

What is a Résumé, CV, and Biography?

Here is the definition of the three items most often requested of jobseekers, explained in simple terms and from my own experience.

Résumé

A term used more often in America than 'CV'. The term 'résumé' is French, literally meaning 'resumed'.

Here are the characteristics of a résumé:

- ◇ Short. One school of thought believes that a resume should be limited to one page. It is more of an overview than a CV, which can be many pages. Use dot points, not sentences.
- ◇ Versatile. Can be used in a wide variety of situations - job applications, college admissions, etc. A résumé can be easily customized to target the job's particular 'position description'.
- ◇ Focus on work profile and experience.

A musician's résumé may include the following sections, in this order:

- ◇ Name and contact information.
- ◇ Summary.
- ◇ Experience, broken down into such areas as teaching, recording, composition and administration.
- ◇ Education.

Curriculum Vitae or 'CV'

A curriculum vitae or 'CV' is a summary of a person's professional history and qualifications, usually used when applying for a job. The term is Latin, and literally means 'the course of life.' Though similar to a résumé, a curriculum vitae has some important differences. These include:

- ◇ Lengthy, often spanning across several pages.
- ◇ Descriptive and detailed. Use sentences. A CV can offer a bit of a 'life story' to the employer.
- ◇ Often used when applying for academic or research positions.
- ◇ Focus on Academic, curricular, and scholarly areas. Outline details of grants, awards, publications, projects, honours, memberships, affiliations, etc.
- ◇ Presented in reverse chronology, with most recent experience first.

Biography or 'Bio'

A Biography is usually considered to resemble a curriculum vitae or 'CV', but can be more elaborate. The term is derived from Greek - the words 'bios' meaning life, and 'graphein' meaning write. Consequently, a true biography goes beyond a list of facts about a person but illuminates aspects of their life, taking into account emotions and events that brought about personal change and growth. This approach is followed by the many published Biographies and Autobiographies that you may find in book stores on famous people.