



# Checklist for Creating a Stellar Resume or CV

by Val Cervarich of Writing Help KC

This checklist outlines the essentials of a stellar resume or CV, and it includes tips to help you create high-quality content and consistent formatting. Maintain a master list of your skills, projects, accomplishments, and research so it's easier for you to customize each application. You can get the other [FREE resources here](#).

## RESUME ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGNS

➔ Limit it to one page!

### Reverse chronological (a.k.a. chronological)

- List all projects, accomplishments, and responsibilities

### Functional

- Organize bullet points under 2-3 skill areas
- Good for job history gaps, career changes

## CATEGORIES AND ORDER

- Header (swap LinkedIn for physical address)
- Professional summary (not an objective)
- Experience/Qualifications
- Education\*
- Skills and abilities
- Awards^
- Leadership/Volunteer experience^

\*First if undergraduate or have little experience | ^Optional

## OTHER TIPS

- Incorporate keywords from the job description, tailoring each app.
- Keep the format simple. Details over design.
- Use simple, 10-12pt font (Arial, Calibri, etc.).
- Use past tense for previous jobs/projects and present tense for current jobs/projects.
- Show, don't tell (be specific, use examples).
- Use compelling verbs and language.
- Only include most recent and relevant experience.
- Match content to your LinkedIn profile.
- Avoid jargon and be honest.
- Proofread.

## CV ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN

➔ There are no page limits, but be concise and organized.

The CV is a flexible, comprehensive overview of research, projects, and accomplishments.

## CATEGORIES

- Header (swap LinkedIn for physical address)
- Education
- Professional summary (not an objective)
- The following are flexible in terms of order\*:
  - Research Experience/Interests
  - Awards and Grants
  - Teaching Experience
  - Mentoring Experience
  - University/Community Service
  - Professional Development
  - Presentations/Invited Talks
  - Publications

\* The content order should mimic the priorities outlined in the job description.

## OTHER TIPS

- Incorporate keywords from the job description, tailoring each app.
- Keep the format simple. Details over design.
- Use simple, 10-12pt font (Arial, Calibri, etc.).
- Use past tense for previous jobs/projects and present tense for current jobs/projects.
- Show, don't tell (be specific, use examples).
- Use compelling verbs and language.
- Highlight accomplishments.
- Match content to your LinkedIn profile.
- Avoid jargon and be honest.
- Proofread.



# Checklist for Creating a Stellar Cover Letter

by Val Cervarich of Writing Help KC

This guide will help you create a stellar cover letter. The bolded statements are specific actions to take. The questions below each action help you assess if you have completed that action.

- Address a specific audience.**
  - Can you name your audience?
  - Are you writing in a way they will understand?
- Do not be repetitive.**
  - Do you avoid repeating information from your resume/CV?
    - If you are repeating info, how can you better paint a picture of you as a candidate?
- Express specific interests in the company/organization.**
  - Do you incorporate your research on the company/organization?
  - Do you demonstrate how your interests tie into the company/organization?
  - Do you use an appropriate voice and tone for the company/organization?
    - Consider the priorities of the company/organization/institution.
- Demonstrate your problem-solving abilities.**
  - Do you show your abilities and skills through mini case studies?
  - Do you use compelling language to support those mini case studies?
  - Is the content memorable?
- Highlight relevant experience that matches the job description.**
  - Do you incorporate keywords from the job description?
    - Remember: Some hiring departments use scanning software to search for those keywords and sort applications based on keyword count.
  - Do you get to the point quickly?
    - Cut out the extra or irrelevant information.
- Make a strong closing.**
  - Do you summarize the points that show your strong candidacy?
  - Do you show eagerness to continue communicating?
    - Remember: Don't be too aggressive (i.e. stating that you'll call to schedule an interview).
  - Do you express gratitude for their time and consideration?
- Show personality.**
  - Do you convey your personality while also being professional?
  - Don't include personal details (family, marital status, etc.) and/or hobbies.
- Make it readable and flawless.**
  - Do you avoid jargon?
  - Do you use compelling verbs and word choices?
  - Do you have 1-inch margins and/or appropriate formatting?
    - If you need more space, no smaller than 0.5-inch margins.
  - Do you use a legible font and font size?
    - Recommended fonts include Arial (Narrow), Calibri, Helvetica, Tahoma, Verdana in 10-12pt.
  - Is the spelling and grammar accurate?