

Résumés, Cover Letters, Thank You Letters

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RÉSUMÉ PREPARATION

Purpose of a Résumé

Your résumé summarizes your personal, educational, and work experience qualifications and is used when you apply applying for work, graduate school, or scholarships or fellowships. It does not serve the same purpose as a job application. This handbook focuses on job search tools, primarily résumés and cover letters.

Your résumé should be designed to sell your skills, abilities, and knowledge to an employer. Companies typically receive hundreds of résumés, so they give only a quick glance (perhaps 10 seconds) over each. To ensure your résumé gets you an interview, honestly adapt it to an employer's needs by highlighting your skills and abilities to show how you can contribute to the company's overall success.

Résumés are marketing tools that display the facts individuals wish to present to a prospective employer. When developing your résumé, tailor it to the job for which you are applying by targeting your skills, qualifications, and accomplishments to the job qualifications or requirements. Emphasize the skills you have that are similar to the skills required to do the work, use specific examples of how you use your skills to accomplish tasks or meet objectives (this shows you are results oriented). When describing your work experiences, mention duties and responsibilities to indicate use of these skills.

Remember, there is no one right way to prepare a résumé. The style and information will vary depending on your experiences and your particular situation.

Categories of a Résumé

Identification

Put your name, address, telephone number, and email address at the top of the page. Avoid abbreviations and nicknames. Use the same name you use on your employment application. If you do not have a telephone, give a telephone number where you can receive messages.

Objective

This statement must focus on what you can contribute to the employer. You should include only one objective or goal, which is clear and concise and consistent with accomplishments and demonstrated skills shown on your résumé. When you apply for different occupations where the same objective is not suitable, design a résumé geared toward each occupation. An alternative to writing a career objective or designing several résumés is to relay this information through the cover letter (see Page 7). Remember, a job objective is defined specifically for the opening you wish to fill. A career objective is a long-range plan that may or may not relate directly to the job for which you are applying.

Education

Begin with your present or most recent school then continue backwards, omitting high school information unless you had noteworthy experiences during high school, high honors or courses or projects that genuinely reinforce the career objective.

For undergraduate and graduate education, show the degree (B.S., B.A., A.S., M.Ed.), then your major, then your minor, and dates of attendance or graduation the first line. On the second line, show the names of schools, dates attended or graduation dates. On the third line, show honors, awards, Dean's List, grade point average. If the job ad mentions specific courses you completed, add a section entitled "Relevant

Courses” and add only upper-level courses related to the job. If there are four or more, use two columns to show the course names, not the course numbers.

Similarly, if your school honors and awards are too long, consider adding a separate section to your document. List activities, accomplishments, awards, honors, and athletics that indicate a well-rounded personality, demonstrate a social awareness, and are related to your employment objective. If you have been out of school for a while, give less educational detail, but present your education clearly and concisely.

Experience

Cooperative education, internships, work, volunteer work, summer jobs, special projects, or military experience can be included in this section or can be separate sections. If you have experiences related to your objective, you may want to list them under “Related Experiences.” Beginning with your present or most recent work, list position titles, names of organization, locations (city, state), dates (beginning and ending month and year), and duties and accomplishments. Use quantifiable data, measurable descriptions, and list any transferable skills applicable to the position for which you are applying. Be specific about your skills. Don’t list vague qualities like “good work ethic,” but describe actual achievements like “reduced company deficit by 50 percent.” Use specific figures. Mention accomplishments and goals met.

Additional Categories

The previous categories are considered to be the traditional or standard foundation of a résumé.

