

The Resident's Guide to the Curriculum Vitae

In order to assess what your CV should contain and how that information should be displayed, you need to first understand the function of a CV.

Put simply, a CV is a marketing tool. The biggest mistake that many people make when it comes to their CVs is that they simply list information without giving any thought to how relevant the information is, and what impact the information will have on the person reading it.

While your CV does contain facts about your academic and professional past, you need to make sure that you are assessing the relevance of each achievement rather than simply listing things as they happened. You want your CV to resonate with an employer in the way that an effective advertisement does with a consumer.

Because the process of becoming a licensed physician is highly regulated, most of your credentials will speak for themselves.

Therefore, you won't have to face many of the obstacles faced by people in other professions with regard to their CVs, such as explaining confusing professional backgrounds or re-shaping the focus of the experience to appeal to a different field. As such, your primary goal is to present those hard-earned credentials in a clear and concise manner, such that the reader can immediately zero in on the most important and impressive aspects of your candidacy.

You can make certain things in your CV stand out through their placement on the page, by using stylistic devices such as bolding or italicizing, and by monitoring the amount of information on your CV. Some people believe that a packed CV equals a good CV. This isn't true. A candidate who pares down his/her CV to the most pertinent information will be much better off than a candidate who crams his/her CV full of irrelevant information.

The following is a list of the most common headings used on a physician's CV. Before you begin drafting your CV, go through this list and jot down everything you can think of from your background that relates to each category (if applicable). Getting all of this information assembled ahead of time will make it easier to create a layout that maximizes your experience:

- Education (School Name, School Location, Degree Earned, Graduation Dates)
- Academic Honors/Activities/Leadership Positions
- Research
- Internships/Clinics/Residencies/Fellowships (Employer Name, Employer Location, Specialty Area, Dates)
- Practice Experience (Name of Practice/Hospital, Location, Title, Type of Practice, Brief Description)
- Specialty Area
- Publications
- Presentations
- Professional Memberships
- Licensure/Board Certification

- Other Work Experience (Employer Name, Employer Location, Title, Dates of Employment, Brief Job Description)
- Professional Awards/Honors
- Language Skills

You want to present employers with a clear snapshot of your experience - one that can be grasped in a matter of seconds. In order to do this effectively, you should list your experiences in a reverse chronological order from most recent to oldest and include dates for your education and experiences. Job titles, names of degrees, names of schools, etc. should be clear at first glance.

After completing your residency, you will be in the position of having to "job hunt" for the first time in your life, unless you had a prior career in a different field. The key to overcoming this necessary evil is to start early. This means getting your CV in order and figuring out the type of position you want to target.

Whether applying for a fellowship or to another type of position, it will be important for you to emphasize your specialty area on your CV.

Be specific about the training you received in your specialty area. In addition, you might want to consider including a brief introductory paragraph in your CV which explains your goals and the most relevant aspects of your background. You want to appear focused and convey that you have well-defined professional objectives.