

Linguistics Career Launch 2024
Career Management Session 2 of 5

Creating and tailoring an effective resume

Alexandra Johnston, PhD
Associate Professor of the Practice
Director, Masters Programs & Career Management
Department of Linguistics
Georgetown University
Washington DC



Linguistics Career Launch 2024 Career Management Sessions

1. Networking for introverts
2. **Creating & tailoring an effective resume**
3. Informational interviewing
4. Leveraging LinkedIn
5. **Salary & benefits: Negotiate like a pro**

Alexandra Johnston, PhD

- **Faculty instructor** *Career Management for Linguists* 2018-present: 3-credit, semester-long course for linguistics graduate students @ Georgetown University
- **Global talent development consultant**: 15+ years, delivering professional development to corporate, government, nonprofit and higher ed clients. Reviewer of 100s of resumes.



Agenda

- **CVs & resumes: Defining the genres**
- What counts as “**experience**” for your resume (*you have more than you think*)
 - Activity: Best/worst of ALL your jobs
- Your “**everything**” resume
- Your “**tailored resumes**” (yes, plural)
- How to write effective bullet points
- Using job ads to **tailor your resume**

when i start a job search and have to update my resume



it's okay, Kermie...

What's a CV?

*curriculum vitae: Latin for “course of [one’s] life”
In the US, “CV” is often short for “academic CV”*

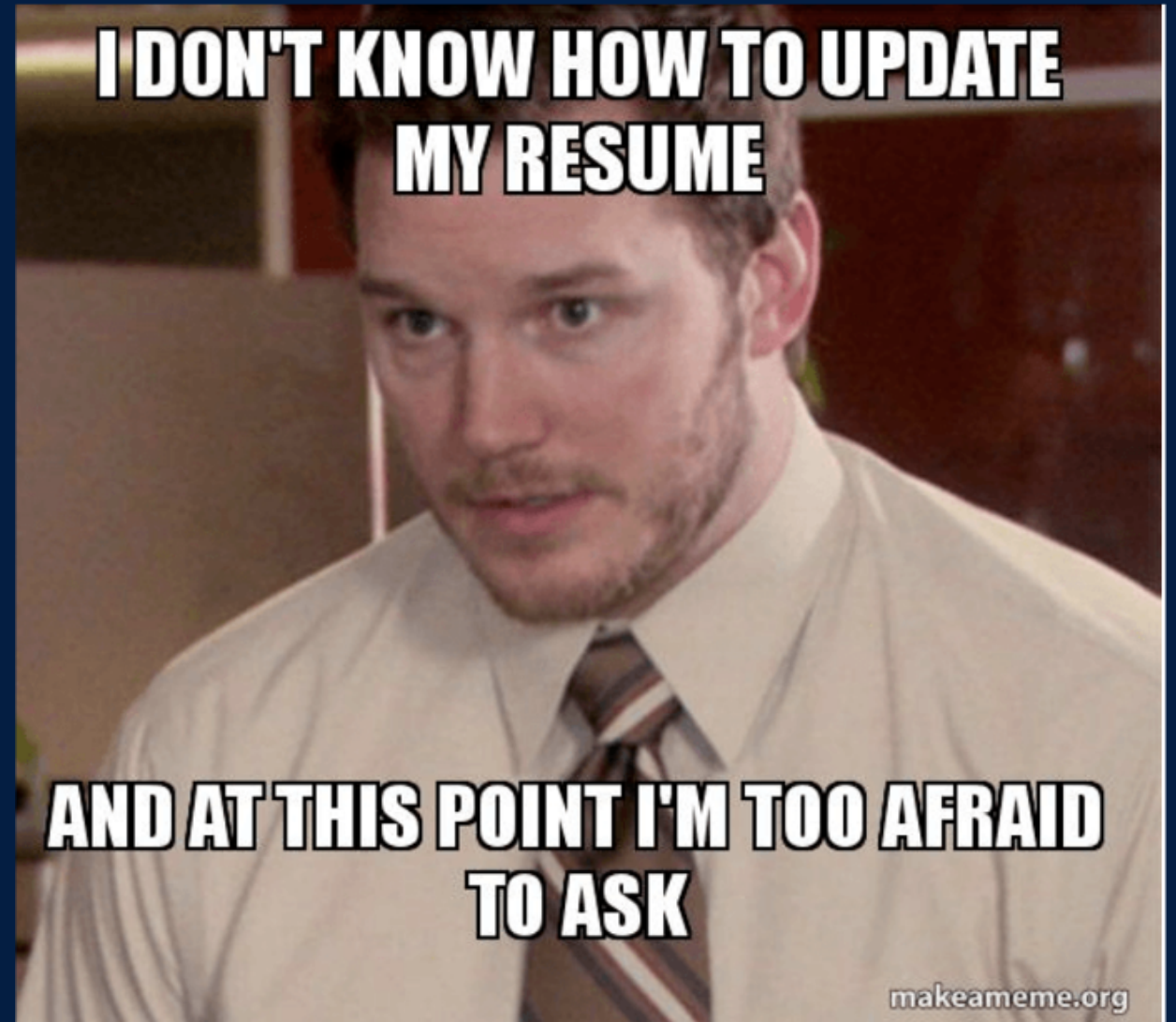
- Everything you’ve ever accomplished in “academia”
 - **Education:** Your degrees
 - **Research:** Publications, conference presentations (refereed, invited)
 - **Grants & Awards:** Granting agency, grant number, amount
 - **Teaching:** Courses and level of responsibility, invited lectures, etc.
 - **Service:** Administration, organization, committee work, service to your field, to your University, to your College (if applicable), to your Department
 - **Mentoring:** Dissertation & thesis committees (supervisor or member)
 - Example of structure and format: [CV of Prof. Jennifer Nycz](#)
- Other conventions:
 - Reverse chronological order
 - Other professional employment (if any) is usually not listed
 - The experience remains in the same ‘frame’: Tailored towards higher education expectations of what is important to and constitutive of the core work of a faculty member
 - Length is “good”! It can be 50+ pages or more!

