

## “The Basics of CV Writing”

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Your curriculum vitae or CV is an important document that you will use throughout your career. Think of your CV as an outline of your professional and academic life. It should: contain relevant academic and professional accomplishments, have logical and consistent formatting, be concise and to the point, and flow smoothly.

*How do you spell vitae anyway?*

You will frequently see it spelled curriculum “vita” and curriculum “vitae.” Webster’s lists “curriculum vitae,” but not “curriculum vita.” However, “vita” has its own entry (meaning a brief biographical sketch) which lists vitae as the plural form. This confusion may explain why most people simply refer to it as a CV.

General Guidelines:

### **I. Be Concise and to the Point.**

Being concise does not necessarily mean producing a short CV, but you should generally avoid the use of paragraphs and full sentences. Remember, this is an outline, not an essay. Don’t bore or overburden the reader with unnecessary information or extraneous details.

### **II. Put additional information in supporting documents, not on the CV.**

Except for the ASA Employment Service, your CV is rarely read as a stand-alone document. For job applicants, details can go in the application letter and for tenure and promotion, in the accompanying documentation -- just make sure you reference the CV in these documents (e.g. “As my CV outlines, my service commitments range from undergraduate student advising to serving on the recent Presidential Search Committee. As chair of the Presidential Search Committee I was responsible for...”).

### **III. Scrutinize content. Don’t pad.**

You don’t need to include everything you’ve ever done on your CV. What you do include depends on your career stage and your career goals. For instance, if you are applying for Full Professor it will make no difference to anyone that you served as a teaching assistant in graduate school. However, if you are a new Ph.D. applying for a tenure track position, this is important to include, especially if your teaching experience is limited.

#### **IV. Use logical and consistent formatting.**

There are a number of ways to organize your CV. Keep the organization consistent within sections and throughout the document to the extent possible given the contents. This includes consistent use of bold, underlined, or italicized print to demarcate subject headings or subheadings, as well as employing a consistent format for the same types of entries (e.g. each position listing or publication).

#### **V. Use templates wisely, not blindly.**

While following a template can be a good way to construct your first CV, ultimately you will want to devise a format that is particularly well suited for highlighting your own professional accomplishments. Remember that every academic career is different and so every CV is different. How your mentor organizes her CV it is not necessarily the best way to organize your own. Your CV should be created/revised with YOUR particular career goals in mind and should highlight those accomplishments that will help you to attain those goals. This means that if you are applying to academic jobs you may want to create different versions of your CV depending on the type of institution to which you are applying. A CV for a research-intensive institution will look very different from one geared to a teaching institution. The format of the CV you submit with your tenure and promotion materials may be very different from that used on your initial CV.

#### **VI. Put the most important information up front.**

As they say in real estate, location is everything. While most information within sections will be organized chronologically, be careful not to bury your major accomplishments in a sea of minor ones. Make the most important sections stand out by locating them in a prominent position – the first page. What is the most important section will vary by career stage. For recent graduates it will be the section detailing Education, for seasoned researchers, it may be publications.

Within sections, place significant pieces of information on the left hand side of the page, where most readers will focus first. Again, use headings and subheadings to your advantage. Use bold and italicized print sparingly, to emphasize particular pieces of information or section headings. In short, don't make the reader hunt for the information they are seeking.

#### **VII. Keep it reader-friendly.**

Use white space to make it more visually appealing, watch page breaks, and keep it free of typos and spelling/grammatical errors. Use a traditional style such as Times New Roman or Courier and don't use anything below a 10 point font. You don't want the reader straining to read about you. Be mindful of the margins and keep a running header that includes your last name and a page number (if the CV is not stapled together this will help readers keep the pages in order). You might also want to include a date in the running header – this will help you to keep track of the different versions of your CV and will help readers to understand what time period it reflects.

### **VIII. Reorganize your CV as your career progresses.**

As your CV grows in length, you may want to drop some early minor accomplishments that once seemed vital, but are now quite trivial. You'll also want to revise the headings and subheading periodically or reorganize the order of major items to better showcase your accomplishments. Consider reorganizing at particular career milestones or testing points – whenever going on the market; when applying for tenure and promotion; when applying for Department Chair; when seeking appointment as a Dean or other administrator.

