



Building Your CV Guide for Graduate Students

This guide is designed for graduate students in all fields and is not tailored to any specific discipline. It offers introductory advice on how to write or update a CV. Before moving forward, we encourage you to:

- Find several sample CVs from your discipline (check assistant professors' CVs from faculty profiles on your department website)
- Speak with your mentors and advisors to understand specific expectations of CVs in your discipline
- Request your trusted peers, mentors, or advisers to review your CV draft and collect feedback

The insights you gain from these additional sources along with this guide and [sample CVs](#) ([/document/1761](#)) will help you write and revise your CV based on your goal. You can also make an appointment to meet with a career adviser from the Center for Career Development to review your CV and provide feedback.

What is a CV

Your CV is a written record of an entire history of your scholarly achievements. It usually includes nearly all aspects of your academic experience. Your CV will continue to grow as you progress in graduate school and beyond. It is a living document with no length limit. It is best to build your CV as early as possible and revise it throughout your doctoral training to capture the developments in your academic career.

If you are curious about the differences between a CV and a resume, please [review our CV vs. Resume Guide](#) ([/document/683](#)).

When do I need a CV?

Your CV is the first of many documents you will be asked to send when you apply for:

- Academic positions such as tenure-track faculty (e.g., assistant professors), non-tenure track faculty (e.g., visiting assistant professors, teaching assistant professors, lecturers), and postdocs
- Research positions at national laboratories or research institutions
- Fellowships, scholarships, and awards
- Research grants

How can I format my CV?

There is no single formula to format your CV, though some fields have style preferences. Check the following key rules to design an effective CV that captures your readers' attention:

- Choose a layout that allows you to present your accomplishments concisely, clearly and consistently so that readers can easily skim your CV and find the information they need.
- Make your CV stylistically consistent. For example, if you make one heading in bold and title case (e.g., EDUCATION), all the headings of your CV should follow the same style (e.g., RESEARCH EXPERIENCE).
- There is no page limit, so do not use fonts smaller than 11 points and keep one-inch margins on all sides.

- Organize headings in decreasing order of importance to put your most relevant accomplishments on the first and second pages of your CV to capture your readers' attention.
- Use reverse chronological order when organizing information in each section, with your most recent information at the top and the oldest at the bottom of each section.
- Don't forget to check for spelling errors and typos to avoid making grammatical mistakes.

Should I tailor my CV for each application?

Even though differences among your CVs won't be substantial, tweaking your CV based on readers' specific expectations is important.

For example, suppose you are applying for faculty positions in different types of institutions (e.g., teaching-focused liberal art college vs. research-focused university). You may need to emphasize different aspects of your academic achievements relevant to each audience (e.g., put teaching experience first over research when applying for a faculty position that primarily involves teaching).

What information should I include?

Your CV should be organized with headings to draw your readers' attention. CV headings are the titles of each section to highlight different aspects of your experiences or accomplishments. They help readers quickly locate key information on your CV.

Getting started

Start building your CV with the common headings suggested below to ensure that you are not overlooking anything relevant. The final headings you need in your CV will be based on your discipline and the positions/fellowships you are applying for.

For additional assistance...

Please [schedule a one-on-one career advising appointment \(http://princeton.joinhandshake.com/appointments/new?utm_source=Our%20website&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=website\)](http://princeton.joinhandshake.com/appointments/new?utm_source=Our%20website&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=website) using Handshake for help developing or updating your CV.

Related documents

- [Sample CVs](#) [\(/document/1761\)](#)

Common Headings

- Education
- Honors & Awards
- Publications
- Experience (e.g., Research Experience, Teaching Experience)
- Conferences & Presentations
- Service
- Professional Affiliations/Memberships
- References

Additional Headings

- Research & Teaching Interests

- Skills & Languages
- Student Advising & Mentoring
- Patents (mostly for Ph.D. students in engineering and natural sciences)
- Grants
- Media Coverage
- Professional Experience

Education

List each institution, degree, field concentration and date your degree was (or is expected to be) conferred. You do not need to add starting dates for each degree.

Remember that your highest degree or degree-in-progress should be listed first since CVs use reverse chronological order. You can also include your dissertation title and the names of your adviser(s) and dissertation committee members. CVs usually do not include high school information.

Honors & Awards

Include dissertation awards, scholarships, fellowships, research or teaching-related awards, and other honors relevant to your field. You may consider listing them under "Education" instead of creating a separate heading if you only have a few awards.

List the names of the awards/honors, the awarding institutions, and the date awarded. If you were selected to receive a fellowship or award but had to turn it down, you may consider listing it here and note it was "declined."

Experience

List relevant experience that highlights your scholarly accomplishments. Include your organization/employer, position title, location and employment timeframe.

You can also use one-to-two bullets (also known as accomplishment statements) to describe your significant accomplishments in each position, which offers a good understanding of your unique scholarly contributions to readers. Avoid using too many bullets as they are more commonly used in resumes than CVs.

Instead of using a general "Experience" heading, it is more effective to subdivide it. For example, "Research Experience" and "Teaching Experience" are the most used experience headings in CVs.

If you've worked as a research assistant under a specific faculty member/Principal Investigator (PI), a research group/lab or a research center, list that under research experience. You can include research internships outside academia, such as national labs, government agencies and private companies if they are directly relevant to your field of study.

