

“Easy reading is damn hard writing” attributed to Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1868...true still 150+ years later!

Background: We all struggle with writing about ourselves. Whether we are crafting our CV/Resume or writing a letter to entice an employer for a summer position or a seeking a research position in the lab of a potential primary investigator, or persuading a professional school admissions officer—all of this writing demands detailed and clear self-assessment. Your efforts are in vain if a prospective employer, Dean of the Graduate School, Principal Investigator, Dental Admissions Officer, Medical Residency Director, or Fellowships Coordinator cannot be intrigued enough to look beyond the surface of your credentials. Your job in constructing your career portfolio is to ensure that you provide NO REASON to be relegated to the ‘sorry’ pile. A large eye-tracking study of recruiters suggests that employment officers make decisions from your materials in as few as 6 seconds. So, you need to provide concrete, specific evidence of your skills, talents and fit.

The Curriculum Vita/CV or Resume outlines your credentials...your toolbox of skills (emphasized in a resume) and educational preparedness (added to generate a CV). In this world of AI screening, what language you use and where you use it can make a difference on your CV—it can flag you as a real ‘keeper’ or if omitted, can cause your dream internship to be relegated to the trash or recycle bin...literally as well as figuratively. And your CV is a dynamic thing, requiring revision and tuning over your career. It is really never one and done! But once you craft a version of your CV, you will find the templates provided are more readily adaptable to a large array of positions and opportunities. The HP CV currently in use at Lafayette for HPAC was developed out of multiple reference works, articles and guides, as well as practical, empirical experience.

Your CV/Resume: To prepare a **strong technical** CV/Resume you need to understand its purpose: to provide evidence of your competence in this area, and that evidence is found in the specific details about your coursework qualifications, research skills and experience, technical competencies, your publications, and other academic and technical credentials. A CV informs, while other aspects of your portfolio and application persuade. To do this requires that you think in terms of quantifiable data for hours spent, dates and timing, and documentation of supervisors. This should be selective, relevant, complete but concise. Do NOT be redundant! You must make judgments about individual experiences to determine where best they ought to be presented. In technical fields for advanced undergraduates, the CV/Resume typically is two pages, or the front and back of a single page. And just so you know...a CV differs from a Resume mostly in the detail of academic and educational credentials. In an academic setting, the CV approach is more preferred, but the distinctions matter less at this stage of your career. While different templates can exhibit many of the desired qualities in a CV, the goal is to capture and delineate as much relevant information about yourself as you can provide, and to do it in a focused and concise manner. Perhaps the most important part of this kind of writing is not the writing itself, but the editing. Knowing what to keep and what to trim takes objectivity, focus, and discipline. People become attached to things on their CV, which makes editing difficult—but no less necessary.

Mechanics: Our HP CV template employs a format that ties related items together with spacing and alignment. Restrain your use of multiple fonts and designations; that can appear jumbled—you are going for sleek and inviting. Use space effectively, but do not waste it. Balance length with content. Highlight achievement and dedication. Be sure to use only tabs, columns, defined indents or blind tables in your formatting...NEVER employ spaces!! You can use the left and right justification properties to achieve a smooth finish, but be forewarned that using full justification can introduce ungainly spacing in your document.

Calibri is an easily-viewed font (this one!). Adobe Heiti Std R is sleek and uses more spacing between lines, so it is clearer, but takes up more space. Consolas, Candara and Arial are all clean-looking. Cambria and Times New Roman, while popular, have multiple edges and finish that can challenge screen-weary eyes who are reading your work! Change your font characters (sizing, italics, bold, small caps, etc) ONLY if needed for headings, etc. Consistency makes for clarity!

Be sure to PROOFREAD meticulously! Even where you are using sentence fragments or lists, use parallel grammatical forms. Use formal standard English; find a peer editor to triple check your verb tense and dependent clauses! As with any important portfolio document, your CV must be PERFECTLY ERROR FREE! A single, glaring typographical error will diminish an otherwise stellar candidate. Whoever is reading your materials is often not searching for a reason to accept you, but rather, is searching for any excuse to disqualify you from consideration. Do not provide one!

Section 1: Heading. With the pressure of Artificial Intelligence based pre-screening, we encourage judicious use of the page area. A large header may look impressive, but using your header to embed the critical information opens more prime real estate for the jargon and keywords that make your material worth considering. Just be sure you have the complete information easy to consume by the reader.

NEW CRITICAL SECTION!! You may have seen the ‘objective’ as a trite aspirational statement. It typically is. But offering a **Professional Summary** can be useful. It is not part of our HP CV needs, but it should be connected to your central theme (used in personal statements and application letters). Placing it in the upper quarter of your first page gives it heft in that prime real estate. This will need to be updated with each position, since you want to be certain key words are contained here to link you to the position description. So, you are likely to alter your resume with each position, just like a cover letter! It cannot be static. It also means you need to translate your skills and what you bring to the table.

