

Writing the Curriculum Vita

What is a curriculum vita?

A curriculum vitae (CV), or vita, is a written summary of educational and professional experience that is generally required as part of the academic job search process. The CV is a marketing tool that allows you to show a university search committee that your education, skills and experiences make you the best-qualified applicant. Search committees use the vita as a screening device to identify the top candidates for interviews. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind how search committee members will view your material. The CV may also be required as part of the graduate school admissions process.

What distinguishes a CV from a Résumé?

Think of the CV as an academic version of a résumé. A résumé summarizes the qualifications, education, experiences, skills and achievements of job applicants in most fields. The CV is used in the academic community to showcase earned degrees, teaching and research experience, publications, presentations, and related service and activities. Résumés are generally one or two pages in length. The CV may have many pages.

What should you include in a CV?

Every CV should include your name, address, contact information, education and relevant experience. The choices for other categories are practically limitless. Brainstorm. Write down everything you can think of that would be important to academics in your field. Ask professors in your major what they would consider important. Below are some options for a few academic areas:

- **English:** Degrees, courses you taught, employment and research experience, publications.
- **Science:** Dissertation or thesis, postdoctoral experience, awards such as grants or fellowships, publications.
- **Languages:** Degrees, native tongue, other languages spoken and level of fluency in speaking, writing and reading, certificates, language studies, international travel and long stays abroad.
- **History:** Degrees, experiences, grants, fellowships, awards, publications, guest lectures.
- **Music:** Degrees, principal teachers with noteworthy reputations, performance experience, professional association memberships, publications.
- **Art:** Collections, exhibits and shows, grants, awards, lectures.

How should you format the CV?

While there is no specific format required for the CV, here are some suggestions for organizing the information:

1. Name, address, phone number and email address:

Place these items at the top of the first page. Your name and the page number on subsequent pages should be placed at either the top left or top right corner.

2. Education:

- List education in reverse chronological order with the highest degree earned, or anticipated, first. List the institution, degree and date degree conferred or anticipated, major and area of specialization (if applicable). Either the institution or the degree can be listed first, depending on what you choose to emphasize. (List only postsecondary schooling.)

- Doctoral degree holders should list the title of their dissertation and their dissertation committee chair with his or her degree. A short, two- or three-line summary of the research may also be included. Master degree students may list their thesis title.
- Grade point averages are optional. List graduation with distinction or honors.
- Additional coursework or private study may be included in the education section after formal studies are listed.
- Listing qualifying, comprehensive or preliminary examinations passed is optional.
- Do not list all your graduate courses because they are in your transcripts.

3. Relevant Experience:

- List teaching, research and other work experiences. Include graduate assistantships, internships and postgraduate fellowships.
- Provide a brief description of your responsibilities if the job title of a position does not convey the extent or value of your experience.
- Use short phrases that begin with action verbs to describe your experience.
- If your mentor has national or international recognition, you may want to note on this. However, only your qualifications will get you a job. Your mentor's professional status may only help garner attention.

4. Other Categories:

- Dissertation: If your dissertation is on a topic of special interest to the academic institution to which you are applying, you may want to list it separate from education.
- Honors/Awards: Academic and professional awards can be listed in the education or relevant experience section.
- Publications: List these using the bibliographic style required by your discipline.
- Grants: Grant writing is an asset, so document successful experience in securing funding from any source. Identify the project, funding agency and dollar amount.
- Performance/Exhibitions (especially important for fine arts majors): Include information about recitals, roles, exhibits, shows and recognitions.

CV DON'Ts

1. Do not attach a photograph.
2. Don't mention race, religion or ethnicity.
3. Don't mention age, date or place of birth.
4. Don't list physical characteristics (gender, height, weight, eye color).
5. Don't list family information (marital status, name and occupation of spouse, names and ages of children.)
6. Avoid use of trite phrases, slang or clichés.
7. Omit references to salary requirements.
8. Don't use multiple fonts. Choose a single, readable font. Popular choices are Cambria and Calibri. Text size should be no smaller than 10-point type and no larger than 12-point type. Your name may be as large as 14- to 16-point type.
9. Avoid overuse of italics, underlining, fancy highlighting or special effects.
10. Don't exaggerate or make inaccurate claims about abilities and accomplishments.

CV DOs

1. Be honest and accurate with the content.
2. Tailor your CV to the targeted position.
3. Use action words to describe your experiences and qualifications.
4. Organize your CV to showcase your strengths as they relate to the targeted position.
5. Use adequate white space. Use margins and space within and between sections to help your printed information stand out.
6. Be consistent with placement of your experience information. Keep the title, organization dates and location uniform. throughout the document.
7. Have at least one colleague or peer proofread your CV. Be open to suggestions.
8. Remember your audience.
9. If you include a URL for your personal website, make sure it is professional.