

Professional Communication and Career Documents

The Professional Communication section provides guidance on the following topics:

- [Resumes](#)
- [Cover Letters](#)
- [Curricula Vitae](#)

You may also wish to visit the [Formal Emails](#) section for more information on professionally communicating via email.

Resumes

Resumes are an important component of the job search. Employers glean a sense of your skills and experiences from your resume, and often utilize it to determine if they would like to interview you. It is important that your resume conveys the most professional and skillful version of yourself possible.

Formatting a Resume

When designing your resume, consider these points:

- Generally, resumes should be about two pages with some white space for ease of reading.
 - Note: In global health, employers are used to longer resumes which highlight the types of responsibilities you have engaged in and locations in which you have worked.
- Fonts should be consistent. Recommended fonts include Ariel, Times Roman, Calibri. For font size, 10 and 11 point are optimal, and headers may be 12 point.
- Formatting of employer names, titles, dates, bullets should be consistent, easy to read and visually appealing.

Bold may be used for headers, titles, degrees, employer names, and college/institution names. Italics are not recommended except for employer descriptions.

A resume may be divided into the following sections:

Headers

At minimum, these should include:

1. Summary or Profile
2. Experience
3. Education (and Certifications if applicable)

Note: Other categories such as Objective, Research Experience, Skills, Volunteer Experience, Interests, Publications, Presentations or Other can also be used, but this is optional. Global health applications should clearly list language abilities and countries you have lived and worked.

Summary or Profile Statement

Describes "who you are" and "what value you bring." It can be a subset of your [elevator pitch](#). It should highlight the specific experiences, skills, strengths and attributes you possess that differentiate you from others. *Note: An Objective may be embedded into the Summary or Profile statement OR have its own*

separate header above the summary. This is often recommended for career changers where goals are not obvious.

Experience (includes former/current employer and jobs titles)

Employer Organizations – Include a description after the name of lesser-known organizations (can be in italics). This should include highlights of the organization’s location, size, service and/or product, and target clients/populations.

Note: Descriptions should also be used for well-known organizations if they make a connection to your target employer. For example, Hewlett Packer might not need a description. But, if you worked in a division of HP that services government clients, and you are targeting government jobs, it is helpful to describe the specific division of HP.

Job Titles – If you have received promotions within organizations, new job titles with corresponding dates should be clear.

Bullets

- Focus on results, outcomes, your contributions/improvements - quantify/use metrics wherever possible. Provide context - how your work contributed to success of project, deadline, deliverables, standards, compliance, regulations, etc.
- Correct tenses must be used consistently.
- Action verbs are powerful and diverse (i.e. there should not be two bullets under one job that start with the same verb).

Education – Degrees and anticipated degrees are clear with concentrations/majors or specific, relevant courses highlighted. Leadership roles in student clubs, projects/deliverables, honors/awards received and other relevant information are included in a brief, concise way. It is recommended that you only include a GPA if it is 3.5 or above.

Additional Resume Tips

Using More Headers – When using other headers such as Research Experience, Skills, Volunteer Experience, etc., information should be concise and follow the formatting of the rest of the resume.

Personal Information – While this is required in many cultures, the use of birth dates, marital status and photos is not customary in the United States.

Cover Letters

In the job search, cover letters are just as important as the resume. While the resume *lists* your skills, experiences, and accomplishments, the cover letter is an opportunity for you to *discuss* these components. The goal of the cover letter is to communicate why you in particular are a good fit for the position. It is an opportunity for you to connect your skills and abilities with the needs of the organization or position as well as demonstrate your ability to write in a professional capacity.

Formatting a Cover Letter

When designing your cover letter, make sure that:

- It is no more than one page. Margins should be no smaller than .5 inches.
- Fonts are consistent with the resume. Recommended fonts include Ariel, Times Roman, or Calibri. For the font size, 11 point is optimal.
- Proofread for spelling errors, missing words, and missing punctuation. All sentences should end with a period.
- Vary your verbs and sentence openings. Try to not begin more than 3 sentences with the word "I."
- Grammar, tenses, sentence structure and punctuation are important. Use the same verb tenses throughout the letter-be consistent.

A cover letter may be divided into the following sections:

Header (optional)

In the top margin of the page, you can include your name and contact information. It should be the same as on your resume.

Date

Write today's date on left margin.

Contact Information for Recipient of Letter (under date, skip a line, and then write)

**If you don't have name, only use organization and address.*

Ms., Mr. or Dr. First Name & Last Name

Job title of person

Organization

Address (street, city and zip code)

Salutation

Address your letter to Dr., Ms. or Mr. and LAST NAME ONLY. If you do not know the name of the person you are addressing, you can write: "To Whom It May Concern."

Paragraph #1 – Why Are You Interested in Them?

This is the paragraph where you should highlight the role you are applying to, why you are interested in the position, and (if applicable) the person you that referred you. It should showcase that you have researched the organization by including your knowledge of the organization's mission statement,

strategy and/or key focus areas, etc. It should show your passion for the organization and role. Showcase why this opportunity aligns with your interests and goals. This is even more important if they have a powerful mission. This should be one paragraph, no more than two paragraphs.

Paragraph #2 – Why Should They Be Interested in You?

This is where you should highlight the value that you bring based on the job posting as opposed to what this job could do for you. This part of your cover letter is often considered the most important. Use bullets to talk about your experiences/skill sets, and be sure they address the introductory line before it. For example, “The following examples of my background highlight the value I would bring to your team:” *Note: We recommend using the “T” framework to match your target job. (See next section.)*

Paragraph #3 – Your Wrap-Up Section

This paragraph should include a) comments that you would like the reader to know about you that are different from what was addressed above, b) a reiteration of your interest, and c) a closing statement that includes thanking them for their consideration.