Which genre to use in an application: CV or resume?

- “(Academic) CVs” are for academic positions (faculty in higher education)
- If a job ad for a position outside higher education asks for a “CV”
 - Ask yourself: “*Do they mean a ‘resume’?*” & then research:
 - Where is the organization geographically based?
 - In the UK: the term “CV” is often used to mean what people in the US refer to as a “professional resume”
 - Is the position “**academia-adjacent**”?
 - Research, grant-writing, think tanks
- Communicate with the **hiring manager, recruiter** or other **bridge person** to clarify the expected genre format

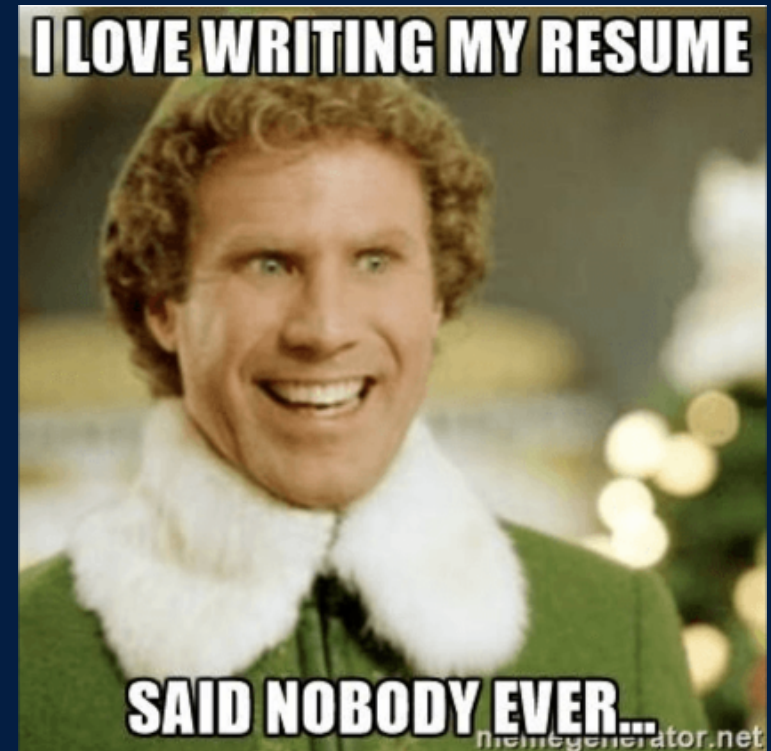
So then...

