

Quicklist of CV Dos & Don'ts

*Prepared by Colleen H. Fava, LaSPACE Program Manager, LSU, January 2014
For the CV & Personal Statement Workshop in conjunction with the 2014 CUWiP at LSU*

One inch margins on all four sides.

12 point font throughout (14-16 font for candidate name)

Times New Roman Font

Single spaced

One or two full returns (ie, blank lines) before each new heading

Headings in bold and all caps

Subheadings in bold only

Left justify all elements of the cv

No bullet points. This is not a resume.

No "box" or column formatting of any kind.

No "XXXX, cont'd" headings. Page breaks will constantly move as CV grows.

NO NARRATIVE VERBIAGE ANYWHERE.

No description of "duties"

No paragraphs describing books or articles

No qualitative explanations of grants/fellowships (ie, "this is a highly competitive fellowship...").

No personal stories.

No career goals or expectations

Structure and Content Norms for an Academic Curriculum Vitae (CV)

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Heading (only on page 1):

Name at top, centered, in 14 or 16 point font.

The words “Curriculum vitae” immediately underneath or above name, centered, in 12 point font. This is a traditional practice in a number of fields; it might be optional at this point in time or even frowned up in some fields. Please doublecheck with a trusted advisor and/or search for examples from people affiliated with the institution/facility you are applying to.

The date, immediately below, centered, is optional. Senior scholars tend to date their CVs since publications and grant awards make them very dynamic documents. It’s optional for someone just beginning their career.

Your mailing address(es) (institutional and home, if available), tel, email, parallel right and left justified. Centering is okay, but not as widely used as left justification.

Footer (only on pages 2 +):

Include your name & page # in the footer for all pages after page 1.

CV Content:

Use all CAPs and **bold** for content headers. Place one or two blank lines between content areas. Single space within content areas.

1. **EDUCATION.** Always. No exceptions. List by degree, not by institution. List Ph.D., MA, BA in descending order. Give department, institution, and year of completion. Do NOT give starting dates.

2a. **PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS/ EMPLOYMENT/ PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE.** This must go immediately under education, assuming that you have/had these. Why? Because the reader must be able to instantly “place” you institutionally. If you held off-campus research-relevant work you can use this section. Most part-time employment and internships in your field can easily be listed under the umbrella of 2b.

OR

2b. **RESEARCH EXPERIENCE / MAJOR RESEARCH EXPERIENCE / ACADEMIC RESEARCH EXPERIENCE.** Just because you have not been employed full time, doesn’t mean you do not have any professional experience. Modify this section to reflect relevant content-knowledge WITH hands-on, practical experience—this could include work-study in a campus lab/campus research project, participation in Summer REUs, or even course work and honors research projects.

3. **PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS.** Again, a more experienced professional will have full sections for publications, conferences, invited talks, etc. As an undergrad you should have a handful of experiences to share here; at the very least you should have poster sessions and at least one

presentation. You can also include publications you contributed to or editorial assistance you may have provided to your research group. Attendance at conferences and meetings, even without direct presentations, might be listed. Consult an advisor on a case by case basis.

4. **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS.** Membership in clubs and organizations (both locally and nationally) should be listed here. Clearly identify student chapters of larger organizations.

5. **COMMUNITY & UNIVERSITY SERVICE.** Participation in outreach or development activities on or off campus, including things like Middle School Science Fair Judge, volunteer at annual earth day festival, math tutor, etc.

6. **HONORS AND AWARDS.** While a senior researcher/faculty person will list awards, honors, fellowships, and grants separately, you can show your promise as a participant in your field by showing the recognition you have received. Any scholarships, honors, recognition you receive as a undergrad can be highlighted here. (Note: it's not a bad idea to make small grant applications—funding from on or off campus. This kind of experience matters in higher education.)

7. **RELATED PROFESSIONAL SKILLS / TECHNICAL PROFICIENCIES / ADDITIONAL SKILLS & CERTIFICATIONS.** Depending on the types of things you have to share, choose a title to reflect the category. Only include upper level, relevant technical skills and proficiencies.

