



How Do I Apply for a Postdoc Position?

Step #1: Develop a good Curriculum Vitae (CV)

- A CV details all your academic credentials and professional science-related accomplishments -- so review all your relevant qualifications and list everything you might include
- Determine how to highlight your accomplishments -- show you are a strong candidate for the job by using strong, active verbs
- Be sure to highlight keywords mentioned in the position's requirements you have identified
- Ask your mentor and other faculty members to critique your CV
- For International Students and Postdocs – In the United States, the "American style" CVs do not include personal details – no date of birth, gender, health or marital status
- *Resumes are documents that are requested by employers in many fields outside of the academic arena*
- Resources on CV:
 - [CV and cover letter for postdoc position \(UCSF\)](#)
 - [38 tips on writing an academic CV \(Nature Jobs\)](#)
 - [Preparing a CV \(Cornell University\)](#)

Step #2: Find a position or a type of position of interest

There are multiple avenues of inquiring about postdoc positions at Emory University:

1. Find and contact individual faculty members with your area of science interest by browsing our Faculty listing or by visiting the Graduate Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences [interactive faculty search tool](#)
 2. Explore Postdoctoral Training Programs available at Emory (under Prospective Students)
 3. Visit the [Emory University Human Resources](#) and click on *Search for Staff Jobs (External candidates)* link to search for postdoctoral job openings - search by using "Post Doctoral Fellow" in the job title field
 4. Consult [Nature jobs](#) and [Science jobs](#) listings for Emory advertisements
- Additional Resources:
 - [Finding a postdoc position](#) – videocast from NIH Office of Intramural Training
 - <https://www.postdocjobs.com/>



- Prepare a list of possible mentors you are interested in applying to and then go through the job ad and carefully note all of the requirements and skills the employer is looking for. Identify your strengths and accomplishments that make you eligible and a good fit for the position
- Refine your CV -- no such thing as a one-size-fits-all CV -- each should be tailored to each job you apply to. Identify key terms identified by the employer – use that language. However, certain parts will remain the same and appropriate for multiple jobs

Step #3: Develop a good Cover Letter

- Go through the job ad and carefully note all of the requirements and skills the employer is looking for
- Identify the two most important skills that the employer is looking for. Try and create a cover letter that illustrates that you have these skills and have used them effectively
- Use the keywords identified in the job posting -- you are describing your experience in the employer's language, not your own
- Ask your mentor and other faculty members to critique
- Resources:
 - [How to write a killer cover letter for a postdoctoral application](#) (American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology):
 - [CV and cover letter for postdoc position \(UCSF\)](#)

How Do I Write a Cover Letter?

Step #1: Do your homework – First Impressions Count!

- **Do not** use the same version for multiple employers, especially if you are applying for similar types of positions. A stock letter is obvious will make a bad first impression.
- Tailor each and every letter to the employer and to the specific job.
- You will need to read the employer's publications in order to determine what they do, if that is interesting to you, and if they might be interested in you (right skills or coursework, for example).
- Use this information to explain why you want to work for this mentor or research team
- Make certain that it is free of spelling mistakes, grammar issues, and typos.
- Use plain email or stationary -- free of distracting backgrounds, pictures or quotes.



- Choose a font that is not too big, not too small, not in color, definitely not comic sans and NOT IN CAPS -- 12-point Arial or Helvetica are easy to read and look professional.
- Avoid slang, attempts at humor, and ending sentences with an exclamation point!

Step #2: Create a draft of your Cover Letter

- Address your potential future employer properly – Dear “Dr. (insert surname here).” If you start with “Dear Sir/Madam” or “To Whom It May Concern,” your application could be dismissed as generic and untailed for the position. If you cannot find the time to use the investigator’s name then you will be dismissed as not taking initiative and your letter will likely go to the recycling bin. If you do not invest the time to learn about the PI and their research, then the PI is unlikely to invest their time to read your application.
- Paragraph #1:
 - First sentence -- state why you are writing the letter. Get right to the point — “I am applying for the postdoctoral position available in your laboratory that was recently advertised (where).”
 - Second sentence – give your current position, place of work and mentor. If you are not immediately available for the position (still need to finish thesis, for example), it is useful to mention when you will be able to start. End the first paragraph with just one or two concise sentences that hint at why you are the ideal candidate for this position (techniques or model systems).
- Paragraph #2 – Further elaborate on why you should be considered for a postdoc in this particular laboratory. Customize your letter and outline how your skills match or complement those of the Principal Investigator. Use the keywords that you identified in the job description or from the publications from the Principal Investigator’s laboratory. Failure to be specific to that Principal Investigator’s work makes you look uninterested and lack initiative -- who would want to hire someone like that? Also identify areas that you want to learn from the Principal Investigator’s laboratory.
- Paragraph #3 – Highlight a few key achievements -- your most important paper or two, a grant or fellowship, or other notable honors (an award-winning presentation at a conference, for example). If you have experience training others in a technique, mention that. But keep it brief – you are highlighting what should be provided in your CV. (make sure you include your CV).

Paragraph #4 – Thank the investigator for taking the time to read your CV and for considering you for this position. Be sure to provide your contact information and state that you look forward to hearing from him or her. The cover letter should be 1- 1 ½ pages max.