*I was always told that resumes for people just starting out should only be one-page long. Does this hold for CVs as well?*

No. Newer graduate students will of course have shorter CVs than seasoned Full Professors, but all academics should forget the “one-page rule.”

### **ORGANIZING YOUR CV**

An often-overlooked aspect of CV construction is that it should be tailored to your particular career goals and your career stage. When constructing or revising your vitae, make a list of your career goals, both short and long term, and then make a list of the kinds of things gatekeepers will be looking for as they evaluate you in light of those goals. The evaluation criteria will dictate, to a certain extent, the organization of your CV. You want to showcase your recent accomplishments in such a way so that your evaluators will remember precisely those things that they most need to remember – how you have fulfilled their evaluation criteria. Have colleagues and mentors, both sociologists and nonsociologists, read and evaluate your CV. Ask them what most stands out for them. If the kinds of things they mention are NOT the same kinds of things gatekeepers will be looking for when they evaluate you then you need to revise and reorganize.

Organize your CV as a series of topics or professional accomplishments using headings and subheadings. Major subject headings are used to organize the CV and subheadings can be used to break up especially long sections so that it is more reader-friendly or to highlight particular kinds of accomplishments. At a minimum, you'll probably want to include the following major subject headings, though these can be organized under slightly different names and in a different order:

- 1) Name and Contact Information (the content is included, though the heading itself is usually dropped)
- 2) Education
- 3) Experience
- 4) Publications
- 5) Presentations
- 6) Service
- 7) Grants, Honors, and Awards
- 8) References

When deciding what headings and subheadings to use, keep in mind the kinds of things you need to highlight for your particular career stage and career goals. If service to the college is especially important for tenure decisions at your institution, then you may want to differentiate the kinds of service you have completed. Similarly, if books are really important for promotion to Full Professor, then you may want to highlight this by devoting a separate heading to books. If you've both edited and authored books, these could become further subdivisions. See below for a list of commonly used headings and subheadings.

*Caution* – Be aware of how subdividing sections may make your accomplishments look weaker in one area compared to another. Always be conscious of how your CV *as a whole* presents you.

*In what order should I list the major headings?*

Except for contact info and references, which generally are bookends on your CV, subject headings should be arranged in order of importance for your particular career stage and career goals. The major headings I've listed below are frequently presented in this order, especially for newer Ph.D.s. However, if you are an Assistant Professor revising your CV for tenure and promotion, you may want to reorganize sections to better highlight the kinds of things that are important at your institution. For example, most new Ph.D.s list "Education" immediately after their contact information. This draws attention to the fact that they've completed the terminal degree, an important consideration for prospective employers. But if you're being evaluated for tenure and promotion, possession of the terminal degree is usually a prerequisite to even being considered. Thus, you may want to put "Publications" before "Education" since this is the more prominent location on the CV (first page), especially if your publication record will be the main evaluation criterion.

## **1) NAME AND CONTACT INFO**

Include your name, mailing address, phone, and email.

It should go without saying that the first item on your CV will be your name and relevant contact info. There is no need to type "CV" or "Curriculum Vitae" at the top as anyone in a position to read it and evaluate you should immediately know what she is looking at. The only exception is if you post it to the web or if you have created supplementary documents that in some way resemble a CV.

*Note:* If you are applying to industry positions then you should have a resume, not a CV, and including "CV" at the top will likely confuse people.

*Should I use a home address, work/school address, or both?*

This depends on your career stage and your particular career goals. For example, if you are on the market and currently hold a temporary position, including your work address will further emphasize that you have experience. If you list both a home and work address, correspondence will usually go to the first address listed or to the one you use on a cover letter.

*What if my current employer doesn't know I'm on the market?*

Including your work address essentially gives prospective employers permission to contact you at work. This may mean you will receive written correspondence at work, so if your coworkers don't know you are on the market, list your work address with caution. You can always include your work phone and email but not address, which will minimize your job search being discovered inadvertently. If your daytime phone number is your work number, then it is especially important to include it since most prospective employers will try to contact you during the day.

