

Applying to Jobs: Cover Letters & CVs

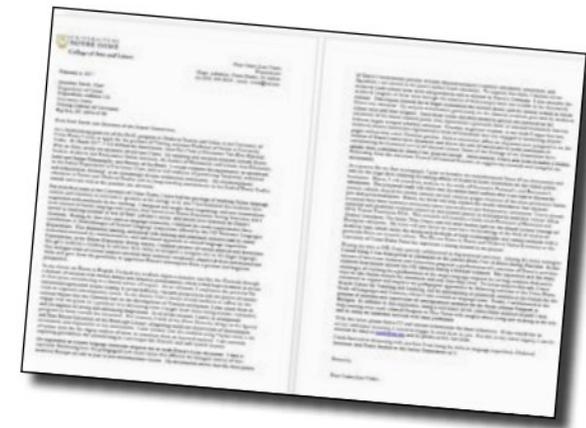
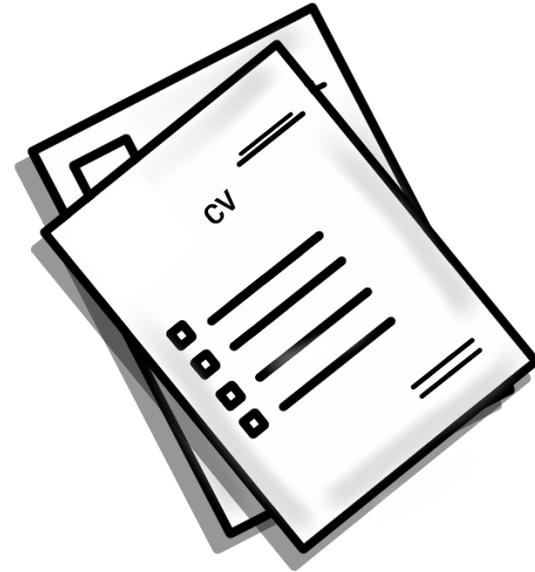
Elizabeth Loughran, Ph.D.

JINA Horizons

November 30, 2020

Goals

- Introduce types of cover letters & CVs and their purposes
- To discuss basic components of Cover Letters & CVs



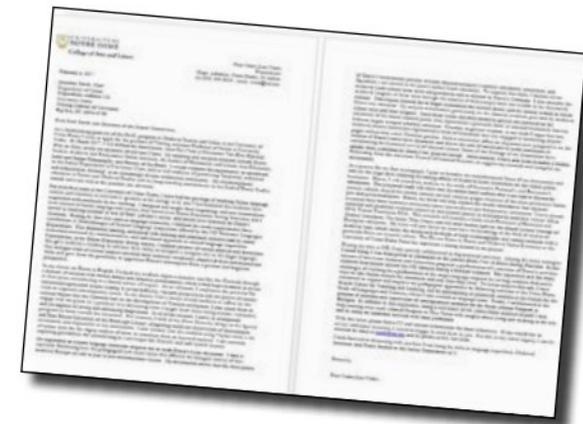
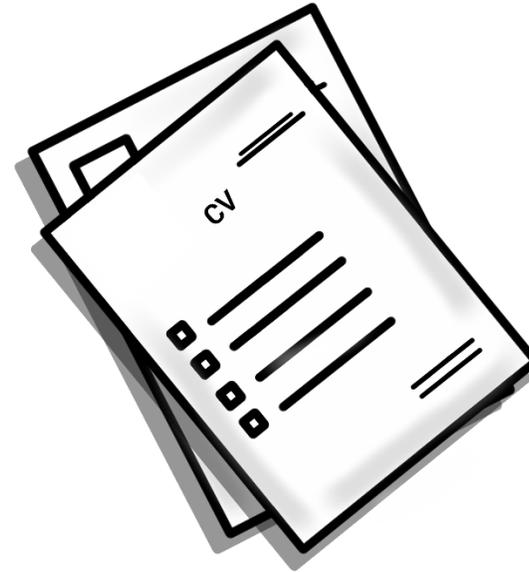
Overview: Types of CVs & Cover Letters

CVs

- Academic CV
 - Postdoc, faculty positions, research institutes
- Industry CV
 - 2 page document or resume for non-academic roles

Cover Letters

- Academic Cover Letter
 - Teaching & research paragraphs
- Postdoctoral Cover Letter
 - Your research, proposed research
- Non-academic / Industry Cover Letter
 - Skills and experiences relevant to job



Know Your Audience: What is the search committee looking for in your CL & CV

Faculty Search Committee

- Does the candidate already have their PhD? If not, when will they be done?
- What is his/her area of specialization?
- Is the candidate capable of producing tenurable work?
- How will the candidate's research interests enrich my own research/lessen the teaching load of our faculty?
- Does the candidate understand the mission of our school and expectations of this job?
- Has the candidate taught students like ours? Has teaching been under supervision or as sole instructor/creator of a course?
- Do I know anyone the candidate has worked with?
- What kinds of people are willing to support this applicant's work record?



