# Writing CVs and Resumes

### **Graduate Writing Center**

**Overview:**

This workshop will cover strategies for creating effective CVs and resumes for applications for further graduate study, funding, and professional positions. It will address overall rhetorical strategies as well as grammatical and mechanical points.

**A Note about This Workshop and the Graduate Writing Center**

Please note that these workshops are designed to address general writing principles. As a result, you may not find information in this packet or during the workshop that is directly relevant to your field or your current study. The best way to view these workshops is as opportunities to be exposed to general skills that should transfer across disciplines. That means attending these workshops is **not a substitute** for reading extensively in your field and asking questions of advisors and peers.

The Graduate Writing Center, located in 111-H Kern Building, provides free, one-on-one consultations for graduate students working on any kind of writing project—from seminar papers to presentations to articles to dissertations. Scheduling an appointment with the Graduate Writing Center is an excellent way to follow up on the practical information you receive during the workshops.

To learn more about the Graduate Writing Center or to sign up for an appointment using our online schedule, visit the Center’s website at http://pwr.la.psu.edu/resources/graduate-writing-center/GWC. Please note that the appointment schedule is posted one week in advance and appointment times book quickly.

**CVs: An Overview**

A curriculum vitae or CV is a record of your educational background and academic experiences, often required for job applications, fellowships, grants, and tenure reviews. A CV is designed to showcase your qualifications to a potential academic employer, funding agency, or tenure review board.

**CV Content**

Most CVs include information about the three-part mission of the university: teaching, research, and service. Although the content of your CV may vary according to your particular experiences, your discipline, or your targeted audience, common elements include:

* Contact information: name, address, phone number, email.
* Education: include information about graduate and undergraduate degrees; include postdoctoral experience if relevant
  + Degree field and other areas of emphasis (i.e., minors)
  + Name and location of school
  + Date degree was conferred (or anticipated graduation date)
  + Title of thesis (under master’s degree information)
  + Title of dissertation (under PhD information); some sources also recommend including a brief description of your dissertation
  + May also include PhD advisor and other committee members
* Relevant Academic Experience: this most often includes information about teaching and research, but may include other areas as well, such as assistantships, fellowships, grants, publications, presentations, related coursework, etc.
* Service: may include information about academic service, such as assisting with academic conference, serving on an academic search committee, volunteer work with university institutions, participation with student groups, mentoring, etc.; may also include community service and outreach programs.
* Some CVs may also include information about professional affiliations or memberships, foreign study, or special certificates or licenses.

Do NOT include personal information, such as sex, age, race, nationality, marital status. Employers are not allowed to discriminate against you on the basis of any of these.

**Job Descriptions**

CVs are less likely than resumes to include lengthy job descriptions in bullets, as most academic job titles (and their duties) are recognizable to the audience. For example, the title “teaching assistant” offers an academic audience enough information to understand your role in that position. However, you may need to include descriptions when your work is not fully explained by the title or reflects unique skills.

When job descriptions are needed, they should be action-driven and begin with a verb.

**Some Action Verbs**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Achieved | Acquired | administered | allotted | analyzed | assisted | authored |
| Automated | Balanced | Budgeted | calculated | completed | controlled | coordinated |
| Conducted | Converted | Created | decided | delivered | designed | developed |
| Devised | Discovered | Eliminated | established | eradicated | executed | expanded |
| Figured | Grew | Headed | helped | identified | implemented | improved |
| Invented | Installed | Instructed | introduced | initiated | managed | operated |
| Optimized | Originated | positioned | prepared | redesigned | researched | restructured |
| Reviewed | Revised | Saved | selected | streamlined | taught | verified |

**Organization**

Most CVs begin with educational background; the arrangement following education often depends on emphasis. For instance, if you are applying to a research institution, you will want to emphasize your research experience (including publications and presentations), by putting that information first. In general, the closer to the beginning you place your material, the more emphasis it receives.

**Resumes: An Overview**

Resumes are brief summaries of your education, work experiences, and qualifications. They are most commonly used to apply to jobs in business and industry. Unlike CVs, resumes should be tailored to fit each job for which you apply.

**Resume Content**

Most resumes include information about your education, work experiences, and skills. As with the CV, you can add sections as necessary. As you will see, there’s quite a bit of overlap between sections. However, the amount and type of detail you include in each section varies from CV to resume—and even between versions of an individual’s resume, since these documents are tailored to each job ad.

