

How to Prepare an Effective Resume

I. Resume Essentials

Before you write, take time to do a self-assessment on paper. Outline your skills and abilities as well as your work experience and extracurricular activities. This will make it easier to prepare a thorough resume.

II. The Content of Your Resume

Name, address, telephone, e-mail address, web site address

All your contact information should go at the top of your resume.

- * Avoid nicknames.
- * Use a permanent address. Use your parents' address, a friend's address, or the address you plan to use after graduation.
- * Use a permanent telephone number and include the area code. If you have an answering machine, record a neutral greeting.
- * Add your e-mail address. Many employers will find it useful. (Note: Choose an e-mail address that sounds professional.)
- * Include your web site address only if the web page reflects your professional ambitions.

Objective or Summary

An objective tells potential employers the sort of work you're hoping to do.

- * Be specific about the job you want. For example: To obtain an entry-level position within a financial institution requiring strong analytical and organizational skills.
- * Tailor your objective to each employer you target/every job you seek.

Education

New graduates without a lot of work experience should list their educational information first.

- * Your most recent educational information is listed first.
- * Include your degree (B..A., B..S., etc.), major, institution attended, minor/concentration.
- * Add your grade point average (GPA) if it is higher than 3.0.
- * Mention academic honors.
- * List relevant coursework.
- * Describe your Independent Study
- * If you studied away from campus, add it to this section.

Experience

Briefly give the employer an overview of work and any other experiences (volunteer, committee membership, etc.) that has taught you skills. Use action words to describe your what you did. Include your experience in reverse chronological order—that is, put your last experience first and work backward to your first, relevant job. Include: (see next page)

- * Title of position,
- * Name of organization
- * Location of work (town, state)
- * Dates of employment
- * Describe your responsibilities with emphasis on specific skills and achievements.

Other Information

A staff member at your career services office can advise you on other information to add to your resume. You may want to add:

- * Key or special skills or competencies,
- * Leadership experience in volunteer organizations,
- * Participation in sports.

References

Ask people if they are willing to serve as references before you give their names to a potential employer. Do not include your reference information on your resume. You may note at the bottom of your resume: "References furnished on request."

III. Resume Checkup

You've written your resume. It's time to have it reviewed and critiqued by a career advisor. You can also take the following steps to ensure quality:

Content

- * Run a spell check on your computer before anyone sees your resume.
- * Get a friend (an English major would do nicely) to do a grammar review.
- * Ask another friend to proofread. The more people who see your resume, the more likely that misspelled words and awkward phrases will be seen (and corrected).

Design:

These tips will make your resume easier to read and/or scan:

- * Use white or off-white paper.
- * Use 8-1/2- x 11-inch paper.
- * Print on one side of the paper.
- * Use a font size of 10 to 14 points.
- * Use non-decorative typefaces.
- * Choose one typeface and stick to it.
- * Avoid italics, script, and underlined words.
- * Do not use horizontal or vertical lines, graphics, or shading.
- * Do not fold or staple your resume.
- * If you must mail your resume, put it in a large envelope.

Action Words

Use action words to describe your experience and accomplishments.

achieved	acquired	adapted	addressed
administered	analyzed	anticipated	assembled
assisted	audited	budgeted	calculated
centralized	changed	collaborated	composed
condensed	conducted	constructed	contracted
converted	coordinated	created	cultivated
demonstrated	designed	developed	devised
discovered	doubled	drafted	edited
eliminated	enforced	established	evaluated
expanded	explained	forecasted	formed
founded	generated	guided	hired
implemented	improved	informed	insured
interpreted	interviewed	launched	maintained
managed	marketed	minimized	motivated
negotiated	obtained	operated	organized
originated	oversaw	performed	planned
prevented	produced	programmed	promoted
provided	publicized	published	recruited
reorganized	reported	researched	resolved
reviewed	selected	separated	set up
simplified	solved	surveyed	staffed
supervise	taught	tested	trained
used			

How to Write Cover Letters

The preliminary application for a professional position generally consists of two documents: a cover letter and a resume. The cover letter allows you to tailor your application to each specific job and introduces your resume. Your resume gives more complete details about your education and experiences. Effective cover letters are constructed with close attention to: **Purpose, Audience, Content, and Format.**

Purpose

Your cover letter and resume usually provide all the information which a prospective employer will use to decide whether or not you will reach the next phase in the application process: the interview. While your goal is an interview and, ultimately, a job offer, the more immediate purpose of your cover letter, in some cases, may simply be to gain an attentive audience for your resume.

