

Writing a bio-statement

1. Audience/Purpose
2. Tone
3. Length
4. Content
5. Structure
6. Language

1. Audience

Whom is the bio for?

- colleagues/academics in your department or discipline
- academics outside of your field of study
- undergraduate students
- clients of various types
- general public
- ...

2. Purpose

What purpose is the bio-statement expected to serve?

- to give **readers of an article or conference proceeding** a sense of who is providing that information
- to acquaint **another academic** interested in your research with some of your background information
- to give **clients of a particular institutional** site a sense of who they're working with
- to present yourself on a **book cover**

3. Tone

- **Who is present in the text and how?** (Is the bio written in the first or third person?)
- **How formal/informal does the bio sound?**
- **Is the tone personal or impersonal?** (For example, does the writer address herself as Maria or Dr. Maria Brown?)

4. Content

For a very short bio (35-50 words), generally used in publications and conference proceedings, writers tend to include the basics:

- name
- position
- department
- institution
- research interests

4. Content

For a mid-length bio (100-200 words), e.g. an institutional or departmental website, you might *add*:

- degrees held
- recent or ongoing scholarly projects
- notable awards and honors
- publications
- journals in which you've published
- you might situate your research interests in a larger field of study

5. Structure

- **Chronological:** usually starts in the past (A) and continues to present (B) or the other way around,
- **Circular:** starts at an important or climactic moment (D), backtracks (A), and then explains all the events leading up to that moment (B, C), eventually bringing the reader back in full circle; good for building suspense.
- **Zoomed In:** focuses on one critical event to symbolically tell a larger story; might use a few small, surrounding details to orient the reader, but otherwise, the moment is important enough to stand on its own.
- **Thematic:** scholarly projects and activities may be organized according to theme (i.e. your institution, research topic, theory, or methodology).

6. Language

Tense usage:

- **Present Simple** to express general facts, habits, routines
- **Present Perfect** to express experience, duration until the present
- **Past Simple** to narrate finished events

Catherine Redford is a Lecturer in English at St Hilda's College, where she has taught since 2012. Her research interests lie in the Romantic and Victorian periods, and include the 'Last Man' in late Romantic texts; wider ideas of apocalypse and dystopia in nineteenth-century English literature; Mary Shelley; H. G. Wells; friendship in Romantic literature; and Romantic and Victorian responses to 'enchantment'.

A Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, Catherine teaches various papers covering the period 1660 to the present day, as well as critical theory. She was awarded Highly Commended in the Keats Shelley Prize (2012) for an essay on Mary Shelley, and was a finalist in the BBC's New Generation Thinkers competition (2013). She has published on Mary Shelley and Romantic depictions of apocalypse.

Catherine is Associate Editor (Reviews) of Romantic Circles.



Source:
<http://www.sthildas.ox.ac.uk/college/academic-staff>



Audience: colleagues, students and general public



Tone: third person, formal language, personal tone when using her first name "Catherine" in subject position



Length: 134 words

Content

Catherine Redford is a Lecturer in English at St Hilda's College, where she has taught since 2012. Her research interests lie in the Romantic and Victorian periods, and include the 'Last Man' in late Romantic texts; wider ideas of apocalypse and dystopia in nineteenth-century English literature; Mary Shelley; H. G. Wells; friendship in Romantic literature; and Romantic and Victorian responses to 'enchantment'.

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Catherine is Associate Editor (Reviews) of Romantic Circles.

Catherine starts by the most important information – **her current position**

Then she lists her **most important research areas** (because the list is long, she uses semicolons)

She summarizes her **teaching expertise**

She highlights her **main achievements**


She concludes by her **publication and editing activities**

Structure

Catherine Redford is a Lecturer in English at St Hilda's College, where she has taught since 2012. Her research interests lie in the Romantic and Victorian periods, and include the 'Last Man' in late Romantic texts; wider ideas of apocalypse and dystopia in nineteenth-century English literature; Mary Shelley; H. G. Wells; friendship in Romantic literature; and Romantic and Victorian responses to 'enchantment'.

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Catherine doesn't structure her profile chronologically; instead she focuses on her most recent activities and achievements and divides them in two thematic paragraphs:

1st paragraph – her activities at St Hilda's

2nd paragraph – her other recent activities

Repetition of subjects

Catherine Redford is a Lecturer in English at St Hilda's College, where she has taught since 2012. Her research interests lie in the Romantic and Victorian periods, and include the 'Last Man' in late Romantic texts; wider ideas of apocalypse and dystopia in nineteenth-century English literature; Mary Shelley; H. G. Wells; friendship in Romantic literature; and Romantic and Victorian responses to 'enchantment'.

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Catherine is Associate Editor (Reviews) of Romantic Circles.

Note that the main character – Catherine appears in all subjects (either her name, the pronoun “she” or subtopic “her research interests”)

To avoid tedious repetition, she incorporates this introductory phrase separated by a comma

Use of tenses

Catherine Redford is a Lecturer in English at St Hilda's College, where she has taught since 2012. Her research interests lie in the Romantic and Victorian periods, and include the 'Last Man' in late Romantic texts; wider ideas of apocalypse and dystopia in nineteenth-century English literature; Mary Shelley; H. G. Wells; friendship in Romantic literature; and Romantic and Victorian responses to 'enchantment'.