* Contact information: name, address, phone number, email.
* Objective statement: brief summary of the position(s) you are applying for and your main qualifications.
* Education: include information about graduate and undergraduate degrees; include postdoctoral experience if relevant.
  + Degree field and other areas of emphasis (i.e., minors)
  + Name and location of school
  + Date degree was conferred (or anticipated graduation date)
  + G.P.A. if above 3.0
* Work experience: give detailed descriptions of each; you may need to include only relevant. Remember to tailor this section to the job ad!
* Skills: these could be skills related to computers, leadership, lab work, etc. Remember, these skills should apply to the job ad, and they should be listed in order of importance.
* Honors and activities: may include academic awards and scholarships, membership in organizations, leadership positions, service positions, academic honors and awards, etc. List date of award/dates of involvement.

Again, do NOT include personal information, such as sex, age, race, nationality, marital status. Employers are not allowed to discriminate against you on the basis of any of these.

**Job Descriptions**

Resumes commonly employ job descriptions to detail duties and responsibilities. These descriptions should reflect the job ad to which you are applying. If the job for which you are applying differs greatly from jobs you have held in the past, job descriptions should emphasize transferrable skills such as leadership, communication, problem-solving, etc. As with CVs, descriptions should be action-driven and begin with a verb. See the list of action verbs above.

**Organization**

Most resumes begin with an objective statement. For most graduate students, the education section comes next, because it’s the most significant indicator of their experience and qualifications. The arrangement of the other sections varies depending on the job ad.

**Formatting CVs and Resumes**

Because both CVs and resumes should be visually attractive and easy to scan, consider the following format tips:

* Use 10-12 point font.
* Use bulleted lists to help employers locate information easily.
* Limit the number of fonts used and the kind of emphasis (underline, bold, italics)—too many fonts and too much emphasis are distracting and hard to read.
* Use strong visual alignments for text.
* Keep in mind balance, symmetry and white space.
* Print on high quality white or off-white paper.

**Online CVs and Resumes**

Increasingly, universities offer resources for placing job application materials online. If you place your CV or resume online, here are some things to keep in mind:

* List synonymous versions of key terms (to increase chances of getting a hit)
* Include a list of keywords.
* Since these are scanned for content, don’t worry about the format. Use a standard font and avoid fancy emphasis. Use bold or FULL CAPS for emphasis.
* Your CV or resume may need to be more functionally organized (if appropriate).
* List credentials and job titles

**Sample CVs and Resume**

**John L. Doe**

Environmental Science Division 207 Dispar Road

Oak Ridge National Laboratory Oak Ridge, TN 37830  
Oak Ridge, TN 37831-6056 (xxx) xxx-xxxx   
(xxx) xxx-xxxx   
  
**EDUCATION**  
*Stanford University,* Stanford, California, 19XX-19XX

Ph.D. in Biological Sciences, 19XX, Area of Specialization: Population Biology  
M.S. in Biological Sciences, 19XX

*Northwestern University,* Evanston, Illinois, 19XX-19XX

B.A. in Biological Sciences, concentration in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology  
B.A. in Biochemistry, Molecular Biology and Cell Biology with honors  
B.A. in Integrated Science Program, with honors

**AWARDS and HONORS**

Hollaender Postdoctoral Fellowship (US D.O.E.), 19XX-present.  
ARCS Foundation Fellowship, 19XX-19XX  
National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship, 19XX-19XX  
Andrew Mellon Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship,19XX Phi Beta Kappa, 19XX

**RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**  
*Postdoctoral Research:* Environmental Science Division, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, 19XX-present (research adviser: Dr. Stephen H. Smith).

* Development of quantitative theory of hierarchical structure in ecological systems.
* Analysis of how ecological communities reflect environmental heterogeneity at different scales.
* Numerical study of foraging behavior with short and long range movement in heterogeneous environments.

*Doctoral Research:* Department of Biological Sciences, Stanford University, 19XX-19XX, (research adviser: Dr. James Advisername).

