

Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles

Elements of a Curriculum Vitae

Definition

Curriculum vitae: (Latin) “course of one’s life”—a concise account of one’s career (academic and professional), qualifications, and accomplishments. The academic equivalent of a résumé. Here “vitae” is not a plural, but a genitive (possessive) case (a form of Latin declension); thus, the plural is *curricula vitae* (e.g., “The *curricula vitae* of the applicants.”). Accordingly, when referring to your curriculum vitae, it is proper to use “my vita” (where *vita* is a noun), or “my curriculum vitae,” but not “my curriculum vita.”

Purpose

Your CV documents and describes the course of your professional education, experiences, training, accomplishments, and career. It is typically prepared by an applicant for a fellowship or grant, graduate or professional school, or a professional position. Your CV should be tailored (including lengthening or abbreviating) for its intended audience and purpose (e.g., grant application, job application, seminar introduction, etc.). For that reason, most professionals maintain several versions of their CVs (short, long, for grants, for job applications, etc.).

Creating Your CV

Unless you are preparing your CV for a particular purpose for which the format is specified (e.g., some grant proposal), there is no official or right/wrong way to prepare a CV, only ways that are more or less effective. If you are starting from scratch, you should examine the CVs of your advisor, other professors, and advanced graduate students. It may be especially helpful to review the CVs of peers who are just beyond your stage of professional development. Rather than becoming intimidated by the lengthy CVs of senior professionals, note the categories (headings) in their CVs and consider those as goals to accomplish and add to your CV in the future. Although content is certainly important, presentation is also critical. After you have examined a few CVs, consider what makes the more visually appealing examples stand out.

Start composing your CV as soon as you begin your professional career. Avoid waiting until one is required for a specific grant or job application to recall and compile your professional experiences and accomplishments since you completed your bachelor’s degree. Likewise, you should update your CV regularly and, preferably, soon after every accomplishment (e.g., honors, grant awards, teaching experiences, special training, publications, etc.) to avoid forgetting important entries and last-minute revisions.

The following pages contain recommendations regarding general dos and don’ts of CV preparation. Most of these are *opinions*, not rules (but see the last section for absolute no-nos). As stated above, each CV is unique to its owner and your CV should reflect the positive aspects of your personality as well as your professional experiences and accomplishments.

It is important to be aware that beyond the accomplishments documented in your CV, reviewers will form an impression of you (e.g., your organizational skills, attention to detail, creativity, etc.) based on how you have prepared this vital document—usually before meeting you in person. Make sure that the impression your CV conveys about you is positive in every respect.



Aesthetics

- Your CV should be well organized, with a logical presentation of the contents (see below). It should allow the reader to learn about you quickly. Therefore, place the information that is most important to your specific audience at the beginning. For example, if you are applying for a teaching position, your teaching interests/experiences should be on the first page.
- Your CV should be pleasing to the eye, without overdoing it. For treeware (printed) versions (increasingly less common), it is appropriate to use high-end paper stock (gently textured, light earth tones or other soft colors, heavy weight or cotton-based papers), but avoid day-glow colors or other distracting materials. The idea is to have your CV stand out, not shout out!
- Use consistent formatting (font formats, text size, spacing, etc.). Do not crowd the margins (use ~2.5 cm on all sides) as your CV may be printed and the margins used for notes by reviewers. Strive to achieve a balance of text on each page (i.e., avoid windows, or large white spaces lacking text).
- Use a font that is easily read. Serif fonts like Times or Times New Roman or Garamond work well (which is why they are widely used in books, journals, and newspapers). Sans serif fonts (e.g., Arial, Helvetica) are increasingly popular, especially for screen reading. Avoid fonts like Courier, which look like they were printed on an old-fashioned typewriter and fonts like Monaco, which space all letters equally. If you choose to vary the font in your CV, do so sparingly (e.g., for section headers vs. body of text).
- Judicious use of **bolding**, *italics*, underlining, SMALL CAPS, enlarged font sizes, and color can help set off major headings, subheadings, etc. but use these formats consistently throughout and do not use more than two in tandem (***DON'T GET TOO FANCY***). Generally, avoid using ALL CAPITAL LETTERS (except in headers) BECAUSE THESE READ LIKE YOU ARE SHOUTING AT THE READER.
- Use succinct bulleted lists rather than long strings of words, phrases, or sentences. If you find you are using periods (.), then you are writing too much.
- Although most items within a heading (e.g., grants, degrees, teaching experience, etc.) will be listed chronologically or in reverse chronological order, cite information in lists so that the emphasis is on the most important item (e.g., the name of the award, granting institution, etc.) by listing that first, rather than placing the year first. When noting dates for listed items, it is not necessary to indicate the full dates or even month or semester—year alone will suffice.
- Avoid abbreviations and acronyms for all but the most internationally familiar terms, or spell them out at first use. For example, DNA and USA are fine, but many universities share the same acronyms. For example, UW could be University of Washington, University of Wisconsin, or University of Wyoming. Similarly, ESA could be interpreted as the Ecological Society of America, Entomological Society of America, European Space Agency, the Endangered Species Act, the Entertainment Software Association, etc.



