Resumes, CVs, and Cover Letters

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One of your basic (and often neglected) tasks as a scientist is to keep an up-to-date CV. Over the course of your career, you'll be asked to provide a CV many times:

- 1. for employment decisions—to get a job, to get a raise, to get promoted.
- 2. for applications for special workshops or conferences.
- 3. for funding of research proposals.
- 4. for nominations for honors and awards.

Get in the habit of periodically (at least once a year) reviewing and adding new items to your CV. Save an electronic copy in several different places. It's one of the most important documents you'll have, and it will be exceedingly painful to have to recreate it, especially as you get further along in your career, if you lose it.

Today, we're going to talk in general about CVs, and in particular about a form of CV, the resume, which is used in job applications. We'll also discuss the all-important "cover letter," which should accompany every resume submitted for a job application.

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CVs and resumes are formal, and adhering to a standardized format is essential

Provide only factual information about your educational background, work history, special skills, honors and awards, and jobrelated experiences

Organize the sections logically

Maintain witless consistency in length, style, and punctuation of items

CV = curriculum vitae (life story)

A summary of a person's education and professional experience

A resume includes many of the same elements

Academic CV Resume

Education Narrative (career) objective
Professional Appts Work history, with summary
Honors and awards of duties/accomplishments

Affiliations Education
Publications and talks Special skills

Grants received

Classes taught Affiliations and licenses

Service to profession Honors and awards Students supervised

A CV is comprehensive; a resume is usually no more than two pages, tailored for a specific job application.

CVs are exhaustive and accreting

CVs are a permanent historical record of everything you've ever done professionally



They don't change direction, they just get bigger and bigger

Resumes are selective and dynamic Tune your resume for the job you're applying for



Pick and choose what you want to emphasize (but don't leave gaps that would raise questions)

The purpose of a resume or CV is to get an interview



- 1. Convince the reader that you have the requisite education, skills, and experience to succeed
- 2. Convince the people who care about such things that you are attentive to detail

Now let's talk specifically about resumes for job applications...



Getting started—your name goes on the first line*

Center your name and affiliation or address at the top of the page

Provide complete contact information
Telephone number, with area code
Fax number, with area code (if applicable)
Postal address
Email address

*use a common, easily read font (I recommend Times New Roman or a similar classic serif font)

Put your current affiliation on a CV

Celia Mathews Elliott

Department of Physics
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
1110 West Green Street
Urbana, IL 61801-3080 USA
+1.217.244.7725 (phone) • +1.217.244.4293 (fax)
cmelliot@illinois.edu

Put your home address">home address on a resume*

Celia Mathews Elliott

3808 Deerfield Drive Champaign, IL 61822-9773 +1.217.351.5810 (phone) • +1.217.402.2291 (mobile) celia.elliott@gmail.com

*Don't use your current employer's letterhead when you're looking for a new job—major breach of business etiquette

Next, provide a narrative statement of your immediate career goals

Tune the narrative to the job

Emphasize your skills and interests

Focus on what you can do for the employer, not what the employer can do for you

Be specific

Keep the narrative short and to the point

Science writer and technical editor (AIP and CBE) seeking a senior editorial position; 28+ years' experience in science journal publishing

Certified research administrator at a Research I university with extensive experience in external funding (NSF, NIH, DOE) seeking a senior proposal-development position

University alumni relations and department-level fundraising professional seeking senior development position in the physical sciences

Seeking a challenging, highly paid position that allows frequent luxury vacations and a guaranteed pension

All of these descriptions apply to me—I'd use the one most closely matched to the job I was applying for (maybe not #4) 11

Science writer and technical editor (AIP and CBE) seeking a senior editorial position; 20+ years' experience in science journal publishing

Certified research administrator at a Research I university with extensive experience in external funding (NSF, NIH, DOE) seeking a senior proposal-development position

University alumni relations and department-level fundraising professional seeking senior development position in the physical sciences

Seeking a challenging, highly paid position that allows frequent luxury vacations and a guaranteed pension

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List your education and training next

Title the section some variant of "Education"

List every institution that you attended in chronological order

Each entry must include

The institution's name and location
The degree you earned
The year you received the degree
Your major field of study
Include honor designations if applicable

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If you have not received your degree yet, put the month/year that you expect to graduate and note it "expected."