*Should I put my highest degree after my name (e.g. Jessie Bernard, Ph.D.)?*

It isn't necessary, but it depends on the degree and your goals. If you are a new Ph.D. on the job market including Ph.D. after your name will further highlight that it is in hand rather than just expected. But since this info will also be contained in the Education section it isn't required after your name. As a general rule, don't put ABD after your name since it isn't a degree and it highlights that you are NOT yet finished. Save the ABD designation for the Education section since it more appropriately indicates progress towards your degree (see below). If you are more advanced in your career it is probably even less necessary to include Ph.D. after your name, though again some people will choose to do so. It may be more appropriate to include degree if you are applying for a position outside academia (e.g. MSW for social work positions).

## **2) EDUCATION**

List most recent degree first and include full name of institution and its location if this is not readily apparent from the name (but see note below). Be sure to include the date the degree was awarded.

*Note* – That SUNY stands for State University of New York or UC for University of California may seem obvious to you, but may not be obvious to someone unfamiliar with that system – so spell it out, at least for the first instance on the CV. You can include the abbreviation in parentheses and use it in subsequent references.

*I'm still working on my Ph.D. How do I indicate that on my CV?*

List Ph.D. first under education (before MA and BA), but indicate “in progress” or “expected 2005” instead of date of completion. You could also indicate whether or not you are ABD.

*Should I list my dissertation title, areas of comprehensive exams, or other information?*

Again, this depends on your career stage. If you are a new Ph.D. or advanced graduate student then you may wish to indicate these as they represent what is probably one of your biggest research activities to date. If you graduated with honors you could list that as well. Some newer Ph.D.s or current graduate students also list the name(s) of their principal advisors here. If you are an Associate or Full Professor, however, the name of your dissertation and your dissertation advisor will probably not matter at this stage of your career. Alternatively, some people will include a separate subject heading entitled “Dissertation” and include this information there.

*My school recently changed its name. What should I list on the CV?*

(e.g., Trenton State College is now The College of New Jersey; SUNY Binghamton is now Binghamton University, etc.)

This is a tricky situation because in some cases the old name is more recognizable than the new one. Technically, you should list the name as it was/is when you received/will receive the degree. If you currently work at the school you should use the current name. If you worked there previously, use the name of the institution as it stood when you were there. You could always indicate the name change in accompanying documentation or note it on the CV itself if you are really concerned about it. Also, see what others in your situation are doing.

### **3) EXPERIENCE**

List your most recent position first and at a minimum include title, dates of employment, name of institution and department.

Make use of different headings and subheadings as appropriate. If you have held different types of positions then consider listing them together (e.g. Research Experience, Teaching Positions, etc.). See list of subject headings below for further suggestions.

*Should I list every position I've ever held?*

Not necessarily. Certainly omit those that are not related to your career goals (i.e. that clerical position that helped pay the bills in grad school but had little value over and above the paycheck) or list them under a separate section entitled "Other Professional Employment" or something similar.

Graduate student teaching assignments are probably more important for new Ph.D.s or ABD job seekers than for more seasoned folks. As you develop more experience it is ok to remove these now minor positions (which were anything but minor when you first started out).

*Should I include my assigned duties or the titles of courses taught?*

If your positions have mainly been teaching positions, then you may want to just list the positions and include a separate section that lists courses taught. If your positions were research positions, it may be more necessary to *briefly* describe your assigned duties. If your positions were outside of academia you may want to include a brief description of duties so that it is apparent that the position was/is relevant to your career goals.

*I taught several courses that were essentially the same course, but had different names at different institutions (e.g., Sex Roles, Gender Roles, The Social Construction of Gender). I want to include course titles in a subsection under "Courses Taught," but do I need to list each course title?*

There are several ways to handle this. First, consider the total number of courses you've taught. Will collapsing the titles under, say "Gender Roles," make it look like you've only ever taught one class? Are you trying to emphasize the wide range of courses you've taught or is this less important? Also consider the degree to which the courses

really were similar. If after closer evaluation you determine that they weren't comparable courses then don't collapse them.

*Should course numbers be included along with the course titles (e.g., Soc 340: Organizations and Bureaucracy)? What about the specific dates when the courses were taught?*

Generally you don't need to include course numbers since the numbers may be meaningless outside of the particular school where the course was taught. The title of the course, not the number, is probably the most important piece of information especially if your CV is to be used for job searching purposes. On the other hand, maybe you want to distinguish undergraduate courses from graduate courses or seminars from lecture courses. To do this, you'll probably want to list the titles of seminar courses under that subheading and so on. You could also group course titles under subject area (e.g., Sociology Core Courses, Gender, Organizations, etc.).

