

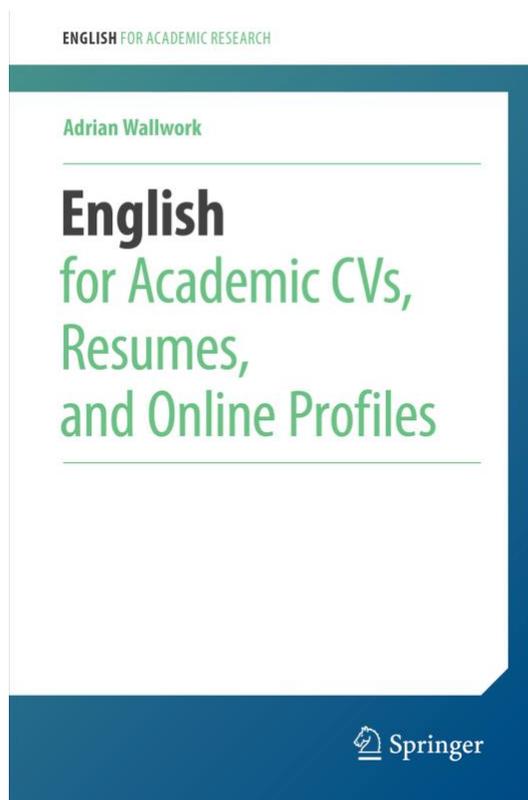
Notes on CVs, Resumes, Cover Letters, Reference Letters, Motivational Letters

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WHO IS THIS DOCUMENT FOR?

This document is primarily intended for students of my PhD English course on Scientific Communication. So some of what is written will only make sense if you have done the course. The course only covers a very small area of writing CVs.

For more details on writing CVs:



If you want to do the course contact: adrian.wallwork@gmail.com

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1 Answers to quiz

Q. What is the ideal length of a CV?

Two pages, remember that Human Resource (HR) managers don't spend more than a couple of minutes reading a CV

Q. If your cover letter looks as if it has been spammed to hundreds of companies, what are the chances of the company reading your CV?

0% - 5%

Q Is it a good idea to send exactly the same CV to many different companies?

No, you need to tailor/customize your CV to the particular company you are writing to. Instead of sending 100 CVs to 100 companies, just choose 10 companies. Find out everything you can about those companies, and tailor your CV and cover letter to that company's particular needs.

CVS, EMAILS AND LETTERS ARE LIKE ABSTRACTS

- Put most important (and most recent) info first
- Be relevant: tell readers only what THEY need to know, not everything that YOU know
- Give max importance to what makes you different: sell yourself
- Be concise, short and clear. No redundancy

SECTIONS IN A CV

Photo (optional, but probably a good idea)

Personal data

Executive summary (see below for examples)

Work experience

Academic experience

Skills

Personal interests

Projects, publications, conferences - possibly on a separate page, particularly if there are many of them

References

2 Personal data

Name: no (this should be at top of CV)

Date and place of birth: yes (but not by law)

Nationality: yes

Sex: male / female (only for Nicola, Andrea etc)

Marital status: not necessary

Contact details: yes

3 Executive Summary

Example 1 (for an advertised position in industry)

- Two years of development experience. Strong core Java/J2SE - especially in high performance multi-threaded server development.
- Three years of work experience at Ferrari (Marinella, Italy).
- Excellent knowledge of FIX and messaging based connectivity applications.
- Currently in final year of PhD in Virtual Robotics at the University of Pisa.

Example 2 non-advertised position in research

Position desired: Research post in polymerization

Experience in syntheses of organic molecules and polymers especially fluorine-containing (meth)acrylate monomers, macromolecular initiators and macromolecules with controlled architecture.

Good knowledge of controlled/"living" radical polymerization methods e.g. ATRP, RAFT.

Future interests: Supramolecular polymers, well-architected macromolecules by controlled polymerization, hybrid organic-inorganic nanocomposites ...

Key features of an Executive Summary

- 3-4 points (max 3 lines each), concise, no personal pronouns
- Full of key words (from ad or from existing similar positions)
- Highlight your Unique Selling Points (USPs)
- Very specific: No generic unsubstantiated statements

For more details, see page 7.

