

## Eight Steps for Preparing Scientific Resumes/Curriculum Vitae

by Bruce Katcher

### Step 1: Develop the Proper Mindset

**Your resume/CV is really a marketing brochure.** It is *not* a detailed job description that outlines every aspect of your work history and all your past job responsibilities. It is a summary of the major highlights of your career emphasizing your professional accomplishments.

**The purpose of a resume/CV is to land an interview.** It must, therefore, be enticing enough to the reader that he or she wants to meet you.

**Just do it!** There are two types of resume/CVs: the type that you are *planning* on completing and the type that is *done*. Only one of these will help your job search. You must, therefore, make up your mind *now* that you are going to complete your resume/CV by a certain date.

**Don't use full sentences and paragraphs.** Bulleted phrases are more to the point and easier to read.

**Don't use excessive jargon.** Acronyms and company-specific names for programs, projects, and grants should be avoided. Use scientific jargon only if you can be quite certain that everyone who will read it will be familiar with the terms.

**Don't emphasize responsibilities.** It is much more important to emphasize accomplishments.

**Don't be shy.** The resume/CV is a forum for you to tactfully boast about how you have helped organizations, advanced scientific knowledge, and contributed to an important cause. It is not a place to be bashful.

### Step 2: Choose the Appropriate Look and Feel

**Your resume/CV must look presentable.** Use white or off-white (i.e. light gray or light yellow) paper. Print only on one side of the page with black ink. Use business type fonts (e.g. Times or Times New Roman). Use the same font throughout the document. Avoid staples or folds.

**One or two pages should suffice.** Readers typically spend only 30-40 seconds looking at a resume/CV. Short and sweet is best.

**Note that practices vary by country.** If you are an international job seeker, you should check into common practices of the country in which you intend to search.

### Step 3: Write the Heading

**Include all relevant contact information.** Center your full name and degree in all bold capital letters at the top. Center your address, phone number, and email address below it. (If you are an international job seeker, be sure to include your country code and city code with your phone number.)

**Do not use your current organization's contact information.** Even if you are planning on staying with your current organization for several more months, the contact information on your resume/CV should be more permanent. The most common solution is to use your home contact information. If, however, you are embarking on a prolonged search, you might consider using both home and work information.

### Step 4: Prepare an Objective or Summary

**When to use an objective.** Use either an objective or a summary, not both. An objective is appropriate only if you can be very specific about the type of job you are seeking. Don't use an objective if you are open to many different types of positions. Avoid writing a vague objective such as "Recent graduate with major in Biology and Mathematics seeking position with growth potential."

**Use a summary if your employment goals are less specific.** It should summarize in just three or four phrases the type of work you do, how long you have been doing it, your major skills, and your personal strengths. The summary should include information that sets you apart from other applicants.

### Step 5: Present Your Professional Experience

**List employers chronologically.** Trace your professional experience back in time. Each entry should include the organization's name, department, dates of employment, and position held.

**Emphasize accomplishments.** Your resume/CV should include a bulleted list of your accomplishments within each position. An accomplishment is any way that you brought value to your organization. You can do this in one of three ways: by helping the organization make money, by helping the organization save money, or by developing something new, innovative, or unique. Include examples of how you won research grants, initiated research programs, reduced costs, increased efficiency, reduced errors, earned awards/recognition, contributed to a breakthrough in your specialty area, or advanced a line of research.

**Use action-oriented verbs.** Each accomplishment should begin with a strong action-oriented verb in the past tense such as "established," "directed," "managed," "increased," "decreased," "created," "launched," "instituted," "trained," or "designed." Avoid weak verbs such as "assisted," "participated," "helped," or "served." Also avoid the expression "responsible for."

**Use numbers, currency amounts, and percentages as much as possible.**

Examples of numbers that impress employers are the size of research grants awarded, number of graduate students supervised, and number of publications placed in refereed journals. (International job seekers should specify the appropriate currency.)

## **Step 6: Document Your Education**

**List your most recent education first.** Include the degree, institution, and location of the institution as well as the year the degree was awarded. (International job seekers should be sure to use the format for their degree that is most common in the country where they are seeking work. For example, many European countries use B.Sc. instead of B.S. and M.Sc. instead of M.S.)

**Recent graduates can include additional information.** Recent graduates might move the education section above the Professional Experience section. Also consider including major, minor, and academic honors.

## **Step 7: Use Other Categories If Appropriate**

**Technical skills.** Use this type of section to list special expertise you possess such as familiarity with specialized equipment, procedures, or research methodologies.

**Publications.** Use a separate category to list your publications. If you have only a few, these can be included in the accomplishment section. Consider using a separate page if you have more than 20. Use the same format you would use when listing references in scientific publications.

**Professional memberships.** Include only organizations relevant to your job search. List them alphabetically. Indicate if you hold any official position in the organization such as President or Treasurer.

**Presentations.** Include speeches, seminars, and training programs that you have delivered. (International job seekers should also include the country where the event was held.)

## **Step 8 Review Your Resume/CV Carefully**

**Proofread.** Nothing makes a worse impression than a resume/CV with typos, misspellings, incorrect spacing, or inconsistencies in the use of bolding, italics, capitalization, and underlining. Proof your resume/CV and have at least one other person review it.