*what's a
resume?*



Resumes: General 'business' format

- 1-2 pages
 - Exception: “**Federal resumes**” for US Gov
- **ACTION-RESULT** format for bullet points that describe your deliverables & impact for each “experience”
 - Each bullet starts with an **action verb (link)**
 - No use of “I” or third-person
- Your results are **quantified** as much as possible to **show impact** of your actions
- Typically **reverse-chronological** order
 - “**Skills-based**” format (less common)
- “Easy-to-read” by humans and “easy to scan” by computers



Two main purposes of a resume

1. To get you an **INTERVIEW**

- *That is, to advance you past **first-round screening***
 - 1) any **HUMANS** who are doing first-round screenings and/or
 - 2) any **Applicant Tracking System** (ATS) so you can get a chance to **TALK WITH A HUMAN**

1. To showcase your curated experience & accomplishments **tailored to the specific job** you are applying for

Interviewer: So why do you want this job?

Me: Well, I've always felt passionately about not starving to death



Resume sections

- **Name & contact info**: Phone, email, LinkedIn + ‘general’ physical location
- **Profile**: (optional) 2-3 sentences defining yourself and your experience *related to the job to which you are applying*
- **Experience** in reverse chronological order by section
 - “work experience”, “professional experience” or experience labelled according to the job ad (“Education technology experience”, “Grant-writing experience”, “Leadership experience”)
 - Can “unpaid” or “part-time” work go here?
- **Education**: Your degrees, institution, major(s)
 - Do I list education first or put it after “experience”?
- **Grants & awards**? Possibly
- Volunteer experience, Community outreach/engagement
- **Skills**
- Interests?

Sample resume

- [Sample resume \(link\)](#)
- PhD student in coursework
- Developed as a “general, all-purpose” resume
 - Originally a “comprehensive” resume
 - Several items removed for presentation purposes

Design & formatting: Keep it simple

- Resource: [How to 'beat' Applicant Tracking Systems](#) (at least, how to work around the ATS weaknesses)
 - No fancy formatting (like arrow bullet points)
 - No graphics
 - No photos of yourself on US resumes
 - Be aware that the two-column format can be 'unreadable' by an ATS (reserve this for a human, if you dare to use it :)
- Speaking of human resume reviewers....



Design & formatting: Keep it simple

Pop quiz!

How long does a typical **first-round resume reviewer** look at your resume?

- a. < 10 seconds
- b. 20-30 seconds
- c. > 1 minute

Design & formatting: Keep it simple

Pop quiz!

How long does a typical **first-round resume reviewer** look at your resume?

- a. < 10 seconds
- b. 20-30 seconds
- c. > 1 minute

Start building your resume with your experiences

- **Self-audit** your experiences
- Make sure you're not missing *anything* you did (this happens A LOT)
- We overlook a lot of our own “experiences”
 - We ‘normalize’ many of our skills and accomplishments
 - “Everybody has good research, writing and presentation skills” as part of grad school / being a student / being a volunteer

What counts as “experience”?

- More than you may realize!
- It doesn't have to be **paid**: Unpaid work is experience
- It doesn't have to be **full-time**
- It can be your own **independent project**
 - Did you take a coding class and gain a certification?
 - Did you build your own website?
 - Did you create an app or design a conversational flow for a chatbot just to teach yourself how to do it?

What counts as “experience”?

- **Your academic training counts**
 - Major class projects
 - Your research experiences with a faculty advisor, team or colleague
 - Doing a thesis or dissertation project
 - Your work as a TA/RA (designing course curriculum, lectures, media)
- **Your extracurriculars & volunteer activities count**
 - Were you part of a club, affinity group, advocacy group or athletic team?
 - Did you engage in leadership of those groups? (as an ‘officer’, captain, or through actions you took to drive projects forward?)
 - Did you manage a budget?
 - Did you raise funding?

