

Tips for sharpening your resume to land a great Washington internship

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1. Focus on your journalism/communications experience. Internship employers want to know that you have experience and skills to do the work listed in their internship or job posting. And don't limit yourself to "paid" journalism/communications experience. If you are the volunteer social media manager for a club or student organization -- that's relevant experience. So is the work you do for the *Missourian*, KOMU, KBIA, Vox, the *Maneater* and other campus media and agencies.

2. Show, don't just tell. Don't just list the name of the organization where you worked, describe in one to three sentences or bullet points what you accomplished in that position. Highlight the types of stories or social media or campaigns you produced and/or the impact, results or obstacles overcome in one particular project. You can also highlight your duties and skills used in a position to show employers what you can do. While you can certainly include a list of skills somewhere on your resume, showing your experience and where you have used specific skills is more powerful than a generic listing of your skills.

3. Know your audience. The hiring managers who will review your resume are in Washington, D.C., so you will want to write your resume to be read by people who have little or no familiarity with the Missouri School of Journalism, its media outlets and agencies, and Columbia, Mo. When you list organizations on your resume where you have gained experience, be sure to include the city and state where the organization is located, and in the bullet points or accomplishment description, you should look for ways to help the reader understand something about the organization you worked for. For example, if you were a producer at KOMU, your first bullet point might say something like: Produced three stories a week for KOMU, mid-Missouri's NBC-affiliated television station. Just a few words of description about each organization helps hiring managers understand the significance of your experience.

4. Reduce or eliminate non-essential information: Keep your resume to one page. Washington employers are looking to hire interns with experience and skills that are relevant to the specific job they have posted. Work experience that has little or no ties to journalism or communications should be significantly condensed or potentially eliminated from this resume. If you are working your way through college with jobs at restaurants, shops or other positions that don't involve communications-related skills, ask yourself whether they should be on your D.C. internship resume. If you do include them, consider condensing them and putting them below your relevant experience, perhaps under an "Other Experience" category. The same is true for volunteer experiences that do not have an obvious connection to journalism or communications. Washington hiring managers are often evaluating 100 or more resumes for a single position. That means they are quickly scanning each resume. You need your journalism/communications experience to be what they see first. Also, in most cases, the resume should only include experience from your time in college. Your competition will be college juniors, seniors and graduate students. If you have received college scholarships or academic honors or awards, consider including them on your resume, likely near the bottom of the page. Your GPA is not necessary to include on your resume, unless the job listing specifies a GPA requirement.

5. Include essential information: Be sure your resume includes at least your email address and telephone number, and consider also listing your mailing address. If you have a portfolio of relevant journalism or communication work examples, include a link to it and label it as your portfolio. In your education section, list your major(s) and the degree you are working toward -- plus your anticipated graduation month and year. Make sure any links work and that your email and phone number are accurate.

6. Evaluate your presentation and content: While it's great for your resume to have an attractive design, it's more important to play up your experience. If the design template you have chosen doesn't seem to have enough space to play up your experience, look for a new template. Also, be sure to save your resume and cover letters as pdfs and save them with appropriate file names that identify the documents as yours, such as *AlisonYoungResume.pdf* or *AlisonYoungLetter.pdf*.

7. Be sure there are no typos or other errors: Your resume and cover letter are where you make your first impression with a prospective employer. They must be error free. Double- and triple-check all of the content, especially your phone number, email address and any hyperlinks. Run spell check -- but don't rely on it because it won't catch everything. Have a friend and/or the campus writing center review your resume and look for grammar errors and typos.

8. Consult with the Washington Program director. Once you have your resume in good shape, email it to Washington Program director Alison Young (alisonyoung@missouri.edu) and set up a time to discuss any additional suggestions and come up with a strategy for your D.C. internship search. If you also have a draft cover letter ready, send that to her as well.