Additional categories allow you to include facts relevant to your employment objective and can be proven:

- Honors/Awards
- Relevant equipment you operate
- Scholarships Hobbies or Interests related to the job
- Occupational Licenses of Certificates Workshops/Seminars
- Qualifications: Recitals/art shows/published articles/poster contests/research projects
- Accomplishments Special Skills (e.g. Foreign Language)
- Computer and Software Skills
- Extra Curricular Actives (athletic or civic)

References

Do not include your professional references on your résumé. Make a separate page using the same contact information at the top of your résumé. The best references are employers who know your skills and interests or customers who received your services. Ideally, the information you show about each reference shows his or her opinion matters. List the names, job title, employer, address, telephone number, and email address of three to five references and be prepared to present them at the interview.

Tips for an Effective and Attractive Résumé

Your résumé should be a brief snapshot of your skills and abilities. The person who reviews your résumé often reviews hundreds of résumés. Therefore, you need to make your résumé both effective and attractive. This is part of your first impression to employers. The suggestions below can help you make your résumé the best statement about you and your potential as an employee. Write your résumé based on these tips and once you are finished, read the tips again to see if you need to make changes. Your résumé is a living document; that is, it changes as you gain new experience and develop new skills.

Things you must do:

- Be brief, clear, and concise. Easy to read, not confusing, and well organized. Use an attractive standard typeface in at least a 10-point font. Present headings in an order focused on your needs and objectives (e.g. Education, Work History, Skills).
- For most recent college graduates with limited relevant experience, a one-page résumé works well. Remember, this is a snapshot, not a biography.
- Be consistent with headings, captions, indentions, formats, and the use of CAPITALS and underlining.
- Be positive.
- Be honest. False statements or exaggerations on your résumé can lead to dismissal. Be certain you can substantiate everything statement on your résumé.

- Be careful. Double-check for grammatical, typographical, spelling or punctuation errors. Replace action verbs with important nouns if the employer will electronically scan the resume.
- Be neat. Have white space on all four sides of the page. Use adequate margins, single-space within sections, double-space after each section, be sure the type is clean and dark, and strive for an uncluttered appearance. If the information is too densely written, readers may miss your key points.
- Keep it in a computer file, if possible. This will allow you to change the résumé for the individual companies and positions you wish to pursue. Your résumé must be neat and easily printed, either by typeset or laser printer.

Things you must not do:

- Repeat details common to several areas.
- Use the pronoun "I" or "me."
- Use statements like "duties include" or "responsible for."
- State salary requirements.
- Offer negative information.
- Use personal information such as age, height, weight, marital status, religion, citizenship, or any hobbies or activities not directly related to the job. These have no bearing on your ability to do the work.
- Mention volunteer work for special interest or political groups, unless you are applying for a job with an organization that fully supports the work of those groups.
- Include any attachments. These are for your portfolio and should be shown during a face-to-face interview.

Critique your résumé

Correct spelling and grammar are critical. Mistakes can cost you an interview. Have your résumé checked by more than one person before you send it. For your final draft, you may want to have it reviewed in Career Services. If you design it yourself, use a word processor; résumé writer, or computer graphics program.

Reproduction

Choose a high-quality, 8 ½ x 11-inch white or ivory paper. Use between 20- and 24- pound, high cotton fiber content paper, and a good duplicating process. Commercial copy services usually produce good copies at low cost, and have quality paper at a per sheet price. The Career Center will print three (3) copies of your résumé on paper you provide. If you use a computer or word processor, print on a laser printer. Laser print is almost as good as photo typesetting.

Verbs to Use

Here is a sample of useful action verbs. Go through the list to see which you can use to make your résumé more active and action oriented. Make sure you do not overuse one or two verbs.

