

# Landing Your First Job

## In Astronomy or Physics

Some helpful hints on writing your CV (curriculum vitae)

# 1. Avoid Microsoft Word Templates.

These three files (handouts, #1) are Microsoft templates. Recognize them? With Microsoft as widely used as it is there are potentially millions of people able to use these three templates. Want your CV to look like a million others? Creating your own layout will take a little longer but will save a lot of job hunting time as your CV won't be thrown away as often.

**Max Benson**

**Objective**

**Experience**

**National Sales Manager**

- Increased sales from \$50 million to \$100 million.
- Increased total sales from \$25 million to \$50 million.
- Managed 250 sales representatives in 10 Western states.
- Implemented training course for new recruits — speeding profitability.

**Senior Sales Representative**

- Expanded sales team from 50 to 100 representatives.
- Tripled division revenues for each sales associate.
- Expanded sales to include mass market accounts.

**Sales Representative**

- Expanded territorial sales by 400%.
  - Increased company's national sales representative turnover by 20%.
- 1971-1975 Southridge State University Southridge, SC
- B.A., Business Administration and Computer Science.
  - Graduated Summa Cum Laude.

**Education**

**Interests**

SR Board of Directors, running, gardening, carpentry, computers.

**Tips**

Select the text you would like to replace, and type your information.

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Select text you would like to replace, and type your information.

**Sindy Doll**

**Education**

- 1995 - 1997 Doll School for ladies London
- GCSEs
- French
  - Double Award Science
  - Music

**A Levels**

- 1997 - 1999 Rocking Horse FE College London
- Physics
  - Maths
  - Music
- 2003 Manchester University Manchester
- (Honours) Physics and Music 2:1
- Final year project in quantum effects of musical resonance in violins
  - Helped younger students with work.

**Work experience**

- Three months as a waitress in the student bar.
- Four months as fruit supervisor on an apple farm.
- 2 months as a research assistant at the Cavendish Laboratory.

**Professional memberships**

Student member, Institute of Physics

**Interests and activities**

I like working with other people. At school I took part in the Young Enterprise Scheme which I found really rewarding. I am interested in reading, especially science fiction.

**References**

1. Professor Wayne, Manchester University, Manchester.
2. Mrs Waggon, Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge.

## 2. Don't put "Curriculum Vitae" at the top.

It's a CV. It's obvious. You don't need to label it and it wastes valuable space.

What you should put is your name, big and bold, right at the top of the first page. Research shows that people with unusual names are more likely to get interviewed because their names make them stand out. So if you've ever been ashamed that your name is Zachary Moondrop, now's the time to shrug off those childhood jibes and stand proud. It'll get you noticed.

# 3. Don't waste time.

No one looks forward to spending a whole day painstakingly reading a pile of CVs. Not even HR professionals. How long do you think someone will spend reading your CV? 1 minute? 5? How about 15 seconds if you're lucky and you've made it really stand out. Therefore it's vitally important to put the good stuff first.

How about putting three bullet points under your name, highlighting your best points? Or writing a very short paragraph (3 lines) about your major skills and achievements? However, don't write too much ([point 6](#)).

## 4. Don't be swayed by convention.

Convention dictates that you put CV at the top, or possibly your name. Then you put your address, phone number, nationality, possibly your date of birth, email address, mobile number and then maybe about a third of the way down the page you start on what it is you've been doing with your life. That's one way of doing it, but by the time they've found out you live in Oaxaca the reader is bored and ready to move on to the next CV.

Put your personal detail in the footer of the page, or even near the top but after your *initial summary* ([see point 3](#)).

# 5. Put things in the right order.

CV for person with relevant experience.

- Your Name (Big, bold, proud)
- Personal Summary
  - Three bullet points
- Address, nationality, email etc
  - Use only 3cm of the page on this MAXIMUM
  - This can go in the bottom of the page if the footer is not used
- Professional/Work Experience
  - Make sure you highlight any points relevant to the job advert. E.g. highlight the work you did in a team or on a project.
  - Put the most relevant jobs first (3 to 4 on the page of this section to it)
  - If you had several summer jobs or work placements while at University include these and list them in order of most recent first. (This is only relevant if you have had more than one job since graduation. A job with more than one job since graduation should leave out their pre-graduation experience.)
  - You can include any voluntary work here.
- Education
  - Start with your degree/s, most recent first if you have more than one.
  - If you were at University (NOT AT SCHOOL) then you can include these here.
  - That's it. No A-Levels, GCSEs, no 11+ results, no primary school prizes. (Unless these are specifically requested in the advert)
- Interests
  - Don't put down things that help you to be stereotyped such as science fiction books or role play, even if you do enjoy these.
  - Try to put down at least one team activity, such as a team sport or acting.
  - Try to put one social thing, to show you can interact with people.
- References
  - If there is space and you are happy for them to be contacted, put them down here.
  - Make sure you have their permission before putting them on your CV.
  - You will need two – both should be recent employers. Neither should not be a relative. It should be someone in a responsible position, such as an ex-employer.
- MAXIMUM LENGTH = 2 PAGES, 1 page in the USA.

