

How to Write a Good Academic Biography (Part 1)

Author

Enago Academy

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When your journal article gets accepted or you are preparing for a public presentation, you will often be asked for a short academic biography. For many people, these academic bios are more difficult to write than a dissertation. How do you sum up yourself and your work in 3-5 sentences? What do you need to include? What should you leave out?

What You Should Do

1. Start with your full name followed by your current position, your general interests, and your current project, keeping them all very brief.
2. If you are within a year of receiving a prestigious award, mention that as well.
3. Finally, finish with a sentence that's personal: add a hobby, a pet's name, the city you live in—whatever you are comfortable with that is personal but not too private.

What You Should Avoid

1. Avoid speaking in the first person, i.e., don't use "I."
2. Don't divulge details beyond your current position.
3. In a longer bio of multiple paragraphs, you may add more awards and information about your master's and bachelor's degrees, but not in a short bio. Moreover, don't add anything that happened before grad school—including your place of birth. For example:

Hi! My name is Scott. I was originally born in Vermont and now I'm a professor at North Yankee University in Fargone, New York (in upstate New York). I study antelopes' migration patterns and their impact of native grain growth. My interest in antelopes began as a teenager when I first saw one in the wild. I did my undergrad degree in biology at SUNY and my masters and UCLA and my PhD in Forestry at Hunter College.

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The above example is far too casual and Scott's work and current position are overshadowed by all the other random details. This can be written in a much better way:

Scott Sampson is a professor of Wildlife Biology at North Yankee University. His work focuses specifically on the migration patterns of antelope and their impact on the growth of native grain. His favorite place to do research in his backyard, which opens to the Akron National Forest.

This improvised version is concise, relevant, and makes Scott's bio appear professional while giving a short description of his personal details.

Longer Bios

For longer bios, follow the same basic rules, but go into a bit more depth about your work, your education, and your future projects or interests. You may also consider adding a line about your immediate family. But as always, leave the personal details for a short and friendly mention at the end of the bio.

Mostly, your bio will be used by someone to introduce you at a conference or public event so if you write your bio using these tips, you will help them give a smooth and accurate introduction. Remember that the bio is the first thing that people know about you so pack it full of the most important things about yourself!

If you would like to know more about different formats of academic biography, read the [next article](#) in this series!

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