4 Work and Academic Experience

WORK EXPERIENCE

Start and finish dates

Reverse chronological order

Name of company, location, area of business

Your position in the company / lab

Brief description of what you did, highlighting how it relates to the job you are applying for

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Start and finish dates

Reverse chronological order

Name of department / institute, location

Thesis

Projects, publications and congresses - but if you have a lot of these (more than half a page), put in separate doc

Thesis

Only put thesis title if it is self-explanatory.

Two line description of thesis.

Do NOT put:

- exact date you defended your thesis (unless this is very recent)
- names of supervisors (unless they are known to the company or are very famous in their field)

5 Writing dates

Date of birth	5 November 1998
Employment	2020 - 2021
	Dec 2021 - Jan 2022

6 Languages

Use the levels from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_European_Framework_of_Reference_for_Languages

Or use these terms:

- mother tongue
- fluent (spoken and written)
- good working knowledge – means that you know enough to be able to carry out your work
- scholastic

7 Hobbies and interests

These are important because they give an idea of your personality. Try to be reasonably specific. Don't put things that most people probably do (eg reading, travelling), but be specific. Don't say sports, instead say swimming, hockey etc. If you put travelling, maybe say your favourite destinations. Do not put activities that are political or contentious (eg hunting), but put things that are fun (eg salsa dancing) or interesting (eg acting). Do not put any nerdy activities (computer games, collecting stamps).

8 References

A 'reference' is a letter written by someone for whom you have worked or collaborated - typically your professor / tutor and people you have worked for/with during an internship. In this letter the professor gives a brief summary of your technical skills and also your personality (how motivated you are, how easy you are to work with, how proactive you are etc).

Whenever you work / collaborate with someone in a lab or a company, get a written reference from someone there. You can then use these references as and when you need them. Also, get permission from these people to put their names, position and email addresses on your CV.

At the end of your CV have a separate section entitled References in which you list three or four people. For example:

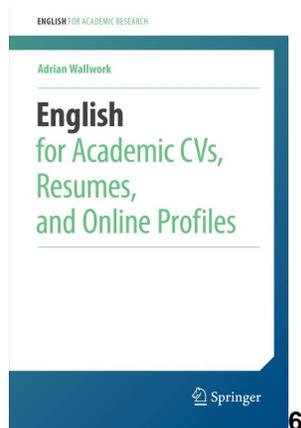
Professor Pinco Pallino (my thesis tutor), University of London, p.pallino@londonuni.ac.uk

Professor Zack Madman (in whose lab I did a 3-month internship), University of Harvard, z.madman@harvard.edu

9 CV Summary: Your CV = your image = you

- Only write what reader / HR person really needs to know. And be honest.
- Be specific, not generic.
- Find things that differentiate you from other possible candidates. Think about what makes you unique.
- Clear simple layout - 10/11 pt font, Arial (not Times)
- Put info in reverse chronological order
- Keep it short
- Remember that you are unable to judge your own level of English – so show it to a qualified native English speaker

10 HOW TO WRITE AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY. EXTRACTS FROM MY BOOK.



What is an Executive Summary?

An Executive Summary is often used when you are applying for a specific advertised job. It is a summary of who you are and enables the recruiter to get an instant idea of your qualifications and skills without needing to read the whole CV.

The secret is to highlight your unique skills and achievements, i.e. factors that will differentiate you from other candidates.

An Executive Summary is sometimes called a Personal Profile, or Career Highlights.

Like an Objective, you should place it immediately below your personal details. You do not need a heading, but you might like to make it stand out by giving it a light grey background or putting it in a box.

What is the best format - one single paragraph or a series of bullet points?

Below are three examples from academia. From a purely visual point of view, which format do you think is:

- easier to read?
- more dynamic?
- would be easier to highlight that your qualifications match the requirements of the institute or industry where you are applying for a job?

FORMAT 1 (ONE PARAGRAPH)

Five years' experience in molecular biology/genetic engineering of microalgae, focusing on fermentative metabolism and biofuels (hydrogen) in *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii*. Seven years' experience in plant adaptations to low oxygen levels; highly skilled in rice in vitro culture and transformation, gene cloning, over-expression / silencing, gene expression analyses and proteomics. Able to independently set up protocols and address related problem-solving tasks. Excellent communicative, social and presentation skills combined with strong international background. Currently in the last year of an Alexander von Humboldt postdoctoral fellowship.

Pros: takes up less space than the other formats.

Cons: not as easy to read as the two formats, difficult to pick out key information.

