



Guide to Writing a Curriculum Vitae for Individuals Applying to Medical School or Healthcare Professional Schools

A Curriculum Vitae (CV) is an important tool used to document and communicate relevant clinical, educational, and research experiences and achievements (1–4). A CV can emphasize your expertise and talents to graduate schools, helping you make a good first impression. Overall, the CV should be a quick and easy-to-read summary of journey to seeking your specific Healthcare Professional (HP) school or medical school.

With proper guidance, writing a CV can become a rewarding endeavor. The AWARD team is committed to providing a user-friendly guide to help you create an impressive and professional CV, specifically tailored for future medical students and HPs students within our specialty.

A. Content and Structure

1. Contact Information

Place your full name, professional email address, phone number, and your location at the top of your CV. Avoid including unnecessary personal information such as marital status, or date of birth. Sometimes, employers may request a profile picture, which should be tailored to their specifications.

2. Professional Summary or Objective

Begin the CV with a brief, compelling summary, or objective (no more than 2-3 sentences). This should highlight your key qualifications and career goals, tailored to the type of school you are applying for (5).

3. Education

Many HP programs and all medical schools require a bachelor's degree for attendance. Thus, you will need to include your educational background, listing degree, degree with honors, institution(s) name and location, major and minor fields of study, if applicable and graduation date(s). List your educational background in reverse chronological order.

4. Awards and Honors

Including awards and honors in your CV indirectly showcases leadership and exceptional skills. These recognitions can come from various areas of your life such as college, community or work. Include scholarships, dean's list, honors program etc. Highlighting these achievements also demonstrate your dedication and excellence, boosting your credibility and competitiveness for future opportunities.

5. Observation or related Work Experience

For applicants to HP programs and medical schools: When it comes to observation, enumerate clinical experiences, detailing the settings, duration, and responsibilities undertaken. Be sure to check your program application requirements to ensure you meet the required observation/volunteer or work experience hours. Every institution is different. Generally, more hours are better; if you have less than the required hours, your application will not be read. It's advisable to garner experience across various healthcare environments rather than concentrating solely on one. This showcases a comprehensive understanding of healthcare scope. Notably, most institutions necessitate confirmation of hours from the supervising licensed professional. This is likely also included in the program application portal (common application systems for each HP and medical program).

List your work experience including undergraduate internships, co-operative experiences in reverse chronological order. Focus on your most recent role, providing short and detailed descriptions of your responsibilities. Use bullet points for clarity and conciseness and quantify your accomplishments whenever possible.

6. Research Experience

If you have research experience either at the undergraduate or graduate level, be sure to include essential elements such as your role on the research project, the project title, primary investigator's name, grant funding (if applicable), project dates, institution where research was conducted, and a brief (2-3) sentence describing the project. Keep this as a separate category under relevant experience.

7. Publications/ Presentations

If you are fortunate to have presented or published research prior to your application, please include these using AMA format (medical schools, PT, PA schools) or APA format (psych programs, nursing, OT). Examples of research products can include original research, case reports, abstracts, etc. List your publications using the proper citation format. Include a PubMed ID number if available(6,7). If you have fewer than 10 items, do not separate by type (case report, original research). For presentations, indicate whether you were the presenter by placing an asterisk by your name and providing a footnote.

8. Professional Memberships/ Volunteerism/Community Service

Mention any relevant student memberships or volunteer activities which highlight your engagement in school and/or your leadership skills. Volunteering is often seen as a valuable trait. Volunteer roles can vary from serving on committees at your current workplace or school, volunteering for professional or patient organizations to contributing to community initiatives. Be sure to include the role you played (chair of committee, member, advisory or adhoc member). Include dates of membership. In the end, keep in mind that all types of volunteering are important, so try to include them all. Be prepared for potential interview questions by ensuring clarity and accuracy in detailing your roles and experiences.