* Field study of the impact of avian predation on *Anolie* lizards in the eastern Caribbean documents the importance of differences in spatial scale between prey and predators.
* Theoretical analysis of spatial scale and environmental heterogeneity in models of predator-prey communities.
* Analytical and numerical works show how species interactions can sharpen underlying environmental patterns and how heterogeneous environments can stabilize predator and prey populations.

*Undergraduate Honors Research:* Department of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, and Cell Biology, Northwestern University, 19XX-19XX (research adviser: Dr. Peter T. Williams)

* Investigation of primary events of bacterial photosynthesis.
* Isolation and spectral analysis of photosynthetic reaction centers.

**RESEARCH INTERESTS**

* Theoretical and field study of ecological communities.
* The roles that spatial patterns and processes play in shaping communities.
* How populations and processes that act on different spatiotemporal scales affect the behavior of ecological systems.
* Influences of disturbance size and frequency on landscape structure.

**TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

*Instructor:* Outdoor Education Program, Stanford University, 19XX-19XX.

* Lectures and weekend outings, emphasis on alpine ecology, animal tracking, and wilderness skills.

*Co-Instructor:* Biology of Birds, Stanford University, 19XX.

* Lectures and field trips; with Dr. S.T. Phillips.

*Teaching Assistant:* Systematics and Ecology of Vascular Plants, Stanford University, 19XX.

* Laboratory and field trips.

*Teaching Assistant:* Core Biology Laboratory, Stanford University, 19XX.

* Ecology laboratory and discussion sections.

*Instructor:* Chemistry Laboratory, Kendall College, Evanston, IL, 19XX-19XX.

* Sole responsibility for laboratory in biochemistry, general and organic chemistry.

*Wilderness Guide:* Association of Adirondack Scout Camps, Long Lake, NY, 19XX.

* Six-day canoe and hiking trips, with attention to Adirondack natural history.

**UNIVERSITY SERVICES**

*Tour Guide:* Botanical tours of Stanford campus for organizers of Native American students orientation, 19XX.

* Emphasis on native uses of plants

*Guest Instructor:* Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve Training Program, 19XX.

* Interpretation of animal tracks and signs.

*Tour Guide:* Ecology laboratory teaching assistant orientation, 19XX.

* Led natural history tour of field site.

*Student Adviser:* Integrated Science Program, Northwestern University, 19XX-19XX.  
  
*Academic Committee:* College of Community Studies, Northwestern University, 19XX-19XX.  
  
*President and Member:* Northwestern Students for a Better Environment, 19XX-19XX.  
  
**PUBLICATIONS and PRESENTATIONS**

Jones, J.T. and J.L. Doe. 19XX. Scrub Jay predation on starlings and swallows: attack and interspecific defense, *Condor* 90:503-505.  
  
Doe, J.L. and J.T. Jones. 19XX. Avian predation on *Anolis* lizards in the northeastern Caribbean: an Inter-island contrast, Ecology 70:617-628.  
  
Doe, J.L. and J.T. Jones. Pattern and stability in predator-prey communities: how diffusion in spatially variable environments affects the Lotak-Volterra model, *Theoretical Population Biology* (in press).  
  
Doe, J.L and J.T. Jones. Predation across spatial scales in heterogeneous environments, *Theoretical Population in Biology* (in press).  
  
Doe, J.L. and J.T. Jones. Species interaction in space, symposium paper presented at the 19XX meeting of the Ecological Society of America, Snowbird, UT; to appear in R. Ricklefs and D. Schulter, eds., *Historical and Geographical Determinants of Community Diversity,* University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

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* Ecology laboratory and discussion sections.

*Instructor:* Chemistry Laboratory, Kendall College, Evanston, IL, 19XX-19XX.

* Sole responsibility for laboratory in biochemistry, general and organic chemistry.

*Wilderness Guide:* Association of Adirondack Scout Camps, Long Lake, NY, 19XX.

* Six-day canoe and hiking trips, with attention to Adirondack natural history.

**TEACHING INTERESTS**  
General ecology, community ecology, ornithology, field biology, theoretical ecology, conservation biology, animal tracking, wilderness skills, wilderness policy issues.

**UNIVERSITY SERVICES**

*Tour Guide:* Botanical tours of Stanford campus for organizers of Native American students orientation, 19XX.

* Emphasis on native uses of plants

*Guest Instructor:* Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve Training Program, 19XX.

