

RESUME AND COVER LETTER GUIDE

What Is a Resume--Marketing Your Experience

A resume is your first opportunity to promote or “sell” your skills and experience to a potential employer. Most internships and full-time jobs require you to submit a resume and cover letter as your application. Think of these application materials as your chance to market yourself as an excellent fit for the position.

As a freshman or sophomore, your resume may list a broad range of experiences. However, as you look for career-related internships and full-time jobs as a junior and senior, it becomes increasingly important to tailor your resume to meet the needs of each employer. Your resume should highlight the key experiences that best represent the skills you will need for the desired position.

Preparation

Before writing your resume, review your educational and professional history. Make lists of all schools attended, jobs held (paid and volunteer), duties performed, extracurricular activities, honors received, skills acquired, duties performed and any appropriate additional information. These lists will form the basis of the content of your resume, and will help you identify which of your accomplishments are relevant and should be included. As you narrow your career options and identify skills in demand for your targeted industries, you will want to emphasize those on your resume.

Getting Started

Margins: Use “normal” (i.e. one inch) margins on the top, bottom, left and right sides of the page. Margins may be decreased to ½ inch to fit all information on one page, but make sure the resume is easy to read and not too crowded. Keep a balance of white space and text.

Fonts: We recommend using 11 point font. If you need to go smaller, do not go any smaller than 10 point font. Most resumes use either Calibri or Times New Roman

for font type, but it is permissible to use any professional style font. Use the same, consistent font style throughout the document.

Indentations, Italics, Underlining: Thoughtful use of indentations, italics, underlining and bold can make your resume more visually appealing and easier to read. However, overuse of those styles can be distracting.

Be Consistent: Be consistent throughout the resume regarding abbreviations, dates and how you present information. Make sure that each work, volunteer and internship experiences are in the same format. Always list the organization, title, location, and dates of employment/experience in the same order, style and font. Being consistent gives the employer an indication of your attention to detail.

Choosing a Resume Format

Many kinds of experiences may be listed on a resume, such as internships, volunteer work, part-time jobs, leadership positions, research, and on-campus or extracurricular activities. Depending on your background and the type of position for which you are applying, it is important to consider which experiences and style are most appropriate.

Chronological Resume

Used most frequently, this easy-to-read resume format focuses on your education, work, skill, or leadership background. It is written in reverse chronological order, starting with your most recent experience. Use action verbs to describe your accomplishments in each position.

Functional or Skills Resume

This approach is useful if transitioning to a new career field to develop skill sections highlighting your experiences and transferable competencies. Start each description of a job-related accomplishment with an active verb. Then list the

employers, job title and employment dates in a separate work history section.

Combination or Hybrid Technical Resume

This resume format focuses on the individual's experiences and transferable skills developed at particular work settings, volunteer experiences, or internships. A reverse chronological listing of work history is still used.

Resume Layout

Most resumes include several standard sections. You may decide to customize your section headings depending on your background and desired position.

Heading/Personal Contact Information

List your name, address, phone number, and e-mail. Your e-mail address should be professional and include your name. Your voice message should be appropriate for potential employers to hear.

<p>John M. Smith 1234 Park Street St. Louis, Missouri 63141 314-555-5555 (mobile) smith@live.maryville.edu</p>

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Summary/Objective (optional)

<p>Maryville University, St. Louis, MO Candidate for Bachelor of Science, May 2015 Major: Business Administration; Minor: Psychology <i>Honors and Awards:</i> Dean's List, 5 semesters Campus Activities Board (CAB), Committee Member</p>
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Experience

The experience category may be titled "Experience," "Work Experience," or "Professional Experience". This section includes work, internship, leadership, research, and volunteer experiences. Employers consider experience, paid or unpaid, an integral part of your resume. Highlight your accomplishments and skills related to each specific

Summary/Objective statements (sometimes called "Professional Objective", "Job Objective" or "Career Objective") are optional and included only if no cover letter is required, or if you have made a career change and your past experience does not reflect your current interests. If included, this concise and specific statement serves as a "headline" or thesis statement that is intended to communicate your interests directly related to the position.