Academic CV for person with relevant experience.

- Your Name (Big, bold, proud)
- Personal Summary
  - Three bullet points
- Address, nationality, email etc
  - Use only 3cm of the page on this MAXIMUM
  - This can go in the bottom of the page if the footer is not used
- Education
  - Start with your degree/s, most recent first if you have more than one.
  - If you were at University (NOT AT SCHOOL) then you can include these here.
  - That's it. No A-Levels, GCSEs, no 11+ results, no primary school prizes. (Unless these are specifically requested in the advert)
- Professional/Work Experience
  - If you had several summer jobs or work placements while at University include 2 or 3 here. Spend a maximum of two bullets on each. (This is only relevant if you have had more than one job since graduation. A job with more than one job since graduation should leave out their pre-graduation experience.)
  - You can include any voluntary work here.
- Awards/Fellowships/Appointments
- Teaching
- Postgraduate Supervision
- Research Grants
- Committees
- Finally...
  - Publication List
    - If this is more than a few pages, have it as a separate attachment to the CV.
- MAXIMUM LENGTH = with academic CVs 20 pages is not uncommon, although the majority of it is usually the publication list. Try to keep the main body of text down to 3 pages.

CV for person just graduating or with no relevant experience.

- Your Name (Big, bold, proud)
- Personal Summary
  - Three bullet points
- Address, nationality, email etc
  - Use only 3cm of the page on this MAXIMUM
  - This can go in the bottom of the page if the footer is not used
- Awards
  - If you were at University (NOT AT SCHOOL) then you can include these here.
  - That's it. No GCSEs, no 11+ results, no primary school prizes.
- Education
  - Start with your degree/s, most recent first if you have more than one.
  - If you were at University (NOT AT SCHOOL) then you can include these here.
  - That's it. No GCSEs, no 11+ results, no primary school prizes.
- Professional/Work Experience
  - If you had several summer/pre-university jobs, put the most recent first. Spend 3 bullets on most recent, then 2 max on others. Make sure you highlight any points relevant to the job advert. E.g. teamwork while working as a dustman or as waiting staff, responsibility while working as a bouncer.
  - You can include any voluntary work here.
- Interests
  - Don't put down things that help you to be stereotyped such as science fiction books or role play, even if you do enjoy these.
  - Try to put down at least one team activity, such as a team sport or acting.
  - Try to put one social thing, to show you can interact with people.
- References
  - If there is space you might as well put them down here.
  - Make sure you have their permission before putting them on your CV.
  - You will need two – one academic (such as your University tutor) and one other. This should not be a relative or a friend. It should be someone in a responsible position, such as an ex-employer.
- MAXIMUM LENGTH = 2 PAGES, 1 page in the USA.

The order depends on what stage of your career you are at. These three word files (handouts, #5) give optional orders for those who are just graduating or with no post-graduation work experience and for those with work experience. Note the differences between academic and non-academic CVs.

# 6. Lumps of text are hard to read.

How often do you read a newspaper article from beginning to end? All that text, it can be a bit of a turn off. Especially if you only have limited time before you have to go on to the next one.

Look at your handouts (**#6 at top of the page**). You can bunch it all up and hope the reader is still interested when they get to the other end, or you can break it down into easy to digest bullets, like on the second page of the document.

# 7. Put the emphasis on the right things.

The major problem in this area is remembering that while you worked incredibly hard to get your degree, unless it is going to be directly relevant to the job, no one cares what modules you took. Definitely no one cares what individual marks you got in any of them. If you are just graduating, spend up to 4 bullet points on your University life and this should include your extra-curricular activities. If you graduated more than 2 years ago take this down to two bullet points. Anything first job and are really unwilling to leave it out, all right then. But more than that and just give your degree title, awarding University and possibly the grade you achieved.

The same is true under the Work Experience heading. Absolutely no one wants to know what you got for your exams at 18, just what they were in, and this only if you have allocated to this section, depending on how many jobs you just graduated. And absolutely definitely 100% guaranteed no one wants to know what your subjects or results were from when you were 16. Unless you are specifically asked to give this information, save the space for other things.

