Adrian Wallwork

English
for Academic CVs, Resumes, and Online Profiles

Springer

English for Academic Research

Series Editor

Adrian Wallwork
English for Academics SAS
Pisa, Italy

This series aims to help non-native English-speaking researchers communicate in English. The books in this series are designed like manuals or user guides to help readers find relevant information quickly, and assimilate it rapidly and effectively. The author has divided each book into short subsections of short paragraphs with many bullet points.

More information about this series at http://www.springer.com/series/13913

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Introduction

Who is this book for?

The book is intended for both native and non-native speakers of English. It focuses mainly on graduates and PhD students, and also young people who are already in employment and are looking for a new job. It is intended primarily for those working in academia and research.

Many of the principles outlined in this book are also relevant for business. In fact, some parts of the book were based on *CVs, Resumes, and LinkedIn*, which is part of the *A Guide to Professional English* series published by Springer.

How is this book organized?

The first two chapters discuss:

- the quality of a good CV or resume
- how recruiters and HR people make their judgments
- whether using a template is a good idea

Chapters 3 and 4 outline what to write at the top of the CV—personal details and short profile. Chapter 4 also discusses how to write an online profile / biography.

Chapters 5-9 examine the other main sections of a CV:

- education
- work experience
- skills (technical and soft)
- personal interests

Chapters 10 and 11 regard how to get a reference, and how to write a reference letter and a cover letter.

The final chapter (Chapter 12) details which elements of your English you will need to check before sending off your CV.

In the appendix is a template for a CV. This template can also be downloaded here: https://e4ac.com/courses-downloads/

How are the chapters organized?

Each chapter has the following four-part format:

1) FACTOIDS

This section contain factoids (i.e. interesting facts and figures) that introduce the topic of the chapter. They can also be used by EAP teachers as warm-ups for lessons. All the statistics and quotations are genuine, though in some cases I have been unable to verify the original source. Note: a few of the statistics are 'recycled' from other books in this series.

2) WHAT'S THE BUZZ?

This is designed to get readers thinking about the topic, through a variety of exercises. These exercises can be done either by the reader alone, or in class with an EAP (English for Academic Purposes) teacher / trainer. The final part of each *What's the buzz*? section is a brief outline of the contents of the chapter. The keys to some of the exercises are contained at the end of the book. If you are a teacher and enjoy these *What's the buzz*? exercises you can find many more in my self published series of *Discussion* books (see 'Other Books'—the penultimate subsection of this Introduction).

3) The main part of each chapter is divided up into short subsections discussing specific issues. The subsections are in the form of frequently asked questions (FAQs) with answers.

4) Each chapter ends with a summary and / or a list of do's and don'ts.

How should I read this book?

This book is designed to be like a manual or a user guide—you don't need to read it starting from page one. Like a manual it has lots of short subsections and is divided into short paragraphs with many bullet points. This is to help you find what you want quickly and also to assimilate the information as rapidly and as effectively as possible.

You can use the Table of Contents as a checklist of things to remember.

I am a trainer in EAP and EFL. Should I read this book? Can I use it as a CV course book?

If you are a teacher of English for Academic Purposes or English as a Foreign Language you will learn about all the typical problems that non-native students have when writing a CV.

The book can be used as the basis of a course on writing CVs / resumes. You will find opportunities for generating a lot of stimulating and fun discussions by using the factoids and the *What's the buzz?* exercises.

If you are interested in other aspects of Academic English, then you can read the teacher's book which contains notes on how to exploit the other books in the series: *English for Academic Research: A Guide for Teachers.*

Is this a book of guidelines or a book of rules?

Guidelines, not rules.

The book is based on interviews with recruiters and HR managers, and an analysis of hundreds of CVs from around 40 different countries.

The result is a series of guidelines on how I think a good CV and cover letter should look, not objective rules. Inevitably, you may not agree with all the suggestions, and are thus totally free to ignore them.