What about listing your GPA if you're a current student? Optional—don't list it unless it's high (e.g., >3.7/4.0)

What about listing minors? Good idea, especially if they're job related.

Education

1971 B.A., English, summa cum laude B.A., History, summa cum laude Michigan State University East Lansing, MI USA

1974 M.Ed., Educational Psychology University of Illinois Urbana, IL USA

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Latin honors are typically given by U.S. universities and appear on the diploma.

cum laude = with honor

magna cum laude = with high honor

summa cum laude = with highest honor

Do not claim honors unless it is marked on your transcript or diploma.

No uniform standard; each university sets its own rules, so comparing Latin honors from one institution to the next is impossible.

Some U.S. universities do not award Latin honors at all, and some use the equivalent phrases in English.

Next, list where you've worked and what you did there

Title the section "Employment"

List every institution where you worked in reverse chronological order

Each entry should include

The organization's name and location
The years that you worked there
Your job title
A brief summary of your job duties

Employment

Limployment	
1999–	Director, External Affairs
Present	Dept of Physics, University of Illinois
	Urbana, IL 61801 USA
	Interact with NSF, NIH, and DOE
	 Develop proposals for research funding
	 Teach courses in technical writing
1996–	Assistant to the Head
1999	Dept of Physics, University of Illinois
	Urbana, IL 61801 USA
	Wrote policies, reports, and nominations
1993–	Assistant Editor
1996	Dept of Nuclear Engineering, UI
	 Edited three peer-reviewed journals
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What about part-time jobs unrelated to your career goals?

Include them if you can

Tie them to your commitment to your education; e.g., you flipped burgers to earn money for school

Show how they gave you an opportunity to practice leadership, communications, or other skills relevant to your future career

What about unpaid positions?

Include them if they are job-related

What skills did you gain?

General knowledge of technical principles and processes

Ability to contribute in a team environment Practice in oral and written communications General knowledge of project management Understanding of quality control

How did they prepare you to be successful?

List special skills next

Focus on skills that employers value
Programming—C++, Java, SQL
Operating systems—Unix, Linux, Windows
Software—MATLAB, Mathematica, Excel
Relational databases—Oracle, Access
Circuit design and analysis
Equipment—optical microscope, lock-in
amplifier, spectrum analyzer
List first the skills that you would be likely to
use in the job

What about classes taken?

Do <u>not</u> just provide a canonical list of classes you've sat through

Explain what you learned (techniques, theory)

Emphasize how the class has prepared you to contribute to the employer

Write out the course name and descriptor FSHN 421?

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Food Science and Human Nutrition, "Clinical Pediatric Nutrition," **not** a course on matching shoes with scarves and handbags.

Coursework

Physics 194, "Behavior of Complex Systems" fractals, neural nets, cellular automata, genetic algorithms, MATLAB, Mathematica

Physics 404, "Electronic Circuits" steady-state circuit analysis using complex numbers, time-domain analysis, digital electronics, signal processing, hybrid digital/analog circuits, high-frequency circuits

Physics 402, "Light" geometric optics, ray tracing and the matrix formalism, Fresnel formulas, polarization, Fourier optics, holography, nonlinear optics

List honors and awards and professional associations next

Honors and awards

Title of the award Entity that bestowed the award Year it was given Citation if applicable

Professional associations

Name of the association Your rank (member, fellow, senior member) Years you have been associated with the organization

Awards and Associations

Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1970 Chancellor's Award for Excellence University of Illinois, 2002

Honorary *kandidat* degree, Humane Letters South Ural State University (Russia), 2003 Outstanding Service Medal

Civilian Research and Development Foundation (Washington DC), 2005

Davis Teaching Award, Department of Physics University of Illinois, 2013

Member, American Physical Society, 1997–present

Next, let's talk about cover letters*

Christine Seymore 288 My Divis, Gerlen City, NY 1939 Christolius Sprane (Bekerum, se May 7, 2822 Than Prozel Land Bryg. 216 Sarry, Clea Line 217 Sarry, Clea Line 218 Sarry, Clea 218 Sarry, Cle

