

Getting the Materials Right for the Academic Job Search

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Parts of an application

- Cover Letter
- Curriculum Vita
- Research History
- Teaching Experience and Philosophy
- Letters of Recommendation

Advise:

- Let people know that you are looking
- Line up strong letters of recommendations (one famous, one who knows your work)
- Get those publications out! (posters too)
- Increase visibility: give talks and attend national meetings → look for opportunities to speak
- Get to know the top people in the field (recommendations + nepotism)
- Be excellent whenever you give talks—people are watching and judging always
- Teach a class—learn this skill early
- Develop a long term **vision** (5, 10, 20 yrs): You are a professor, what do you profess?
 - My mantra: to explore thin film materials to enable MEMS
- Book recommendations:
 - **Tomorrow's Professor** by Richard Reis
 - **A Ph.D. is Not Enough** by Peter J. Feibelman
 - **So You Want to be a Professor!**, *Matt Anderson, Physics Today, April 2001, pg. 50-54*

Anatomy of a search

- The department identifies a key area that needs representation
- Three faculty members review applications → Good fit: research efforts, good co-worker
- *Statistics*: 300 applications get whittled down to 30 and 5-6 are invited to visit

Advise:

Read the advertisement and tailor your response to it— no boiler plates

Don't apply for positions without qualifications

Don't fret over rejection and don't put all your eggs in one basket.

Sell Yourself!!

- Don't just send your CV
- **The cover letter is key; write the best one ever. [example]**
- Send CV, research plans, teaching philosophy
- Make plans specific to the institution (if possible)
- Add a seminal paper or press clipping

Anatomy of a Curriculum Vita*

**order depends on emphasis teaching vs. research*

Identifying Information: name, address, phone and back up phone number. Leave out your birthday, marital status, number of children, astrological sign.

Education: Start with most recent degree or expected degree. List degrees, major, institution and date of completion (or expected completion).

Dissertation or Thesis: provide title and research advisor. Provide a brief description

Award, honors, fellowships, scholarships: Recognition of scholarships by the university or outside. Membership to honorary societies can be listed here too. Some entries may need explaining, but be brief. For example, “one of 30 selected from my graduation class...”

Professional Experiences: List your work experience here. It can often be subdivided into categories such as: “Research Experience”, “Teaching Experience”, or “Postdoctoral Work.”

Publications/invited papers/posters: These can be subdivided and listed in reverse chronological order. List all authors of papers or posters.

Academic Service: List all university group or departmental roles you may have had. These demonstrate leadership abilities.

Memberships or professional affiliations: List all professional groups and offices held (if any).

Languages: List other languages that you speak or read besides English. Omit this category if you are not fluent in other languages.

Checklist:

- Is the vita well-designed and organized and attractive?
- Are categories clearly labeled?
- Has your advisor reviewed it? Has it been proofread (by other people) several times?
- Have you avoided using lots of acronyms? (Join SEA—society for the eradication of acronyms.)
- Has it been printed on quality heavy paper?

The Art of the Cover Letter

Introduction Paragraph

- State the specific position you are applying for and where you learned about it. e.g. “I am responding to your advertisement for a faculty position in Material Science...”
- Tell them who you are, what your field is, and where you are attending school (or where you are doing your post-doc).

Middle Paragraph(s)

- The second paragraph provides an overview of research accomplishments. Write this for a general scientific audience not an expert in your field.
- Subsequent paragraphs should highlight your qualification. Connect your qualifications with the needs of the department.
- In later paragraphs, discuss teaching if the position requires teaching. Be enthusiastic about your experiences and discuss courses you have taught or been involved with.

Ending Paragraph

- Details of when they can expect you: “I will complete my degree...”
- What you are enclosing in the application “I have enclosed a resume, list of publications and references as well as copy of recent media exposure my work has received.”
- Be courteous and thank them for their time.
- Your address/telephone/email should be somewhere on the document.

Checklist:

- Is it on letterhead?
- Are you addressing the letter to the right person?
- Is your contact information on the letter?
- Did you get your letter proofread by different people?

Your Professional Roadmap

Research History and Plan

- Describe our major research accomplishments
- Stress skills you have learned
- Think hard about your future plans. What is your vision for the next 5 years? 10 years?
- Think about what tools you'll need to be successful—how much start up funds and lab space. Don't put a number down in this document, but have this number in mind

Teaching Experiences and Philosophy

- Describe courses you taught, the class size and level?
- Describe teaching style: in-class assignments, demonstrations, etc.
- Be enthusiastic. Share a story or experience which shows your zeal for teaching.