

# Writing a CV and Cover Letter

Susan E. Minkoff

Department of Mathematics and Statistics  
University of Maryland Baltimore County  
Baltimore, MD 21250, USA

Grad Student Seminar  
April 1, 2009

Thanks to: Sonja Follett, English Language Center, UMBC

# General Tips for Cover Letters

- **Know your audience!** Tailor cover letter to job.
- **Personalize** if possible but be sincere. (Don't state that you want to work with Dr. X if you have no intention of doing so.)
- Length of letter depends on
  - 1 type of position
  - 2 what other items ad does or does not ask for
  - 3 your experience level
- Have someone **proofread** your letter for grammar, logic, etc.. The letter is the first impression you give to a potential employer. *The purpose of the application is to get an interview.* Make sure you make a good impression. Employers care about how you communicate and will judge you based on your letter of application, cv, etc.

# General Tips for Cover Letters

- **Grab their attention.** In other words, apply for jobs you think are a **good fit** for you and explain why they are a good fit in your cover letter. Make a case for why they should want to hire you *and* why you want to work at the company, university, lab, etc.
- Sell yourself but in a professional way!
- Get your advisor to read your cover letter, look over your cv and give you feedback. Ask for samples from him/her realizing that they may not be appropriate for your career level. Also ask for samples from fellow graduate students. Modify style as necessary.

# Resume vs CV

- **Resume is shorter.** Resume appropriate for entry-level jobs applicants apply for with a **bachelor's degree** or less.
- Resume is best kept to a single page. Two pages ok if needed.
- **CV is longer** (can go on for pages). Usually used by job applicants with **graduate degrees seeking faculty, research, or scientific positions.**
- **Always be honest.** Never embellish or claim things you have not done.
- Know to whom you are applying (research company, lab, etc before applying). Affects what is included in cv. (E.g., for a research position at a company you may not wish to include courses you have taught.)
- **Format is important!** Find samples you like, copy and modify as needed.

# Resume vs CV

- In some situations (i.e., for tenure or promotion) the format may be dictated to you. Be sure you understand the categories they require.
- What you include in your cv will evolve over time.
- **Proofread** multiple times!
- **Update often!** or whenever something important changes in your life. (E.g., a paper is accepted for publication. You gave a talk at a professional conference. You won an award, etc.) Less likely to forget these items when you go to update your cv if you write them down as they happen. Or keep a file of these items for later inclusion.
- Learn what employers look for so you can work on those items.
- Don't include unnecessary personal info (birthdate, home address, age, marital status, etc).