9. Extracurricular activities/ Hobbies and interests

Include activities and pursuits outside of work or academics that reflect your personality, values, and interests. These can provide insight into your character and help recruiters or employers understand you better on a personal level.

10. Professional References

Is essential for providing potential employers with additional insight into your qualifications and character. When listing professional references, ensure you include individuals who can speak knowledgeably about your work ethic, skills, and experience. Typically, you should include three to four references, including former faculty, supervisors, colleagues, or mentors who can vouch for your abilities and professionalism.

Dos and Don'ts

Dos

- Keep your CV up to date, regularly updating it with new experiences and achievements.
- Follow established best practices for CV formatting, using a clean layout and professional fonts like Arial, Tahoma, or Calibri.
- Break up text into bullet points or short paragraphs for easy readability.
- Proofread your CV carefully to catch spelling mistakes and other errors.
- Customize your CV for each school application, emphasizing relevant skills and required experiences.
- Seek feedback from trusted sources, such as mentors or career advisors, to improve your CV.

- Utilize tools like Grammarly and ChatGPT to refine your writing but avoid relying solely on automated software.
- Please sure to ask the individual if they are willing to provide a good reference for you before you list them on your CV.

Don'ts

- Avoid using long paragraphs or excessive text.
- Do not bold the section area headers, rather bold the school or position.
- Avoid using unprofessional email addresses or fonts.
- Don't exaggerate or fabricate experiences or qualifications; honesty is crucial.
- Avoid using clichés or generic phrases; strive for originality and specificity in your descriptions.
- Don't include outdated or irrelevant work experiences or skills.
- Don't disparage individuals, programs, or institutions if you have had a negative experience somewhere — regardless of the reason.
- Avoid including unnecessary details or hobbies that are not relevant to the job you're applying for.

B. Cover letter/Essay/Personal Statement

When applying for medical or a HP program, you'll often need to submit a document introducing yourself, highlighting your qualifications, passions, and aspirations, and explaining why you're interested in the attending the program. This document can take various forms, such as a cover letter, an essay, or a personal statement, depending on the program's preferences(1,3,7).

1. Cover Letter

In a cover letter, applicants typically address admissions committee directly, briefly summarizing their relevant experiences and skills, and explaining their interest in the specific program. On the other hand, an essay or personal statement offers a more detailed insight into the applicant's background, experiences, achievements, and goals, allowing the individual to showcase personality, values, and unique perspectives.

2. Essay

In an essay, one must highlight the characteristics that make you an ideal candidate. Many essays pose questions designed to assess the candidate's understanding of the scope of practice, ethical decision-making abilities, and perspectives on social determinants of health. For example, questions may delve into the comprehensive understanding of the role, such as the need for a Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) in the field, which requires knowledge of various areas like pharmacology, imaging, and differential diagnosis to ensure safe and effective care. Additionally, ethical scenarios and discussions on social determinants of health are frequently included to gauge the applicant's responses and perspectives.

3. Personal Statement

Personal statements are usually asked for candidates applying to medical and health professional programs(8). The personal statement (PS) presents the applicant's identity and motivations to readers and Program Directors (PDs) (9). While the CV outlines the applicant's achievements, the PS complements it by delving into the applicant's skills, experiences, and aspirations. It provides an opportunity to showcase strengths, expand on experiences, and convey a genuine reflection of the applicant's character. To craft an effective PS, applicants should dedicate ample time to brainstorm, draft, and revise, ensuring it offers a candid and insightful narrative. A well-constructed PS addresses several key aspects beyond explaining the choice of study. It should reflect on the applicant's evolution, emphasizing experiences, passions, and motivations that align with your chosen profession. The PS should avoid redundant explanations of the professional program you are applying for and instead focus on personal growth, unique qualities, and relevant experiences, inviting PDs to envision the applicant as a valuable addition to their program. The final paragraph of the PS should summarize the applicant's expectations of the program and their future medical career plans.

All the documents described in this section typically require support from mentors and peers and may need to be written multiple times until a final version is ready to present.

C. References

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