

Dr. Karen's Rules of the Academic CV

[Karen Kelsky](#) August 19, 2016

Reposting classics on the basic job market documents as we gear up for the 2016 job search!

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Today's post is a long overdue post on CVs.

While the CV genre permits a wide range of variation, and there is no consensus on the value or desirability of one particular style, I am going to present a list of expectations that govern my own work at The Professor Is In.

These expectations will produce a highly-readable, well-organized CV on the American academic model. British and Canadian CV-writers will note that the font is larger, the length is greater, the margins wider, and the white spaces more abundant than you may be used to. These are the typical norms for American CVs (again, admitting of enormous variation among fields and individuals).

These norms govern the "paper" CVs that are submitted as elements of a job application. The CV can be created in a program like Word but submitted as a PDF to ensure proper formatting on the receiving end.

These rules do not encompass online CVs, which may employ elements such as bullet points that I reject.

Candidates seeking work in the UK or Canada might want to consult with experts from those countries for opinions on whether this American model CV will work against candidates in searches there.

Without further ado: Dr. Karen's Rules of the CV.

## ***I. General Formatting Rules***

One inch margins on all four sides.

12 point font throughout

Single spaced

No switching of font sizes for any element, EXCEPT the candidate name at top, which can be in 14 or perhaps 16.

Headings in bold and all caps.

Subheadings in bold only.

NO ITALICS OF ANY KIND EXCEPT FOR JOURNAL AND BOOK TITLES  
(Brits, I'm talking to you)

One or two full returns (ie, blank lines) before each new heading.

One return/blank line between each heading and its first entry.

Left justify all elements of the cv.

Do not full/right justify any element of the cv.

No bullet points at all, ever, under any circumstances. This is not a resume.

No "box" or column formatting of any kind. This interferes with the constant adjustments a dynamic professional CV will undergo on a weekly/monthly basis.

No "XXXX, cont'd" headings. Page breaks will constantly move as CV grows.

YEAR (but not month or day) OF EVERY ENTRY THROUGHOUT CV LEFT JUSTIFIED, with tabs or indent separating year from substance of entry.

Why, you ask? Because candidates are evaluated by their productivity over time. Search and tenure committees wish to easily track yearly output. When you produce is as important as what you produce. Year must be visible, not buried in the entry itself. (table formatting another option as described in comment stream)

NO NARRATIVE VERBIAGE ANYWHERE. Brits, I'm talking to you.

No description of "duties" under Teaching/Courses Taught

No paragraphs describing books or articles.

No explanations of grants/fellowships (ie, "this is a highly competitive fellowship...").

No personal stories.

No "My work at the U of XX is difficult to condense..." etc. etc.

One possible exception: a separate heading for "Dissertation" with a VERY short paragraph abstract underneath. I disapprove of this. Some advisors insist on it. One year or so beyond completion, it should be removed.

## ***II. Heading Material:***

Name at top, centered, in 14 or 16 point font.

The words "Curriculum vitae" immediately underneath or above, centered, in 12 point font. This is a traditional practice in the humanities and social sciences; it might be optional at this point in time, and in various fields.

Please doublecheck with a trusted advisor.

The date, immediately below, centered, is optional. Senior scholars always date their cvs.

Your institutional and home addresses, tel, email, parallel right and left

justified.

### **III. Content:**

1. **Education.** Always. No exceptions. List by degree, not by institution. Do not spell out Doctor of Philosophy, etc.; it's pretentious. List Ph.D., M.A., B.A. in descending order. Give department, institution, and year of completion. Do NOT give starting dates. You may include Dissertation/Thesis Title, and perhaps Dissertation/Thesis Advisor if you are ABD or only 1 year or so from Ph.D.. Remove this after that point. Do not include any other verbiage.

2. **Professional Appointments/Employment.** This must go immediately under education, assuming that you have/had these. Why? Because the reader must be able to instantly "place" you institutionally. These are contract positions only– tenure track or instructorships. Ad hoc adjunct gigs do not go here; only contracted positions of 1+ years in length. Postdoctoral positions also go here. Give institution, department, title, and dates (year only) of employment. Be sure and reflect joint appointments if you have one. ABD candidates may have no Professional Appointments, and in that case the Heading can be skipped. TA-SHIPS, ETC. ARE NOT LISTED UNDER PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT. COURSES THAT YOU TAUGHT AS AN ADJUNCT ARE NOT LISTED UNDER PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS.

3. **Publications.** Subheadings: Books, Edited Volumes, Refereed Journal Articles, Book Chapters, Conference Proceedings, Encyclopedia Entries, Book Reviews, Manuscripts in Submission (give journal title), Manuscripts in Preparation, Web-Based Publications, Other Publications (this section can include non-academic publications, within reason). Please note that forthcoming publications ARE included in this section. If they are already in the printing stage, with the full citation and page numbers available, they may be listed the same as other published publications, at the very top since their dates are furthest in the future. If they are in press, they can be

listed here with "in press" in place of the year.

**4. Awards and Honors.** Give name of award and institutional location. Year at left. Always in reverse descending order. Listing \$\$ amount appears to be field-specific. Check with a trusted senior advisor.

**5. Grants and Fellowships** (if you are in a field where these differ categorically from Awards and Honors). Give funder, institutional location in which received/utilized, year span. Listing \$\$ amount appears to be field-specific. Check with a trusted senior advisor. Year at left.