Conclusion: only use if short of space.

FORMAT 2 (HEADINGS RELATED TO EXPERIENCE, EXPERTISE AND INTERESTS)

Experience in syntheses of organic molecules and polymers especially fluorine-containing (meth)acrylate monomers, macromolecular initiators and macromolecules with controlled architecture.

Good knowledge of controlled/"living" radical polymerization methods e.g. ATRP, RAFT.

Future interests: Supramolecular polymers, well-architected macromolecules by controlled polymerization, hybrid organic-inorganic nanocomposites ...

Pros: easy to see key information. Allows candidate to mention what he/she would like to do in the future, which is useful if you are not responding to a specific advertisement, but are simply sending your CV to a company or institute in the hope that they might have a position open in your field.

Conclusion: perfect for academic positions.

FORMAT 3 (BULLET POINTS)

- Over 8 years of experience of **managing an Intellectual Property** department in a large research center with more than 700 research scientists, and building a portfolio of over 200 patent applications in more than 20 countries.
- First-hand experience of licensing negotiations and **successful technology commercialization**.
- Educational background in **Engineering, Management and Intellectual Property Rights**.
- **Consultation** to several universities re establishing technology transfer offices.
- More than **70 publications**, including 3 books as author or co-author, 9 peer-reviewed publications, 25 journal and newspaper articles; plus 30 conference papers.
- Teaching at more than **120 workshops on Innovation and IP Management** at universities, research centers, public and private companies.
- Creation of a **website on IP and Innovation Management**.

Pros: easy to see key information, allows candidate to show how he/she matches the requirements in the job description (the order of the bullets could follow the same order as the list of requirements in the advertisement)

Cons: takes up more space than the other formats.

Conclusion: fine if you have sufficient space.

FORMAT 4 (HEADINGS RELATED TO SOFT SKILLS)

A creative and conscientious teacher of English as a foreign language. A recent Trinity Cert. (TESOL) graduate with extensive previous experience in business.

A dynamic, confident verbal and written communicator - in business and in the class room

Innovative and resourceful - an instinctive problem-solver with a flexible approach

Student/stakeholder-focused - enthusiastic and adaptable, committed to achieving results

Organised and reliable - with strong analytical and planning skills

Pros: easy to see key information. Allows candidate to highlight her soft skills (which are incredibly important in a teaching/learning environment).

Cons: they are such generic skills that they cannot be classified amongst the key words that might be picked up by the software that hirer's use to scan CVs.

Conclusion: suitable for recent graduates with little or no work experience

11 CV TEMPLATES

Some institutions and companies like to receive CVs in a standard format:

<https://app.onlinecv.it/editor/cv/bbdcffde-baba-457d-a8e1-4a3e0cac6616/edit/contact-information>

Below is a possible template for a two-page CV.

Your name should be in 12 pt, headings in 11 pt and the rest in 10 pt. Your name and personal details should be centered if you have no photo, or aligned to the left with your photo on the right.

The parts in [square brackets] are optional. Obviously, you will have more or less subsections in each section depending on your experience.

Instead of an Executive summary, you may just have an Objective.

First Name + Second Name

first.second@email.com; cell phone number

[dd/mm/yyyy; nationality; gender]

Executive Summary

- blah
- blah
- blah
- blah

Work Experience

2026-2032 Name of company + [www.etc]

Position, role + details of work carried out highlighting technical and soft skills

2025-2026 Name of company + [www.etc]

Position, role + details of work carried out highlighting technical and soft skills

Education

2016-2022 Name of university / institute + [www.etc]

Qualification obtained + [further details, highlight technical and soft skills]

2015-2016 Name of university / institute + [www.etc]

Qualification obtained + [further details, , highlight technical and soft skills]

Skills

Languages Language 1: mother tongue; [Other main language: fluent]; English: spoken (proficiency), listening (proficiency), written (proficiency) and reading ((proficiency); [English exams passed: name of exam, grade]

Software software 1 [level of proficiency]; software 2 [level of proficiency]; etc

Technical technical 1 [level of proficiency]; technical 2 [level of proficiency]; etc

Personal interests

Interest 1: Blah blah blah ...

Interest 2: Blah blah blah ...

Interest 3: Blah blah blah ...

Publications

Publication 1

Publication 2 etc

References

Name 1: position; email address; website address

Name 2: position; email address; website address

Name 3: position; email address; website address

12 TEMPLATE FOR A RESUME

On the next page is a possible template for a one-page resume.