What is a PI looking for in a postdoc?

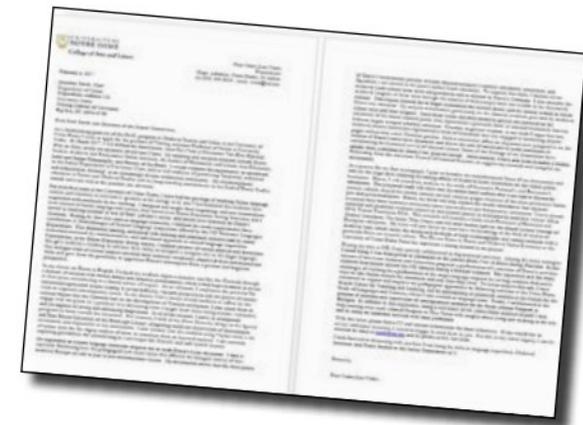
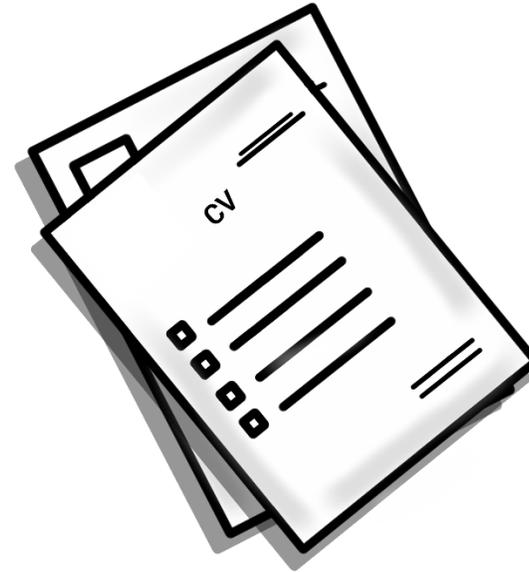
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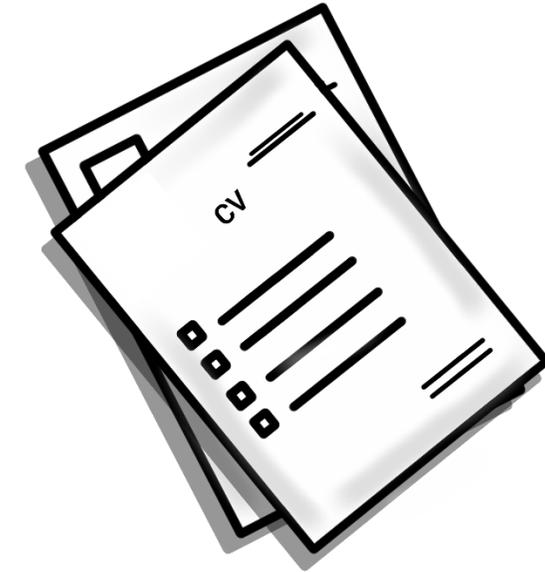
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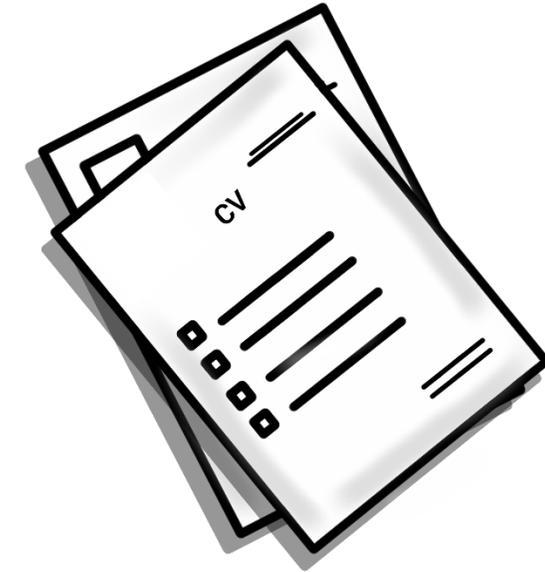
Purpose of the Academic CV