**6. Invited Talks.** These are talks to which you have been invited at OTHER campuses, not your own. Give title, institutional location, and date. Year only (not month or day) at left. Month and day of talk go into entries.

**7. Conference Activity/Participation.** Subheadings: Panels Organized, Papers Presented, Discussant. These entries will include: Name of paper, name of conference, date. Year (Year only) on left as noted above. Month and date-range of conference in the entry itself (ie, March 22-25). No extra words such as: "Paper title:" Future conferences SHOULD be listed here, if you have had a paper or panel officially accepted. The dates will be future dates, and as such they will be the first dates listed.

**7a. Campus or Departmental Talks.** These are talks that you were asked to give in your own department or on your own campus. These do not rise to the level of an "Invited Talk" but still may be featured under the heading of Campus Talks or Departmental Talks. List as you would Invited Talks. Under no circumstances may guest lectures in courses be listed here or anywhere on the CV. That is padding.

**8. Teaching Experience.** Subdivide either by area/field of teaching or by institutional location, or by Graduate/Undergraduate, or some combination of these as appropriate to your particular case.

ADDENDUM 9/18/13: Format in this way: if you've taught at more than one institution, make subheadings for each institution. Then list the courses vertically down the left (ie, do NOT use the year-to-left rule that applies everywhere else). To the right of each course, in parentheses, give the terms and years taught. This allows you to show the number of times you've taught a course without listing it over and over. Give course titles BUT NEVER GIVE COURSE NUMBERS! Course numbers are meaningless outside your campus.

If your quantity of courses taught exceeds approximately 15, condense this section; it is not essential for a highly experience teacher to scrupulously list every single course taught, every single time. Just cover your general range of competencies.

TA experience goes here. No narrative verbiage under any course title. No listing of "duties" or "responsibilities." There is one small exception to this rule, as noted in the comment stream (near comment #100). If your department is one that has its "TAs" actually design and sole-teach courses, then this needs to be clarified. Language to be added can include, "(Instructor of record)" after course title, or "(As TA I designed and sole-taught all courses listed here)," etc. Keep it short and sweet.

**9. Research Experience.** RA experience goes here, as well as lab experience. This is one location where slight elaboration is possible, if the research was a team effort on a complex, multi-year theme. One detailed sentence should suffice.

**10. Service To Profession.** Include journal manuscript review work (with journal titles [mss. review CAN be given its own separate heading if you do a lot of this work]), leadership of professional organizations, etc. Some people put panel organizing under service; check conventions in your field.

**11. Departmental/University Service.** Include search committees and other committee work, appointments to Faculty Senate, etc. Sorry to be a

pain, but here the convention is that the Title or Committee is left justified, with the year in the entry. Don't ask me why, and only a convention, not a strict rule.

**12. Extracurricular University Service.** [Optional. ] Can include involvement in student groups, sporting clubs, etc.

**13. Community Involvement/Outreach. [Optional.]** This includes work with libraries and schools, public lectures, etc.

**14. Media Coverage. [Optional.]** Coverage of your work by the media.

**15. Related Professional Skills.** [Optional.] Can include training in GIS and other technical skills relevant to the discipline. More common in professional schools and science fields; uncommon in humanities.

**16. Non-Academic Work.** [Optional—VERY optional!] Include only if relevant to your overall academic qualifications. More common in Business, sciences. Editorial and publishing work possibly relevant in English and the Humanities.

**17. Teaching Areas/Courses Prepared To Teach.** [Optional]. You can give a brief list of course titles (titles only!) that represent your areas of teaching preparation. No more than 10 courses should be listed here.

**18. Languages.** All languages to be listed vertically, with proficiency in reading, speaking, and writing clearly demarcated using terms such as: native, fluent, excellent, conversational, good, can read with dictionary, etc.

**19. Professional Memberships/Affiliations.** All professional organizations of which you are a member listed vertically. Include years of joining when you are more senior and those years recede into the past—demonstrates length of commitment to a field.

**20. References.** List references vertically. Give name and full title. Do not

refer to references as "Dr. xxx," or "Professor xxx." This makes you look like a graduate student. Give full snail mail contact information along with tel and email. To do otherwise is amateurish, even though we know nobody is going to use the snail mail address. Do not give narrative verbiage or explanation of these references (ie, "Ph.D. Committee member," etc.). The only exception is a single reference that may be identified as "Teaching Reference." This would be the fourth of four references.

#### ***IV. Principle of Peer Review.***

The organizing principle of the CV is prioritizing peer review and competitiveness. Professional appointments are extremely competitive, and go first. Publications are highly competitive, and go second, with peer reviewed publications taking place of honor. Awards and honors reveal high levels of competition, as do fellowships and grants. Invited talks suggest a higher level of individual recognition and honor than a volunteered paper to a conference—this is reflected in the order. Teaching in this context, ie, as a list of courses taught, is not competitive, and thus is de-prioritized. Extra training you seek yourself, voluntarily, is fundamentally non-competitive. Etc. Etc.

What is never included:

ANYTHING FROM YOUR UNDERGRADUATE YEARS!!! Remove all undergraduate content, other than listing your BA degree under Education.

Overseas travel

Career goals

Anything you'd see on a business resume.

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Please read the comment thread closely—it contains many more

refinements and additions to the advice here.