# 8. Tailor your CV *EVERY TIME* you send it out.

Look at the job advert (handout #8). Before moving on make an actual or mental list of the skills you should highlight in your CV. Now go to page 2 of the document. Get them all?

Somewhere in your CV you should have at least one bullet point dedicated to each of these points. These bullets could be found in the employment or education sections, or in your personal summary, under your name at the top of the front page.

Each time you send out your CV you should tailor it as much as possible to reflect the ethos of the company and the language used in the advert.

# 9. Reformatting and file types - the menace of email

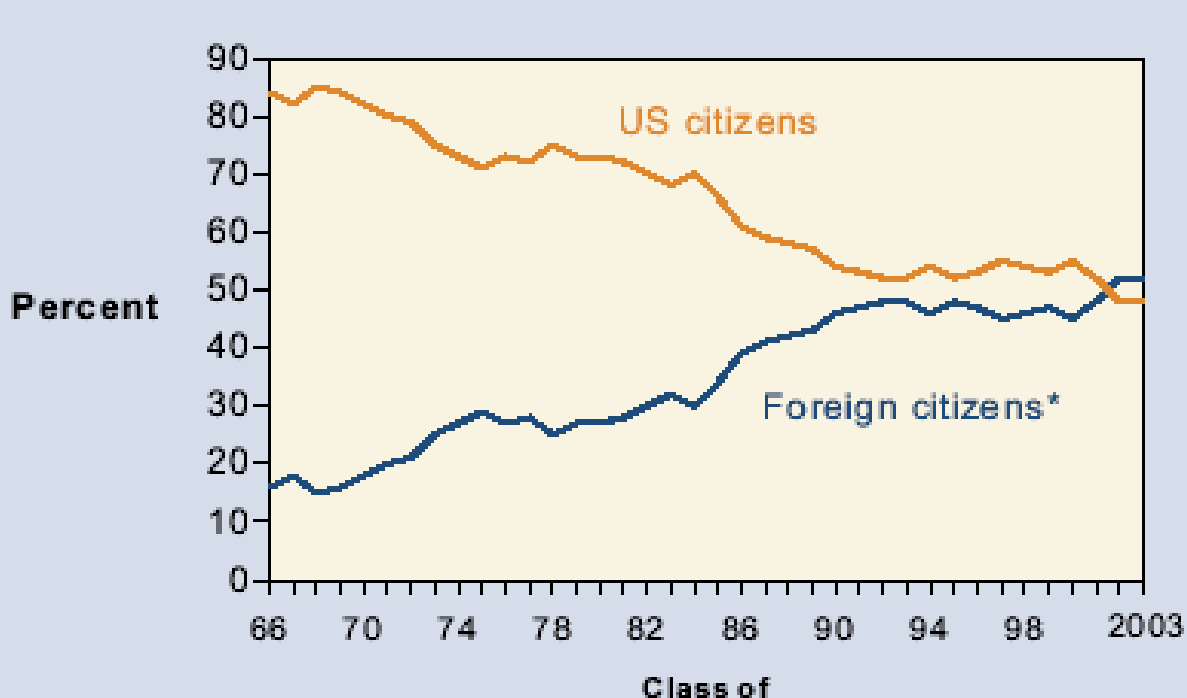
Most HR people will have Word on their computers - therefore if you are asked to email your CV, do it as a word document. However, be aware that word files can reformat to reflect the default template of the person opening it. Therefore it may sometimes be better to convert your CV into a .pdf file. This will stop it from reformatting, although despite Acrobat Reader being free to download, not everyone has done that. To be safe, send a word and .pdf version.

# 10. Final thoughts

- Don't think for a minute that just because it is you, you have more chance than anyone else at getting your CV read. It's largely the surface appearance of your CV that will get it noticed enough to read. It can contain good stuff and be awfully laid out and you'll never get an interview.  
Don't lie. You'll be found out.
- If you write "Fluent in French" be ready to conduct part of the interview in French. This has been known to happen in international companies where English may not be the native tongue of the interviewer.
- Don't try to explain your weak points. Research shows women are far more likely to do this than men.
- Emphasize your strengths. They can't see you being all cool, calm and competent. If you are the world expert at something, put it down. If you have excellent communication skills, say it.
- Get someone who is not related to you to read through your CV. Ask them for honest feedback and react to the suggestions they make.
- If you are posting your CV, use good quality, clean, un-crumpled paper.

# From the AIP (American Institute of Physics)

Figure 6. Citizenship of physics PhDs, 1966 to 2003.



\*Foreign citizens include individuals with permanent resident status and those with temporary visas.

Sources: NSF(1966-1991), AIP (1992-2003)

AIP Statistical Research Center, Enrollments and Degrees Report.

**Best of  
Luck**