As for including dates, this depends on where you are listing the courses and why. If you are listing the course titles with the institution where it was taught under a general heading for "Teaching Experience," then you will probably already have indicated what the dates were that corresponded to your position. If you are including the course titles under a separate subject heading of "Courses Taught" then you've disassociated the courses from the dates. In this case, you need to think about the purpose of your CV. If it is for tenure and promotion, then maybe it is important to include dates. If you are applying for jobs, the search committee is probably more interested in *what* you taught than *when* you taught it. In either case, though, you can always include this information in a separate document or as part of your teaching portfolio. For example, when I was on the job market I developed a document called "Teaching Responsibilities" that listed all the courses and dates I had taught by institution, and I included this as part of my teaching portfolio.

*I've worked at the same institution for two or more nonconsecutive years. What is the best way to handle this on my CV?*

This depends on a number of things. Were the positions comparable? Did you work in the same department? Are you trying to emphasize your cumulative work experience or are you trying to minimize the appearance of moving around a lot? If the positions are comparable then it is ok to subsume the two dates in one entry, just be sure you note the separate dates of employment. However, if this will make your experience appear very limited it might be better to list them separately -- but this depends on your overall purpose in writing/revising the CV. This is probably less of a concern to those seeking promotion than those seeking an initial tenure track appointment.

*Should I list my supervisor or department chair here?*

No. If you include this information on your CV it should appear under the References section.

#### **4) PUBLICATIONS**

Give the full bibliographic reference for all publications so that readers can locate the publication if they so choose. Use ASA style or another preferred style consistently throughout the CV. If you have several different types of publications you can list each type separately or use subheadings (e.g. Journal Articles, Book Reviews, Book Chapters, etc.). If you don't have many publications you may want to list them all together.

*I have an article that has been accepted for publication but has not yet been published. How do I handle this on the CV?*

It is acceptable to list forthcoming publications on your CV. Instead of the publication date, simply insert "Forthcoming." But be aware that if an article (or book, etc.) is listed as forthcoming when you apply for jobs this same publication may not count when you apply for tenure and promotion, *even if it went to print while your tenure clock was ticking*. This varies by institution of course. For some job seekers this may not matter since at some institutions a publication record has become a prerequisite to even being considered for a position. Thus, including a forthcoming article may help keep you in the running. This is more common at research-intensive institutions than at others, and you may not actually know what the practice is at a particular school until after you get the job. It may be worth the gamble to include the publication on the CV when applying for positions. The same situation could hold true if you include a forthcoming article on your CV for a yearly review or for a third-year review. It may not "count" for subsequent reviews. You'll want to check on how this is handled at your institution.

*Do books reviews count as publications? What about articles in professional newsletters?*

They are publications as far as your CV is concerned. Whether or not a hiring committee or tenure and promotion committee counts them as publications is a different matter. In any case, you should still include them on your CV since they are a professional contribution. If you have several of these types of publications you may want to differentiate them from refereed publications, which will generally carry more weight in evaluations. This will make it easier for gatekeepers to find the refereed publications and shows that you recognize this important distinction.

*Should I list my dissertation under publications?*

While technically your dissertation is bound and published by your degree granting institution, it isn't usually listed as a publication on the CV unless you have published it as a book. If it has only been published as a dissertation by your university then don't include it here. If you have published it as a book then what you are really listing is the book, not the dissertation.

*How do I list publications that I co-authored?*

If you have co-authored publications then you want to make sure you include the names of all the authors in the order in which they appear on the publication. To be consistent across all publication entries, this means you will probably want to list your name on solo-authored publications. If none of your publications are co-authored then feel free to omit your name.

*I'm a new graduate student and don't have any publications. What should I do?*

Everyone starts out with no publications so don't panic. Just omit the Publications section from your CV until you have something to include. In the meantime, if you have the time and inclination, submit your name as a potential reviewer to the book review editor of a journal in your area. Also, don't overlook minor publications like contributing an article to *Network news* or an ASA section newsletter, or having a syllabus included in an ASA syllabi set. While these may not get you a job, tenure, or promotion, they are all professional contributions and belong on your CV.

