

## Do's and don'ts of writing an effective CV/resume for international positions

**First name** **Last name, academic qualifications** (e.g., MD, MPH)  
**Postal address including postcode**  
 Email: xxxxxx  
 Telephone: including country code (e.g., +81-3-1111-1111)

**Specialties:** xxxxxxxx, xxxxxxxx, xxxxxxxx, and xxxxxxxx

**Education and Academic Qualifications**  
 Dec 2015 **Qualification** (e.g., PhD, Infectious Diseases), **Certifying body, country**  
 Dec 2004 **Qualification** (e.g., MD), **Certifying body, country**

**Summary:**

- **Highlight main responsibilities (duration) and skills** (e.g., Physician with broad experience in XX field (10 years) and YY field (4 years), management consultation (4 years), training of... (6 years), and .... (4 years)

**Employment [or Work Experience, etc.]**  
 Jun 2014 – Present **Job title**  
**Affiliation name, city, country**

- **Relevant details** (e.g., Developed..., Led..., Consulted for... Here, summarize your main responsibilities using strong verbs and parallel structure: developed, created, ensured, led, advised, trained, mentored, managed, coordinated, approved, coordinated, collaborated, assisted, published, presented, etc.)

Jan 2004 – May 2014 **Job title**

Many specialists at the mid-to-advanced stage of their career hope to expand their work to an international level, for example, by serving on an international committee, taking up a position within a globally active nongovernmental organization, or taking a visiting professorship or sabbatical at a university overseas. Goals can include raising awareness, spreading knowledge, and disseminating working practices in specific populations or in society as a whole.

A number of documents are needed when applying for such positions, and all must be written with great care and attention to detail. Among these documents, the curriculum vitae (CV) or resume/résumé is usually the first document that is read during the screening process. As such, it needs to highlight the candidate's suitability for the position quickly, accurately, and clearly.

Although many resources are available to help students and early career professionals write effective CVs/resumes, few exist to guide mid-to-advanced career specialists. This article seeks to address this gap by offering specialists who want to apply for influential international positions some **tips**—in the form of do's and don'ts—for writing English CVs/resumes. We also provide a general **template** to help create clear, accurate, and well-formatted CVs.

**Download a CV/Resume TEMPLATE (Word File)  
for mid-to-advanced career specialists**

The tips below have been drawn from helping many specialists—senior clinicians, engineers, academics, researchers, social scientists, and policymakers—to prepare effective application materials for top-level roles at home and overseas. By “application materials,” we mean the many documents needed when applying for influential positions, including a CV/resume (with a publications list), a cover letter (sometimes listed as a statement of purpose or a letter of intent/motivation), a letter to a referee asking for a reference/recommendation, a confidentiality agreement/undertaking, and a conflicts of interest disclosure form.

Here, we focus on writing CVs/resumes. We'll cover how to write the other documents, as well as how to write recommendation letters, in later feature articles.

### What makes an effective resume?

As a mid-to-advanced career specialist, you will have acquired a number of specific skills and experiences over the years that you could list on your resume. Providing the standard information needed isn't the difficult part—you've

probably updated your resume several times over the years. The challenges are to know exactly what information to keep in and what to leave out, how to use the best wording to showcase your talents concisely and appropriately, and how to best present the information that you decide to keep in.

The person who will screen your application will scan-read your CV to decide whether to look at your application in more detail. Therefore, your goal is to produce a resume that demonstrates, quickly and accurately, your suitability for the position. To do this, your writing needs to be:

- Clear and concise
- Free of errors
- Formatted for easy scan reading

So, let's look at how to do this, by focusing on each of the standard sections of your resume. The content can be broadly divided into six sections. Depending on the position you are applying for, some of these sections may appear in a different order from that listed here.

1. Heading information (your name, academic degrees/professional qualifications, and contact information)
2. Education and qualifications
3. Employment history
4. Publications list
5. Professional memberships
6. Awards
7. Date

Change the nature and focus of your content according to the type of position you are applying for. There is no one standard template to use.

After you have created a well-crafted CV once, you should be able to update it quickly throughout your career. When you want to apply for a specific position, you can then focus your time and attention on revising the text to fit the exact position.

Here are a couple of general do's and don'ts that you should consider when writing your resume.

## Do's

Do use a template file to help you prepare your CV (follow the formatting carefully); it should have clear, simple, and consistent formatting that distinguishes between the sections

Do save your final file as a PDF file to submit; change the file properties so that the text can be printed but not easily copied or resaved into an editable file

Do use bullet points for lists

## Don'ts (or don't need to)

Don't choose a template file that has overly complex formatting that could be distracting; it shouldn't have many different fonts or a complex layout

Don't use an Excel file for resumes in English (as is commonly used for resumes in Japanese)

Don't need to use fully grammatical sentences; whether you choose to write in grammatical sentences or not, use one style of writing throughout

Let's look at some tips for each section. And don't forget to download the [template](#), to guide you in providing the standard information.

