

The following is a compilation of information from **books**, (put in refs) my college's career guidance counselor, and the input of many faculty from the College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at CSU when emailed and asked to say what is in a good and bad CV and cover letter.

In your CV: Do

- Make the formatting visually appealing and consistent
- Put information in a consistent chronological order that is easy for reader to follow
- Make the font big enough so that older faculty can read.
- Use formatting such as bullets, italics, or bold font only sparingly and use paper that is white, beige or a neutral color
- Check for misspellings and other errors

In your CV: Do

- Include information about your research and teaching experience
- Include publications, abstracts and professional presentations
- Include Professional Activities
 - (committee memberships, intern experiences, relevant volunteer work)
- Have a skills section including second language and/or computer proficiencies

When you need to start applying for jobs is NOT the time to start thinking about what your CV is going to look like!!!

- Think you want to go into teaching but have little experience?
 - Volunteer to be on your university's education committees
 - Volunteer to help TA classes
 - Volunteer to help with K-12 mentoring (science fairs, ASM etc)
- Want to apply for jobs in research?
 - Make sure you write that paper and get it submitted before you start working on your CV
- Want to go into industry?
 - Make sure you are familiarizing yourself with and obtaining the skill's that industry will need

In your CV: Don't

- Worry too much about length—there are no rules on length.
- The CV should be professional and should include your important data.
 - (although lots of faculty in my dept said not longer than 3 pages)
- Include the following information.
 - Age;
 - Ethnic identity;
 - Political affiliation;
 - Religious preference;
 - Hobbies;
 - Marital status;
 - Sexual orientation;
 - Place of birth;
 - Photographs;
 - Height;
 - Weight;
 - Health.

In your CV: Don't

- Have poor grammar, incorrect spelling –
 - Easily overcome by having someone else proof read.
 - If you're not a native English speaker this is imperative.
- Use personal pro-nouns such as I, me or my

In your CV: Don't

- List excessively detailed information about research or teaching.
 - Instead, provide the titles of research projects and course names along with brief summaries of your work.
- Listing every technique you've ever used;
 - a brief description of your research project(s) usually gives a good idea of what technical expertise you have.

In your CV Don't

- Fluff your CV up with things like listing high school, college accomplishments or listings in who's who's etc.
- List large numbers of manuscripts "in preparation" - if it's not been submitted, then don't bother putting it on.*** (this is debatable!!)
- Don't mix abstracts with peer-reviewed publications to 'pad out' your publication list.
 - Annoying to an over-worked reviewer as he/she tries to sort through it to glean the relevant information.
 - This can highlight the fact that you are somewhat embarrassed by its scant nature.
- ❖ Instead make 2 separate lists 1 of publications and 1 of abstracts.

In your CV: Don't

- Neglect to name your research supervisor, it sends up red flags that there were conflicts.
- Not listing your current advisor as a reference - if you don't/can't then some explanation is warranted (in cover letter)
- It prevents potential employers from evaluating your professional references (i.e. post-docs in same or different labs, collaborators, major advisors, committee members, etc.).
- Much as we may not like it, pedigree is an important part of your portfolio.

What to do if there were conflicts with a supervisor.

- Having problems with your major professor is not always the kiss of death to your career.
- Getting a good committee is critical.
- Establishing relationships with your committee members, especially a collaboration (no matter how small) can give you a broad group of professionals familiar with your work and with your abilities.
- You can also establish these relationships with other collaborators not on your committee.
- Make sure to list people who are familiar with your conflicts as references for a counter opinion, ask them to address the conflict if they are comfortable with this.
- Again, we can't stress this enough, it all comes back to networking!

Paragraph of your research interests

- Many faculty complained that many applicants only send a list of techniques used which give them little feel for what an applicants scientific interests are.
- Some suggested that you also write and include a brief paragraph describing your research interests, which cleverly weaves in your technical know how.
- If you are a post doc and applying for faculty positions this will be a required part of your application.

What is a cover letter?

- The purpose of a cover letter is to tell a prospective employer what you can do and why you feel you are qualified.
- It is an opportunity to demonstrate your writing skills and it opens a window to your personality.
- A good-well planned cover letter is just as important as an impressive CV, and together they form an important resource in your job campaign.
- Address your letters to a specific individual with his or her correct title and business address.
- Obtain information about the employer and tailor your letters for each position or employer. Generic, mass-produced letters are unprofessional.

What is a cover letter?

- Grab the reader's attention in the first paragraph.
- Construct your letters to be employer/work-centered rather than self-centered. It uses the first person ("I") sparingly.
- Eliminate extraneous words and avoid rehashing material from your resume.
- Keep your letter to one page.
- It sounds confident without being arrogant.
- It answers the question: "Why should we hire you?"
- It's action oriented.

An example that walks you through paragraph by paragraph

- Your Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
- Date
- Name of Person
- Job Title
- Company/Organization
- Street Address
- City, State, Zip Code
- Dear Mr./Dr./Ms./Mrs. XXXXXXXXX:
- **FIRST PARAGRAPH:** The beginning of your letter should catch the reader's attention, but avoid catchy phrases and gimmicks.
- Name the specific position or type of work for which you are applying
- And mention the resource used in finding out about the opening or company/organization.
- You can also tell them why you are interested in that particular organization in this paragraph

SECOND and THIRD PARAGRAPH:

- Explain why you are interested in working for that employer or in that field of work, or this specific position and most importantly, what your qualifications are
 - e.g., academic background/training,
 - work experience,
 - personal skills
 - Point out achievements that relate to the field in which you are applying, without duplicating exactly what is included in your resume. Refer the reader to the enclosed resume or other application instrument.
 - Indicate that your resume summarizes your qualifications and background.
 - You can also include personal attributes (personality) or "soft skills" here such as enthusiasm, dedication to the field, independence, self motivation etc...
- **CLOSING PARAGRAPH:** Restate your interest in the position, tell them that you are interested and available to interviews and provide follow up information. Remember to thank them for their time!
- Sincerely ,
- Your Name

MOST IMPORTANT POINT

- Your cover letter must be specific for a job application or a position you would like,
- vague "blanket cover letters" most often get ignored by busy faculty.
- This was the most often cited complaint from faculty in my college

Other Documents you might be thinking about preparing

- Depending on the jobs you will be applying for you might also be preparing to write a description of your research interests and your teaching philosophy.
- Faculty positions
 - Will need description of research interests and your teaching philosophy
- Biotech jobs or industry
 - Description of research interests

Acknowledgments

- Faculty members from the college of CVMBS at CSU for generously sharing stories of what they think should be contained within both good and bad CV's and cover letters
- Kelly Reese the career guidance counselor for CVMBS from whom most of this material was "stolen" with generous permission.

REFS

- Add list of refs I used for books

Notes from looking through your CVs

- 1 use your space wisely, don't automatically stick to the 1.25 x 1 x 1 x 1.25 margins!
- Give them as much contact info as possible
- From Ronica:
 - some of your documents did not print well,
 - she fixed them for you
 - an employer will not be so kind
 - If you are using odd programs think about if they are going to print well when received (major problem with Macs)
 - Consider sending Pdfs, safest bet, sure to print as planned

Notes from looking through your CVs

- Hard to get a feel for what your work really is from most of your CVs
 - Give a BRIEF summary under your title or description that summarizes major techniques you use
- Same for teaching, indicate how many semesters and sections you taught
- Give a list of 3 references at the end
- 1 should be your PI if possible