

Foundations for the Job Search

Résumé/Curriculum Vitae Inventory

Before you can even begin to apply for a professional position, you need a résumé — or curriculum vitae, the term used more often in academia — that summarizes your qualifications for **a particular kind** of position. The résumé/vitae you finally come up with must have focus: It's probably futile to attempt to create a single document that is **equally** effective at showing your qualifications for, say, teaching **and** editing. (See the difference between the samples.)

As a first step, you might want to assemble facts about yourself in some convenient file. This method will provide you with much more information than you'll eventually need on your résumé/vitae, but it is nonetheless good to have the information at your disposal in case a potential employer asks for it. Keep separate lists on which you put relevant information about the following:

- **Education:** List schools, locations, inclusive attendance dates, major and minor programs pursued, degrees.
- **Experience:** Under separate columns on your worksheet, list “related” and “other” jobs (include job titles and responsibilities), organizations employed by, inclusive dates, names and phone numbers of supervisors.
- **Military experience:** List inclusive dates of service, last rank held, job titles, responsibilities, special competencies learned that are relevant to career aim.
- **Activities:** Under separate columns on your sheet, list “related” “ activities and “other” activities, titles held (if any), organizations associated with, inclusive dates.
- **Honors/Awards:** List names of awards, awarding organizations, dates.
- **Special skills:** List skills the employer may be able to use but which he/she would not already assume you had. For some positions, certain skills will be assumed; mentioned those that would not be assumed but which might put you in a position of advantage.
- **Publications:** List titles, publication names, publication dates. For writers, this will be amended regularly.
- **References:** List 3-5 names, job titles, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of recommendors.

Résumé/Curriculum Vitae Format

As you look around for examples to imitate, note how some are arranged in a tabular (or list-like) fashion and others are arranged in more of a semi-essay (or paragraph-like) fashion. Ask yourself which would fare better in a 30-40 second reading by a personnel manager or search committee member who had 50 or more applications sitting on his or her desk. Note also how the following graphic devices are used, or overused, for emphasis: typeface, capitalization, underlining, justification, and white space.

Application Letter Organization

Before you begin writing, think about what your primary and secondary strengths are with respect to a given job and a particular job description. Is education at the fore and experience secondary? The other way around? What would you include as allied strengths to either of those above? Think also about how you would answer questions about how you could serve the interests of an organization — rather than how it could serve your interests. For the sake of logic, symmetry, and emphasis, your sense of what's primary and secondary with respect to the letter you're writing should correspond with your placement of information on the accompanying résumé/vitae. Keeping all these things in mind, the application letter should first and foremost address the position description, providing detailed, relevant glosses on the accompanying résumé/vitae.

Application Package

Unless otherwise indicated, your first contact with a potential employer will be via an application letter and an accompanying résumé/vitae. The relationship between the two documents: The letter argues your qualifications for the particular position advertised, while the résumé/vitae shows your qualifications for such positions in general. For this reason, the letter is always customized to suit a particular position description, while the résumé/vitae may be the same used for other such positions.