The parts in [square brackets] are optional. Obviously, you will have more or less subsections in each section depending on your experience.

Instead of an Executive Summary (also called Career Highlights), you may just have an Objective.

Note: In addition to the Experience and Education sections, you may also wish to put one or more of the following sections:

- Associate Memberships / Professional Affiliations
- Certifications
- Honors
- Professional Training
- Publications
- Related Experiences
- Skills (technical and language)

Unlike a CV, a resume generally does not include a photo, a Personal Interest section, or a References section.

First Name + Second Name

first.second@email.com; cell phone number

Executive Summary

- blah
- blah
- blah
- blah

Experience

Most recent position

Name of company + [www.etc]; dates of employment

5-6 line description of role including key skills (technical and soft)

Second-most recent position

Name of company + [www.etc]; dates of employment

2-4 line description of role including key skills (technical and soft))

etc

Education

Most recent educational qualification

Name of university / institute + [www.etc]; dates of attendance

Qualification obtained + [further details, highlight technical and soft skills]

Second-most recent educational qualification

etc

13 THE COVER LETTER

1 Find out the name of HR person

Find out the name of HR person from the company website, and address your letter to him/her :
Dear Michael Smith

2 Make it clear exactly what job you are applying for

If you have seen a job advertisement in a journal or newspaper, say what specific job you are applying for and where you saw the advertisement

If the job is advertised on the company's website, make it clear which particular job you are applying for.

If you don't know if company has any positions available, say what kind of job you are looking for.

3 Think about benefits for the company

Say how your skills and experience directly apply to that job

Do NOT talk about the benefits for YOU of working for them

Make it clear you know something about the company, and how you would fit in

Your letter MUST seem that it was written specifically for that company / laboratory.

4 Give them the info they need

Say when you are available for an interview

Provide your contact details

STYLE OF COVER LETTER

Keep it as short as possible: 10- 15 lines max

Find documents written by the company and imitate their:

- style
- layout - e.g. use of white space
- font and font size

Make it seem that you already work for that company.

What do HR managers want to know?

Not just your technical skills and experience but:

Concrete evidence of these skills

Ability to work in teams + evidence of this

Ability to do presentations

Evidence that you know something about their company

What do HR managers NOT want?

Strange email addresses: andre@manzini@hotmail.com, lordofdarkness@death.com

Emails from company accounts

Multiple emails – i.e. you send a lot of the same emails at the same time

Regular emails – i.e. you send the same email every month

Advertisements after the signature

Text that reads like spam (mega generic)

Emails with no body text

Unclear subject lines (emails)

Strange fonts and colours

Unclear what job position is wanted

Cut and pastes

Missing contact details

Very formal typical phrases

Spelling mistakes

Txt mssg style

Too much text

Possible layout of Cover letter

Their address

Date

Application for *name of position of job (this line all in bold)*

Dear name of person (*find out HR from website or ring the company – show that you have initiative*)

I saw your advert for a XYZ on your website / in The Times newspaper / in ABC Journal.

I think I would be qualified for this position because / I think I may have the qualifications you are looking for because:

- a
- b
- c

I would particularly like to work for IBM because ... / The skills I think I could bring to IBM are: *write any additional things that you have not written in a, b, c above. The idea is to show that you know about the company (IBM) and that you would fit in perfectly with them*

I am attaching my CV along with references from various professors and previous employers.

I would be available for interview from June 20 (when I finish my current researcher contract at the University of ...)

I look forward to hearing from you.

legible signature

Pinco Pallino

14 REFERENCE LETTER

Your reference letter needs a very clear structure which will highlight your key skills (both technical and soft) and will thus act as an objective support to what you have written in your CV. Here is a possible structure:

- 0) Heading
- 1) Positive opening sentence
- 2) Referee's position
- 3) Referee's connection to candidate
- 4) Details about candidate's qualifications
- 5) Reference to candidate's wonderful personality
- 6) Positive conclusion
- 7) Salutation

Each paragraph of the letter below is an example of the structure above.