- Display a **full history** of your **scholarly identity** and **academic credentials**
- Key document to securing an **interview with academic search committees**
 - **First Impression**
 - Represents your **professional qualifications** - experiences, accomplishments and expertise - in the most **positive** manner possible
 - **Tailor** your CV to highlight how your skills meet the requirements of each job for which you are applying (research or teaching focused)
- Make a **habit** of consistently **listing your accomplishments and experiences**
 - i.e. poster and oral presentations, publications, new skills etc.
 - This will make life easier when you need your CV



Academic CVs – Common Categories

- Identifying Information (Note that in US, pictures and personal info is not included)
- Educational Background
- Research Experience
- Teaching Experience
- Publications
 - *Submitted or in preparation* is acceptable but keep to a minimum and always be able to show someone the manuscript if asked
- Presentations
 - If very few publications, consider combining with presentations
- Awards/Honors/Grants/Fellowships
- Academic Service
- Leadership & Outreach
- Professional/Organization Memberships
- Related Experience
- Skills/Languages
- References
- Note that activities unrelated to academic pursuits are extraneous here



For more information, visit <https://gradcareers.nd.edu/application-process/curriculum-vitae/>, CV template available.

Academic CVs

Do

- Recall CV is a summary
- Be consistent
- Define abbreviations/acronyms first time used
- Everything should be up to date
- Use past tense, short phrases, action verbs, little punctuation, and bullets
- List content in reverse chronological order
- Label each page with number and name
- Keep a master version
- Order sections strategically

Don't

- Mix formatting styles, fonts
- List items twice to pad your CV
- Overuse bold and italics
- List publications in preparation if you can't share the material if someone were to ask

For more information, visit <https://gradcareers.nd.edu/application-process/curriculum-vitae/>, CV template available.

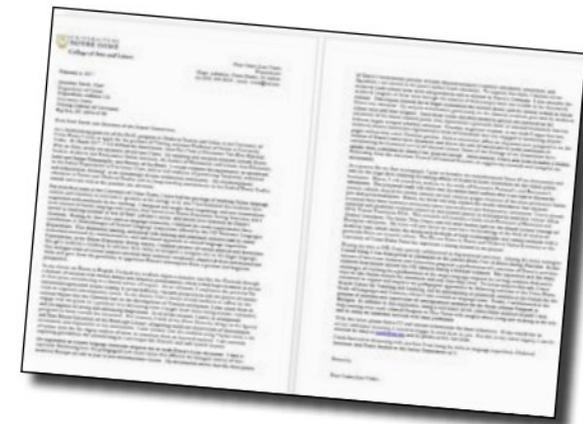
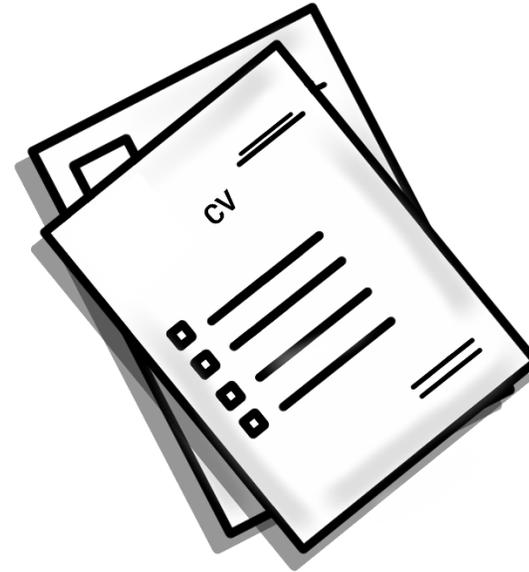
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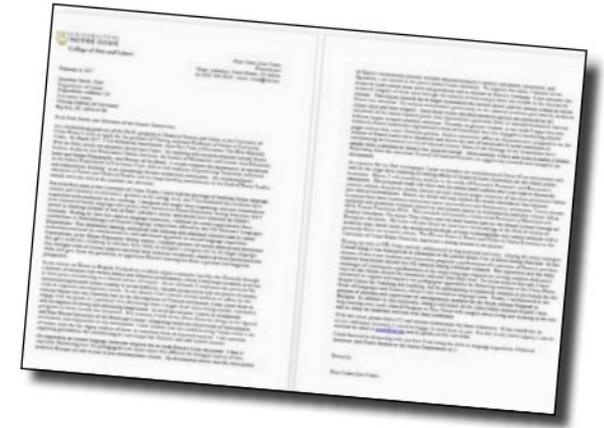
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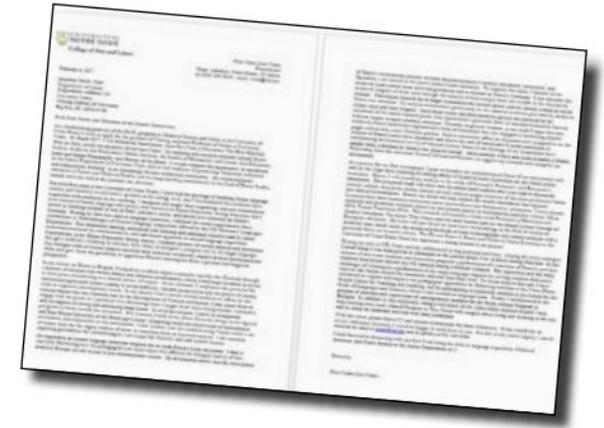
Purpose of the Academic Cover Letter