Terminology used in this book

CV (also written *curriculum vitae*)

A reverse chronology listing your education, work experience, skills and interests. Generally two pages long, and typically used in all Anglo countries apart from the US and Canada.

Resume (also written *résumé*)

A brief summary of your achievements and skills, not necessarily in reverse chronological order, and generally not as comprehensive as a CV. Generally one page long, and typically used in the US and Canada.

Recruiter

Someone who works for an agency that finds potential candidates, whose CVs and resumes are then submitted to the agency's clients.

Human resources (HR) manager

> The person in an organization who deals with staff in general, and specifically recruitment and employment.

Hiring manager

> The person responsible for deciding whom to employ.

For the sake of simplicity, although a CV and resume are not exactly the same, I will generally just use the term CV. And although a recruiter, HR manager and hiring manager do different jobs, I will often use these terms indiscriminately.

How dates are used in this book

CVs are full of dates of when you started and finished an activity. For the purposes of this book, I am imagining that we are now in 2030. So unless you are reading this book in 2030, most dates will appear to be in the future.

Examples used in this book

All the examples used in this book have been taken from real CVs, cover letters, reference letters, etc. The only things that have been changed are personal details, dates and layout / font.

I use *he* or *she* at random to refer to the candidate who produced the CV or cover letter.

Other books in this series

This book is a part of series of books to help non-native English-speaking researchers to communicate in English. Other titles that you might like to read are:

English for Writing Research Papers

English for Research: Usage, Style, and Grammar

English for Presentations at International Conferences

English for Academic Research: Grammar / Vocabulary / Writing Exercises

English for Academic Correspondence

English for Interacting on Campus

English for Academic Research: Typical Mistakes

You can find a description of the books plus sample downloads here:

https://www.springer.com/series/13913

For EFL / ESL teachers: Other books you might find interesting.

Easy English: typical grammar and vocabulary mistakes; language games, personality tests, wordsearches, jokes. Details at: https://www.springer.com/series/15586

Guides to Professional English: CVs, presentations, meetings, negotiations, technical manuals, and socializing. Details at: https://www.springer.com/series/13345

Discussions AZ and other discussion books. Details at: https://e4ac.com/teacher-resource-books/

Acknowledgements

The author

Adrian Wallwork is the co-founder of English for Academics (e4ac.com), which specializes in editing and revising scientific papers, as well as teaching English as a foreign language to PhD students. He is the author of over 30 textbooks for Springer Science+Business Media, Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, the BBC, and many other publishers. In 2019 he began marketing his self-published *Discussion* books for EFL teachers and students.

Contents

Chapter 1
Preliminaries - thinking about the type of job you want

Factoids

❖ A UK study found that 2 in 5 people in professional jobs are unhappy, partly because of boredom, fatigue or anger. The industries most affected by low job satisfaction were marketing, legal, hospitality, accounting and computing.

❖ Recruiters and HR staffing personnel receive 100-400+ resumes a day if they have posted a job on the open market.

❖ A survey of over 300 UK employers revealed that 50% of recruiters felt that a logical order in the presentation was the most important thing to consider on a CV. 91% of recruiters see a Word document of two to three pages as the best option for a CV.

❖ In 2002, a survey found that 30 seconds is average time spent by recruiter to read a CV. Today the time is around 5-6 seconds.

❖ A survey conducted by UK Job Forecast found that the majority of HR people use the web as part of their strategy and will screen candidates by checking any information about them on personal websites, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter etc. Over 60% of employers questioned by CareerBuilder.com rejected candidates on the basis of information that their recruiters had discovered online.

❖ Research shows that despite the effort selectors and candidates put into interviews, they are actually rather a fallible tool for measuring future performance - past performance provides a more accurate measure.

❖ Employers routinely get thousands of CVs from candidates seeking the same job, i.e. a candidate may only have a 1 in 1000 chance of getting an interview. A well thought-out CV can boost a candidate's chances of being interviewed to 1 in 3.

