

ASTR 8500 (O'Connell)

ADVICE ON WRITING *CURRICULUM VITAE* IN ASTRONOMY

General

- Your CV is often your first introduction to others, especially prospective employers. It describes your training, experience, productivity and (implicitly) your abilities and potential. It is a summary, not a narrative. Keep it well organized, clear, clean, uncrowded, succinct.
- An exercise in **tempered self-promotion**. You should be thorough, but don't inflate, exaggerate, or overhype. Facebook profiles are a **bad** influence here.
- Remember that your CV will be seen not just by your prospective employer but also by people being asked for letters of recommendation.
- Arrange format so it is easy to update regularly
- For a hardcopy version of your CV:
 - Black text only
 - Header line on each page except first with your name and the date
 - Single 12 point font is best. Use bold face for section headings and occasionally elsewhere (e.g. highlighting your name in author lists). Optionally, use italic for journal names, titles of books or projects, telescopes, etc.
 - 3/4"-1" margins
- Most listings are now preferred to be in reverse chronological order. (Personally, I find this annoying, but it seems to be the current default. Unfortunately, it implies use of special typesetting macros if you intend to number publications, for instance).
- For most job opportunities, the most important items in the list below are **publications (refereed), teaching experience (for faculty positions), research grants, professional recognition, and leadership positions..**

- Be sure to check solicitations/advertisements for any **special items** you are expected to supply; some might best be included in the CV. One area of increasing interest to some employers is experience in DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) programs.
- Thanks to the Web, you can now see the CV's of hundreds of active astronomers. Sample those of people you admire and model yours accordingly. It would be a good idea to survey the CV's of scientists at institutions where you are applying.

Typical content and order

- **Full name**
- Current address and **contact information**; email address
- **Education** (college and subsequent): institutions, degrees, major subjects, dates. Do not list high school. Do not give GPA's. List any honors (except in degree titles) under "Recognition."
- **Research interests** (brief list, not description)
- **Employment/positions held**: dates, title, institution. Additional entries for each subtitle (e.g. Assistant, Associate Professor).
- **Professional affiliations** (e.g. AAS, IAU)
- **Recognition**, prizes, awards, fellowships (academic; college and subsequent)
- **Computer experience**: list languages you can program in; include other significant computing experience (e.g. facility with sophisticated simulations), public software packages or databases you have developed, etc. Important for young people, not for seniors.
- **Observing experience**: especially if competitively awarded; telescopes and instrumentation.
- **Instrumentation experience**: essential if applying for a job with possible instrumental components
- **Teaching experience**: most important are courses for which you have had complete responsibility; list institutions, years, titles (though don't list repeat offerings). TA experience: course name, years; indicate lab or lecture. Include online teaching. Include research students and postdocs supervised (could be a separate section).
- **Online engagement**: Online teaching experience, if any. List Web postings you

have produced that are educational or professional in nature (e.g. teaching webpages, manuals, project informational pages, software, databases, etc.). Best not to mention exposure on social media (Twitter, Facebook, blogs, etc) unless you have become a widely recognized spokesperson/authority in some area.

In fact, given the many horror stories about the immortality of stupid ideas expressed on social media, I'd recommend maintaining an **extremely low profile** there --- at least until tenure and even beyond. And, yes, it's guaranteed that you will not recognize the ideas as stupid until after you publish them.

- **Outreach experience:** local, regional, or national public outreach; mentoring activities; press/media interactions; online exposure, etc. Outreach publications (indicate whether these exist, but it is probably best to list under "Publications" below).
- **Other professional activities:** often broken into categories. Institutional, national, international. Journal refereeing, committee work, proposal reviews, telescope allocation committees, conference organizing, professional societies, large project participation, etc. Highlight any elected and/or leadership positions.
- **Research grants:** sponsor, title, years, amount. Indicate whether PI or Co-I. "Amount" should be those funds over which you have personal control. Listing total grant amount (i.e. funds controlled by other co-investigators) is optional. You can include pending proposals, but don't list proposals that were not approved (though you would include those on annual reports for your institution). Include grants that accompany awards of observing time (e.g. HST, Chandra) here, rather than under "Observing experience," though you can list the time under "Observing."
- **Presentations:** a list of colloquia, conference talks, etc. For young people, it's important to include this section; but for seniors, it's overkill. Give year, title, venue or conference name. Indicate if a conference talk is "Invited" or "Plenary." Normally you would not list poster presentations here, but you can include them under "Non-Refereed Publications" (see below). Can include public outreach events (e.g. press conferences) here.
- **Publications** (see below)

Optional content

- **Biography:** date and place of birth, marital status, children, etc. Potential issues: age, other discrimination.
- **Other interests:** unusual activities, hobbies, sports, etc. Potential issue: academic institutions are usually not interested in these and are wary of non-academic

preoccupations. Use your judgement.

- **Languages:** only if you're at least semi-fluent. It's important to be clear about facility if you're applying to an institution where you will not be a native speaker.

Publications

- Usually the **single most important category**
- Publication lists are normally embedded in the CV but could instead be given separately as a "Bibliography."
- List in reverse chronological order.
- Include your PhD thesis and advisor(s).
- Preferred order is to list refereed journal publications first, then non-refereed publications. Books and book chapters are usually listed separately.
 - **Refereed publications:** Include complete citations for all. Author list (exactly as it appears in press), title, journal & volume, pages or index number, year. Put your name in the author list in bold font. If there are more than about 12 authors, list only the lead author and then the number of co-authors. (Note that this style differs from the regular format used in most astronomy journals.)
 - Include papers that have been accepted or are "in press" (i.e. between acceptance and appearance in the journal). Put papers that have been "submitted" but not accepted under a separate heading. It's best not to include work "in preparation" unless it is something major (a monograph, for example) because readers have no guarantee that it will be completed.
 - Numbering publications is important if you are being evaluated for a job or promotion, so that referees can easily refer to individual pieces of work. But this is overkill if you have only a handful of papers.
 - You could give a URL for the paper, but this will clutter up the appearance and isn't very useful in hardcopy; if you do include a URL, make it to the ADS abstract service.
 - **Non-refereed publications:** List information as for refereed. Non-refereed items would include papers in conference proceedings, technical papers or reports, ArXiv postings that aren't submitted to journals, etc. Can include popular/outreach writing, but is probably best to make that a separate section. Can include online work.

- For senior people, work presented only in the form of a **poster** would not be included. But this disadvantages young people, whose early contributions will likely be in this form. You can create a separate section labeled "Meeting Poster Abstracts" and place entries there. Note that in some cases (e.g. AAS meetings) poster abstracts are listed on the ADS abstract server. At some meetings, poster presenters are allowed to put abstracts or one-page writeups in the published proceedings. In that case, list them under "Non-Refereed Publications."
- If an author is **your student or postdoc**, it is good to highlight this with an asterisk or dagger. Particularly important in the case of lead authors because this usually represents a "shared-first-author" credit (the first-author count is a metric commonly used by hiring committees). Some CV's list first-author papers separately, but this isn't recommended.
- Highlight any paper that is an "Invited Review" or the published version of an "Invited" presentation.
- Remember that in some circumstances (e.g. university promotion), you will be expected to submit hardcopies of publications, so it is a good idea to update a file of these every time you update the CV.

Web links

Sample CV: [Brett McGuire](#)

Sample CV: [Nitya Kallivayalil](#)

[O'Connell's Tips on Writing Proposals in Astronomy](#)

[ASTR 8500: a course on professional development for graduate students](#)

*Last modified **January 2022** by [rwo](#)*

Text copyright © 2022 Robert W. O'Connell. All rights reserved.