- **Your first introduction** to the search committee. First impressions are important!
- Describe your **research and teaching experience**
- Reflect your **enthusiasm and interest** in what you do
- Demonstrate your **intellectual capacity**
- Reflect something **more than the CV**
- Demonstrate what makes you unique / your **“voice”**
- Indicate that you are **“job ready”**
- Demonstrate your **knowledge and interest in the institution** to which you are applying
- Align your education and experience with the **current needs of the department**
- Convey the experience and expertise that make you the **best fit** for the position



Components of an Academic Cover Letter

- Name, contact information, date, name & address of hiring committee
- Opening paragraph
- Research paragraph(s)
- Teaching paragraph(s)
- Closing paragraph



Academic Cover Letter: Opening Paragraph

- Identify position for which you are applying
- Briefly introduce yourself to the reader
- How did you hear about the position? Did someone suggest you apply?
- Indicate when you did or will receive your Ph.D.
- Set the stage for the remainder of the letter
- Tip: Steer clear of generic introductory phrases like “I am writing to apply for”

Academic Cover Letter: Research Paragraph

- Write substantively about your research
- Concentrate on specifics, using clear and concise phrasing. Avoid jargon and consider who your audience is.
- Use scholarly and professional language
 - “My work contributes to the field by demonstrating that...” vs “My dissertation explores the problem of...”
- Indicate future directions for research (expanded in research statement)

Academic Cover Letter: Teaching Paragraph

- Subjects/courses you have taught
- Evidence of your success
 - This may be a brief overview of course evaluations, mention of teaching awards, or an especially strong student comment.
- Teaching method or style
 - Give specific examples from classroom experience to illustrate your point
- Indicate your desire to teach the level/type of student which attend that institution
- Make connections between your research and teaching interests
- Tailor your content towards the teaching mission of the university

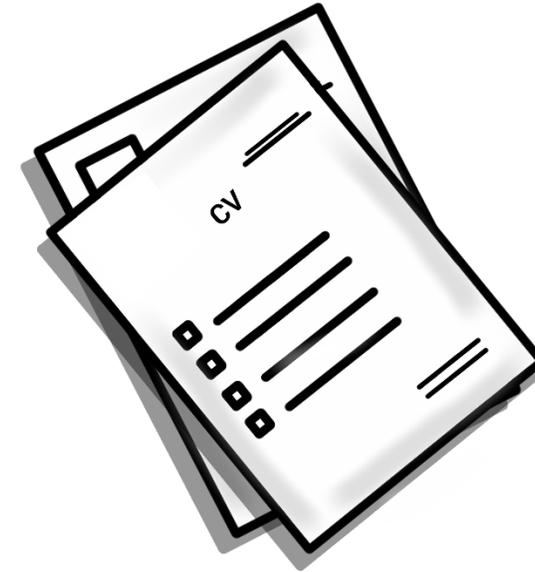
Academic Cover Letter: Closing Paragraph

- Keep this fairly short
- This is a great place to remind them of a significant honor, research, fellowship, or committee work (anything that is applicable to the position to which you are applying)
- Reiterate your interest in the institution, department, university
- State any contact information again, in case they need or want to get in touch with you
- Let them know if you will be at the next professional association meeting for your area
- If college is in a “remote place,” communicate your reasons for wanting to live there beyond “I just need a job.”
- Note enclosures

