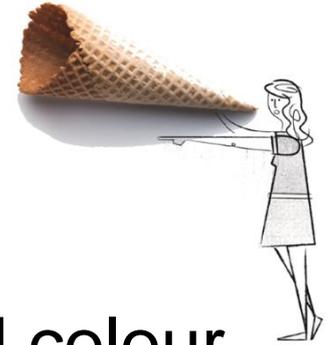
Disadvantage?



Don't these examples take up space?

- Yes. Be selective
- Which examples best show the skills needed by the employer?
- Fewer high quality examples often better than lots of irrelevant (or “me too”) ones
- Covering letters (or application forms) may be a better place than CVs for these
- Use to enhance your LinkedIn profile

Make every word count



- Create emphasis
 - Use strong verbs – adds emphasis and colour
 - “sorted out” – Better: established, persuaded, negotiated
 - “made” – caused something to happen - how? Better: doubled, generated, introduced
 - Avoid “excellently”, “tremendously”, “extremely”; could use “very” or “really” – but sparingly
 - Avoid “I had to ...” – sounds like you were forced
 - Chose, opted, elected, determined, decided – all sound more positive

Lean CVs – cut the padding!

- Focus on the verb
 - I made an improvement to ...
→ Improved ...
- Don't "start to", just do
 - Started to develop ... → Developed ...
- Don't do something "in order to", just do
 - "I set up a meeting in order to sort out the disagreements" – alternatives?
 - Stronger example? "Convened a meeting to resolve the conflicts"



Keep it simple - & skimmable

- Almost every recruiter loves bullet points
 - Focus the bullet – ~~put the verb at the start~~
 - Start with the verb
- Keep paragraphs short.
 - Rule of thumb: 4 lines or more is hard to skim
(feedback from non-academic employer reviewing a PG CV; academics less bothered by length)
- Keep sentences shorter
 - Avoid combining sentences just to save words

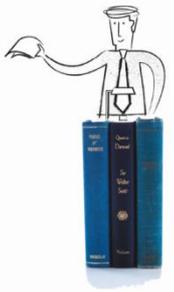
Lists ...



- Should you use lists of techniques?
 - Can be needed for agency applications/CVs
 - Allows agency to match you to vacancies by keyword
 - Direct applications - can be better to choose the most important techniques and add context:
 - “Used technique X in context Y to achieve outcome Z”
 - Shows you understand the value of the technique and can apply it



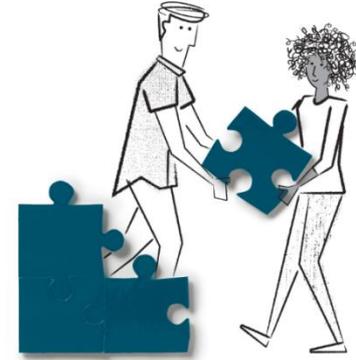
Professional - but human



- Use the language of the world you want to enter to show understanding
 - Relevant concepts rather than random technical terms
 - Targets, objectives, deliverables
 - Collaborations, outreach, peer review
- Keep some passion and personality
 - Interests can work in your favour
 - 100 perfect, identikit CVs are boring to read
 - Every recruiter wants someone who sounds like they would *love* to do the job



Enlist some help



- What's your "tell"?
 - Mine?
 - "We were starting to deliver ..."
 - Starting with the negatives
- Someone else with normally find mistakes in your final, final version.

Oops – will!
- CVs for postgrads
www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/postgraduates/howtoguides/writecvsandapplicationsasa/postgraduate
- Applications advice
 - The Atrium, Monday to Friday, bookable up to 24 hours in advance.
 - www.careers.manchester.ac.uk