

Building an Effective Curriculum Vitae (CV) for Graduate Student

Introduction

This guide is designed to help graduate students, especially PhD students from all disciplines. It offers introductory advice on how to write or update CVs effectively but is not tailored to any specific discipline. It offers general advice for creating a CV that meets basic academic standards. Before you begin, consider the following steps:

1. **Research Sample CVs:** Find sample CVs from your discipline by checking assistant professors' CVs on your department website.
2. **Consult Mentors or Advisors:** Speak with your mentors and advisors to understand specific CV expectations in your field.
3. **Peer Reviews:** Request feedback from your peers as well.

Using insights from these sources along with this guide will help you create a comprehensive and well-structured CV that effectively showcases your academic achievements and aligns with specific application requirements. You can also [make an appointment to meet with a graduate career advisor from the Career Center](#) for additional feedback.

Understanding a CV

A CV (Curriculum Vitae) is a comprehensive document detailing your entire history of scholarly achievements. Unlike resumes, CVs are living documents with no length limit and will grow as you progress in your academic career. Start building your CV early and update it regularly.

When to Use a CV

In general, you need a CV when applying for:

- Academic positions
 - Tenure-track faculty positions (e.g., Assistant Professors)
 - Non-tenure track faculty positions (e.g., Clinical Assistant Professor, Research Assistant Professor, Teaching Assistant Professor, Lecturer)
 - Postdocs
- Research positions at national labs or research institutions
- Fellowships, scholarships, and awards
- Research grant proposals (usually with your PIs)

CV Formatting Tips

1. **Layout:** Choose a layout that presents accomplishments concisely, clearly, and consistently.
2. **Consistency:** Ensure stylistic consistency (e.g., if one heading is in bold and title case, all headings should follow the same style).
3. **Readability:** Use fonts no smaller than 11 points and maintain one-inch margins.
4. **Order of Importance:** Organize headings in decreasing order of importance to highlight the most relevant accomplishments on the first pages.
5. **Reverse Chronological Order:** List information in each section from most recent to oldest.

Tailoring the CV

While significant changes like those made for resumes aren't necessary for each position, minor adjustments based on the reader's expectations can make a significant difference. For example, when applying for faculty positions at teaching-focused institutions, it is important to emphasize teaching experience over research accomplishments. Conversely, for research-focused positions, highlighting research experience, projects, and publications should come first.

Common CV Headings

1. Education
2. Honors & Awards
3. Publications
4. Experience (e.g., Research Experience, Research Projects, Teaching Experience)
5. Conferences & Presentations
6. Service
7. Professional Affiliations/Memberships
8. References

Additional Headings (if applicable)

1. Research & Teaching Interests
2. Skills & Languages
3. Student Advising & Mentoring
4. Patents
5. Grants
6. Media Coverage
7. Professional Experience

Section-Specific Guidance

Education:

- List each institution, degree, field, concentration, and (expected) graduation date. There's no need to include the start dates.
- Ensure the highest degree or degree-in-progress is listed first in reverse chronological order.
- Include your dissertation title and advisors (PIs).
- Including dissertation committee members is optional and depends on their involvement in your research progress and faculty job search. If they have played a significant role, listing them can be beneficial.
- High school details are generally not included.

Honors & Awards:

- Include awards, scholarships, fellowships, and any other relevant honors.
- If there are only a few awards, they can be listed under "Education" instead of creating a separate section.
- Provide the name of the award, the awarding institution, and the date it was received.
- If you were chosen to receive an award but declined it due to receiving multiple awards, include it and note it as "declined."

