Resumes, Cover Letters, and CVs

A strong resume, cover letter, and/or CV have the power to get you in the door to the interview stage. These documents are essential to making the case for why you have the skills and experience to excel at the job and within the organization and team.

Resumes, cover letters and CVs should be tailored to the job at hand and should be checked thoroughly before submitting to make sure you are putting your best foot forward.

Cover letters

Your cover letter is, first and foremost, structured in the format of professional correspondence and should emphasize why you want to work for that particular organization and why you would be a good fit.

You can articulate this by sharing the most valuable transferable skills you bring (and brief examples to prove it).

How to write an effective cover letter (with samples)

You will have to prepare a number of materials for employers while looking for a job. One type of document is the cover letter, which is included with your resume when requesting a job interview. An effective cover letter is directed towards a specific position or company, and describes examples from your experience that highlight your skills related to the role.

You want to convince the reader that your interest in the job and company are genuine and specific. You also want to demonstrate ways that your experience has prepared you for the role by sharing a few brief stories that highlight your qualifications. This takes time and research; use the job description and the company's web site or LinkedIn page to identify traits and skills the company values.

Cover letter structure and format

A cover letter should be no longer than one page with a font size between 10-12 points. Be sure to include your contact information and address it directly to the hiring manager, using their name. If you are not sure who to address the letter to, write "Dear Hiring Manager." If the role you are applying for has a reference number or code, be sure to include it in your letter so that human resources is able to accurately track your application. The reference code is usually included

Cover letters typically take the following structure:

- Introduction (1st paragraph)
- Body (2-3 paragraphs)
- Closing (last paragraph)

Additional cover letter tips

1. Be sure that each cover letter is specifically tailored to the company you are writing to. Research the company to help you determine your approach. Check the company's website and other resources online.
2. Are you seeking a position in a field or industry that does not have an obvious parallel or connection to your academic training? Be explicit about why you are interested in that particular field, organization or job, and what value you bring. For example, if you are an electrical engineer applying to a finance or consulting position, highlight your quantitative skills and ability to problem-solve.
3. If you are applying for a summer job or internship and do not yet have any experience that is directly related to the position, focus on transferable skills that will add value to the role – leadership, communication, problem-solving, project management, etc.
4. Lastly, cover letters are a chance to demonstrate the communication skills necessary to most jobs. Careful composing and revision are essential. To put your best foot forward and ensure your cover letter will be effective.

Resumes & CVs

A resume is a dense, fact-based document that provides information on your educational background, details your past professional experience, lists your top skills, and showcases your achievements.

A CV is similar to a resume in that it details achievements and history, but does not have the same space limits that a resume does.

Since CVs are often requested in international professional contexts, it's a good idea to learn about the conventions for CVs in the country where you are submitting your application documents.

Curricula vitae (CVs)

In the United States, **curricula vitae (CVs)** are used to apply for teaching or research opportunities, fellowships, further academic training, grants, contract funding proposals, tenure, promotion to professor positions, and membership in a professional society or organization.

Note: In the United States, the term **"resume"** is used for industry and other non-academic positions. In some international settings, the term "CV" is used for all opportunities – however, you should tailor your document based on position type.

Develop your CV strategically

You should have two CVs:

- an authoritative CV with all information,
- and a tailored CV, written for a specific position or opportunity.

In developing your CV, keep the following tips in mind.

- Make your 3-4 most notable skills, achievements, and knowledge areas leap off the page for readers. This can be done by putting the most related items to the opportunity higher up on your CV.
- Keep your audience in mind. How technically savvy are they? Will they understand the vocabulary of your field? What are they looking for? What will they find interesting about you?
- Material you present early in your CV is likely to stand out more than material placed later. (An exception is that publications are often at the end).

Formatting your CV

There is no single correct format or style for writing a CV – think about making it easy for your readers to skim and find the information they are looking for. Use a consistent format throughout, use an easy-

to-read font, and make good use of descriptive section headings, subheadings, and white space to guide your reader.

Typically, CVs are longer than resumes. Unlike a resume, it is appropriate to describe both teaching and research experience in detail. If applying for a position that primarily involves research, describe research experience first; if the reverse is true, put teaching experience first. When describing your experience, include the goal, your contributions, and the impact/result of your contributions.

Completeness is more important than brevity. The length is typically 2 to 4 pages for a younger professional, 4 to 7 pages for a person with more experience.

CV sections and headings

Headings can be located and titled strategically. Determine what is of primary importance, and put that section first.

Common CV headings
- Name & Contact Information
- Education
- Research Experience
- Fellowships/Grants/Awards/Honors
- Teaching Experience
- Mentoring Experience
- Other Professional Experience, e.g., Industry Experience, Government Experience
- Presentations
- Publications

Additional CV headings (if applicable)
- Patents
- Professional Associations
- Leadership & Service Activities
- Research Interests
- Teaching Interests
- Outreach Activities
- Works in Progress
- Skills – may include subcategories such as Computer, Languages, Lab Instrumentation
- Languages
- References
- Other – could include relevant global /field experience, and personal interests

Including work or professional experience

In an academic CV, you can choose whether to include other non-academic work experience depending on the opportunity you are applying for. If your work experience is not directly relevant to your academic interests, are there skills you gained that make the experience worth including? Work experience may take a number of forms in your CV. You may describe your experience briefly or list it without description.

Publications section
- List publications in reverse chronological order.
- Use the citation style of your field
- Put your name in bold to highlight your authorship
- Can create separate categories to add clarity: "Publications," "Book Chapters", etc.
- Can list "Works in Press" or "Works in Progress" to show up-and-coming research

Presentations section
- Conference presentations should include: Title, Name of conference or event, Location, Date
- Can use sub-headings: "Invited Talks," "Posters", etc.

Patents

Short citation format: patent number, title, and date issued

Example: U.S. Patent 9755095, "Method and structure for multicell devices without physical isolation," Mar 14, 2014

Full citation format:

1. US Patent 7482171, "Angiotensin converting enzyme homolog and uses therefore," Feb 16, 2005
   Inventors: Acton, Susan (Lexington, MA), Robison, Keith E. (Wilmington, MA), Hsieh, Frank Y. (Lexington, MA)
2. US Patent 7268218, "Cardiovascular system associated protein kinase 3 (CSAPK-3) antibodies," Feb 25, 2004
   Inventor: Acton, Susan (Lexington, MA)
3. US Patent 7078511, "Class B1 and C1 scavenger receptors," Jan 4, 1996
   Inventors: Krieger, Monty (Needham, MA), Acton, Susan (Somerville, MA)

If a patent is pending, it may be included but must be designated as pending either under a separate category or within a 'Patents and Patent Applications' category and then designated as such(e.g. "US Patent Application 4564848…)

Writing An Email (Example To Make A Hotel Reservation)

1. Include all relevant information in your email:

- your complete contact information,
- date and time of arrival and departure,
- number of days of your stay,
- type of room and any special needs or requests such as a smoking or nonsmoking room.

2. Be to the point. don't include any unnecessary details.

3. Be polite and start your email by "Dear sir or Madam"

4. Example:

> Dear Sir or Madam,
>
> Would you mind reserving a nonsmoking room for me and my wife for this date (...) We will be spending three nights. We will arrive on August 4th at 5 o'clock in the morning.
>
> Please charge my credit card for the initial deposit required. Include any discounts that my early registration permits.
>
> Credit card number:
>
> Name:
>
> Expiration date:
>
> I look forward to receiving a letter confirming my reservation.
>
> Thank you.
>
> Name

5. Don't forget your name, address, email, phone, fax or any contact details.