Include all full-time, part-time, volunteer and adjunct teaching experiences as a teaching assistant, assistant in instruction, co-instructor, solo-instructor, or lecturer in your teaching experience section. Along with your titles, institutions where you taught, and employment timeframe, include the name of each course taught to demonstrate your competencies.

If relevant to your goal, you may add additional experience headings such as "Other Professional Experience," "Administrative Experience" and "Museum Experience." What you include may vary depending on your field and the positions/fellowships you are applying for.

Publications

If you plan to use your CV for tenure-track faculty positions, postdocs and fellowships that primarily involve research, this is one of the core sections you need to highlight. If possible, include this heading on the first or second page of your CV.

Please note that your dissertation itself is not considered a publication in academia, so do not include it here. To list your publications, use the citation style of your academic discipline (e.g., APA, MLA, IEEE, Chicago). You can make your name bold to highlight your authorship.

Since there are prestige hierarchies among academic publications, you can create subheadings to differentiate types of

publications. For example, your publications may be categorized as below.

- Peer-Reviewed Articles or Refereed Journal Articles
- Books
- Book Chapters
- Book Reviews
- Conference Proceedings
- Technical Reports
- Web-based Publications
- Other Publications (non-academic publications such as blog posts)

If your work is accepted or/and in the final process of production, it should be considered published work. When listing it, replace the year of publication with the term "accepted," "forthcoming," or "in press."

If you have several manuscripts you submitted to a journal for review, you could create a "Manuscripts in Submission" subheading.

You may have a "Manuscripts in Preparation" subheading if you have ongoing research projects to submit for publication in the near future. Do not list too many in preparation or submitted items in your CV because they are not officially accepted or published yet.

Conferences & Presentations

Along with the publications section, this is another core area to showcase your research accomplishments. Similar to your publications, follow the citation style of your field. In general, you need to include the names of presenters, the presentation or poster titles, the names of conferences, and the dates you presented.

You may subcategorize them to demonstrate different types of scholarly engagement. For example, you may consider subheadings such as:

- Paper Presentations
- Poster Presentations
- Invited Talks & Lectures
- Campus Presentations
- Panels/Workshops Organized

If you have an accepted paper or presentation but a conference was canceled due to COVID, you can list it with an additional note in parentheses (e.g., canceled due to COVID).

Service

List any volunteer work contributed to your department, university and professional associations, such as a committee member, manuscript reviewer, and department representative.

You may categorize them with the following subheadings:

- Departmental Service such as department student organizations, department committees and department seminars organized
- University Service such as campus-wide committees and graduate student organizations
- Disciplinary Service or Professional Service such as journal/conference paper review, ad hoc or regular committees affiliated with professional associations and conferences organized

If you develop a CV to apply for academic positions (e.g., assistant professors), your readers are interested in your service activities. Even though they are not directly related to research performance, this section highlights the way you've volunteered to give back to academic communities.

Skills & Languages

This section is optional, but if your field requires specific foreign languages or technical skills to conduct research, you may want to consider adding this section to your CV. As for languages, specify the extent of your proficiency (e.g., advanced reading and

conversational knowledge) for each language.

Professional Associations/Memberships

List your memberships in international or national scholarly organizations by including the names of the organizations.

References

As a graduate student, it is common to include at least three academics who are willing to write letters of recommendation (e.g., adviser(s), dissertation committee members). Include their names, titles, institutions, and contact information (e.g., email addresses).

Accomplishment statements

To write effective bullets or accomplishment statements in CVs, start with an action verb, then offer detailed descriptions by covering the following aspects:

- **What:** What did you do exactly? Be detailed and explain each part using quantitative and qualitative terms.
- **How:** How did you do this? Did you lead or work on a team?
- **Results or Why:** Share the outcomes of your action to show the value of your contributions or highlight the purpose of your work. What was the goal of the project? Did this lead to a publication?

Remember not to overuse bullets since they are optional in CVs. Include one or two most significant and relevant aspects of each work if you decide to use bullets in your CV. If your target readers are scholars with a similar academic background and are familiar with your field-specific jargon, you may use your field vocabulary to describe your work.

Examples of accomplishment statements include:

Research

- Applied a general circulation model to analyze the regional climate impacts, which led to three conference presentations and one peer-reviewed journal article
- Examined the relationship between medieval material culture and visual culture in religious communities in southern France
- Analyzed the effectiveness of anti-corruption audits on governments by examining changes in management and bureaucratic organizational structures
- Collaborated with three graduate research assistants and two postdocs to design novel experiments that assess cell mobility to determine the path of least hydraulic resistance

Teaching

- Facilitated weekly precepts involving discussion of lectures and readings on 19th-century British and American literature for a total of 30 undergraduate students
- Developed and implemented learning lessons to introduce materials science to 50 first-year undergraduate students, later adopted by the department
- Integrated multimedia and humanities to offer theoretical and historical understandings of global art history using film and instructional technologies

For more information on creating bullets/accomplish statements (e.g., action verbs), please review the [Transforming Your CV to a Resume guide](https://careerdevelopment.princeton.edu/sites/g/files/toruqf1041/files/media/transforming_your_cv_to_a_resume_final.pdf) (https://careerdevelopment.princeton.edu/sites/g/files/toruqf1041/files/media/transforming_your_cv_to_a_resume_final.pdf).