*Never submit a resume without an accompanying cover letter

Use your cover letter to supplement your resume

The cover letter should explicitly state
What job you are applying for
Why you're a good fit
What you can do for the employer
Ask for an interview

Use your cover letter to direct the reader's attention to specifics in your resume Demonstrated success in previous jobs Related experience and appointments Additional special skills (job-related) Honors and awards

Select information to emphasize relevant experience and prior success

If you include research interests, put the topic of the prospective position first

List skills in the order of importance to the job you're applying for

Emphasize classes most closely related to the job that have prepared you for success

No-nos for cover letters

Addressing the letter "To Whom it May Concern" (dated and tacky in the extreme)

Failing to specify exactly what job you are applying for

Using the letterhead of your current employer

Failing to supply complete contact information

Sending a generic letter that is not specifically tailored for the company or the job

Rambling on for more than a page

One size does *not* fit all—if you really want the job, do the work



Write a general "core" document and then customize it for each application

Include only job-relevant information

DO NOT include personal information that is unrelated to your skills and experience

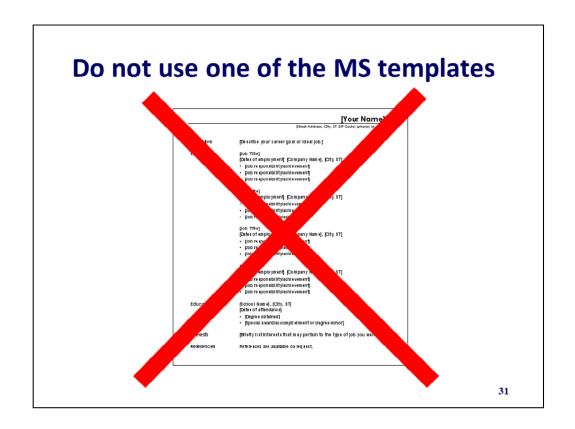
Agent date of birth Dependents Health Genter Rice or ethnicity

Include only job-relevant information

DO NOT include personal information that is unrelated to your skills and experience

Age or date or birth Dependences Health Genter Rice or ethnicity

Citizenship or right to work Year in school Availability for work Physical ability if job-related Gender if job-related Race or ethnicity if related



In addition to your formal CV or resume, maintain a narrative bio

Celia Mathews Elliott has worked as a technical writer and administrator at the University of Illinois since 1993. Although her primary responsibilities involve departmental administration and working with faculty to develop research proposals for federal funding agencies, she has taught undergraduate courses in scientific and technical communications for physics majors since 2000. Recently, she co-developed and team-teaches a graduate-level technical writing course in the Department of Physics.

She has presented technical-writing and proposal-writing workshops at Sandia National Laboratories, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, the University of Sao Paulo (Brazil), and National Chiao Tung University (Taiwan), and she has participated in four webinars for the American Chemical Society on scientific communications. She answered questions on technical writing in two Reddit\science "Ask Me Anything" appearances, and her lectures on scientific communications have been downloaded by people from more than 90 countries.

Celia earned bachelor's degrees in American history and English from Michigan State University and completed a master's in educational psychology at the University of Illinois. She was presented an honorary doctorate in humane letters from South Ural State University (Russia) in 2003 and the Civilian Research and Development Foundation's Recognition Medal in 2005 for her work with scientists in the former Soviet Union. She received the Chancellor's Academic Professional Excellence Award (2002) and the SPaRC Career Achievement Award (2016) from the University of Illinois and the American Physical Society's Physics Haiku Grand Champion prize (2004). Her teaching was recognized by the Department of Physics with the Doug and Judy Davis Award for Excellence in Teaching Undergraduate Physics in 2013.

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People will ask for a narrative bio to advertise your talks, introduce you at conferences, or nominate you for prizes.

Other tips for success

Use a standard font (Times New Roman, Calibri) of at least 11 pt.