Content Essentials (continued on next page)

- *Complete professional name*—It is time to decide whether to use your middle initial, hyphenated last names, or family suffixes (e.g., Jr., IV, etc.) in your professional name. Once you decide, avoid using alternative forms of your name as this may impact how your work is credited in citation indexes (although registering for an [ORCID iD](#) should prevent this).
- *Present position(s)*—Include title(s) (MS Candidate, Teaching Associate, Research Assistant, etc.) and contact information: full institution name, complete address, office, laboratory, and mobile phone, facsimile, email, website, and professional blogs and social media addresses.
- *Education*—Include institutions (college only; spell out completely), major fields of study, degrees (note if with honors: *cum laude*, *magna cum laude*, or *summa cum laude*) + year(s) conferred, and postdoctoral training. Some scientists include titles of their theses and dissertations. These are typically listed in reverse chronological order (most recent → oldest).
- *Previous professional positions*—Include your official title(s), institution(s), and year(s). These are usually listed in reverse chronological order.
- *Awards and honors*—Include only awards for professional activities. Some scientists separate their awards into categories such as intramural (within an institution) and extramural (external awards). Include institutions, complete award titles, year(s), and monetary awards accompanying the honor (if any). These are usually listed in reverse chronological order.
- *Research interests*—Include general (e.g., cell biology, population ecology, etc.) and specific interests (e.g., protein packaging, antibiotic resistance, predator–prey interactions, etc.) as well as specific study organisms or model systems. Provide as short bulleted lists, not sentences.
- *Grant support*—Include project title, co-principal investigators (if any), granting agency, year(s), and award amounts. Usually listed in reverse chronological order.
- *Teaching experience*—List the courses you have taught noting (1) your position (e.g., instructor, Teaching Associate, etc.); (2) complete course title; (3) format: lecture, lab, seminar, etc.; (4) course level (graduate or undergraduate; course numbers lack meaning outside home institution); (4) delivery mode: in person, fully online, or hybrid; (5) the institution; and (6) the year(s) (no need to indicate semester or quarter). Usually listed in reverse chronological order.
- *Professional presentations*—List presentations given at professional meetings. Format these lists like you would a bibliography for a paper (see example below). Include, in this order, the author(s), year, title, complete name of the society(ies), the city and state (and country if outside the USA). Identify the presenter of multi-authored papers with an asterisk or other identifier and your own name with bold/underline, etc. Distinguish between poster and oral presentations, although it is not necessary to list them in separate subcategories. Create separate subheadings for invited symposia and departmental seminars. Traditionally, listed in chronological order, current preference is to list most-recent presentations first.