Melanie Guyot [0]

It is a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to thoroughly recommend Melanie Guyot [for the position of ...] [1]

I am the coordinator of the Biorobotics Institute at the University of Montpellier. [2]

I was Melanie's supervisor while she was doing her Master's of Science in ... She was also a student in my class on medical robotics. [3]

During her Master's thesis, Melanie demonstrated great intuitiveness in solving ... In fact, she played a major role in ... She also ... [4]

Melanie has a bright and lively personality and works extremely well in teams, both as a team member and team leader. She showed a clear demonstration of these skills when ... [5]

I very much hope that her application will be taken into serious consideration as I am sure that Melanie Guyot represents an excellent candidate. [6]

Best regards [7]

Pierre Lepoof. (pierre.lepoof@institute.com)

Note the following:

- There is no initial salutation, i.e. the letter is not addressed to anyone in particular. In fact, the letter is intended for anyone that Melanie chooses to write to.
- The heading of the letter simply contains the candidate's name, rather than adding the position that candidate is looking for on one specific occasion. This means that you can use the same reference letter for more than one job application.
- Each paragraph has a specific purpose. Also, by dividing the letter up into multiple paragraphs (rather than one or two long paragraphs), the reader will be able to quickly locate the information he/she is interested in.
- In Paragraph 2, the referee first establishes his / her credibility. The HR person needs to know that the reference is written by someone who is qualified to write such a letter. Then in Paragraph 3, the referee answers an HR person's question: How does the referee know the candidate?
- Paragraph 4 will probably be the longest paragraph in the letter, and may even be divided up into more than one paragraph. This is the part of the letter where the referee tries to establish the credibility of the candidate, and gives objective support to what the candidate has written in his/her CV. Further support is provided in Paragraph 5, which outlines the candidate's social / soft skills.
- When writing any kind of letter or email, it is good practice to begin and end on a positive note (Paragraphs 1 and 6).
- The final salutation is brief (*Best regards*). There is no need to write 'Feel free to contact me should you need further details'. The whole point of a reference letter is that the referee implicitly gives their permission to be contacted, so there is no need to state this. The aim is to keep the letter as concise as possible.
- The referee provides their email address (if this is not already on the header / footer of the letter) so that they can be contacted.

15 PERSONAL STATEMENTS, MOTIVATIONAL LETTERS ETC

What is a Personal Statement? What are the elements of a good Personal Statement?

A personal statement is an optional section, typically written by candidates who have finished their education with a normal degree without doing an MSc, a PhD or a post-doc qualification.

Personal statements (generally of a maximum of 4000 characters) are also used by school leavers when applying to university.

The aim of a personal statement is to show that you:

- have the right qualifications for the place / position you are seeking
- have the right skills - both technical and personal (i.e. soft skills)
- can describe yourself and your achievements concisely

Below is a personal statement written by a young British graduate who wishes to secure a job in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) in a language school. It highlights some of the good and bad points of a typical personal statement.

Personal Statement:

Having a BSc degree has given me the skills required to use language to a high standard and write and communicate with many different people. Among the modules I studied were:

- Environmental Management
- Environmental Law
- Information Technology and Quantitative Biology
- Environmental Economics

I have worked primarily in the customer services area either in shops or on a campsite, which has given me good experience of working with people in teams and offering an appropriate quality of service to customers. I have completed a TEFL course in order to teach English; completing this course has helped my skills in planning, listening, speaking to groups, and ensuring understanding. Since then I have undertaken more teaching qualifications and employment all of which have been very successful; I have been well received by students, fellow teachers and course organisers. Recently I have been more and more involved in TEFL teaching having been working both in my home city of Bristol and in Prague. I would really like to extend these experiences to working abroad, especially in your city, to which I have a particular attachment having enjoyed my stay previously.

I am committed to finding for myself a career, but I need an opportunity. I hope than you will give me an opportunity to start a career with you and within the industry.

Her layout is clear using bullet points, she clearly lists the main topics she studied at university and she tries to connect this to TEFL by saying that she has strong skills in writing and communicating. However there are a number of problems:

- the statement is very long, although she claims to have good writing and communication skills, his statement shows that she is prone to repetition and redundancy. She says she has completed a TEFL course and then adds *in order to teach English* - this is redundant given the fact that the TE in TEFL stands for 'teaching English', the same redundancy is in 'TEFL teaching'. However, this tactic of repeating her key words (i.e. TEFL, teaching and English), means that if she submitted an electronic version of her CV to a recruiting agency website, it might stand a better chance of being picked up during any automatic screening process of CVs
- the statement does not seem to have been tailored specifically for the reader - she says *especially in your city*. If she is writing directly to a language school, she would be better to write the exact location of the language school and mention the exact time she visited that town, rather than writing something so generic that gives the idea that she has probably never even been to *your city*. Moreover, the fact that she used *your city* shows that she hasn't really made an effort, and this could be interpreted by the reader that she would be happy to work in any city
- in her final paragraph, she sounds a little desperate (*I need an opportunity*) and also the phrase *I am committed to finding for myself a career* sounds a little strange, given that securing a career is the objective of most graduates. Again it sounds like she may be applying for jobs in any field, not the specific field of TEFL

Below is a revised version. The main differences with respect to the original version are highlighted in italics.

Personal Statement:

My BSc has provided me with the skills required to use language to a high standard and write and communicate with many different people. Among the modules I studied were:

- Environmental Management
- Environmental Law
- Information Technology and Quantitative Biology
- Environmental Economics

I have worked primarily in the customer services area both in *shops and campsites*. This has given me valuable experience of working with people in teams and offering an appropriate quality of service to customers.

During my TEFL course I further improved my skills in planning, listening, speaking to groups, and ensuring understanding. Since then I have *acquired* more teaching qualifications and *have successfully gained additional teaching experience in my home town of Bristol and in Prague*. As testified by the attached references, I have been well received by students, fellow teachers and course organisers.

I would really like to extend these experiences to working abroad, *especially in Moscow*, to which I have a particular attachment - *my maternal grandmother was born in a village near Moscow*.

I very much look forward to having an opportunity to meet you.

The revised version:

- is 20% shorter. All the repetition and redundancy has been removed, but no content has been lost
- has more paragraphs - this makes it easier to read
- has removed ambiguity (e.g. *acquired* teaching qualifications, rather than *undertaken - undertaken* sounds like the courses were started but not completed)
- mentions *references* to give her more credibility, i.e. what she says can be supported by the people she has worked for
- mentions the specific city where she wants to work (Moscow) rather than saying *your city* (this generic use of *your city* could indicate to the recruiter that the candidate has sent the same personal statement to lots of English language schools. A tailored personal statement has more impact
- has deleted the rather strange final paragraph

The combination of the above changes makes the statement sound as if the candidate had put a lot of effort into creating it. It also sounds makes the candidate sound more dynamic.

Note: Don't confuse a Personal Statement with a Research Statement. A research statement is a summary of research achievements and a proposal for upcoming research. It includes BOTH current aims and findings AND future goals. How to write a research statement is outside the scope of this book, but useful information can be found here:

<https://gradschool.cornell.edu/academic-progress/pathways-to-success/prepare-for-your-career/take-action/research-statement/>

<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/how-to-write-a-research-statement>

What is a motivational letter? What is a statement of interest?

There is no real difference in the aim of a cover letter, motivational letter or a statement of interest. All of them are opportunities for you to expand upon some of the more salient and interesting points of your CV and to interpret their significance for the HR person.

These letters are a way for you to sound dynamic and really differentiate yourself from other candidates. Your letter should answer such question as: What targets did you reach? How well did the projects go? What did you learn from them? How could this experience be applied to the position you are applying for?

From an employer's point of view, these letters / statements are demonstrations of

- how much you care about getting the job
- your writing ability
- your attention to detail
- your communication skills

The key differences are that a motivational letter or a statement of interest tends:

- not to be in response to a specific job advertisement
- to be used in academia rather than business
- to be longer than a cover letter

There is no real difference between *motivational letter* and *statement of interest* - they mean the same thing.

So, if a research institute or university requests a motivational letter or a statement of interest, you can follow all the suggestions in the rest of this chapter, but simply provide more details. This means that you are likely to write more than one page of text.

A website with very good suggestions for a statement of interest / motivational letter is:

<http://www.fordschool.umich.edu/downloads/writing-effective-statement-of-interest.pdf>

For an example of a long cover letter that also functions as a motivational letter [see 12.37](#).

What is a bio? When would I need one?

A bio is a biography, i.e. the story of a person's life, or in the context of this book, their academic career.