accelerated	discovered	instituted	proposed
achieved	displayed	instructed	proved
adapted	doubled	integrated	published
administered	edited	introduced	reconciled
advanced to	eliminated	invented	reduced
analyzed	employed	investigated	regulated
applied	enacted	keynoted	reinforced
approved	engineered	lectured	reorganized
arranged	enlarged	led	reported
assembled	established	licensed	researched
assisted	estimated	located	reshaped
attained	evaluated	maintained	resolved
bought	examined	managed	revamped
budgeted	executed	manufactured	reviewed
built	exhibited	marketed	revised

chaired	expanded	maximized	saved
commanded	facilitated	moderated	secured
completed	financed	motivated	served
composed	forecast	negotiated	simplified
conceived	formed	obtained	sold
conducted	founded	operated	sorted
contracted	governed	originated	stimulated
controlled	guided	perceived	strengthened
converted	helped	perfected	structured
coordinated	hired	performed	succeeded
correlated	illustrated	persuaded	supervised
created	implemented	pioneered	supported
decided	improved	placed	systematized
designed	influenced	procured	tutored
developed	inspected	progressed	verified
directed	installed	prompted	wrote

Nouns to Use

Here is a sample list of useful nouns. Go through the list and see which you can use to make your résumé more powerful.

approaches	handbook	program	art
help	project	assignment	human resources
recommendation	attachment	ideas	records
capabilities	individuals	relations	catalog
information	reports	change	innovation
requirements	charts	input	research
communications	investigations	resolutions	competition
machines	resources	conclusions	materials
response	controls	methods	self-starter
cost	operations	service	criteria
output	solutions	data	performance
sources	designs	plans	specifications
duties	policies	standards	events
precision	statistics	facts	presentations
strategy	findings	principle	structure
fixtures	priorities	survey	framework
problem	system	goals	process
technique	groups	procedures	treatment
growth	product	variables	

Adverbs and Adjectives to Use

These words describe how you do things. Go through the list to see which you can use in your résumé to accurately reflect yourself and the way you do things.

accurate	driving	innovative	reliable
acuity	dynamic	instrumental	repeatedly
adept	easily	leading	respected
artful	effectively	lifelong	responsible
astute	exceptional	mastery	sensitive
aware	expert	natural	significant
broad	experienced	new	sophisticated
calm	extensively	objective	strongly
challenging	firm	open-minded	successful
competent	foresight	original	tactful
concerned	greatly	outgoing	talented
contagious	highly	outstanding	trained
creative	high-level	uncommon	dedicated
honest	perceptive	unique	dependable

humanizing
imaginative
improved

pioneering
quick
readily

unusual
versatile
vigorous

diplomatic
discrete
diverse

RÉSUMÉ FORMATS

Chronological Format

A chronological résumé highlights your work experience. It starts with the most recent position, and then describes the next job, and so on, until all the important jobs are listed. This style is used most often. Consider this format if you have work experience but have been laid off or are changing jobs. Consider developing a functional resume if you have major gaps in employment or have had many job changes.

Tips for a Chronological Résumé

- Include the most details about your most recent employment.
- Highlight skills and accomplishments in the experience section. Don't just describe duties. Show the reader your contribution to the company or business is important.
- Measure or quantify results when possible. Use concrete examples, such as numbers, percentages, amounts, and descriptive statements.
- For early jobs, use short phrases with action verbs in past tense, such as achieved, directed, or sold. Describe your current job with present tense verbs, such as analyzing, solving, or explaining. Be consistent throughout your resume.
- Education information can go either at the bottom or top of a chronological résumé. Usually, if it is within the past five years, it should be at the top. In this sample résumé, the most recent work record is close to the employment objective, so it is listed before education.
- You may want to use bold lettering for former employers and schools.

Functional or Skills Résumé Format

A functional or skills résumé highlights skills and potential, rather than where and when you used them (work experience and education). It describes accomplishments, capabilities, and skills. It does not provide great detail on work history. Consider this format if you lack "real world" experience (college grads), are changing careers, have good skills but limited work experience, or have gaps in your work experience

Tips for a functional résumé

- Use four or five separate paragraphs, each one emphasizing a particular area of skill or responsibility. Use short phrases, not complete sentences.
- Highlight your skills and potential by using action or skill words, such as managed, sold, coordinated, improved, or planned. Provide measurable or quantifiable results when possible.
- The statements must all be directly related to the employment objective. This may require some research or study about the occupation.
- Accomplishment statements answer the question "What have I done?" Capability statements answer the question, "What can I do?"
- Place the section most related to the employment objective at the top of the list. It may contain more information.
- Place your education directly after the employment objective if it was within the past five years and is related to your employment objective. If your education is not related to your employment objective, place it at the end.
- You can omit the brief listing of your work experience if you have no relevant work experience, or if there are gaps in your work history. Be prepared to give more information about your employment experience at the interview.

