Formatting a CV for a faculty job application

One thing I think blogs can be useful for is providing information that ideally a mentor would provide, but that, for whatever reason, doesn't always end up being provided. Some examples from our blog include how to suggest reviewers, how to respond to reviewers, and how to review a manuscript for a journal. Here, I will focus on how to format one's CV when applying for a faculty position. **Update 8/26/16:** To be clear: I write this from the perspective of a scientist at an American research university. All of my search committee experience is on searches related to ecology and evolutionary biology.

One of the most important things is to **make it easy for someone who is looking over your CV to find things quickly**. You can accomplish this by having clearly demarcated sections. When I was a postdoc and applying for faculty jobs for the first time, I got application materials from several people I knew who'd recently gotten jobs. I looked through all their CVs and took the elements that seemed to most effective and used those on mine. At a minimum, you want to have things split out into sections for different major aspects of your history (see more specifics on these below), and you want those sections offset in some way (bold and/or underlined and/or some other formatting that makes the section headings stand out clearly). Here are a couple of CVs (Ben Winger's and Cassie Stoddard's) that I think do a good job of this (these are also linked to below in a more specific context).

A second important thing is **do not make it look like you're padding your CV** or trying to pull a fast one on people reading it. I will give specifics related to this in different sections below, but some examples include mixing "in prep" pubs in the middle of a list of published things, making it seem like you received a multi-million dollar grant when you received a small subaward, or listing grants/awards that you won based on a lottery. (And, yes, I have seen all of those things on CVs submitted by job applicants.)

What sections should you include? At the top of the first page, you should have your name, current position, and current contact info. (If you're on the job market, having your contact phone number is a good idea, as search committee chairs often call people who are getting an interview.*)

After that, most CVs list education and employment history, including undergraduate and graduate degrees, postdoctoral training, and relevant jobs (e.g., work at an NGO, faculty position). Do not list where you went to high school (or anything else from high school). I think it's fine to list major accomplishments from when you were an undergrad

(e.g., a presentation at a national meeting).

The exact order of what to include after that varies somewhat, and there isn't agreement in terms of whether pubs or teaching or something else should go next. (See the discussion in [this comment thread](#) for more on this topic.) Personally, I think teaching, publications, grants, and fellowships & awards should be the next four sections, but I don't have a strong opinion about which order those four should go in. The exception is for someone applying to a teaching-oriented institution: then, I would recommend putting the teaching section first.

While I said that I think teaching, publications, grants, and fellowships & awards should be the first four sections after the bio stuff, I apparently didn't do that when I applied for my first faculty positions. [I just looked at the CV I used when I applied to Georgia Tech](#), and see that I had teaching way down near the bottom (in part, I think, because I did not have much in the way of teaching experience before I started my first faculty position). So, I'll stress again that probably the most important thing is having the sections easily demarcated so that the information can be easily found, regardless of the order.

Teaching

For the teaching section, you'll want to make it clear whether you were a teaching assistant or the instructor of record; the latter will be much more impressive and jobs at teaching-intensive institutions sometimes have this as a requirement (even if unofficial) for getting an interview. You'll also have a teaching statement where you can go through this sort of stuff (as well as your teaching philosophy), but [if your CV doesn't impress the reader, they might not look at your statements](#).

People sometimes also including mentoring experience in this section. I think that's fine, though you could also include this in a separate section, especially if you have a fair amount of mentoring experience. Some people list the names of the people they have mentored and the project they worked on. Others just say the number of students they mentored. Others list the student names but not the project names. (The latter is what I do on my CV now.) I think the key would be to give enough info (succinctly!) for someone to understand your level of involvement. So, for example, you could write something like: "I have mentored 4 undergraduate students who worked in the lab, including one (Firstname Lastname) who completed an Honors Thesis under my supervision." Then, you could include more about your mentoring of those students in a teaching statement.

Publications

You should have your publications listed in reverse chronological order (meaning your newest pubs at the top). Bold your name to make it easy for someone scanning the list to see where you are in the author string. I suggest numbering them since the committee members are likely to count them anyway. If you and someone else were "co-first" authors, you cannot switch the order of the first two. If an undergrad you mentored is a coauthor on a publication, that is worth noting.

Split your publications section into three different sections (or four, if you have non-peer reviewed pubs; see the last part of this section for more on those). Have the top section be the papers that have already appeared or that are in press. Below that, have a section for papers that are in review, listing the journal. (Update 9/1/16: In the "in review" section, I think it's worth noting "in review" (for something in its first round of review at a journal) or "in revision" (if a revision was invited). You can put that after the journal – for example, "*Ecology*, in revision".) A big question (and a source of much debate!) is whether to include manuscripts that are in prep. My opinion is that you should, but that you should only include ones where, if the person writes you to ask about it, you could send them a complete draft. I indicated that by putting "manuscripts available upon request" in parentheses after the "In preparation" heading, to try to indicate that these things really did exist. Do not list every idea you've ever had as an "in prep" manuscript. (I've seen lists that were >20 manuscripts; that just looks silly and falls into the category of looking like you are trying to pad your CV.) Again, only list it if you could send me a complete draft when I see the title on your CV, think it looks intriguing, and want to read more.