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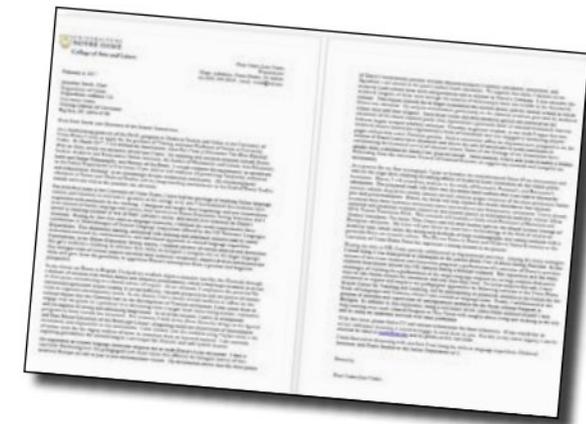
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Postdoc Cover Letters

- Opening Paragraph
- Paragraph about your graduate work
 - Consider what the PI is looking for in a candidate and how that matches up with your experience/skills
 - Name key achievements
- Paragraph about future work
 - How you will apply your skills to the research questions the group is asking (i.e. what do you bring)
 - Why are you a good fit for the job?
- Closing paragraph
- *Generally 1 page*

Additional Reading: howtophd.org/2020/07/how-to-write-a-cover-letter-for-a-postdoctoral-application.html

Non Academic Cover Letters

SAMANTHA M. IRISH
Street Address, City, ST ZIP • samsh@nd.edu • (123) 456-789 • [linkedin.com/in/samirish](https://www.linkedin.com/in/samirish)

February 26, 2019

Ms. Maria Walton
Consulting Company XXXX
Street Address
City, ST ZIP

Dear Ms. Walton,

As a PhD candidate at the University of Notre Dame graduating in May 2018 with a degree in XXXX, I am writing to apply for the Associate position at XXXX. My interest in this position stems from the day I heard a Notre Dame PhD alumnus come to campus and talk about his exciting and fulfilling life as a consultant. From that time on I have been intrigued and energized by the idea of applying my own skillsets to solve real world problems in the consulting sector. With its talented and hardworking consultants, XXXX constantly makes significant impact in the world by helping Fortune 500 companies excel and improving the world we live in. I am confident my analytical, leadership and communication skills position me for success at XXXX and I am eager to apply my strengths and passion to contribute to your organization in a way that is personally challenging and exciting to me.

- **Analytical and problem solving skills:** In my graduate studies on organ development, I approach my research based on hypothesis-driven problem solving. I routinely identify problems, make hypotheses, conduct experiments and analyze results. Image analysis, data extraction and analysis, and data visualization are just a few of the skills that I acquired in graduate school. As a result, I have written 3 scientific papers and have been awarded multiple grants. This disciplined, logical, and analytical approach to testing hypotheses is a skill I am excited to offer to XXXX.
- **Leadership skills:** At Notre Dame, I became an independent researcher in the process of developing my own project from the ground up. In the lab, I have also served as mentors to five undergraduate students to help them succeed in research. To facilitate the discussion of research, I am currently leading a team organizing a departmental research symposium. During my undergraduate studies, I led a team of 10 people in an international bioengineering competition. I was also the President of International Student Ambassadors, serving international students and professors. My proven leadership skills make me an ideal candidate for XXXX.
- **Interpersonal and communication skills:** Throughout my academic career, I have coauthored 3 scientific papers, and I have communicated with the public about my research by speaking at prestigious national conferences. I have also worked in multicultural teams, collaborating with scientists and engineers from other fields. Outside of academia, I have worked with at-risk teens as a counselor, and I have taught English to classes of 150+ students. My communication skills and compassion for people will be valuable in working with clients.

My experience and skills make me an ideal candidate for the Associate position with XXXX. Accompanying this cover letter is my resume. I look forward to discussing the position and my qualifications further. Please feel free to contact me at your convenience. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Samantha Irish (Insert Written Signature)

Samantha Irish

Your address, date, employer address

1st Who I am/What I want

- Who are You?
- Why are you writing?

2nd What I bring

- What are your qualifications?
- Highlight relevant experiences

3rd What's next

- What are you seeking/asking?
- Reference enclosures
- Next steps in process

Tips

- Start early
- Engage with career services (and writing centers) at your University
- Understand which document you need for the type of position for which you are applying
- Research the position and the organization prior to applying
- Tailor documents for each position
- Address a specific person or committee in your cover letter
- Get multiple sets of eyes on your document (peers, career development professionals, advisors, mentors etc)
- Visit gradcareers.nd.edu/application-process/academic-portfolio/

Questions , acknowledgements & contact info

University of Notre Dame

- Graduate Career Services
- Notre Dame Learning | Kaneb Center
- The Writing Center

Liz's contact

gradcareers.nd.edu/about-us/our-staff/liz-loughran/
loughran.11@nd.edu



UNIVERSITY OF
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CENTER FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT
Graduate Career Services