8. **REFERENCES. LIST REFERENCES VERTICALLY.** Give name and full title. Give full snail mail contact information along with tel and email. To do otherwise is amateurish, even though we know nobody is going to use the snail mail address. Do not give narrative verbiage or explanation of these references (ie, "Ph.D. Committee member," etc.). Application forms may request this kind of explanation, but it's not standard to list it on the CV.

Tips for Writing a Strong Admissions Essay

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Recognize each essay as a unique and original exercise:

- Clearly read and follow the instructions for each program
- Make note of special requirements (word count minimums/maximums)
- Cover any specific information requested / answer any direct questions listed
- Prove you know the school/department/program you are applying to by making direct and specific reference to unique characteristics of the program
- Prove you will fit into the program by connecting your experience and interests directly to unique characteristics of the program

Avoid the typical mini-biography that opens with a flashback clause (“Ever since I can remember,” “I’ve always known,” “When I was 10 years old I decided....”) that follows with a step by step, incident by incident recounting of your life (First I did this, then I did that, then I did that).

Note: Write your introduction last. How can you introduce something that doesn’t exist?!

Offer concrete anecdotes that highlight your talents, interests, accomplishments, and goals. Try to build the essay around a concrete experience or type of experience to convey a unified message.

If there is an obvious flaw or gap in your academic record use this space to directly address it. It might be your only chance.

The passive voice should be avoided (*Avoid the passive voice*).

Vary sentence structure and word choice.

Avoid contractions, slang, and unusually complicated vocabulary.

Avoid vague generalities (I learned many valuable lessons) and instead use concrete examples (As the project manager, I learned the importance of time management and the nuances of team work).

Do not submit your first draft:

- Proofread, revise, and get feedback on your essay before submitting it.
- Grammatical errors and spelling mistakes can be a shortcut to the rejection pile and we can’t always count on our own tired eyes to catch our mistakes.
- Information might be unclear or misleading. What makes sense to us internally might not translate to an external audience.
- Issues with narrative flow, structure, and rhythm can be caught by reading aloud
- Ask a professor in your field to review the essay for content relevance.

Standard Supporting Documents for a Graduate Program Application

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Curriculum Vitae (CV) / Resume

American Institutions of Higher Education prefer the CV to the Resume. The CV format was designed to cleanly illustrate the major components of an active teacher and researcher at a university. The emphasis is on research, funding, service, and teaching. An undergraduate's CV must be designed to reflect this format while still highlighting the particular experiences and qualifications of a pre-professional.

Admissions Essay

Often a broad request for a general statement of interest explaining why you should be admitted to the program. Sometimes specific questions or content areas are required.

Summary of Research Experience

This might be requested as a stand-alone document, as a component of the admissions essay, as a section on the application, or not directly requested at all.

Scholarly Writing Sample

Lab Reports or Research papers conducted for a class or assistantship.

Washington U in St Louis Physics Graduate Program Application Requirements

<http://www.physics.wustl.edu/graduate/how-to-apply>

Applying for Admission

Please apply directly online. There is a \$45 application fee. If necessary, you may apply on-line for a waiver of this fee which will be reviewed by the Dean of the Graduate School. In addition, please download, fill out, and scan to a pdf the **Physics Department Information Sheet** and send by email. To this same email address also send a copy of your transcripts and report your GRE scores as soon as you learn them. Mail your original transcripts to the following postal address:

Note: Physics Department Information Sheet requests attached information on teaching/research experience, and a statement of purpose.

LSU Physics & Astronomy Graduate Program Application Requirements

<http://www.phys.lsu.edu/newwebsite/graduate/instructions-advice.html>

You can (and should!) include other files (as PDF uploads) which are entered at the bottom of the "Additional Academic" section.