Activity:

All Your Jobs + Best thing / worst thing

JOB (="experience")	Best thing	Worst thing
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Activity:

All Your Jobs + Best thing / worst thing

JOB (="experience")	Best thing	Worst thing
1. Babysitting, nannying	Making up activities and bonding with the kids	Behavior management (dealing with tantrums)
2. Administrative assistant at an international education exchange nonprofit	The citizen diplomacy aspect = working with people from around the world	Low pay, short staffed, many dumpster fires
3. TA'd an undergraduate linguistics class	Creating my own lesson plans & multimedia lectures	Grading
4. Built my own website	Figuring out Wordpress, widgets, solving problems	Not paid

Create your “Everything” resume

- Use all these experiences to start building your “Everything resume” (also called a “comprehensive resume”)
- Unedited, long list of experiences and bullet points to describe your deliverables & accomplishments
- You will use this later to **TAILOR** your experiences and bullet points to **EVERY** job you apply to based on the **job announcement**
- Yes, *every* job
- No, I’m serious

Let's talk about effective bullet point language

Effective resumes display **accomplishments + results**

- Your resume is NOT a list of your job responsibilities or tasks
- **Cat resume bullet FAILS:**
 - *“Dot catching, biscuit making, loafing”*
 - *“Tasked with catching red dots weekly”*
 - *“Responsible for red-dot catching”*
- **Cat resume bullets WINS:**
 - *“Caught 10 red dots per week in FY2023”*
 - *“Developed dot-catching process adopted company-wide resulting in 75% Q4 increase.”*



Brainstorming a cover letter story

1. Think of problems and challenges you took action on that produced results.
1. Show impact of your results through quantification.
1. Try the STAR story structure to think through what you've accomplished

STAR story
structure:

SITUATION

TASK

ACTION

RESULTS

Situation

- What was a situation, problem or conflict you faced?

Task

- What were you tasked with doing?
- What were your responsibilities or goals in that situation?

Action

- What action did you take?
- How did you solve this problem?

Results

- What was the outcome?
- How can you quantify it?
- How can you describe the impact or lasting effects?

Situation

- Trainees at my organization weren't ready to navigate the org's data tracking system by the end of the 1-week onboarding session. It was taking them 2 weeks

Task

- My boss asked me to review the onboarding program and see what gaps there were in training to help trainees learn to use the system faster

Action

- **Created** the company's first training manual
- Successfully **persuaded** management to adopt the manual
- **Overhauled** training curriculum built around manual use and guidelines

Results

- Trainees learned the system in only **1 week!** (target goal!)
- Manual was **adopted company-wide** and is **still in use** today! (lasting impact)

STAR story
structure:

SITUATION

TASK

ACTION

RESULTS

Your story: **Actions** + **Results** & **quantification**

- **Developed** the first training manual for X company's data tracking system which **cut employee onboarding time by 50%**
- **Redesigned** entire onboarding program, which was **adopted company-wide** and **remains standard process today**.

This same achievement can be reframed to highlight different skills aligned with those sought in different job announcements

- For example: Communication, persuasion, leadership, influencing without authority, instructional design

Bullet points: From generic to *GENIUS*

Fulbright Association Chapter Events Coordinator

- Responsible for organizing events and panels

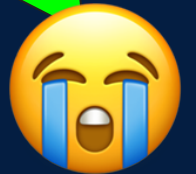
What **ACTIONS** did you take to organize events?

- Recruit speakers?
- Coordinate logistics of space, catering, budget?
- Manage publicity? Make media appearances? Execute a social media plan?

What **RESULTS** did you achieve?

- How many panels over what time period? How many attendees? Did attendance increase?
- Did attendees take action as a result of these panels?

A TASK
not a
RESULT



Getting better....

Fulbright Association Chapter Events Coordinator

- Planned and delivered public discussion panels on timely topics such as the Iowa caucuses for audiences of 500+ US Fulbright alumni and international grantees on a bi-monthly basis for 5 years
 - Identified and recruited 30+ state government officials and community organization leaders to participate as panelists
 - Created marketing materials and publicized events through social media, local TV and radio; delivered live and pre-recorded local news interviews on site and in studio
-
- 1st bullet shows **organizational skills**
 - 2nd bullet shows **research, interpersonal communication skills and influencing without authority**
 - 3rd bullet shows **strategic marketing and media savvy**

Give us even more impact!