A 4-5 line bio might also be called **About** on a university webpage or social media site, Bios are typically used by people in academia and research, for:

- Conferences. If you are giving a presentation at an international conference, the organizers may ask you for a short summary of your career and major achievements. The organizers will then use this bio for the conference proceedings.
- Books and book chapters. If you are asked to contribute to a publication, you may be requested to provide a bio.
- Grant applications
- Your personal home page or blog, or your institute's home page.
- Social/professional networking sites, including Twitter

Bios are typically read by:

- colleagues/academics in your department or discipline
- undergraduate students in your department who may be taking a course with you
- academics in other fields who may be attending the same conference as you
- potential employees

If you place a bio on your home page (either your personal one or your institutes), you may consider using more than one format:

- 'About' - where you describe in a couple of sentences who you are: name, position, department, institute, research interests.
- 'Short academic bio' - where you provide in the first person a brief summary of your academic career and experience. This will be slightly more detailed than the 'About', e.g. you might present a short list of your research interests..
- 'Extended academic bio' - where you write in the third person (or with no pronouns) more details your academic career experience, and research interests. Here you will mentioned your degree(s), projects, award, publications. An example is given in the next subsection.
- 'CV' - in this case you simply provide a link to your full CV

By providing several versions of the same info you can let your 'audience' (colleagues, undergraduates, conference goes etc) choose what kind of information they are interested in.

For more info see: <http://www.gradhacker.org/2011/09/23/narrating-your-professional-life-writing-the-academic-bio/>

What is the structure of an extended bio?

Bios for both conference proceedings and books tend to be written in a very formal way using the third person (i.e. *he / she, his / her*). They are usually structured as one paragraph.

Typical things to mention include:

1. your degree(s)
2. previous positions
3. your current position
4. what projects you have worked on
5. what project you are working on now
6. your plans for the future
7. the number of first author publications
8. the number of conferences attended where you gave a presentation
9. committees that you are on
10. patents held

Things that you might write on your CV but probably would not include in your bio are:

- non technical skills
- teaching experience
- private interests

Below is an example. The numbers in square brackets correspond to points 1-10 above.

[1] Volmar Thorgaard holds a degree in physics from the University of Copenhagen, Denmark. [2] In 2014 he joined KNUT, an institute of the Danish National Research Council. Starting in early 2016, he spent 18 months at the IBM Scientific Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, working on computer networks. [4] He has since directed several national and international projects including (in chronological order): xxx, yyy, zzz. [3] In 2018 he joined the Department of Information Engineering of the University of Helsinki, where he is now an assistant professor. [5] His current research interests include the design and performance evaluation of PMAC protocols for wireless networks and quality of service provision in integrated and differentiated services networks. [6] He is planning to bring together Scandinavian countries into a joint project linking up research center computers to Finland's space station on Mars. [7] Thorgaard is the first author of 10 papers published in international journals, [8] and has presented his research at all the major conferences on technologies for Mars in the last decade. [9] He is on the editorial committee for the two top space technology journals in Scandinavia. [10] He is co-author of several patents with Danish Telecom and Nokia, in the areas of scheduling algorithms.

Note the following:

- Volmar avoids beginning every sentence with *he* by occasionally beginning with a date, using *his*, and using his name (both his full name, and his family name alone)
- present simple to refer to present situations: *holds a degree in physics, is co-author of several patents*;

- present perfect for situations that began in the past and are still true today (Volmar still directs projects): *he **has since directed** several national and international projects*
- past simple for finished actions: *In 2018 he **joined** the Department of Information Engineering*

How do I write a bio for a home page?

For their personal home page, people generally use the first person (i.e. *I, my*). For the home page of their university or research institute both personal and impersonal forms are used, and the choice depends on how formal you wish to be.

Below is an example from a researcher's personal home page.

I am a postdoctoral fellow at the European Space Agency and a visitor in physics with Caltech.

My primary research interest is the observation of astrophysically unmodeled bursts of gravitational waves from sources such as core collapse supernovae, the merger of binary compact objects, the progenitors of gamma-ray bursts, or perhaps unanticipated sources. In particular, I am interested in taking advantage of the new global network of interferometric gravitational wave observatories, composed of the LIGO detectors in the US and the GEO and Virgo detectors in Europe, in order to maximize the prospects for detection and the physics that we can learn.

I currently live in Pisa, Italy, and work at the nearby European Gravitational Observatory.

For a list of publications, please see my curriculum vitae (pdf).

Note how she structures her bio into several paragraphs:

1. current position
2. current interests and aspirations
3. indication of where she lives and where she works
4. reference to a pdf version of her CV and list of publications

You also need to give all your contact details.