Combination Résumé Format

A combination résumé incorporates the best elements of the functional and chronological résumé. It highlights relevant skills and accomplishments to the current job search by function, while work experience is presented in the standard, reverse chronological formation. This format can draw attention away from gaps in employment while at the same time allowing the writer to emphasize special skills and experiences. One of the advantages of the combination résumé is the flexibility to structure the document so it works best for you, but the downside is that it takes longer to read.

Consider this format if you fall into any one of the following categories if:

- Each position you have held involved a different job description.
- You are a student, new graduate and entry-level job seeker (or you have held internships or volunteer positions that directly relate to field of interest). This allows job seekers to emphasize their skills rather than their short-lived employment history.
- You are a worker with a steady, consistent employment history. The addition of a qualifications summary pinpoints the top credentials for the job objective so employers readily see you are a good match.
- You are a career-changer, unless you're making a radial career change, in which case a functional résumé probably makes more sense.
- You are an applicant re-entering the job market. This format takes emphasis off the fact you have not been working for a while.
- You are an older worker. Workers with extensive employment history need to sell their strongest credentials; including a summary section provides that focus.

Tips for a combination résumé

- The main strategy is to lead with a Career Summary (also commonly called a Qualifications Summary or Skills Summary) that emphasizes your strongest credentials. It can be quite brief, or up to six sentences and can also appear in the form of bulleted statements. Each situation is different. By stating your key qualifications at the beginning of your résumé, you entice hiring managers to read all your résumé. You can incorporate your job objective, key skills, and areas of expertise, accomplishment highlights and related training into the summary section. Follow with a reverse chronological employment history; this keeps your résumé in the chronological format most employers prefer.
- Be clear and concise when writing your Employment History or Experience section. Avoid adding unnecessary information about jobs and task unrelated to your career goal.
- Other sections on a combination résumé depend on your specific experience, but can include Education, Training, Affiliations, Languages and Additional/Miscellaneous information.

See sample résumés at

<http://jobsearch.about.com/sitesearch.htm?q=sample+resumes&SUName=jobsearch>

and

<http://www.quintcareers.com/resres.html>

COVER LETTER PREPARATION

Purpose of a Cover Letter

Always write a cover letter when sending your résumé to a prospective employer. Cover letters are important, perhaps more important than résumés. While résumés summarize your qualifications, cover letters should sell you to employers. You want the letter to convince the employer to take action on your résumé and invite you for an interview. Be specific about your qualifications, list a few results directly related to how you use your skills, and explain how you will contribute to the organization. Actual experiences are more important to employers than vague phrases. Many job seekers mail copies of their résumés to prospective employers, even when no openings have been announced. Mailing unsolicited résumés can sometimes be productive when the cover letter is tailored to the prospective employer. Be sure to enclose all the materials, such as your résumé and writing samples, to which you refer in your letter.

