

Creating and developing a professional CV

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Your CV should highlight the leadership skills you display every day.

NURSE LEADERSHIP within health care was a key focus of the 2010 Institute of Medicine/Robert Wood Johnson landmark report on the future of nursing. But what is a leadership role? Do you have to be the director of nursing to be in a leadership role? No. Can bedside clinicians hold leadership roles and have a strong voice? Yes. Nurses demonstrate their inherent leadership every day through the work they do to organize, plan, and manage patient care, and influence outcomes.

Promoting yourself as a leader and showcasing your professional career as a nurse can be accomplished in various ways, including with a professional curriculum vitae (CV). Historically, the CV was considered important for faculty positions in academic settings. In today's complex, competitive healthcare world, the CV is vital for nurses in all settings and at all levels of their careers.

CV defined

The CV really is all about you. It documents your accomplishments and experiences as a nurse, and beyond. Don't think of it as a resume. Typically, resumes are general, concise, and short—only one to two pages. They include name, contact information, educational history, work experience, and references. Sometimes potential employers or academic organizations (if you're applying to school) require this short synopsis of your nursing experience.

A CV, on the other hand, is a specific, detailed document of your life's journey as a nurse. In addition to highlighting information found in a resume, your CV should include sections about your professional presentations, publications, committee work, and community service. It should illustrate your achievements as well as what you give back to nursing and your community.

Let's get started

Creating your CV requires thought and organization, so the earlier in your career you start, the easier updating and maintaining it will be. The following tips will help you format and organize your CV.

Format

Keep your CV simple, professional, and easy to follow. No fancy fonts, clip art, or graphics. Use a font that's easy to read, such as Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman. The flow from section to section should be logical to a reader.



Several headings are required in the CV, including your name with credentials (for example, Susan Mary Jones, BSN, RN, CCRN), contact information, educational history, and work experience. Note your highest earned academic degree immediately after your name, then indicate your professional licensure followed by certifications. Note certifications last because they might not be continued if criteria for renewal aren't met. Separate your credentials with a comma. If you include your personal email, don't use your "suzybabe" address; create a professional one.

What should you include in your CV?

In addition to required information, such as name, credentials, contact information, education history, and work experience, your CV should include detailed information relevant to your career and leadership experience. Here are some suggested section headings and examples of items to include.

| Suggested headings | Examples for inclusion |
|---|--|
| Work experience summary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short summary of your work and responsibilities for past and present jobs. For example: "Cared for high-acuity trauma patients in a level I trauma center. Considerable charge nurse experience. Responsible for creating shift assignments, handling ill calls and staffing, and addressing patient and family issues." |
| Certifications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National specialty certifications (e.g., Certified Emergency Nurse) Work-related certifications (e.g., balloon-pump certificate, baby-friendly champion) Educational certificates (e.g., informatics) |
| Honors and awards (nominee and recipient honors noted as such) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee of the month DAISY Award nominee Recipient of a hospital-based scholarship for school |
| Professional memberships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional organization for your specialty (e.g., perioperative nurses, obstetric nurses) National nursing organizations (e.g., American Nurses Association) Alumni organization Sigma Theta Tau International |
| Continuing education attended | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include name, title of the conference, location, and credits achieved |
| Professional presentations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local council meeting about a new initiative on your unit Unit presentation about an educational program you attended Regional specialty conference to present a topic common to your specialty area |
| Local publications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Article published in your hospital newsletter about a recent quality-improvement project on your unit Newsletter article written for your local chapter of a national specialty organization |
| National publications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Article published in a professional peer-reviewed journal (include coauthored papers as well) |
| Committee appointments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unit quality committee Hospital-wide patient safety council Nomination committee chair for the local chapter of your specialty organization |
| Community/volunteer activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career day at local elementary schools Walker or team leader for a fundraising relay team Volunteer at a local rescue mission School board member Boy Scout or Daisy/Girl Scout leader |

Use the print preview tool of your word-processing program so you can see what the CV will look like to a reader, then make adjustments as needed.

Organization

Decide what sections to include in your CV. For example, if you've presented topics at hospital council meetings or on your unit, include a professional presentations section. Presentations promote leadership in nursing, and they don't have to occur at the national or international level to be included. On the other hand, if you haven't completed research projects or

participated on a research team, don't include a research initiatives section. All items within each section should be listed in reverse chronologic order (most current first). (See *What should you include in your CV?*)

If you're a new nurse, you may want to include a non-nurse job if your responsibilities related to nursing-type skills (for example, leadership, organization, teamwork, multitasking). If just before nursing school you worked at the local garden center, for example, and managed employees, ordered inventory, and addressed customer complaints, include it in the CV. However, after a few years of working as a professional



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nurse in different roles, you'll want to remove the garden center job.

Maintaining your CV

Your CV is a living document that highlights your life as a nurse, so update it every year. If CV updates aren't completed annually, getting back on track becomes a daunting task. Pick a specific date each year to make updates and keep track of relevant events and information.

To organize information from throughout the year, keep an easy-to-access physical or digital folder specifically for that purpose. Write notes to yourself as events occur and place the notes in the folder. Perhaps you presented a topic for your unit. Simply jot down the title of the presentation, the date, and the audience, then slip it in the folder. When attending a conference, place the continuing education certificate in the folder. Then, when it's time to update your CV, everything you need will be available.

Help your CV grow

Early in your career, your CV will likely be short. This is perfectly acceptable, and potential employers and academic organizations will expect this. As you move forward in your career, your CV will expand. However, this is accomplished only through conscious effort and strategic career planning. Although the required sections on the CV will remain constant, other sections may be added in subsequent years. If you participate on a research team, add this section to the CV. You may want to remove items after about 5 or 6 years. For example, presentations completed 10 years ago can be removed, but don't remove items from your educational and work experience histories.

Throughout your nursing career, you'll find many ways to demonstrate your leadership. The professional CV helps you showcase your accomplishments. This article presented ideas for the creation and development of your professional CV. In the next issue of *American Nurse Today*, watch for an article on how to effectively use your CV for career planning, employment opportunities, and academic progression. ★

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