- **Created marketing materials and publicized events through social media and local TV and radio; represented the Fulbright Chapter in local news appearances**
 - How broad was the reach? Were new Chapter members recruited? Did these events increase public awareness of the organization or brand?
- "Created marketing materials and publicized events through social media. Increased follows by 30%. Increased program attendance by 50% and doubled new memberships."
 - *50% increase from 40 to 60 attendees (or 400 to 600) is both accurate and **significant***
 - *50% increase from 4 to 6 attendees is accurate and **misleading***
- "Created marketing materials and publicized events through social media. Documented increased attendance at Chapter programs throughout the year" *(if you are unable to quantify with an valid, significant %)*

'Translating' academic experience

CV example

- PhD student in final year
- Seeking a job in industry

TEACHING

 University

Adjunct Lecturer

Introduction to Language, Spring 2021

Sounds of Language, Spring 2021

Graduate Student Instructor

Phonetics, Fall 2020

Introduction to Language, Spring 2017

Teaching Assistant

Sociophonetics, Spring 2020

Field Methods, Fall 2019

Phonology I, Spring 2019

Linguistics Teaching Practicum, Spring 2019

Introduction to Language, Fall 2017, Fall 2016

Guest Lecturer

Optimality Theory, Spring 2019

Introduction to Praat, Spring 2019

Topics in Linguistics, Fall 2018

'Translating' academic experience

How one "TA" experience was transformed into a resume bullet point:

Course Developer, Linguistics Teaching Practicum

Spring 2019

- Developed a new curriculum for graduate students serving as teaching assistants for the first time
- Led weekly classes on problem-solving strategies for real-time issues
- Created a structure for the Practicum that has been retained throughout subsequent semesters

"curriculum" → training & development cadence

"subsequent semesters" → through present

"Spring 2019" → January-May 2019

Offer accepted as an Analytical Linguist at Grammarly

Polishing administrative experience

Office clerk, X Clinic

- Prepare patient appointment billing sheets, lab forms, and procedure consent documents

Administrative assistant, X Clinic

- Prepared 100+ patient files for review weekly in high-volume clinic environment
- Executed essential administrative and logistical support for 2 physicians
- Developed process improvements for office workflow which led to higher patient satisfaction ratings
- Maintained patient and data confidentiality

Offer accepted as an Events Coordinator in a non-profit organization focused on K-12 education

Tailor your experience to the job announcement

Your academic CV:

Instructor of record
SPAN 101, Spring 2024



Goal:

Land a position in
educational technology

Duolingo is hiring for a “Curriculum Designer & Polyglot”

Resume bullet points use **ACTUAL KEYWORDS** FROM THE JOB AD:

- **Designed language curricula** and **learning materials** for 300+ adult learners of **Spanish**
- Assessed learning outcomes aligned with **CEFR & ACTFL standards**
- **Leveraged generative AI** and **educational technology tools** for **content creation**

Keep it real



**WHEN YOU LIE ABOUT YOUR
RESUME**

BUT STILL GET THE JOB

Don't overstate or exaggerate



consigliere

@moyodre

How would you write "I changed a light bulb" on your resume?



M

@MuyiwaSaka

Single-handedly managed the successful upgrade and deployment of new environmental illumination system with zero cost overruns and zero safety incidents.

Before you submit

- Keep one resume version with limited formatting for entering into text boxes
- Save versions as both doc and pdf
 - pdf preserves formatting for humans
 - docs are easily scannable by ATS
- Label resume files you upload or send out to people as “NAME resume – POSITION date” or something equally informative and identifiable
- Avoid sending a resume to a human being that’s labeled “resume” or “resume draft v2 final final FINAL FINAL!!!!”



Before you submit your resume:

- Get **other eyes** on your resume!
 - Leverage your growing career community
- Find out the **keywords** that are important in that sector, organization or position type
 - Informational interviewing
 - Careful reading (=discourse analysis!) of the job announcement(s)
- Deploy your **linguistic skills of analysis**
 - Your linguistic superpowers can be applied to your OWN job search



Resources

- [Resume, CV & Cover Letter advice & templates](#)
Georgetown University Cawley Career Center
 - Look at resources at your own institution's undergraduate & graduate career centers
- [JobScan](#): delivers degree of match between words on your resume & words used in your job announcement of interest (a few scans per month for free)
- Quick video on [what recruiters "see" when they scan your resume](#) for those 6 seconds

Connect with me:

*Alex Johnston ([LinkedIn](#))
johnstam@georgetown.edu*