Education

Begin with the most recent degree you are pursuing or have earned. Include institution, city and state, degree you will earn, major(s) and minor(s), and month and year of completion. List any additional degrees in reverse chronological order. Study abroad and other summer or academic programs may also be listed in this section. Transfer students who attended another institution for more than one year, or who had significant career-related experience from another college/university, may also list that institution on their resumes. Dual degree students should list both institutions. Advanced and technical coursework directly related to the desired job may also be included in this section. High school details should be included only in your freshman and sophomore years.

<p>Maryville University, St. Louis, MO Bachelor of Science in Actuarial Science, May 2015 <u>Relevant Coursework:</u> Insurance and Risk; Risk Theory</p>
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Honors, Awards & Activities

List honors, awards and/or activities in a separate section or as a heading under the education section.

experience. As your resume becomes more tailored, you may want to break up your experience into categorized sections (e.g., marketing experience, nonprofit experience).

Computer/Technical/Language Skills

Indicate your knowledge of technical, foreign language, research, computer (software, hardware, platforms, programming languages, operating systems, applications) and other specialized skills. Be accurate and explain your knowledge or proficiency level by using appropriate wording to describe your ability (fluent, proficient, or basic knowledge). You can quantify your experience as well (e.g., two semesters of college-level Spanish).

Resume Writing Tips

The best resumes are focused, concise, visually appealing, and speak to the employer's needs. Keep in mind the following guidelines.

- Focus on the employer's needs, not yours. What characteristics would describe the employer's ideal candidate? Highlight the qualifications that best match that "ideal" candidate description.
- Think about how your skills are transferable to a new environment and keep this in mind as you write descriptions of your past experiences. For example, customer service skills that you gained in retail could be transferable to other client-based work.
- Limit your resume to one page, make the format clear and easy to follow, and ensure there are no spelling or typing errors.
- Begin your bullet points with action verbs (do not use "responsibilities included"). Paint a picture of your experience by including specific duties, program names and actual numbers. Remember, when the employer initially reviews your resume you will not be present to provide explanations or insight.
- Use present tense for activities, internships or jobs with which you are still involved. Use past tense for activities or jobs you have completed.
- List your GPA if you are proud of it. GPA is more important in some fields than in others. If GPA is important in your field, list it with two decimal points (i.e. 3.86/4.0 not 3.8/4.0).
- Spell out the names of organizations that go by acronyms, as employers may not be familiar with them. Avoid abbreviations, particularly when you have room to spell out the full word.

References

DON'T: Write "Reference available upon request" at the bottom of your resume.

DO:

- Prepare a list of references on a separate page so you will have them ready if an employer asks for them.
- Copy and paste your heading (name and contact information from your resume) onto a second page and list the name, title, address, phone and e-mail of three to four people (professors, employers, student group advisors, and internship supervisors).

- Contact all references BEFORE you list them to ensure they are comfortable acting as a reference for you.
- Contact all references AGAIN after you have provided the reference list to your potential employer and provide him/her with the job title, description, company name and the name of the person who will be in contact.

Resume Reviews

Ask several people to review your resume for good flow, grammar and formatting. For a critique, you can schedule an appointment with a Career Advisor or Career Peer by calling 314-529-9375 or stop by during "walk-in" hours.

Cover Letter Writing

A cover letter is your formal introduction to a prospective employer. Your letter should demonstrate your ability to think clearly and write persuasively. An effective cover letter makes you stand out, and some employers consider it even more important than your resume.

Your cover letter should establish a link between the needs of the organization and your skills and experience related to those needs. Demonstrate your motivation, creativity and knowledge of the organization. Rather than restating what is on your resume, enhance your qualifications by describing HOW your past experience will benefit the employer. A cover letter should always accompany your resume.