Another common question is, if including an "in prep" section, whether you should list the target journal. I think it is good to do so but people will certainly take what you write with a grain (or entire shaker) of salt. (If you list several as in prep for Nature or Science, no one will believe you.) But it sometimes helps me to know whether you're envisioning an ecological journal or a microbiology journal or a behavior journal or whatever.

For the section for publications that are already published (or in press), some people list the impact factor of the journal. I don't pay much attention to that, but I also don't get annoyed if someone does it. Most people don't include that, though, and I would advise a mentee of mine not to include it.

Another question for this section is whether to include press coverage related to an article. I think this is good, listing it as a bullet right below the publication – again, being brief (e.g., "Covered by the BBC, National Geographic, and NPR"). Sometimes, someone has had a lot of media coverage of their work. In that case, having a separate

section related to public outreach might be worthwhile; [my new colleague Ben Winger does this on his CV](#), which I think is very well-formatted. I would recommend against including altmetrics. I think most people don't know how to interpret them, and most people don't include them.

One question that came [via twitter](#) was how to indicate slow research output due to having babies. I have seen people do this, and I try to take it into account. For example, when going through CVs, I keep track of things in a spreadsheet where I note the year of the PhD; I would add a note there to take into account family leave for birth of a child, eldercare, etc. However, there is no question that there are still a lot of biases against women who have children, and that it could easily trigger implicit (or even explicit) bias. So, I would recommend against it (even though it pains me to type that).

Update 8/26/16: In the comments, Matthew Holden asked about where to put non-peer-reviewed publications. Those should go in a separate section for "Other publications" or "Non-peer-reviewed publications". If you put these in the middle of the list of regular publications, it will look like you are padding your CV. See more discussion on this [in the comments](#).

Grants

If you've received any grants, you should have a separate section for grants on your CV. One thing that can be common is that grad students will have received a small amount of funding from a departmental or university source every year. Do not list each of these separately. Instead, put something like:

2010-2015: Department Research Grant Name, University Name ($3050)

If you have a collaborative grant, make it clear who the lead PI is, who the co-PIs were, what the total grant budget was, and what your portion of the budget was.

If you've written a grant but were senior personnel rather than a PI ([usually due to institutional restrictions](#)), sometimes people list that here with a note. I think that's fine to do (others might disagree with this), but it is essential that you make it clear you were not a PI. I suggest putting it in a separate section with a subheading, such as "Proposals w/Lastname as Senior Personnel". You could then put "(co-wrote with PILastname)" or "(ApplicantLastname wrote X% of proposal)" or something like that after the basic info about the grant. [This CV from Haldre Rogers uses an asterisk for this purpose;](#) it doesn't use the subheading approach, but it's still clear from her CV when she was not the official PI on a grant. ([Drew Tyre's CV](#) uses a similar approach.) I also like the way of doing it shown in the tweet below. Whichever you use, make sure the

formatting makes it so that a person reviewing hundreds of CVs won't miss the note. I also want to emphasize that you should *make sure at least one of your letter writers addresses the topic, noting your contributions to conceiving the project and writing the proposal*.

> @duffy_ma @LMDiepenbrock On my CV I added this blurb, and put an asterisk after the "official" author list: pic.twitter.com/PQIv8qH9Zb
>
> — David R. Coyle (@drdavecoyle) 2:02 PM - 24 Aug 2016

If you have a proposal that is currently under review, that is worth including but, similar to the publications section, you want to make sure that you have it separated in a way that makes it clear that it's pending, not funded. Again, I suggest having a subheading (e.g., "Pending proposals").

A more recent question related to grants is whether to include that a preproposal was invited, even if the full proposal wasn't funded. I think that you should. Getting a preproposal invited is an achievement, and shows that you have a promising idea for a project. Again, you should make sure to indicate that this was a previously invited preproposal, possibly with a different subsection. Sometimes people list the invited preproposal and then the results of the full proposal (e.g., "full proposal denied but received a 'meritorious' rating").

Another related question is whether to include proposals submitted but not funded (in cases where there isn't a preproposal) or preproposals that were submitted but not invited. I wouldn't. If you want to indicate the breadth of agencies you could apply to, you can do that more effectively in a research statement.

Fellowships, Awards, and Other Honors
Depending on how many of these you have, you might want to split the fellowships out into a separate section. When possible, indicate the approximate amount of money that the fellowship represented. Do not include things you won based on a lottery (e.g., a travel award); this falls under the "don't make it seem like you're padding your CV" guideline. If you received an honorable mention for a prestigious award (e.g., for the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship), that's definitely worth listing.

