grad map

Basics of CV Writing

What is a Curriculum Vitae, or CV?

The UNC Writing Center defines the CV as "a fairly detailed overview of your life's accomplishments, especially those most relevant to the realm of academia."

CVs can vary widely depending on which country, field, and institution you are applying to. We've outlined the basic parts of a CV, but make sure you check your desired programs' requirements or those of successful applicants to see what type of structure they recommend.

What are the parts of a CV?

Personal Information
- This section contains your name, address, email, and telephone number.
- In some instances you may need to add a photo – check the requirements for this!

Education
- Degrees must be written in full (e.g. Bachelor of Science in Molecular Science and Biotechnology instead of BS MBB) along with the granting institutions. Put the start and end dates of your degree/s.
- If you wrote a thesis, mention the title of your thesis and the name of your supervisor.
- If you graduated with honors (e.g. *cum laude*) mention this. You can include your GPA, but it is better if you can find the equivalent converted GPA for the region you are applying to.
- Online courses or certifications are usually not relevant in this context

Work Experience
- Write the job title, employer, and the work period for each position you held.
- Describe your work using strong action verbs (here's a list of strong action verbs from the MIT Career Advising & Professional Development website).
- Present your accomplishments in a quantitative manner in order to provide a sense of scale. Use numerical values as much as possible.
- In some cases you may need to divide this section into 'Research Experience' for lab work, 'Teaching Experience' for teaching duties, 'Professional Experience' for non-academic jobs, etc. Again, check the CV template that your desired institution uses.

Skills
- Include relevant techniques, instruments, programming languages etc. in your repertoire.
- If you are applying to a position in a non-English speaking country and you've studied the language in that country, indicate the level of classes (A1, A2, etc.) you attended.
- Make sure to find the most important skills from the job description or research group you are applying to and prioritize them in your CV.
- Don't lie about skills you do not possess – this can be grounds for disqualification if you are caught lying.

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What are the parts of a CV? (continued)

This part of your CV lists your accomplishments. You can choose which sections to include from this list:

Awards – This includes scholarships, awards given during graduation, licensure exams, inter-school competitions, etc. Give a short explanation about the context of the award – for example, the admissions committee will not understand how selective a DOST Scholarship is, or how many applicants competed for the Best Undergraduate Thesis award in your university.

Publications – Includes journal articles and book chapters that were submitted to a publishing body. You may also include any publications you are currently working on, write the tentative title and indicate that it is in progress. This does not include laboratory papers submitted as a grade requirement in one of your classes. Be consistent and use the same citation format (e.g. MLA, APA, IEEE) for your publications.

Conferences – Only include academic conferences. Indicate whether you are an oral presenter, poster presenter, or a participant.

Patents – Only include patents that have been approved and published online, and place the appropriate details.

Affiliations – Put your memberships in professional and volunteer organizations (e.g. Integrated Chemists of the Philippines, Philippine Red Cross) you are actively a part of.

Certifications – Includes non-degree certifications which require training for a specific number of hours followed by an exam. Lean Six Sigma, Project Management Professional, and Chartered Financial Analyst are some examples of certifications.

References
- Your references (usually professors) should know about your research and/or academic skills, and preferably they should be working in your field and have advanced degrees (Master's or PhD).
- Use only 2 or 3 references in your CV.
- Write their full name, position, institution, and institutional email address.
- Remember to ask permission first before putting them on your CV!

Things To Remember:
- Organize and format your CV properly and with consistency.
- Do not pad your CV with excessive details or unfocused material. Pick only the important points relevant to the position you're applying for.
- Always check for spelling and grammatical errors every time you submit your CV.
- Ask your mentors and peers for feedback!

Further Reading:
- Oxford University Careers Service
- Academic Advising & Career Center, UToronto
- College Center for Research and Fellowships, UChicago