

The Personal Interest CV Section

Investment Banking › CV and Cover Letter



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Many students who we have talked to think that the "personal interests", "other interests" or "hobbies" section is not the most important thing on your CV. Here is a CV tip: while your academic performance and professional experience matters, this section at the bottom of your CV is often quite important too. Why?

1. Your interests show the bank how well-rounded you are

Being a "well-rounded" person is a recurring recruiting theme among investment banks. Nobody wants to hire an academically gifted person who would not be able to hold a casual conversation with a senior banker or a CEO for a few minutes. This is often called "the airport test": interviewers will ask themselves, "Would I like to be stuck in an airport with this person?" Showing that your interest in sports, interesting hobbies, or anything else outside study and work indicates that you are a well-rounded person. Therefore, pay particular attention to showing that you are neither a nerd, nor a workaholic.

2. They show the bank your potential leadership skills, creative skills and open-mindedness

This section at the bottom of your CV is not there to look nice or to fill some space. Every aspect of this section, every hobby, needs to show something about yourself that will improve your candidacy. For each aspect, it will need to either show: **leadership, creativity, stamina, or intelligence.**

For example:

- Sports: If you were the captain of your rugby team, this instantly shows the bank that you have great leadership skills and will be able to manage teams in the future, which is an extremely important skill for a banker. If you won competitions (or at least ranked in the top three), this will also show leadership skill and stamina, as well as a competitive spirit. This will score you a lot of points during interviews. More unusual sports such as rock climbing or diving tend to attract much more interest.

- Hobbies (outside sports): Do not list a range of common, boring hobbies. Definitely avoid mentioning reading, watching movies, chess or travelling. This is something that everybody does.
- Extra-curriculars: activities such as managing small businesses (i.e. online businesses) or being managing members of clubs will score you many points.
- Languages: Do mention linguistic ability following these categories: native, fluent, intermediate, or beginner. Never overestimate yourself because you WILL be tested at some point, even if you speak a rare language.
- Warnings: Watching movies is generally not a good hobby to mention (everybody does it). Chess is a very common hobby, as students often try to use it to show "intellect" or "strategic thinking," but only mention this if you are part of a club or won some real competitions. Finally, art is an excellent topic but choose carefully and make sure you know about the topic, because you will likely be quizzed about it.
- Final warning: do NOT mention fluent English in your application.

3. Interesting personal activities will give you an edge at building a relationship with the interviewer

If a person lists as interests "jogging, travelling, and fishing", it will be hard for the interviewer to connect with the applicant; the conversation will remain very formal, and they will probably spend the extra time drilling you on harder topics. However, if somebody mentions on the CV, "ran London marathon twice" or "climbed Mount Kilimanjaro in 2007" or "launched a small online florist", the conversation will flow naturally and easily. In fact, more time will probably be spent on talking about your hobbies than banking, and this will leave a very positive feeling with the interviewer. Overall, our advice is to use the personal interest section to differentiate yourself from other applications. When writing your CV, do ask yourself: "How does this hobby add value to my application?" and "What does this hobby say about me?"

If you would like your CV to be reviewed by AskIvy, please see our [CV Review Service here](#).

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