Don't put more than one blank line between sections

No artwork, photos, fancy fonts

Nothing that identifies you as a member of a "protected class"

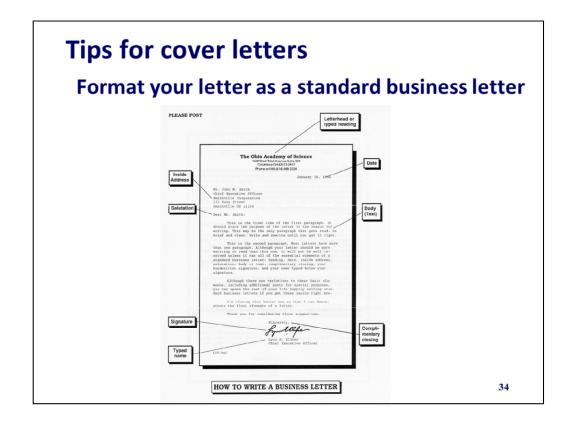
Fill the page, but make the information meaningful and job-related

No "References furnished on request"

Emphasize what you can contribute

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And don't include "References furnished on request"—of *course* you're going to give somebody references! Use the valuable real estate on your resume to tell the reader something useful; don't waste space on witless statements.



Tips for cover letters

Make your own letterhead

Use a subject line that indicates which specific job you are applying for

Address the letter to a real person

Celia Mathews Elliott

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November 14, 2019

Professor Eric A. Schiff, Chair Department of Physics Syracuse University Physics Building Syracuse NY 13244

RE: Application for Job #37496—Senior Proposal Coordinator and Grants Administrator

Dear Professor Schiff

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And don't include "References furnished on request"—of *course* you're going to give somebody references! Use the valuable real estate on your resume to tell the reader something useful; don't waste space on witless statements.

Tips for cover letters

Give specific examples of how you have been successful in similar work

In this calendar year, I have worked with 63 faculty to develop and submit more than 100 technical proposals to federal funding agencies and private foundations, totaling over \$84M in direct costs. Last year, our success rate was >55%.

Tell the reader how you can immediately contribute to the organization

I am very familiar with all the federal proposal portals, including NSF's FastLane and research.gov, NIH's ASSIST, NASA's NSPIRES, DOE's PAMS system, SAM, and grants.gov's Workspace.

Tell the reader something that he or she will not get from your resume

In addition to my duties as a grant developer and research administrator, I have taught a class on technical writing for upper-level physics undergrads for 20 years, and I love to teach.

Tips for cover letters Ask for an interview

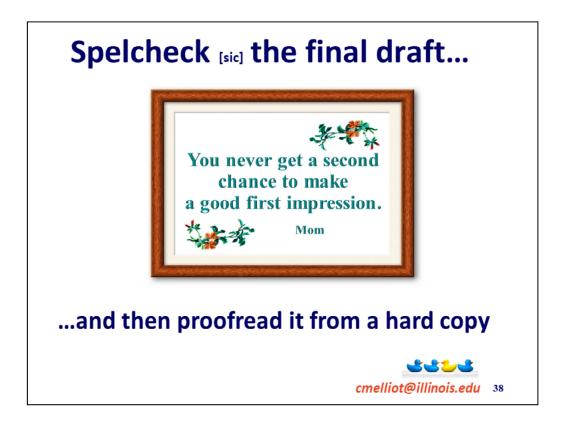
Because I believe I can best convey my experience and approach to federal funding in person, as well as learn more about your requirements and needs, I'd like very much to schedule an interview. Please call me at (217) 555-1234 to indicate a time that would be convenient for you.

Very truly yours,

Celia M. Elliatt

Celia Mathews Elliott

Include a standard closing, leave blank lines to insert your signature, and type your complete name below the signature blank



Train yourself to run the spellcheck every time you make a change to your document. If something has to be *perfect* (and a resume **does**), use these old proofreader's tricks:

- 1. Always proofread from a hard copy. Mistakes will leap off the paper that you'll never see on the screen.
- 2. Start at the lower right-hand corner of the document and read right to left, bottom to top. Doing so makes you look at every letter in every word.