Cover Letter Writing Tips

- Write a custom cover letter for each position and print it out on the same paper as your resume. Use the same heading and font that you used on your resume so your materials look like a package.
- Address your letter to a specific person. If you do not have a name, call the organization and ask for the name and title of the person who should receive your letter. As a last resort, you may use "Dear Hiring Manager."
- In general, cover letters state the specific position you are seeking in the first sentence, tell the reader why you think you should be considered and suggest the next course of action (e.g., you will follow up with a phone call).

- Make the most of referrals and connections. Name the person who referred you in the opening sentence. The familiar name will grab the reader's attention.
- Research the organization, study the position description, and tailor your letter accordingly. Your initiative and knowledge will make your letter stand out from others. Resist the temptation to use a standard letter that only changes the company name.
- Focus on the reader's needs, not yours. Make your qualifications clear and emphasize how you can help the organization.
- Limit the letter to one page or less. Business writing is different from academic writing. Keep it simple, straight-forward and to the point.
- Cover letters serve as a method to help employers evaluate your writing ability. Spelling and grammar must be perfect. Ask friends, mentors and advisors to review your letter and provide feedback. Read your cover letter out loud to pinpoint grammatical mistakes.
- For a critique, you can schedule an appointment with a Career Advisor or Career Peer by calling 314-529-9375 or stop by during "walk-in" hours.

Submitting Your Application Materials

The position description will indicate if the employer prefers or requires a particular method of sending your cover letter and resume to apply for a position.

Hard Copy

Sending a hard copy of your cover letter and resume involves printing them on quality paper and sending them through the postal service. Some boxes of resume paper come with business envelopes. If you choose to use a 9 x 12 envelope, be sure to use correct postage. When possible, feed your envelope through the printer or make a label instead of hand writing the address.

E-mail

It is extremely important to exercise professionalism when corresponding with employers through e-mail. Be sure to

use a concise, business-like style and check for spelling, punctuation and grammar. Choose an appropriate subject line. When applying for a job, an example of an appropriate subject is "Timothy Smith, Marketing Assistant application."

When sending your cover letter and resume via e-mail, we recommend that you send it as a PDF attachment so it will print in the intended format. In a professional manner, introduce your attachments with a brief three to four sentence note in the body of the e-mail. Your note should reference the position to which you are applying. Be sure to include your contact information.

Online Application Forms

Some employers require applicants to paste resume information into online application fields. In this case, you may want to remove your resume formatting so that the information is organized and easy to read in electronic form. If an application requires you to list your skills, carefully consider those you wish to include and provide a comprehensive list. Applicants are often sorted by the skills and experiences provided on the application.

Most electronic resumes are sent in Microsoft Word (.doc) or Adobe Acrobat Reader (.pdf). However, some guidelines might ask you to submit your resume as text-based or ASCII format. A text-based resume will eliminate most of the formatting such as bold, italics, bullet points and underlining. Review your text-based resume before you submit it to the employer. Be sure to check spacing and page alignment if you are pasting it from a Microsoft Word document.

Employers in some industries are investing in computer systems that use OCR (Optical Character Recognition) technology to scan and screen resumes. You may want to work with someone at The Office of Career and Professional Development if you have questions about preparing a scannable resume. Electronic and scannable resumes are only to be used at the employer's request.