For awards, I'd give the name of the award, then the name of the group/university/society that gave the award. Sometimes, it can be worth including a very brief description, such as "given for an outstanding ecological research paper by a scientist under 40". Otherwise, people reviewing your CV may not have a sense for

whether the award you got was a small department one (which won't make a big difference in how people view your CV) or one from a national society (which will look much more prestigious).

Presentations

I would put this section after the ones listed above. Split out any invited talks from contributed talks. I think it's worth including your contributed talks, as it helps show what meetings you go to and what you've talked about (which can help define what kind of scientist you are – and sometimes a department, or some people in it, are looking for a particular kind of person). Because of that, I think it is worth including talk titles, even though it makes things start to get kind of long, though I don't feel very strongly about this. Personally, I don't think there's a point in including talks on which you are a coauthor. You are not going to get a job interview because you were third author on a talk at ESA.

There's sometimes debate on twitter on whether to include presentations that were given as part of a job talk as an "invited" seminar. I think they should be – I don't see why it's less of an "invited" talk if people were considering offering you a job based on it!

Note: if you won an award for a talk or poster, make sure to put that in the "awards" section above, so it doesn't get lost in the presentations section. Many folks will skip the contributed presentations section entirely, so would miss a note in there about an award.

Professional Service

Here, you would list department committees you've served on, journals you've been a reviewer for, and things along those lines. In terms of reviews, some people list the number of reviews they've done for a particular journal. That's fine – it doesn't hurt, in my opinion – but I don't think it really matters either way.

Professional Societies

This is similar to the note in the "presentations" section above – it can signal what kind of scientist you view yourself as. It's not heavily weighted, but it can be of interest. So, I suggest including it, but putting it way at the bottom.

Professional Development

Looking back at the CV I used when I applied for my first faculty position, I see that I included a "professional development" section. A key reason for this was to note that I had attended a workshop on innovative teaching and active learning. As I said above, I

didn't have a lot of teaching experience, and was hoping that this would signal that, despite that, I did care about teaching. You could also list important short courses you did here, especially if you think they might be relevant to the positions you're applying for.

Other Professional Products

There was some discussion on twitter about how to include non-publication products like software and datasets. I think it would be fine to include major contributions in a separate section (e.g., if you developed an R package). As one example, Cassie Stoddard lists software in a separate section on her CV; I think her CV is also an excellent model for how to format a CV. But I recommend against including links to things like Genbank sequences or the Dryad/FigShare/whatever repository links for data you've archived. That would look like an attempt to pad one's CV to many (probably most) reviewers.

Other topics

Someone on twitter asked about whether it would be good to include research projects that didn't result in a publication, to show experience in a subject. I think this depends on your role in the project. If you were a hired research assistant, you could list this under "employment history". But I don't think it's a big deal not to include it. (I generally haven't included my time working as a research assistant between college and grad school on my CV, though I'm not entirely sure why.) However, if it's your own work, I would say that you should leave it off. I think it would look weird to have entries for projects that you worked on but that haven't worked out (or that haven't made it to the stage of having a complete manuscript draft).

Updating CV

This is somewhat outside the subject of how to format your CV, but one thing that comes up is whether to submit an update to one's CV. If you get a major grant, award, or have a paper accepted, yes, submit an update. If you submit a manuscript, it's probably not worth updating.

Other thoughts

1. Once you have your CV drafted, make sure to get feedback on it, ideally from people who have experience serving on search committees. They can help you make decisions about specific things to include or not include. We did a lab meeting on CVs a few months ago and I think it was really useful.

2. I wouldn't do a lot of tailoring of your CV for particular jobs – sometimes things that

don't seem directly related can end up helping. As an example, I've seen cases where some experience with policy has been helpful to a candidate, as there are a lot of students who might be interested in policy-related careers.

3. As long as you have your CV formatted well, I wouldn't worry about how long it is. You don't want to include unnecessary/irrelevant information, but you also shouldn't worry about it being too long. I just looked back over the CVs for some of competitive applicants for recent searches I've been on and they were in the 3-7 page range. (All of those applicants were postdocs applying for their first faculty position.)

4. Finally, remember that academics have strong opinions, and they often don't agree. So, while I think that what I wrote above would generally be accepted by many people reviewing job applications, there will be some disagreement. Those are my thoughts on formatting your CV. I'll be interested in hearing whether people have other tips (or disagree with some of those)! And, if you asked about something on twitter that I haven't addressed, that just means I was having a hard time keeping track of the thread. Please ask again! And, if you have suggestions for links to publicly available, well-formatted CVs, please include those in the comments, too!

Related:
1. [How North American search committees work](#) (by Jeremy)
2. [Useful links related to tenure track job searches in ecology](#) (by me)
3. [Weird and unwise things to include on your CV](#) (by Jeremy; see comments for interesting discussion of CVs)

* As a postdoc, I decided not to answer the phone if I didn't recognize the number, so I could prepare a little (after listening to the voicemail) before talking to the search committee chair. There were some fun moments when my phone would ring in my office and my officemate and I would excitedly start googling the area code to try to figure out which school it might be.