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* How populations and processes that act on different spatiotemporal scales affect the behavior of ecological systems.
* Influences of disturbance size and frequency on landscape structure.

**WILDERNESS TRAINING**

Animal tracking, avalanche safety, kayaking, mountaineering, outdoor education, rock climbing, wilderness survival.

**WILDERNESS LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE**

Back-country skiing, minimum equipment camping, mountaineering, off-trail navigation, snow shoeing, white water canoeing.

**RELATED INTERESTS**

Back-country baking, basketry, ethnobotany, flintknapping, prehistoric fire-making, shelter design, weaving.

**PUBLICATIONS and PRESENTATIONS**

Jones, J.T. and J.L. Doe. 19XX. Scrub Jay predation on starlings and swallows: attack and interspecific defense, *Condor* 90:503-505.

Doe, J.L. and J.T. Jones. 19XX. Avian predation on *Anolis* lizards in the northeastern Caribbean: an Inter-island contrast, *Ecology* 70:617-628.

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**Rita P. Anderson**

Permanent address: [rpa146@psu.edu](mailto:rja146@psu.edu) Local address:

16 W. Kent Ave. 111 E. College Ave. #222

Louisville, PA 12345 State College, PA 16801

(520)-635-5767 (814)-867-1044

## Education Pennsylvania State University – University Park, PA

Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering, Spring 2003

GPA of 3.37

**Relevant Courses:**

* Calculus I, II, III
* Many Chemical Engineering Courses
* Microeconomics/Macroeconomics
* Technical Writing
* Speech Communication

## Knowledge MS Office with extensive use in Excel, knowledge in C++, HTML, CAD, MathCAD.

**And Skills**  Good interpersonal, communication, and analytical skills.

## Work Center for the Study of Polymer Solvent Systems– Department of Chemical

## Experience Engineering at Penn State University

Undergraduate Researcher, 5/01 – Present

* Performed experiments independently; some last 4 – 5 days and need to be monitored and analyzed every 5 hours.
* Extensive involvement in ordering, planning, meeting budget levels, and designing of new equipment and apparatus.
* Troubleshooting, repair, clean and maintain equipment.
* Prepare data and analyze with spreadsheets.

**Blue Transit School Busses** – Mechanicsburg, PA

School Bus Driver / Maintenance, 1998 – 2000

* Obtained commercial drivers license with Passenger and Bus endorsements.
* Drive children grades K-12 to and from school, while keeping them calm and orderly on bus.
* Responsible for cleaning interior and exterior of all buses, routine safety checks, and general maintenance of buses.

**Anderson’s Sporting Goods** – Smalltown, PA

Salesperson, 1995-1998

* Required to run small business on daily basis independently.
* Deal with customer complaints, make orders, stock shelves, and a variety of other tasks.

**Honors**  Deans List Fall 2001/ Spring 2000/ Fall 1999 at Penn State.

Omega Chi Epsilon, National Chemical Engineering Honor Society

Top 10% of graduating high school class.

**Helpful Resources**

**CVs**

Anthony, R., & Roe, G. (1998). *The curriculum vitae handbook: How to present and promote your academic career*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Rudi. (Includes a wide variety of sample CVs for formatting inspiration).

Hume, K. (2010). *Surviving your academic job hunt: Advice for humanities PhDs*. Revised edition. New York: Palgrave. (Although this is geared towards humanities majors, it has excellent information on academic interviews, formatting teaching statements, and several sample CVs).

Purdue’s Online Writing Lab: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/641/01/>

For science CVs: <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Basics-of-Science-CVs/46275/>

Some sample CVs:

[www.career.arizona.edu/pdf/examples/Resumes/curriculum.doc](http://www.career.arizona.edu/pdf/examples/Resumes/curriculum.doc)

<http://www.cs.princeton.edu/~august/cv.pdf>

**Resumes**

Purdue’s Online Writing Lab: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/564/01/>

Penn State Career Services: <http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/students/resumes.shtml>

**From CV to Resume**

From the *Chronicle of Higher Education*: <http://chronicle.com/article/From-CV-to-1-Page-R-sum-/138739/>

University of Texas’s Liberal Arts Career Services: <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/orgs/lacs/Students/Graduate-Students/CV-Cover-Letters.php>

Cornell’s Career Services: <http://www.career.cornell.edu/students/grad/cv.cfm>