Experience:

- Detail your scholarly accomplishments with information about your organization/employer, position title, location, and employment dates.
- Use one or two bullets to describe significant accomplishments, offering a clear understanding of your unique contributions to the field.
- Instead of a generic "Experience" heading, subdivide into relevant categories such as "Research Experience," "Research Projects," and "Teaching Experience."
 - **Research Experience:**
 - List positions such as research assistantships, including details of the faculty member/Principal Investigator, research group/lab, or research center.
 - Include research internships outside academic institutions if relevant to your field.
 - **Research Projects**

- It is useful to have this section in addition to their Research Experience section if you have been involved with multiple research projects during their graduate training.
- List the names of research projects along with one or two bullets describing your unique contributions to each project.
- **Teaching Experience:**
 - Include all teaching roles (full-time, part-time, volunteer, adjunct), listing your titles, institutions, and employment timeframe.
 - Include the names of courses and levels (e.g., undergraduate or graduate courses) taught to showcase your teaching competencies.

Publications:

- Highlight this section if applying for positions focused on research.
- Use the citation style appropriate for your academic discipline (e.g., APA, IEEE, Chicago).
- Differentiate types of publications with the following subheadings if you have many publications.
 - Peer-reviewed Articles or Refereed Journal Articles
 - Books or Book Chapters
 - Book Reviews
 - Conference Proceedings
 - Technical Reports
 - Web-based Publications
 - Other Publications (non-academic publications such as blog posts)
- Include accepted, forthcoming, or in-press works by replacing the publication year with terms like "accepted," "forthcoming," or "in press."
- Create subheadings like "Manuscripts in Submission" or "Manuscripts in Preparation" if you have ongoing projects.
- Do not list too many items under "Manuscripts in Preparation" since they are not officially accepted or published yet, as this may be perceived as overselling your work.

Conferences & Presentations:

- Follow the citation style of your field.
- Include names of presenters, presentation titles, conference names, and presentation dates.
- Subcategorize presentations into sections as below if there are many presentations

- Paper Presentations
 - Poster Presentations
 - Invited Talks & Lectures
 - Campus Presentations
 - Panels/Workshops Organized
- Note any presentations canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Service:

- List volunteer or committee work within your department, university, and professional associations.
- (optional) Categorize into
 - **Departmental Service:** Work related to student organizations, committees, and organizing seminars at the departmental level.
 - **University Service:** Work related to campus-wide committees and graduate student organizations.
 - **Disciplinary or Professional Service:** Work related to journal/conference paper reviews, ad committees affiliated with professional associations, and organizing conferences.

Skills & Languages:

- Include this section if your field requires specific skills or languages. Specify the level of proficiency for each language/skill (e.g., proficient, intermediate, basic).
- List this section at the bottom of the CV.

Professional Associations/Memberships:

- List memberships in scholarly organizations with the names of the organizations.
- List this section at the bottom of the CV.

References (optional):

- Include at least three academics willing to write letters of recommendation. Provide their names, titles, institutions, and contact information.
- Place this section at the end of the CV.

Developing Accomplishment Statements (Bullets)

To write effective accomplishment statements, start with an action verb and provide detailed descriptions using quantitative and qualitative terms. Highlight the results or goals of your actions.

- Use field-specific terminology if the target audience is familiar with it.
- Stick to 2-3 bullets max. Too many bullets can make the CV resemble a long resume, which is often not well-received in academia.
- **Examples:**
 - **Research:** "Applied a general circulation model to analyze regional climate impacts, leading to three conference presentations and one peer-reviewed journal article."
 - **Teaching:** "Developed and implemented learning lessons introducing materials science to 50 first-year undergraduate students, later adopted by the department."

For additional assistance, [schedule a one-on-one career advising appointment](#) at Career Center via [CareerBuzz](#).

Additional Campus Advising Support for CV Review

[The Center for Teaching and Learning](#) also offers one-on-one consultations about academic job search for PhD students and postdocs. [Schedule a consultation](#) to review the academic job application packet or discuss the interview or job talk.

[The Communication Center](#) offers one-on-one appointments for current graduate students to review your job search documents. [Schedule an in-person, virtual, or asynchronous appointment](#) with a Communication Center consultant to review your document.