## 1. Heading information

### Do's

Do give your name centered at the top of the page followed by your academic degree(s); on the line below, give your email and telephone for quick contact

**Jane Smith, MEng, PhD**

Email: xxxx@gmail.com

Tel: 81-1-1111-1111

Do give your date of birth (DOB) on a new line, left aligned, **if this information is asked for**

Do give your address where you want to be contacted (either a work or home address)

Do give any other information that you want to stand out quickly to the recruiter when he/she is scan-reading your CV, such as

**Specialist fields:** X, Y, Z

**Current position:** Physician/scientist at a university hospital, specializing in Z

### Don'ts (or don't need to)

Don't need to provide a photo unless you are asked for one

Don't give your DOB or age unless requested (your age is not required, particularly in the United States, to avoid potential age discrimination lawsuits); if you are completing an online form, don't give your date of birth together with your place of birth because these two pieces of information can result in identity theft if the online form is compromised

Don't need to state your sex, marital status, or dependents

Don't need to include a profile statement (about 200 words), which is also known as a career statement/aim and commonly appears on CV templates (often given by professionals earlier in their career)

## 2. Education and qualifications

This section has various titles, but common ones are "Education and qualifications" and "Education and academic qualifications".

### Do's

Do list your most recent qualification first

Do give the date (month with year or year alone) that you qualified for each, left aligned

Do state the academic degree and name (or equivalent professional qualification details) in bold type on the same line as the date, indented

2014      **PhD, Materials Science**  
X University, Osaka, Japan

2009      **MSc, Materials Science**  
Y University, Sydney, Australia

### Don'ts (or don't need to)

Don't need to state all your qualifications if they are not relevant to your application

Don't need to state the start date of training unless you wish to; if you are listing a few qualifications, sometimes giving the year alone is clearer

Don't need to write your thesis/dissertation title if you completed it many years ago (but include it if it is specifically related to the position you are applying for or you wrote it fairly recently)

### 3. Employment history

This section also has various titles, including “Employment”, “Employment history”, and “Employment and experience”

#### Do’s

Do list your most recent job position first

Do give the month and year that you worked in each position, left-aligned; use standard abbreviations for months (<http://web.library.yale.edu/cataloging/months.htm>)

Do give your job title in bold type on the same line as the date, indented; follow this on the next line, indented, with department/division name, affiliation/company name, city, country

Apr 2009 - Present      **Regional Director of R&D, Europe**  
X Company, Geneva, Switzerland

Jan 2006 - Mar 2009      **Director of R&D, Japan**  
X Company, Tokyo, Japan

Do summarize your responsibilities if they are relevant to the position you are applying for; use strong verbs to start the listed points

- Led a team of 10 researchers to do Y
- Developed...
- Increased...

#### Don’ts (or don’t need to)

Don’t need to state all of your very early career positions in detail if they are not relevant to your application

Don’t need to include the period after abbreviations for months (if you want to make the formatting more consistent and tidy, you can use “Jun” for “June” and “Jul” for “July”)

Don’t vary the formatting of this section; adjust the indenting if necessary so that all of the job titles start at the same distance from the end date

Don’t overstate to the point of falsehood (lying)

**Note:** If you have a gap in your employment history that is not covered by academic study and which you think might raise questions in the recruiter’s mind, mention the reason for the gap briefly in your cover letter.

### 4. Publications list

#### Do’s

Do list your most recent publications first, in a bulleted list

Do show your name in bold type for a publication with coauthors

#### Don’ts (or don’t need to)

Don’t need to state all of your publications if there are many; add a summary sentence and then give the most relevant ones for the position you are applying for

Don’t state a publication if it is not yet accepted; instead list it as “(under review)” or “(submitted)”

## 5. Professional memberships

Do's	Don'ts (or don't need to)
Do list your professional memberships that are relevant to the position you are applying for and that show your level of expertise	Don't need to write these in full sentences (instead give as a bulleted list)

## 6. Awards

- Include any awards that show your level of expertise generally, as well as specifically for the position you are applying for

## 7. Date

- You can finish your CV with the date to indicate the time of writing
- Note that dates written as numerals only can be confusing: 02/03/2017 can be read “2 March 2017” in British English and “3 February 2017” in American English. Using the format “3 February 2017” or “February 3, 2017” is clear.

For example, right aligned:

“Updated February 3, 2017”  
“Revised 3 February 2017”

## Summary

We hope these general do's and don'ts of writing effective CVs/resumes for influential international positions are helpful. There are no firm rules for writing such documents, except that they should be error-free, clear, accurate, and targeted to the position you are applying for.

In our [workshops](#) about writing CVs that we teach to experts, key opinion leaders, and mid-career specialists, we are often asked how long a CV/resume should be. The answer we usually give is: as short as it can be to clearly and accurately show that you are a good candidate for the position and direct the recruiter to look at your more detailed cover letter and other application materials.

Our senior editors would be very happy to support you in [editing](#) and [translating](#) effective resumes that focus attention quickly on the important details of your career. Please let us know if we can help in any way – and in 2017, please look out for new feature articles on writing other application materials, such as cover letters (letters of motivation/intent), requests for recommendation letters, and recommendation letters themselves.