## **5) PRESENTATIONS**

Include name of presentation, forum (SSSP, ASA, ESS Annual Meeting, etc.), location, and date.

Since lists of presentations can get very long, consider subdividing this section into types of presentations (Invited Lectures, Paper Presentations, etc.). This will showcase the variety of presentations you have done.

*I'm just starting out and don't have any presentations.*

Like publications, just omit this section if you don't have anything to include. But don't overlook guest lectures and other presentations on campus. As you develop more experience omit early minor presentations like these.

*I interviewed at Big Prestigious University. Can I include my research talk as an "Invited Lecture"?*

While your research talk does technically count as a presentation, it is usually pretty obvious that such presentations are padding on your CV. Omit interview talks if you already have a fairly developed list of presentations. In a recent nonscientific poll of professional colleagues (I asked some senior colleagues), this question provoked a lot of negative reactions, so proceed with caution. Furthermore, if you are still applying for jobs after interviewing at Big Prestigious U, then the assumption will be that you didn't get the job. While YOU know that in today's job market just getting an interview is quite an accomplishment, you can't be sure that the hiring committee will know this. It is quite

possible that they may instead view it as a sign that you aren't a suitable candidate. Finally, if you've already got a job there's really no reason to include a job talk on the CV. Presumably you're presenting in bigger and better venues.

## **6) SERVICE**

Include position held, organization or institution, and dates.

*Do I need to describe my service work in detail?*

No, just listing your position is usually sufficient. If your service is difficult to characterize under one position or title, you may need to play around with it for a while until you find the appropriate language. If your service is especially important for your career goals then you may want to describe it in a bit more detail, but again, avoid turning it into an essay. For example, if you are applying for a position as Department Chair or Dean, briefly describing some of your service work in key areas may help demonstrate experiences and skills important for an administrative position that might otherwise appear lacking on your CV.

*I carry a heavy advisement load. Should I note that under my service commitments?*

If it will help to contextualize other aspects of your CV, then yes. For example, if your advisement load is so heavy that advising has become your main service contribution it is probably a good idea to make a note of the average number of students you advise each semester. If, on the other hand, you only advise a small number of students each semester then it will probably not make much of a difference. If you are just starting out and are applying to positions where advising will be expected, listing an advisement load will show your experience in this area. However, as a Department Chair once told me, "I have never hired anyone because of their service record."

*I've done a lot of community service. Is it appropriate to include it on my CV?*

It largely depends on the nature of your community service. If you can relate it to your academic work it is probably useful to include, but again, be cautious of padding. Don't include it just for the sake of including it. It must be relevant to your career goals. "Community Service" is probably a good place to include activism if it is related to your areas of expertise and if you think it will be helpful for accomplishing your particular career goals. But depending on the particular type of activism and the institutional culture, you may or may not want to list it.

## **7) GRANTS, HONORS, & AWARDS**

*For grants:*

List the name of the grant, the institution or organization sponsoring it, and the date of the award.

If you have received major research grants you will want to indicate the dollar amount. If under \$1000, consider leaving it off. Just be consistent. If you list the amount for one grant, you should generally list the amount for all grants.

*For honors and awards:*

Indicate the honor, the institution or organization awarding it, and the year.

Sometimes you may want to indicate honors under a separate listing in your CV. For example, if you received a teaching award you could indicate this under “Teaching Experience” with the entry for that particular position. It also depends on the total number of honors and awards you have received.

## **8) REFERENCES**

Include names, addresses, phone numbers and e-mails.

Include a minimum of three professional references. If you are just starting out, these should include at least one member of your dissertation committee. If you are at an advanced stage in your career you may want to include co-workers, co-authors, or editors instead, since they can speak more directly to your current academic accomplishments.

Always check with a potential reference first, before adding them to your CV. Find out their preferred method of communication. If this is by phone make sure you find out if they want to be called at work or at home and clearly indicate that on the CV.

Make sure the contact information for your references is complete and up to date. Be mindful of minor changes to email addresses or area codes, which may prevent someone from reaching your reference in a timely manner.

