

The Curriculum Vitae



Career Services

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Difference between a CV and a Resume

"Curriculum vitae" (abbreviated "CV") is a Latin phrase translating roughly to "course of my life." Conversationally it is often called a "vita." Confusion sometimes occurs around the difference between a CV and a resume because sometimes there is no difference. In other countries a CV is the term used to mean what we typically think of as a resume. Even some people in the U.S. use the terms interchangeably.

Usually, though, a CV and resume here in the U.S. serve different purposes and consequently have different content and format from one another. A curriculum vitae is typically used in academic, scientific or research settings, focuses on scholarly pursuits and is longer in length – as long as it needs to be, in fact. Resumes are used for career fields outside academia as marketing documents that often get very quick reviews, so they must summarize and format content in such a way that it can be reviewed quickly – within seconds. Also, the content of resumes is designed to persuade readers that the job seeker has the skills and experience necessary to do the job. CVs, on the other hand, are a thorough documentation of all scholarship, research and teaching pursuits.

When to Use a CV

- Applying for graduate school
- Applying for fellowships
- Grant applications
- Seeking an academic position
- International jobs/internships
- Seeking professional association leadership
- Publishing
- Departmental/tenure reviews
- Speaking engagements
- Editorial review boards

Preparing your CV

If you're a current student or recent graduate, your CV and resume will likely resemble each other quite a bit because you don't yet have a tremendous amount of experience. The main differences will be moving your honors higher on the page, focusing on research or creative works as opposed to other jobs and activities and the addition of a publications/presentations section.

Faculty members are excellent resources for CV writing, since they have all created their own. Examples of Southwestern University faculty and student CVs are available for review in the Career Services Resource Center. Career Services also reviews and critiques CVs by appointment. As with a resume, you may need different versions of your CV for different types of positions. If you are anticipating using your CV overseas, we recommend you research each country's accepted CV format, which may be different than the format commonly used in the United States.

Have your CV critiqued and allow yourself a number of drafts before you produce a final copy for any given opportunity to which you are applying. Your CV will grow with your experiences and as your career needs change and develop.

Basic Structure of the CV

Like a resume, a CV begins with your contact information. And like resumes for students and recent graduates, education is your most important credential on the CV, so that category appears at the beginning of the document.

Thereafter, the structure of any CV includes some of the same categories as a resume but also includes several new ones.

Identification

Name
Address
Telephone number including area code
E-mail address

Education

Degrees (earned or in progress, reverse chronological order)
Professional studies
Principal teachers

Professional experience

Focus on the experiences relevant to the opportunity you're seeking. These often include:

Professional overview/background
Teaching experience/overview
Course highlights
Areas of expertise
Research experience/overview
Teaching/research assistantships
Fieldwork
Administrative experience

Honors

When applying for a scholarly honor in particular, you may want to list the Honors section immediately after Education, toward the beginning of the CV document. Include:

Fellowships
Academic awards
Scholarships
Special honors
Awards
Prizes

Publications, presentations, inventions/patents

Include all, most recent first, in correct bibliographic format so the reader can check details. Include author, title, publisher, place of publication/presentation, name of periodical/conference, volume, issue number, date, page(s) and show both independent and collaborative work (if applicable). Include:

Journal articles
Chapters in books
Papers presented
Works currently under submission
Books papers
Monographs
Reviews
Exhibits/exhibitions
Arrangement/scores
Workshop presentations
Conference presentations
Conference participation/leadership

Memberships

Professional association memberships
Memberships in scholarly societies

Professional certification

Certificates
Licensure
Special training
Endorsements

Foreign study

Study Abroad
Travel abroad
Languages
Language competencies

Computer/Technical Skills

References

Supply the name, address, telephone/fax number of three (or more) individuals who can comment on your fit to the institution where you are applying. Choose your referees wisely by including persons who know you and your work well, including referees with high external visibility, if possible. Be sure to ask their permission before submitting their names.

Tips for Producing an Attractive CV

Design Tips

- Be sure your name appears at the top of each page.
- Consistency is important; stay with one style and font.
- Use quality bond paper – do not use odd-sized paper or bright, unusual colors.
- Do not print on both sides of a page.
- Do not use script or gothic lettering, bright colors or strange graphics.
- If you are faxing your CV, do not use italics, underlined text or dark paper.

Content Tips

- Omit references to marital status, children, health, spouse's work, religious affiliation
- Do NOT include as heading words such as "Personal Information," "Name," "Address"
- Omit negative words or information. Ensure that you use correct spelling and grammar.
- Update the information in your CV before sending. It is not necessary to include the date of preparation; however, if you think it would be helpful to you or those receiving your CV, add the date at the top of the first page
- Include content sections relevant to your field (e.g. computer proficiency, scientific instrumentation, etc.).

Layout Tips

- **Sections go in order of importance to the reader.** Remember we read from top to bottom and left to right, so more important content should appear toward the top of every page and front of every line.
- **Length varies.** Include sufficient, well-written detail about yourself to enable a good assessment of your qualifications for the position:
 - Two to four pages for a young professional
 - Four to seven pages for a person with more experience
 - While there is no technical maximum, many experts recommend not exceeding 10 pages.
- **Gapping** is common on a CV, as it is on resumes. Gapping is the use of incomplete sentences. For example, instead of writing, "I taught composition for four years, during which time I planned classes and activities, graded papers, and constructed exams. I also met with students regularly for conferences," you might write, "Composition Instructor (2000-2004). Planned course activities. Graded all assignments. Held regular conferences with students." By using incomplete sentences here, you cut out unnecessary words and allow your reader to see quickly what you have been doing.
- **Parallelism** is also very important to a strong CV. Keep the structure of your phrases and/or sentences consistent throughout your document (i.e. if you use verb phrases in one portion of your CV to describe your duties, try to use them throughout your CV). Particularly within entries, make sure that the structure of your phrases is exactly parallel so that your reader can understand what you are communicating easily.
- **Bullets or not?** One distinction between the work description sections of resumes and CVs is that bullets are very commonly used in resumes and tend to appear somewhat less frequently in CVs. Whether or not you use bullets to separate lines in your CV should depend on how the bullets will affect the appearance of your CV. If you have a number of descriptive statements about your work that all run to about a line in length, bullets can be a good way of separating them. If, however, you have a lot of very short phrases, breaking them up into bulleted lists can leave a lot of white space that could be used more efficiently. Remember that the principles guiding any decision you make should be conciseness and ease of readability.

References:

Purdue Online Writing Center Website,
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/641/01/>

Oklahoma State University Career Services' Preparing a
Curriculum Vitae Ready Reference E-13