Malone, C. S.*, P. J. Edmunds, **R. Mackelprang**, F. Hertel, and J. M. Robertson. 2018. A new diagnostic test for detecting dead-wood faculty. Southern California Academy of Sciences, Northridge, California [oral].



Content Essentials (continued from previous page)

- *Publications*—Format your publications as you would a bibliography for a paper and maintain formatting consistency. Journal citations should include: all author names (initials for first and middle names only), year of publication, title (not in quotes, capitalize only formal words), full journal name (not abbreviated), volume number (do not include the issue number), and inclusive pages. Some researchers include article [DOIs](#). Some scientists separate their papers into categories such as: books, book chapters, journal publications, and shorter contributions (e.g., notes, book reviews, etc.). Published abstracts (i.e., those printed in a volume of abstracts from a professional meeting) and popular articles, agency reports, or “gray” literature should be included under a separate heading (and only if you have not included them in the Professional Presentations section, above). List only papers that have been published or accepted for publication, so your CV does not appear “padded” with manuscripts that are “in preparation.” You may include an additional list of “Manuscripts Available” for those papers that are in review or under revision. Traditionally, listed in chronological order, current preference is to list most-recent publications first. Some scientists number them.

Other Items (continued on next page)

The following items should be included if you can claim them. Intersperse them within the essential items described above in an order that makes logical sense (e.g., invited seminars should come before professional presentations).

- *Professional experience*—Include experiences such as scientific consultant, laboratory technician, field assistant, museum docent, or curatorial assistant. Briefly describe (bulleted list, not sentences) your responsibilities in relation to your field of study. Do not list jobs that are unrelated to your field (e.g., burger flipper, dance instructor, etc.).
- *Professional service*—These are duties you assume (usually) without compensation including giving a presentation to a club or youth group, providing information in a radio or television interview (these last two may be listed separately under the subheading “Community Service”), creating a departmental website, serving as treasurer of a graduate student association, organizing a symposium, serving as referee for peer-reviewed journals, reviewing grant proposals, serving as chair of the Animal Care and Use Committee at your university, etc. Some scientists break these items into subheadings like intramural and extramural or international, national, university, departmental, etc.
- *Training certifications and other skills*—Include any special skills you have if they are applicable to the job or award you seek and not readily apparent from your other professional experiences. These might include SCUBA diver or CPR certification, radiation safety training, foreign language (be sure to indicate reading, writing, and speaking level) or computer programming proficiency, GIS, scientific illustration, etc.
- *Membership in professional societies*—It is important that you affiliate yourself with professional organizations in your field of study early in your academic career. Include both intramural and extramural affiliations. Cite these organizations as a bulleted list in alphabetical order (e.g., Ecological Society of America, CSUN Microbiology Club, Sigma Xi, etc.).



Other Items (continued from previous page)

- *Invited seminars*—Include the title of your talk, the institution and department or professional society, and year.
- *Names of references (optional)*—Students and early career scientists sometimes include these as the last item of their CV, but most professionals provide this information separately (e.g., in a cover letter). If you opt to include professional references, include their complete contact information (full institutional address, phone and facsimile numbers, and email address).
- *Date your CV*—CVs change frequently as information is updated and new items are added. Therefore, many scientists place the date that their CV was last revised/printed in the first page header to indicate the recentness of the document. If >1 page, include page numbers as well.

Organization and Order

Organization is an extremely important element of your CV. For example, if readers cannot easily determine where you were educated or your previous experience related to the job you are applying for, you may be overlooked. Keep in mind that CV reviewers for a job or grant application are most likely wading through a very large pile of similar documents from your competitors. All else being equal, if your CV is easy to navigate, there is a better chance you will make it to the successive stages of consideration for the position or award.

