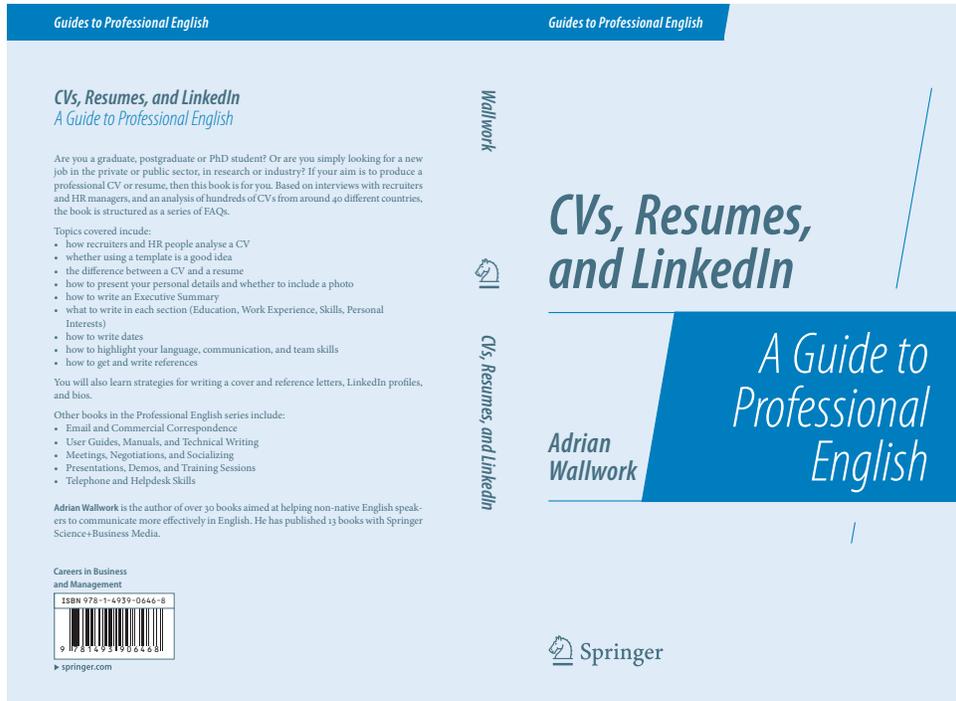


# Notes on CVs, Resumes and Cover Letters

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## 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

## **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

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Example 1 (for an advertised position in industry)**

- Nine 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 extract from my book at the end of this doc.*

## **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)

## WRITING DATES

Date of birth	5 November 1994
Employment	2012 - 2014
	Dec 2015 - Jan 2016
Graduation	2013
	March 2014

## 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](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

## 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).

## 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

## **CV templates**

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

[http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/europass/home/vernav/Europasss+Documents/Europass+CV.csp?loc=en\\_GB](http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/europass/home/vernav/Europasss+Documents/Europass+CV.csp?loc=en_GB)

However, you may want to differentiate yourself from the standard and use your own format. The most important thing is that your format is 100% clear and nice to look at. Use Arial 10 pt for text and 11 pt for headings. Use plenty of white space.

You can go on my website to get a template created by one of my students from Sant'Anna (Pisa). First look at the pdf version, then download the Word version to use.

<http://adrianwallwork.wordpress.com/courses/downloads/>

## **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

## **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.

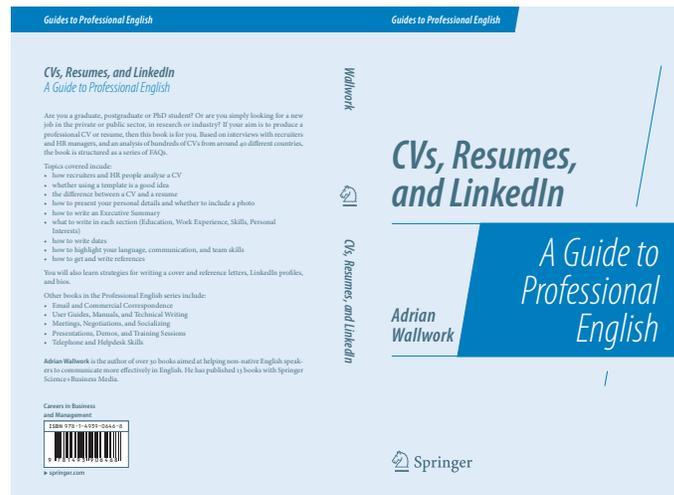
I would be available for interview from June 20 (when I finish my current researcher contract at the University of ...)

I look forward to hearing from you.

*legible signature*

Pinco Pallino

## HOW TO WRITE AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY. TAKEN FROM MY BOOK.



### 6.5 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.

### 6.6 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

## **Template for a CV**

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

For examples of CVs see my website: <http://adrianwallwork.wordpress.com>

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]

page 2

## 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

## **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