

Seaver College Career Center

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Creating Your Curriculum Vitae

What is a CV?

- The curriculum vitae or CV can be translated as "the course of one's life/career" and provides a comprehensive overview of your academic background and professional accomplishments.
- A CV is often needed to apply to **graduate programs, employment in academia or international organizations**, and in **certain professional fields**.

When to Use a Curriculum Vitae

- In the United States, a CV is used primarily when applying for academic, scientific or research positions. It is also applicable when applying for fellowships or grants.
- When asking for a job in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, or Asia, expect to submit a CV rather than a resume.
 - Keep in mind that **overseas employers** often expect to read the type of personal information on a CV that would never be included on an American resume, such as date of birth, place of birth and nationality. An International CV also typically includes a personal photo as well.

Resume vs. CV

- Many of the rules of writing a resume can also be applied to writing a CV.
- A CV is a longer and more detailed synopsis of your background and skills.
 - Experience and education dictate the length of your CV.
 - A two to three page CV is common for most seniors and graduate students.
- The CV includes a greater range of information.
 - The focus is more on **academic** achievements such as educational background and training, research interests, published works, teaching experience, field experience, academic honors/awards, and other related professional experience.
- Like a resume, a CV should include your name, contact information, education, skills and experience.
- In addition, a CV includes research and teaching experience, publications, grants and fellowships, professional associations and licenses, awards and other information relevant to the position or program to which you are applying.
- Start by making a list of all your background information, and then organize it into categories. Make sure you include dates.

Review CV Samples

- It's often helpful to look at samples before you begin writing.
- Sample CVs and CV templates are also posted on:

Seaver College Career Center website: <http://seaver.pepperdine.edu/careercenter/>

Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology website:

<http://gsep.pepperdine.edu/career-services/students-alumni/>

10 Top Tips To Ensure Your CV Has Impact

TIP 1: Target your CV

Prospective employers/programs are concerned with finding the right candidate. Consider carefully the requirements of your target job or graduate program and make sure your CV highlights the relevant skills and experience.

TIP 2: Structure your CV so it is easy to read

An initial scan of a CV is usually only **20 or 30 seconds**, so have your information clearly laid out with the **most relevant skills and experience** highlighted. Use headings and sub-headings to divide information and keep the format crisp.

TIP 3: Create content that sells

A good design will get attention, but it's really the content of your CV that determines your success. Provide plenty of information to help sell your skills and experience. Give concise descriptions of your roles and responsibilities, including key information such as research experience, publications, teaching experience, class projects and fieldwork/internship experience.

TIP 4: Focus on achievements and contributions

Highlighting your relevant skills and achievements will really put you ahead of the competition. Use active verbs to showcase your experiences and accomplishments.

TIP 5: Quantify and qualify your achievements

Create powerful success statements by quantifying your achievements. Give an indication of the scale and scope of your contributions by including details of the numbers of people/sites involved in particular projects. Highlight any special features, i.e. first research investigation in this field.

TIP 6: Use strong marketing "power" words

Use power words in your statements such as: achieved, delivered, led, implemented, pioneered, introduced, initiated, increased, improved. See our Action Verbs guide for more active verb choices.

TIP 7: Sell the benefits of your skills

Many CVs provide a list of duties without explaining the benefit of those skills. If one of your key skills is the ability to motivate teams, explain how this has benefited your employer's bottom line - i.e. you have improved team morale and motivation, resulting in increased staff retention which has in turn reduced recruitment costs.

TIP 8: Provide examples to support your claims

If you claim to be a good communicator, for instance, support this by providing information on the types and levels of people/organizations you've dealt with and how you have communicated. Example: Delivered presentations to audiences of up to 500 people.

TIP 9: Ensure perfect presentation

Poor presentation can undermine the best content, so make sure your spelling, grammar and layout are **PERFECT**.

Be sure to proofread and have someone else read your CV to double check for errors.

TIP 10: Keep your CV highly relevant and concise

A successful CV is relevant and targeted to a specific program or position, so you should only include information that supports your suitability for the role. There are no right or wrong CV formats so re-order your CV to highlight experience most relevant to your current target.