Actions Words For Resume Writing

Achieved	Communication	Detail Oriented	Research	Managed/Led	Service/Support	Manual Skills
Attained	Aided	Analyzed	Analyzed	Achieved	Advised	Arranged
Awarded	Arbitrated	Approved	Assessed	Assigned	Advocated	Assembled
Completed	Advised	Arranged	Calculated	Administered	Attended	Bound
Demonstrated	Apprised	Classified	Cataloged	Consulted	Cared	Built
Earned	Arranged	Collated	Collected	Contracted	Carried Out	Checked
Outperformed	Authored	Compared	Computed	Controlled	Coached	Classified
Reached	Briefed	Complied	Correlated	Coordinated	Coordinated	Constructed
Succeeded	Campaigned	Documented	Critiqued	Decided	Counseled	Controlled
Targeted	Clarified	Enforced	Diagnosed	Delegated	Delivered	Cut
	Collaborated	Followed Through	Discovered	Developed	Demonstrated	Drove
Creativity	Composed	Met Deadlines	Evaluated	Directed	Educated	Drilled
Acted	Conferred	Prepared	Examined	Established	Earned	Handled
Abstracted	Consulted	Processed	Experimented	Evaluated	Empathized	Lifted
Adapted	Contributed	Recorded	Extrapolated	Executed	Expanded	Maintained
Composed	Coordinated	Retrieved	Gathered	Facilitated	Explained	Prepared
Conceptualized	Counseled	Set Priorities	Identified	Fired	Facilitated	Pulled
Created	Debated	Systemized	Inspected	Guided	Furnished	Operated
Designed	Defined	Tabulated	Interpreted	Hired	Generated	Tested
Developed	Directed		Investigated	Implanted	Informed	
Directed	Drafted	Financial	Measured	Initiated	Inspected	Technical
Drew	Enlisted	Administered	Monitored	Led	Installed	Authored
Generated	Explained	Allocated	Observed	Motivated	Issued	Charted
Illustrated	Expressed	Analyzed	Organized	Negotiated	Mentored	Compiled
Imagined	Helped	Appraised	Proved	Operated	Referred	Condensed
Improvised	Influenced	Audited	Qualified	Orchestrated	Related	Developed
Integrated	Informed	Budgeted	Quantified	Organized	Repaired	Eliminated
Innovated	Inspired	Calculated	Reviewed	Oversaw	Resolved	Estimated
Painted	Interpreted	Computed	Surveyed	Planned	Provided	Formulated
Performed	Interviewed	Developed	Tested	Prioritized	Purchased	Generated
Planned	Manipulated	Figured	Tracked	Produced	Sent	Graphed
Problem Solved	Mediated	Managed		Recommended	Served	Installed
Shaped	Merged	Performed		Reported	Serviced	Instructed
Synthesized	Negotiated	Prepared		Supervised	Submitted	Invented
	Participated	Projected		Trained	Transmitted	Logged
	Promoted	Tracked Records		Unified		Minimized
	Recommended					Routed
	Repressed					Solved
	Spoke					Surveyed
	Suggested					Translated
	Summarized					Upgraded
	Supported					
	Verbalized					
	Wrote					

Headings for Resumes

Academic Honors	Languages
Achievements	Licenses
Activities	Military Service
Affiliations	Non-Teaching Experiences
Areas of Expertise	Objective
Awards	Other Experience
Campus Involvement	Other Work
Campus Leadership	Overseas Study
Career Objective	Papers Presented
Certificates	Position Desired
Civic Activities	Practicum Experience
Civic Engagement	Presentations
Classroom Experience	Professional Ability
Coaching Certification	Professional Experience
Coaching Interests	Professional Leadership
Coaching Skills	Professional Memberships
Committee Assignments	Professional Objective
Community Activities	Professional Seminars
Community Involvement	Professional Societies
Community Service	Publications
Computer Competence	References
Computer Literacy	Related Coursework
Computer Skills	Related Experience
Conference Participation	Scholarships
Conferences Attended	Seminar Presentations
Credentials	Services
Distinctions	Shows
Education	Skills
Employment	Skills and Competencies
Endorsements	Special Skills
Exhibits	Special Training
Experience	Student Teaching
Extracurricular Activities	Study Abroad
Field Experience	Summary of Strengths
Global Experience	Teaching Certificate(s)
Group Memberships	Teaching Experience
Highlights of Strengths	Teaching Objective
Honorary Societies	Teaching Skills
Honors and Awards	Teaching Strengths
Interests	Technical Skills
International Experience	Technology Experience
Internship Experience	Training
Languages Ability	Volunteer Activities
Language Competencies	Workshops Attended