- **Brief summary of research experience.** This is important. We want to know what labs you have worked in, what theoretical problems you have solved, what conferences you have attended, and what papers you have written or co-authored. Importantly, tell us exactly what you have done, down at a detailed level.
- **Personal statement.** Here is your chance to tell us where you want to be heading in the world of physics. Here is your chance to tell us about unusual circumstances (perhaps a few years in the army or working for industry) or to explain how you have a good physics background even while having worked as an undergraduate in other fields. Here is a chance to detail why you want to come to LSU. Here is your chance to tell us why we should want you to come to LSU.
- **Resume or curriculum vitae or CV.** This is helpful for putting all your main history together in one place. This is also an opportunity for you to highlight your research experience, to list all your papers, to list the conferences that you've attended, and whatever else you can think of that makes a strong case for why we should admit you.
- **Scholarly writing sample.** This is where you upload preprints or reprints of a paper for which you are the author or a co-author. This can show us the sort of research that you have done and are interested in. For many people, your research papers are your best case for evidence of skill and knowledge of research and are your ticket to admission at LSU.
- **Local Contacts.** Unfortunately, material sent directly to our Department or directly to our professors is not part of the on-line application, and we have no ready way to include this information. Nevertheless, it might be useful to have direct contact with our professors, as we trade around information and recommendations that will get passed to the decision makers.

Texas A&M Physics & Astronomy Graduate Program Application Requirements

<http://physics.tamu.edu/students/prospective/grad/admissions.shtml>

Submit your Supplemental Materials directly to the Department of Physics and Astronomy.

Your supplemental materials may be uploaded online through AIS, by postal at the address listed below, or to apply@physics.tamu.edu.

Supplemental Materials include:

- Personal Statement (submitted as part of the Apply Texas application or sent directly to the department)
- Resume or CV
- List of publications or statement of research experience
- At least three Letters of Recommendation (submitted through AIS or by postal only).

After submitting your Apply Texas application, you will receive a letter from the Office of Admissions containing your Universal Identification Number, or UIN.

UT Austin Physics & Astronomy Graduate Program Application Requirements

<http://www.ph.utexas.edu/grad-admissions.php>

The Graduate and International Admissions Center (GIAC) requires...

- [Online Application for Admission](#).
- Three Letters of Recommendation. The online application allows your referees to submit their letters of recommendation online. When you list your referees on the application, you will need to enter the referees' email addresses. They will be sent an email with directions on how to submit a recommendation letter for you. Paper Letters of Recommendation are **not** accepted.
- Statement of Purpose. The online Application Status Check page allows you to enter your Statement of Purpose or to upload it in a variety of formats. Please note that this is a Statement of Purpose and *not* a Personal Statement, and compose it accordingly. Paper Statements of Purpose are **not** accepted.
- Official GRE General Test Scores. (Sent electronically by the [Educational Testing Service](#); the ETS code for the University of Texas at Austin is 6882.) Please be sure to include your Physics Subject Test Scores.
- Official Transcripts. Transcripts from any university or college attended are now uploaded via the online Applications Status Check page.
- [Certification of Financial Responsibility](#). (For international applicants only.) This form is not filled out until you are offered and have accepted admission.
- TOEFL Scores. (For international applicants only.)

The Physics Department requires...

- A CV (curriculum vitae) or Professional Résumé. Uploaded via the Application Status Check page.
- Official GRE Physics Subject Test Scores. Be sure to have these sent directly to GIAC with your other scores (or separately, if necessary); the ETS Code is 6882.

U of Alabama Physics & Astronomy Graduate Program Application Requirements

<http://physics.ua.edu/grad/AdmitGrad.html>

Graduate Applications

A research profile of our department can be found at this link and additional information about our department can be found at this link.

In your application we evaluate your Statement of Purpose very carefully. Your Statement of Purpose should clearly describe how an advanced degree in Physics or Astronomy relates to your career goals. Please state if you have a clear preference for a particular area of research and whether your inclinations are more theoretical, experimental, or observational. If you are considering a range of possible research areas, please describe them. A summary of departmental research projects and collaborations can be found at this link and individual faculty research interests can also be found on their web pages via this link.

We encourage you to visit the following web sites to learn more about our programs:

<http://physics.ua.edu>

<http://bama.ua.edu/~hep>

<http://astronomy.ua.edu>

<http://mint.ua.edu>