Note also how she:

- uses the first person pronoun (i.e. *I, my*) but still maintains quite a formal style
- inserts a lot of key technical words - this should increase her chances of being found by a search engine
- is very succinct, she only gives essential information - she doesn't waste the reader's time with unnecessary words or information

Can my academic biography include personal information and humor?

Some researchers like to provide some personal info in their bio as can provide insights into the personality and work style that could not otherwise be gleaned from a simple list of academic qualifications and achievements.

Others also like to include a little humor. If you are not a native speaker and thus do not have an excellent command of the nuances of the English language, then including humor can be risky as what you may think is funny, may not be funny to others and may even appear offensive. So always have your bio (and CV, and any other important document) checked by a native speaker with experience in writing academic documents.

Below is the short academic biography for Professor Dan Grossman, which at the time of my search on Google was the top-ranking bio. Professor Grossman kindly gave me permission to use it. I think it is a great bio.

It is structured as follows (the numbers refer to the paragraphs).

1. key info about his current role
2. educational background
3. other activities - committee work
4. other activities - teaching work
5. personal info + humor
6. humor (unexpected info revealing that Professor Grossman must be a fun character)

The penultimate paragraph also provide readers with information that they could use on a social occasion if they happened to meet Dan at a conference.

Dan Grossman is a Professor in the Paul G. Allen School of Computer Science & Engineering at the University of Washington where he has been a faculty member since 2003. He holds the J. Ray Bowen Professorship for Innovation in Engineering Education. He is the Allen School's Deputy Director.

Dan completed his Ph.D. at Cornell University and his undergraduate studies at Rice University. His research interests lie in the area of programming languages, ranging from theory to design to implementation. He has collaborated actively with researchers in several other disciplines of computer science, particularly computer architecture on problems at the hardware/software interface.

Dan has served on roughly thirty conference and workshop program committees and is the Program Chair for PLDI 2018. He has served on the ACM SIGPLAN Executive Committee, the Steering Committee for the ACM / IEEE-CS 2013 Computer Science Curriculum, and the ACM Education Board. He currently serves on the CRA Board.

Dan is the instructor for a popular MOOC on undergraduate topics in programming languages and functional programming.

Dan lives with his partner, an international public-health researcher, their two sons, born December 2013 and September 2015, and, because that clearly isn't enough chaos, a puppy born October 2016. Prior to becoming a proud and obsessed dad, Dan enjoyed playing (poorly) and watching ice hockey, (road) bicycling, hiking, non-fiction, and enjoying good food, beer, and live theatre. Now he usually manages to read one book a month.

Dan has never had a cavity.

https://homes.cs.washington.edu/~djk/grossman_bio.html by kind permission of Professor Dan Grossman (email 6 Aug 2018)

How should I report my publications?

If you are applying for a job in research or academia, and the main part of your CV is looking full, you could put your Publications on a separate page. Alternatively, you can locate it directly under either 'Other skills' or 'Hobbies and interests'.

You might also consider dividing up your publications into the following subsections:

- *Selected Refereed Publications* - these are the ones you want the reader to focus on
- *Other Refereed Publications* - these extra ones help to highlight the quantity of research that you have had published
- *Pending Publications* - these are ones that either you have submitted (and are awaiting confirmation) or that are currently at the press
- *Technical Notes* - these are short articles outlining a specific development / modification, technique or procedure

You should list your publications in the same way as you would normally list the publications at the end of a paper. With regard to pending publications you can write:

A. Wallwork et al. "Detailed comparison of word order in Modern and Old English". To appear in *Annals of Ling. Rev.*

A. Wallwork et al. "The subjunctive in Old English texts". Submitted to *Int. Lang. Rev.*

The term *to appear in* means that your paper has already been accepted for publication, whereas *submitted to* means you are waiting for the outcome.

If you are applying for a job in industry, you don't need to have a list of publications or a separate section dedicated to publications.

However, the fact that you have published your research is still important, even to an employer in industry. Publishing your work means that you have certain skills:

- writing in English about technical matters
- communicating with referees and editors, so you will have written many formal emails and letters
- meeting deadlines
- presenting your paper / research at international conferences

So the solution is to add a short subsection to your Education or Work Experience section in which you write something like this:

First author of five papers on civil engineering, published in international journals. Presented three of these papers at international conferences. Papers available at: www.blahblah/blah