

## Writing a Professional Bio

A professional biography is a written summary of a person's relevant professional and academic experiences. These biographies provide potential employers or particular clients with a specific introduction that highlights your achievements, experience, talents, and personal interests. There are three formats that are commonly used when writing a professional biography: Long format, short format, and two-line format.

### Long Format

Multiple paragraphs, sometimes a page in length. A typical "long format" written at Boise State University includes 3 paragraphs, which are divided into professional, academic, and personal backgrounds.

Lynn Scott is a free-lance artist who creates visual art and sells her paintings and pottery at markets and on her online website. As a self-employed artist for multiple years, she manages her own work schedule, taking commissions from individuals or businesses, collaborating with clients to make their ideas reality. Her work caught the attention of The City of Boise who awarded her, along with a group of peers, a grant to paint a mural representing diversity and change next to Boise State University. In this process, she collaborated with fellow students, businesses, and cultures to best describe the diversity of her city.

Scott is a third-year student studying Visual Arts with an emphasis in Drawing and Painting at Boise State University. Scott used her commission from The City of Boise to further her education in cultural studies and business management, which compelled her to minor in cultural studies. Scott will use her undergraduate degree to improve the collaboration between college disciplines and continue her studies on the relationships between culture and art.

She uses her knowledge of societies and cultures around the globe to provide her with a unique lens on the art world, which has presented her with opportunities to create cultural art for her university campus. Her experiences working with fellow artists to represent the diversity of her city opened Scott's eyes to her newfound passion: the power of collaboration and diversity in a publicized display.

### Short Format

One paragraph in length. Consider using the first paragraph of your long format bio if it is broad enough!

Lana Krav is a junior at the University of Washington, majoring in Forensic Studies with a minor in Sociology. Ms. Krav is trained in forensic photography and drug analysis, and is working on a certification in crime scene reconstruction. Her minor in Sociology provides her with a new perspective of researching crime in populations and societal systems, enhancing her skills as a criminologist. She wants to pursue criminology to become a private investigator.

### Two-Line Format

An "elevator pitch" of yourself. How can you summarize yourself in 15 seconds?

Heather Lihn is a recent Honors graduate of Boise State University with a BFA in Graphic Design. She has certifications as an Adobe Certified Associate (ACA) and a Certified Web Developer. Lihn is continuing her education with an MFA in Media Design.

## Quick Guide to Professional Bios

### 1. Update your personal bio regularly.

- Keep all of your professional bios regularly up-to-date. You should aim to check in on your bio at least every six months, so as to avoid any stale information being presented to potential customers and or employers.
- Generally speaking, each bio will include your postsecondary education and any job credentials broad enough to apply to multiple careers.

### 2. Tailor your bio to your audience and purpose.

- Each individual bio should be tailored to your specific audience and purpose. Multiple bios for different audiences do not need to share every detail. A bio for your photography website will be more creative, whereas a bio for your research portfolio will be more academic.
- Your photography bio is likely to be separate from your research bio, and include precisely tailored details, but any information shared between the two needs to be congruent as they're still about *you*.

### 3. Write in an active voice.

- Writing in an active voice emphasizes the person performing an action, and tells the reader what that person does. An active voice confidently communicates your accomplishments and skills to your reader.
- In active voice, the subject is doing the action ("Harriet published three reports in the journal") whereas in passive voice the subject is after ("Reports were written by Harriet and published in the journal").

### 4. "Show" rather than "tell."

- Avoid "telling" your audience your skills: "show" them your specific skills when describing your experiences! One way to "show" your skills is to use them as action verbs, such as using "collaborate" or "communicate" to describe job responsibilities e.g. "She regularly collaborates with students on writing."
- Highlight specific skills. Use the "skills" you're highlighting as action verbs: analyzed, consulted, communicated, hired, researched, etc.

### 5. Make your professional bio actionable.

- Action items (or a "call to action") invites potential customers and or employers to respond to your bio. One way to invite your readers to interact with your bio is to include ways for them to follow up: A link to book an appointment with you, your personal website, or professional portfolio and or publications.