Tips for a Cover Letter

- Address your letter to a specific person by name. If you do not know the name of the hiring official reviewing your résumé, call the employer and ask. In some cases, the hiring official's name will be listed in the advertisement or job posting. It may be the personnel manager. The head of the department in which the opening occurs sometimes reviews résumés. In small businesses, it may be the owner. It is a good idea to send two copies to the firm - one to the hiring official and one to the personnel manager, if they are different people. You can usually find out the hiring official's name and title by asking the secretary or receptionist who answers the phone. Explain that you would like to send a letter to the person in charge of reviewing applications. Be sure to get the correct spelling of the person's and the company's name and address.
- When a formal title is desired, use "Ms." for women and "Mr." for men. If you cannot tell from the name whether the person is a man or woman, call the employer's personnel office and ask whoever answers.
- It is imperative to write an original cover letter for each position for which you are applying. A generic form cover letter you send to every employer just does not work well.
- Like your résumés, the cover letter should be brief and to the point. Don't use jargon or be too technical. Its purpose is to tell the employer why you are interested in the job, what qualifies you for the job, and to request an interview. Remember to show what you can do for the business, not what it can do for you.
- Use action words instead of passive ones.
- Pay close attention to grammar and spelling.
- Try to limit the use of the personal pronoun "I".
- Show a genuine interest in the job and the company.
- Give your letter a businesslike appearance.
- Print or type it on the same high-quality bond paper as your résumé.
- Use wide margins and center the letter on the page so there is as much blank space above the top line (the inside address) as there is below the bottom line (your typed name). The format used for the sample cover letter outline is widely accepted in the business world. In the sample letter, the text is aligned at the left and a blank line separates the paragraphs.
- Your envelope should be typed and should match the professional look of your résumé.

Sample Cover Letter

Your Present Address
City, State, Zip Code
Date

(several blank lines)

Employer Name
Title
Organization
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Blank:

1st paragraph – Tell why you are writing; name the position, field, or general career area about which you are asking. Tell how you heard of the opening or organization. Refer to any previous contact you may have had with the employer.

2nd Paragraph- Mention one or two of your qualifications you think would be of greatest interest to the organization, slanting your remarks to their point of view. You can elaborate on the rest of your accomplishments if you're granted an interview. Tell why you are particularly interested in the employer, location, or type of work. If you have had related experience or specialized training, be sure to point it out. Refer the reader to the enclosed application form or résumé for additional information concerning your background and interests.

3rd Paragraph – Close by making a request for an opportunity to visit the employer. Indicate you will follow up with a phone call about the possibility of a meeting. If, instead of wanting an interview, your request is for further information concerning openings, it would be polite to enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Be certain closing is not vague, but makes a specific action from the reader likely. Thank the employer for his/her considering your application materials. Include a statement telling the reader he/she can reach you for additional information at (your email) or (your phone).

Sincerely,
(Your Handwritten Signature)

Type Your Name

Get additional suggestions for your cover letters at
<http://www.quintcareers.com/Content-Index/Cover-Letters.html>

THANK YOU LETTERS

When you have an interview, follow up within 24 hours with a sincere thank you letter. Include a statement stating you are interested in pursuing the position and send any additional information the interviewer asked about. Use the same business letter format recommended for a cover letter.

Sample thank you letter

<p>Your home address City, State, Zip Date</p> <p>Name of individual who interviewed you Title Company Mailing Address City, State, Zip</p> <p>Dear ----:</p> <p>Thank you for talking with me today about the vacancy in your Finance Department. You gave me a very good picture of what is expected. I am very interested in the position feel my performance on the summer internship with Arthur Anderson and Company and my B.S. in Accounting demonstrate my ability to do this job well.</p> <p>The completed application form you requested is enclosed and a college transcript is being sent from the Registrar's Office of Middle Georgia State College. I trust you will consider my application favorably. Please let me know if I may provide you with any additional information.</p> <p>Sincerely yours, <i>Handwritten Signature</i> Typed Name</p> <p>Enclosure</p>
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Thank you for using this guide. When you have your basic résumé and/or cover letter drafted, feel free to have it reviewed in Career Services. Call 478/471-2714 to set up and appointment or send it as a Word document attached to an email to barbara.warren@maconstate.edu.

Career Services

Middle Georgia State College
Suite 254, Student Life Center, Macon Campus
478/714-2714

<http://www.mga.edu/career-services/default.aspx>

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