The order of some items in your CV should be modified according to the position or grant you are seeking. For instance, if you are applying for a research grant, you will want to emphasize your research experience and previous grant awards more than your teaching experience. Nevertheless, **your CV should generally start and finish with your best material**. The reason for this is that reviewers tend to remember the first and last of what they read. First impressions do matter, and so does leaving a lasting impression. Therefore, the first and last items in your CV should not be changed (in most cases) regardless of your audience. (As discussed in class, the “primacy and recency” principle applies to more than just CV organization.)

First and foremost, reviewers will need to know who you are and how to get in contact with you: professional address(es) and contact information. Next, most will want to know your background including what stage you are at in your career and where you were educated: present positions and education sections. Many scientists take advantage of the first-impression syndrome by listing their awards and honors next. Thereafter, the midsection should be tailored to your audience with emphases created by the order of the items listed. End with a list of your publications (if you have them)—your strong finish. As noted above, publications are usually listed in chronological order, so the reader arrives at your most recent work on the last page.

When ordering items within a subsection, there are no steadfast rules, although publications are traditionally listed chronologically. Most people order their professional presentations chronologically also. However, awards, honors, and grants are often listed in reverse chronological order (most recent first). Teaching experience and professional service are variably chronological or in reverse chronological order. Whatever you decide, be sure to keep it consistent within each subsection of your CV.



Do *Not* Include the Following

Generally, you should not include personal information in a professional document like your CV. In the USA and many other countries, personal information is illegal to request or to use to select among job applicants or for awards. That said, you will commonly encounter CVs of other professionals that include one or more of the items listed below. But now you know better.

- *Social security number (SSN)*—Your SSN might be necessary for monetary transactions (e.g., an honorarium for a seminar, reimbursement for a job interview, etc.); however, it is personal information (which, incidentally, indicates the state in which you were born) and can be used for unlawful discrimination (as well as identity theft). Your SSN can be provided to those you know and trust on an as-needed basis, but it should not appear on our CV.
- *Birth date, gender/gender identity, nationality, citizenship status, race, ethnicity, health status, disabilities, etc.*—In the USA, it is illegal for a would-be employer or granting agency to inquire about any of these items (although names may indicate your gender and perhaps your ethnicity). If an application requires citizenship of a certain country and you are not, you obviously would not apply for the position. Some grants and honors will require that you belong to a group traditionally underrepresented in your field (e.g., first in family to attend college, certain age group, religion, ethnicity, Pell grant recipient, etc.). Under these circumstances, the sponsor may assume that applicants meet the criteria of the award if you check a box, but in other cases applicants will be required to provide documentation or an essay supporting their eligibility.
- *Marital status and children*—In the USA, it is illegal for a would-be employer to inquire about spouses/partners (academic or otherwise), children, or other dependents. Despite their importance on a personal level, they should not be mentioned in your CV.
- *Home address*—If you do not currently have a professional position or someone needs to contact you at home, you can provide this information at your discretion, otherwise it should not be on your CV. That said, providing your mobile, home phone, and/or facsimile numbers are acceptable because many scientists have home offices as well.
- *Hobbies*—This is clearly irrelevant personal information that should never be included in a CV.
- *Typos and grammatical errors*—Read through a **printed** copy of your CV several times (at least once out loud) and have several colleagues review it for you before you submit it. You do not want to give a would-be employer or granting agency the impression that you are sloppy, careless, or worse...

Quotes from CVs, Résumés, and Cover Letters

- I was a prefect and pier mentor
- Extra Circular Activities
- At secondary school I was a prefix
- In my spare time I enjoy hiding my horse
- Restaurant skills: Severing customers
- I'm an accurate and rabid typist
- Ability to meet deadlines while maintaining my composer
- I have a degree in orgasmic chemistry.
- Instrumental in ruining an entire operation for a chain operator
- I have a long term interest in public relations
- As indicted, I have over 5 years of analysing investments.
- I demand a salary commiserate with my extensive experience
- i am a conscious individual with good attention to detail