Section 2: Education. Include what is applicable. Be sure to list your degree as anticipated until you are an actual graduate—to do otherwise is misleading. In considering Honors and Academic Awards, be thorough: consider any and all scholar awards (and if multiple years, indicate that too). For coursework remember you will submit a transcript, but this is a place where you can allow your preparation to shine—list foundational courses and follow with relevant coursework in alphabetical order by name. Be sure to indicate laboratory, writing intensive, CURE (course based undergraduate research) or competitive admissions courses (like Tech Clinic). You must judge what is relevant—for example, formal training in public speaking through a theatre course might really matter for a position as an intern at a national conservancy. Be thoughtful.

Section 3: Relevant Experiences. This should include both paid or volunteer positions that demonstrate you are responsible and engaged. Avoid terms like ‘extern’ or ‘excel’ when they stand alone, since they are not standard terms. Start with the location and duration, then indicate your actual position, followed by your supervisor and their contact information. Shift to a specific list of responsibilities and what you accomplished. Be as clear and quantitative you can. If you are a TA in a lab of 17 students or of 7 students, that makes a difference, and both can be equally impressive if articulated well. Provide accurate contact information (either email or phone) and all specific obligations—what you needed to do when you were volunteering or working, and what you were able to observe and learn when you were shadowing. If your relevant experiences can be organized as ‘Clinical’ and ‘Research’ go ahead and segregate them. Research experiences require a title as well as the Primary Investigator or lab supervisor. Indicate course-based undergraduate research as CURE.

Section 4: Leadership Experience. Be selective here and include those positions where you demonstrated passion and commitment. If you held a title and progressed through an institution or club, be sure to indicate that. But if you dispensed important obligations, be sure to include that, even if not captured by a title. In much the same way as above, highlight responsibilities and hours spent.

Section 5: Additional Experience. This can include activities like clubs, other extracurricular efforts, athletics and also volunteer, service or paid experiences. Holding down a part time job while you are pursuing your

degree says a lot about your maturity and grit. Again, highlight responsibilities and hours to demonstrate your commitment. But be careful not to pad here. This section in particular can be challenging.

Section 6. Publications and Presentations. If your research or work or even volunteer experience resulted in a formal presentation or poster or paper, use this. If you do not have any yet, eliminate the section entirely. The idea is always to promote your credentials, not diminish them.

Section 7. Support Skills. This includes important technical, artistic, linguistic skills you want to mention, especially if they figure into your overall credentials. You can also include 'Further Information' to highlight elements like hobbies or interest that may seem tangential to your portfolio, but that can provide balance.

Section 8. Standing References. While this is not part of our HP CV, it ***IS a silver bullet advantages!!*** Be sure to ask someone if they are willing to provide a strong standing reference on your behalf. Include those who capture different aspects of your positions, personality, background and competence. You should be able to marshal at least two, three is ideal. Put their information into a bullet...and then remove the bullet boundaries. You can make this font significantly smaller than others.

Preparation: Okay...so how do you get started building a technical resume? Before we begin that, one critical thing NOT to include: do not provide personal information (birthday, marital status, photographs, etc). You need to start with some exhaustive **LISTS!**

1. List each course you have completed, whether you think it is relevant or not. You will decide that later. Use an accurate descriptive course title, not the number. Designate if it was a lab course, a writing-intensive course, a two-semester sequence of classes, and if it was virtual.
2. List each lab course you have completed. Consider in each one the exercises you performed. You may need to do an inventory of the exercises from moodle. This list should also include any equipment or machines you used, any assays or analyses you employed. For each of these, you should designate them: are you acquainted with the assay or instrument? Are you familiar with it? Are you adept or highly experienced at it? Assess its value.
3. List any language courses you have completed. For each of these designate your level of fluency in reading, writing, speaking—are you conversant? Or perhaps you have limited reading proficiency?
4. List support skills: computer platforms, software, tools in your toolbox not identified about.
5. List every position you have held, whether paid as a job or volunteer. What was your title? Who was your supervisor? What is their contact info? What were your specific responsibilities—these should be verbs! Actions! What you did, not what you learned. Quantify, even if you have to estimate. If you do estimate, stay slightly under rather than overinflate.
6. List any honors, awards, certifications you have earned.
7. List meaningful groups of which you are a member. If you have held multiple offices, list that too.
8. List all shadowing experiences with mentor, duration, etc.
9. List specialized skills, activities, hobbies.

Once you have your lists, you can decide how to put the puzzle of your portfolio together. Use our template and keep your CV updated. You never know when a great opportunity will present itself to you. Be ready and versatile!