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The Present Perfect – used here to express duration of an action until now (*since 2012 until now*)

The Present Simple – used here to express a general fact

The Present Simple – used here for habitual activities

The Past Simple – used here because the actions are finished and with clear time setting (*years 2012 and 2013*)

The Present Perfect – used here to express publishing experience in undefined past and that this activity will still continue

Stephen Lin received his PhD from the Washington University in St. Louis and did his Postdoctoral research at Harvard University. In 2006 he joined StemCells, Inc. of California as a Scientist for liver cellular therapeutics, where he discovered pathways that contribute to the rapid decline of function and expansion of primary human hepatocytes. Since 2012 he has been Staff Scientist for early-stage product concepts at Life Technologies (now part of Thermo Fisher Scientific), a global life sciences company that develops and offers tools for every aspect of stem cell and gene therapy including genetic manipulation, genetic analysis, and cell culture.

Source:

<http://stemcell.omicsgroup.com/2015/scientific-program.php?day=2&sid=562&date=2015-03-24>

Audience: colleagues, researchers in stem cells

Tone: third person, formal language, impersonal

Length: 100 words

Content

Stephen Lin received his PhD from the Washington University in St. Louis and did his Postdoctoral research at Harvard University. In 2006 he joined StemCells, Inc. of California as a Scientist for liver cellular therapeutics, where he discovered pathways that contribute to the rapid decline of function and expansion of primary human hepatocytes. Since 2012 he has been Staff Scientist for early-stage product concepts at Life Technologies (now part of Thermo Fisher Scientific), a global life sciences company that develops and offers tools for every aspect of stem cell and gene therapy including genetic manipulation, genetic analysis, and cell culture.

Stephen starts chronologically in the past – **his studies**

Then he continues the chronology and **highlights his main achievement**

He then moves to present and his **current position**

He concludes by the main **research interest and significance**

Structure

Stephen Lin received his PhD from the Washington University in St. Louis and did his Postdoctoral research at Harvard University. In 2006 he joined StemCells, Inc. of California as a Scientist for liver cellular therapeutics, where he discovered pathways that contribute to the rapid decline of function and expansion of primary human hepatocytes. Since 2012 he has been Staff Scientist for early-stage product concepts at Life Technologies (now part of Thermo Fisher Scientific), a global life sciences company that develops and offers tools for every aspect of stem cell and gene therapy including genetic manipulation, genetic analysis, and cell culture.



Stephen uses **chronology**
(starts in the past and
finishes in present)

Repetition of subjects

Stephen Lin received his PhD from the Washington University in St. Louis and did his Postdoctoral research at Harvard University. In 2006 he joined StemCells, Inc. of California as a Scientist for liver cellular therapeutics, where he discovered pathways that contribute to the rapid decline of function and expansion of primary human hepatocytes. Since 2012 he has been Staff Scientist for early-stage product concepts at Life Technologies (now part of Thermo Fisher Scientific), a global life sciences company that develops and offers tools for every aspect of stem cell and gene therapy including genetic manipulation, genetic analysis, and cell culture.

Note that the main character – Stephen Lin begins the story and appears in all subjects (referred to by the pronoun “he”). This principle helps the writers achieve cohesion and coherence.

To avoid repeating the same subject at the beginning of each sentence, Stephen sometimes starts with time adverbs that postpone the subject

Use of tenses

Stephen Lin **received** his PhD from the Washington University in St. Louis and **did** his Postdoctoral research at Harvard University. In 2006 he **joined** StemCells, Inc. of California as a Scientist for liver cellular therapeutics, where he **discovered** pathways that **contribute** to the rapid decline of function and expansion of primary human hepatocytes. Since 2012 he **has been** Staff Scientist for early stage product concepts at Life Technologies (now part of Thermo Fisher Scientific), a global life sciences company that **develops** and **offers** tools for every aspect of stem cell and gene therapy including genetic manipulation, genetic analysis, and cell culture.

The Past Simple – the first four verbs express the chronological sequence of events that are finished and with clear time setting (*in 2006*)

The Present Simple – used here to express a generally accepted fact

The Present Perfect – used here to express duration of an action until now (*since 2012 until now*)

The Present Simple – used here to express general actions and repeated events

Common moves and steps in the biostatement game (Tardy & Swales, Genre Analysis (2014))

Move	Steps
Describe position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List current position held • List institutional affiliation • List city or country where position is located
Establish formal qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List degree(s) received • Identify institution from which degree was granted
Mention publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make general reference to the fact that the author has published • List publication types and/or journal titles • List titles and publishers of books
Describe research areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List areas of research interest or projects
Describe professional activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe past or current job types or professional responsibilities • Describe specific professional projects carried out in the past or present • List past or current roles in professional organizations • List geographic locations where the author has lived and worked
Describe honors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List awards, grants, or honors received