*How many references should I include?*

Certainly if you are applying for jobs (initial tenure track, department chair, dean, etc.) you’ll want a minimum of three. It is acceptable to list more than three, but don’t go overboard.

Important Note about References:

It is crucial to talk to your references about what they are likely to say to a prospective employer. This should be done tactfully. Of course references are confidential and you’ll never know exactly what a referee says about you. You can minimize the chance that references say something negative or more commonly, simply neglect to say the *right* kinds of things, by highlighting (either on paper or in a conversation) the kinds of accomplishments you believe are represent of your best work and noting the kinds of things employers are looking for.

*Do I even need to include a list of references on the CV if I'm not applying for jobs?*

As long as you screen your references carefully it shouldn't hurt to have them listed on your CV. If your CV is getting really long and unwieldy, though, you could probably take them off and simply insert "References available upon request." If you are going up for tenure or promotion find out what the practice has been at your particular institution. You may not want to include any references on your CV and omit this section entirely if you are applying for tenure or promotion, but this depends on current practice at your institution.

*Do I need to include someone from every major institution at which I've worked?*

No. Select references carefully though. If you worked at a university for 10 years and don't list a reference from that institution, it may raise a red flag or two.

### **ALTERNATIVE HEADINGS AND SUBHEADINGS**

What you use as major subject headings and subheadings will depend on the content of your CV (your particular accomplishments) as well as your career goals. What follows is a list of commonly used subject categories. These are not always mutually exclusive and I have tried to list together those categories that seem to overlap. Use one of these overlapping categories or incorporate them as subsections as appropriate. Don't be afraid to create your own subject headings, especially for categories of information unique to you.

Ph.D. Areas

Areas of Specialization

Research and Teaching Interests

Research Agenda

Professional Experience

Academic Positions

Teaching Experience

Research Experience

Courses Taught – can be further subdivided by subject area or level (i.e. undergraduate or graduate)

Thesis and Dissertation Committees – can be further subdivided by level (i.e. senior honors theses, Master's, Ph.D.)

Publications

Works in Progress/Manuscripts in Progress

Under Review

Dissertation

Refereed Articles

Journal Articles

Books

Book Chapters

Book Reviews  
Commentaries  
Review Articles  
Edited Volumes

Presentations/Conference Presentations/Presentations at Professional Meetings  
Invited Talks/Lectures  
Poster Sessions

Honors and Awards  
Academic Honors  
Scholarships  
Research Grants

Other Professional Activities (e.g. Editor, Session organizer, Moderator, Discussant, Panelist, etc.)

Other Professional Experience

Other Skills (highlighting, for example, proficiency with particular statistical programs or other specialized computer applications, foreign language proficiency, etc.)

*Note* – Include in separate section only when info is relevant to your goals and when this info is not apparent from other sections of the CV. For example, if you list some specialized methods course with SAS in its title in a section on “Courses Taught,” you may not need to list your computer proficiency with SAS separately unless you are really keen to highlight that.

Committee and Service Work (or list separately)

Academic Service

University/College Service

Departmental Service

Professional Service – can be subdivided by organization (e.g. SWS, ASA, etc.)

Community Service

Professional Memberships/Associations/Affiliations

**Resources:**

Heiberger, Mary Morris and Julia Miller Vick. 2001. *The Academic Job Search Handbook* (3rd ed.). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.

Rebecca Anthony and Gerald Roe. *The Curriculum Vitae Handbook: How to Present and Promote Your Academic Career*. Rudi Publishing.

Acy Jackson and Kathleen Geckeis. 2003. *How to Prepare Your Curriculum Vitae* (Rev. ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

John A. Goldsmith, John Komlos, Penny Schine Gold. 2001. *The Chicago Guide to Your Academic Career*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

From The Chronicle of Higher Education <<http://www.chronicle.com>>:

“Converting a Faculty CV to an Administrative Resume,” by Jean Dowdall.

“The CV Doctor,” (actually a series of articles) by Mary Morris Heiberger and Julia Miller Vick.

“Am I My Vita?” by Mary Morris Heiberger and Julia Miller Vick.

“How Much Should You Reveal on Your CV?” by Mary Morris Heiberger and Julia Miller Vick.