❖ The result of many interviews may be decided by interviewers within the first two or three minutes. These decisions are often made at an intuitive level in relation to the rapport that between interviewer and interviewee.

1.1 What's the buzz?

A) Decide which of these statements are myths (i.e. often believed but not true in reality).

1. The main aim of your CV is to persuade an employer to offer you an interview.

2. You need to exaggerate your skills and experience in order to attract the best jobs.

3. You need to have had lots of experience in order to get a job.

4. Your CV has to be at least two pages long.

5. Your CV should be contain many adjectives designed to highlight your skills and impress the reader.

6. The information that you provide must be quantifiable.

7. Your CV is likely to be scanned, so key words are of paramount importance.

B) How would you answer the following questions?

- Am I more interested in a career where I can use my skills or one which will satisfy my interests?

- How would I describe myself in one sentence?

- What are my greatest skills and how might they match the job I am looking for?

- What are my major accomplishments? How might these be relevant for a particular job?

- Do I like working independently or as part of a team? Would I make a good team leader?

- Do I mind (enjoy) working long hours? How well do I deal with deadlines?

- What are the most important factors I am looking for in my ideal job?

Your answers to these questions should help you first decide what kind of job you would like, and secondly to decide the content of your CV.

C) Below are 20 typical questions asked in interviews. Choose 10 questions and then discuss how you would answer them.

1. Why did you decide to continue in research rather than go into industry?

2. How did you choose the university you attended and why did you pick your particular degree?

1.1   What's the buzz? (cont.)

3. Would you choose the same course again?

4. Apart from what you have learned from an academic point of view, what other skills have you learned from being at university?

5. What parts of your course did you find the most interesting / difficult

6. What contribution did you make to tutorials, seminars, and workshops?

7. How do you prepare for examinations?

8. What obstacles did you face during your time at university?

9. What personal qualities did university help you to develop?

10. What would your supervisor / professor say about your strengths and weaknesses? How would your fellow students judge you?

11. How do you cope with deadlines? What type of deadlines have you had to deal with?

12. What teaching experience have you had?

13. How did you cope when papers were rejected or experiments did not produce the expected results?

14. What is your greatest achievement so far / to date?

15. What kind of team member are you?

16. What was the most satisfying aspect of writing your thesis / dissertation?

17. What do you think are the differences between a job in research and a job in industry?

18. Have your research interests / career interests changed much over the last few years?

19. What difficulties did you encounter with your professor / supervisor? How did you deal with them?

20. Given that English is not your first language, how would you cope with a job outside your country?

D) For an ironic perspective on writing CVs, see the Polish poet Wisława Szymborska-Włodek's poem 'Writing a Curriculum Vitae' - just type in her name and the title of her poem into your search engine.

1.1 What's the buzz? (cont.)

This chapter focuses on the purpose of a CV and helps you to analyse the type of job you want. You will learn what research institutes and companies are really looking for. You are advised to always be honest, to be aware that recruiters will cross check your CV with your Facebook, LinkedIn and other profiles, and that sending the same CV to several companies / institutes is not a good approach.

Note: Unless otherwise stated, the terms *CV* and *resume* are used interchangeably in this chapter.

1.2 What is the purpose of a CV / resume?

The aim of your CV or resume is to encourage a recruiter to contact you regarding a possible job.

Write your CV from the point of view of the person who will read it, i.e. a recruiter in an agency, an HR person in a company or research institute, a professor or fellow researcher in a research team.

This means you should:

- use a format that will be familiar to the reader (i.e. a standard template, which you can modify where appropriate) rather than a format that you have designed totally by yourself. A standard format is easier to navigate for the reader - he / she knows exactly where to look in order to find what he / she is interested in

- only include details that are relevant to the job you are looking for

- clearly highlight your skills and qualifications

- be honest and accurate, and as objective as possible

A CV is thus not an opportunity for you to:

- write every single detail of your career history, education history and personal history

- experiment with your design skills