Closing

Be formal. We recommend using “Sincerely.”

Signature

Write your full name 2 spaces below your closing.

Writing a Targeted Cover Letter: Using the “T” Framework

Many job searchers share that cover letters take them two hours to write, as they spend this time tailoring their cover letters for each target position. Not only can this be exhausting, it can often hold you up in sending out applications in a timely manner. To create a tailored cover letter more efficiently, we recommend using the “T” framework as a guide. See details below.

On a sheet of paper, create a “T” with the job posting’s primary job responsibilities on one side and what you bring that matches those responsibilities on the other side.

JOB POSTING’S PRIMARY JOB RESPONSIBILITIES AND REQUIREMENTS	WHAT YOU BRING THAT MATCHES THE RESPONSIBILITIES AND REQUIREMENTS
1. Plan annual conference	1. Planned educational conferences for high school students to encourage exercise and healthy eating habits.
2. Manage community partnerships	2. Collaborated with hospitals, neighborhood groups, and advocacy organizations to promote events and share best practices.

3. Evaluate programs

4. Understands adolescent learning theory

5. Knowledge of sexual health

3. Solid understanding of how to plan, implement and evaluate health promotion and disease prevention interventions gained through MPH course work.

4. Developed a sexual health training module for at-risk teens as part of a field study project with Peer Health Exchange.

5. *Note: 4th bullet incorporates sexual health*

Now, take the bullets from **your** side of the “T,” and incorporate them into the second section of your cover letter. This could be in bullet form or paragraph form. The third/final section of your cover letter may include comments that you would like the reader to know about you. It should also include a closing statement.

Curricula Vitae

This section has been adapted from the [BU Center for Career Development](#).

The curriculum vitae, commonly called a CV or vita, is a scholarly representation of you that details your academic achievements, including publications, awards, and honors. While similar to a resume, the CV is most appropriate if you are pursuing a PhD-level position, a research opportunity, or admission to graduate school.

Format and Appearance

There is no one standard look or order for a CV, but it can generally be treated as a longer resume with your address and contact information at the top, and the different areas you list separated with headings. A CV can be as few as two pages, but can be ten or more.

CV Sections:

Sections can vary widely and largely depend on both the type of position you are applying for (professor, researcher, etc.) and the field. For example, biochemistry and literature may have different formats. The main sections of a CV are below.

- **Header/Contact Info:** Like in a standard resume, this section tells the employer who you are and how to reach you. Your name, street address, phone number, and email address should all be included.
- **Education:** This listing should appear in reverse chronological order. Include institution name, degree, specialty or major, and year (or expected date) for all your degrees. You may opt to include your undergraduate GPA.
- **Dissertation or Thesis:** Include the title, a brief description, and your advisor and committee names. For science fields, you might choose to describe research more fully in the Experience section and just list the dissertation/thesis title here. It is also possible to include a dissertation abstract—anywhere from two paragraphs to a few pages—in an addendum.
- **Fellowship:** This section can also be expanded to include grants, honors, and awards (but do not forget to label appropriately, i.e., Fellowships and Honors). Give the reader a clear understanding of each fellowship, grant, or award, particularly if the honor or award's significance is not stated in the title or was given in another country.
- **Related Professional Experience:** You can subdivide this section into several categories, such as Research Experience, Teaching Experience, Consulting, Fieldwork, Postdoctoral Work, etc., depending on your discipline.
 - List any experience relevant to the position for which you are applying. Start with your most recent activity and move backward.
 - Include volunteer experience, student teaching, internships, research projects, summer or part-time jobs, and other work experience. If you are writing a CV for a research-intensive position, we recommend listing Research as its own section.
 - Include the name of the organization, city and state, dates of employment, job title, and a brief description of accomplishments and responsibilities.

- Use short descriptive phrases, beginning with action words to highlight your skills and accomplishments.
- **Teaching/Research Interests:** If you are applying for a professorial or lecture position, this section should list the areas where you have strong specialized knowledge. For researchers, list areas where you have done solid work, published, or co-authored—or areas into which you wish to transition. You can include your teaching philosophy or research goals in detail in an addendum.
- **Languages:** List each of your languages and corresponding levels of proficiency, whether beginner, basic comprehension, intermediate reading and writing, conversant, fluent, native, or a combination of these.
- **Papers and Lectures:** This should include talks and papers you have presented at conferences and other events, with names, dates, and locations (for conferences/ meetings). Indicate invited talks. If you don't have many presentations, you can combine them with your publications.
- **Publications/Creative Work:** List publications in the citation format appropriate for your field. This section can be subdivided into Journal Articles, Book Reviews, Monographs, Art Exhibits, Poems, Musical Performances, etc. If you choose to list works in progress, you should note their status as "submitted for publication."
- **Academic Service:** List all departmental and university groups, committees and task forces, and student groups.
- **Graduate Coursework:** List any coursework relevant to your degree. You can break this area into subsections based on the types of courses (e.g. foreign language, literature, science, teaching, research). You have the option of listing the names of your professors, which is especially an asset if you have worked with leaders in the field.
- **Additional Sections:** Sections may include the following as well as others you find relevant to your academic career. When in doubt, ask a professor or colleague in your field for best practices and some examples.
 - **Special training.** This can include certifications, specialized post-graduate courses, or technical training.
 - **Professional affiliations and memberships.** Mention any officer roles in an organization here.
 - **Relevant interests/activities.** This can include hobbies and informal clubs.
 - **Travel.** This includes study abroad experiences, research trips, and teaching overseas. Be sure to list cities, states or regions, and countries. Describe the value and purpose of the experience in a few words.
 - **References.** You can choose to list references within the CV itself or in a separate document. Make sure the individuals you list are willing to be contacted and recommend you strongly. You may also wait for the prospective employer to request references.