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Creating and Maintaining Your CV

(http://www.flickr.com/photos/luschei/1207763391/)In the United States and Canada, *curriculum vitae* (Latin for "the course of a life"), or "CV" in common parlance, refers to a document that describes an academic's educational background and professional experience. It's often thought of as something like an academic's resumé, with the important difference that the CV is typically comprehensive (and therefore long) and a resumé is selective (and short). A copy of your CV will frequently be requested when applying for academic jobs, grants, or conferences. It's important to note, however, that in Europe and the UK, the term CV refers to a shorter document similar to the resumés produced for corporate contexts in the United States. Thus many websites offering "CV advice" are actually aimed at European jobseekers rather than academics.

If you are already employed, your institution may require that promotion or website CVs follow a set organization and format. Your professional organization may recommend certain formatting. But if you don't have a set format to use, then the following suggestions and links should help.

What is the Purpose?

The CV describes your entire academic career, which encompasses education, employment history, publications, grants awarded, papers delivered, teaching experience, and service experience. A CV allows an individual (or a committee) who does not know you personally to have some understanding of the scope of your educational background, professional career, and current research interests. Committees are often in the position of comparing applicants and so your CV should provide clear access to your professional information.

There are a set of conventions that academics generally use when compiling and evaluating CVs. The more closely you follow these conventions, the more easily your readers can locate the information they seek about you. In general, the CV is not the place to demonstrate your creativity, your unique aesthetic, or your free spirit. It is a professional document and you should aim for clarity and completeness of information. You may think that small details like page numbers don't matter, but I've served on committees frustrated by applicants who didn't provide complete citations for their publications. Why give a committee that kind of a reason to toss your application?

How Long Should it Be?

A CV can be as long as needed in order to fully document your career. For some circumstances, such as grant or employment applications, it is appropriate to include your complete CV (maybe 3-5 pages for a postdoc, or 20+ pages for a senior scholar). For other circumstances, you may be asked to submit only a two-page CV or some other specified shorter length. Once you have your master CV document compiled, it's quite easy to create a shorter one that highlights the relevant categories of information.

Many institutions require or encourage faculty to post either abbreviated or full CVs. These can help you see what CV conventions are used in your field of specialization.

Collect All of your Information

The first step in compiling your CV should be to note down all of your relevant professional experience. CVs typically include information such as:

- Contact Information (email, postal address, telephone)
- Education (list all of your degrees including undergraduate)
- Professional Employment (list all of your positions, with dates and ranks)
- Research Experience (might be subdivided into publications, presentations, grants, etc)
- Teaching Experience (might be subdivided into courses taught, theses supervised, curriculum development, etc)
- Honors and Awards
- Professional Service (might be subdivided into Department, College, University, Professional Organizations)

In every category, you want to provide complete information: full bibliographic citations for your publications and presentations; dates for all degrees, jobs, awards and other experience; and grantor names and dollar amounts for grants.

Use Headings to Your Advantage

Group similar items together on your CV by using headings and subheadings. You can adjust the names and order of the categories on your CV to best highlight your experience. (See the websites linked below for suggestions for category titles.) For instance, if you are applying for small-college teaching positions, you might decide to list your teaching experience before your research experience. If you have experience in a unique area, then group those items together under a subheading (Field Research, Digital Editing, or Stage Performance). If you are applying for academic jobs, your CV might also include a description of your dissertation topic and/or names of faculty who have agreed to serve as references.

In general, most CVs separate Research, Teaching and Service items into various subheadings. Within each subheading, list information in either chronological or reverse chronological order (pick one and use it throughout your CV).

Formatting

Use formatting to support the organizational structure of your content, not distract from it.

Keep your formatting simple: pick one font; use bold and/or capitalization to visually distinguish headings from main text; and limit your use of indenting. ProfHacker Nels recommended LifeClever's Give Your Resumé a Face Lift (http://www.lifeclever.com/give-your-resume-a-face-lift/), which offers very clear suggestions and resources about typography and page design.

The Chronicle's CV Doctor columns provide sample CVs and two expert readers' critique of them. I've found these very helpful for thinking about how organization and format can be perceived by your readers. See, for example:

- CV Doctor Is Back (3 different examples) (2009) (http://chronicle.com/article/The-CV-Doctor-Is-Back-/49086/)
- CV Doctor 2008 (English, Social Work, History of Medicine–and good general remarks) (http://chronicle.com/article/CV-Doctor-Returns-English/48629/)
- CV Doctor 2005 (http://chronicle.com/article/The-CV-Doctor-Returns/45037/)
- CV Doctor 2003 (http://chronicle.com/article/The-CV-Doctor-Returns/45312/)
- CV Doctor 2002: CV for a Faculty Member in the Sciences (http://chronicle.com/article/The-CV-Doctor-CV-For-a/46059/)

Traditionally, academic CVs have relied less upon bullet point lists than corporate resumés, but I think that has been changing over the past decade. Just be sure that your selection of margins, indenting, and/or bullet points help you to clearly present your information, rather than create unnecessary visual clutter.

How to Keep Your CV Updated

After you've put a lot of work into compiling and designing your CV, it's important to remember that the document you wind up with is only provisionally complete, since your academic career continues to progress. In a previous Open Thread column, ProfHacker readers have already made some good suggestions for ways to keep your CV updated (http://chronicle.com/blogPost/Open-Thread-Tips-For/25982/). Most of these are some variation (whether low-tech or high-tech) on maintaining one master document that you update regularly with new information, and using it to generate CVs as needed for particular uses. Use file names and dates to keep track of which CV is which.
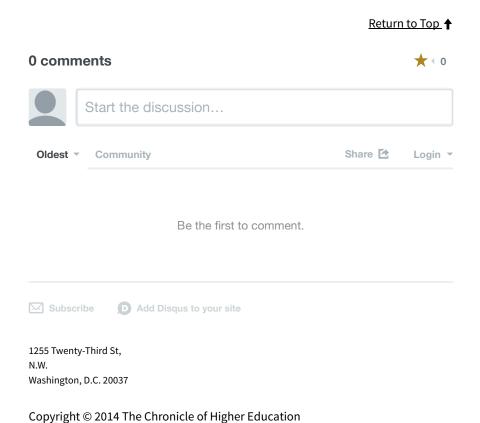
Additional Resources

There are lots of sites that offer information and examples of academic CVs. Here are a few that you might find helpful.

- Colorado State University's detailed step-by-step guide to Writing a CV (http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/documents/cv/index.cfm)
- Rice University Center for Student Professional Development's CVs and Resumés for Graduate Students (PDF) (http://cspd.rice.edu/docs/cv_and_resume_guide.pdf) excellent overview, list of possible cv headings, and samples
- Duke University Career Center's CV Guide (http://www.studentaffairs.duke.edu/career/resources/cv-guide) includes samples from several disciplines
- Pepperdine University, Seaver College Career Center's Writing the Academic CV (PDF) (http://seaver.pepperdine.edu/careercenter/doc/CV%20Packet.pdf)
- University of Pennsylvania's CV Guide (http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradstud/samples/CVguide.html) (includes tips and templates)
- Virginia Tech Career Services curriculum vitae (http://www.career.vt.edu/JOBSEARC/Resumes/vitae.htm) page
- *Science* Magazine's How to Craft a Winning Resumé (http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_development/tools_resources/how_to_guides/how_to_craft_a_winning_resume) includes information for scientists seeking positions in industry as well as academe.
- CV recommendations for art historians (http://www.collegeart.org/guidelines/arthistcv.html) adopted by the College Art Association
- Purdue Online Writing Lab's tips on Writing the CV (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/641/1/)

What are your questions or tips about compiling and maintaining your CV? Let us know in the comments!

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