Audience

A cover letter provides, in a very real sense, an opportunity to let your prospective employer hear your voice. It reflects your personality, your attention to detail, your communication skills, your enthusiasm, your intellect, and your specific interest in the company to which you are sending the letter.

Therefore, cover letters should be tailored to each specific company you are applying to. You should conduct enough research to know the interests, needs, values, and goals of each company, and your letters should reflect that knowledge.

Content

A cover letter should be addressed to the specific company and the specific individual who will process your application. You can usually find this through research or simply by calling the company to find out whom you should address your letter to.

The letter should name the position for which you are applying and also make specific references to the company. Indicate your knowledge of and interest in the work the company is currently doing, and your qualification for the position. You want the reader to know:

- * why you want to work at that specific company,
- * why you fit with that company
- * how you qualify for the position.

In addition to tailoring your application to a specific job with a specific company, the cover letter should also

- * highlight the most important and relevant accomplishments, skills, and experience listed in your resume
- * point to the resume in some way ("as detailed in the enclosed resume")
- ?? request specific follow up, such as an interview.

Format

A cover letter should be in paragraph form (save bulleted lists for your resume) with a conversational, though formal, tone.

The first paragraph should be brief, perhaps two or three sentences, stating

- * what job you are applying for and how you learned about it
- * any personal contacts you have in or with the company
- * your general qualifications for the job.

The body of your letter should consist of one to three longer paragraphs in which you expand upon your qualifications for the position. Pick out the most relevant qualifications listed in your resume and discuss them in detail, demonstrating how your background and experience qualify you for the job. Be as specific as possible, and refer the reader to your resume for additional details.

The concluding paragraph of your letter should request an interview (or some other response, as appropriate). State where and when you can be reached, and express your willingness to come to an interview or supply further information. Close by thanking your reader for his or her time and consideration.

Example: Cover Letter 1

1234 15th Street
Troy, New York 12180
January 30, 2002

Mr. John M. Curtis
Recruiting Coordinator
HAL Corporation
55 Washington Avenue
New York, New York 10081

Dear Mr. Curtis:

As an experienced computer programmer who is presently pursuing a bachelor's degree in computer science at the College of Wooster, I am writing to request information about possible summer employment opportunities with HAL. I am interested in a position that will allow me to combine the talents I have developed in both computer programming and web design. However, as you can see from the attached resume, I have extensive experience in many related fields, and I always enjoy new challenges.

I feel that it is important for me to maintain a practical, real-world perspective while developing my academic abilities. I am proud of the fact that I have financed my entire education through scholarships and summer jobs related to my field of study. This work experience has enhanced my appreciation for the education I am pursuing. I find that I learn as much from my summer jobs as I do from my academic studies. For example, during the summer of 2000, while working for IBM in Boca Raton, Florida, I gained a great deal of practical experience as a technical consultant. When I returned to school in the fall and took Computer Hardware Design, I found that my experience with IBM had thoroughly prepared me for the subject.

Having said all this, I realize that your first consideration in hiring an applicant must not be the potential educational experience HAL can provide, but the skills and services the applicant has to offer. I hope the experience and education described in my resume suggest how I might be of service to HAL.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss with you how I might best assist HAL in fulfilling its present corporate needs. I will be available for employment from May 14 through August 31, 2002. Please let me know what summer employment opportunities are available at HAL for someone with my education, experience, and interests. You can reach me at the above address or by phone at (518) 271-0000.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Joan Doe

EXAMPLE: Cover Letter 2

February 2, 2002

James Butler
Vice President
XYZ Company
ABC Address
City, State & Zip Code

Dear Mr. Butler:

I am writing to express my interest in joining your professional sales team. I obtained the information about the sales position in the Akron Beacon Journal newspaper. I have attached a copy of my resume and this letter summarizes my professional background.

I have experience in sales and marketing. As a student, I started my own company, took it from a business plan to construction to sales approaching a half million dollars and successfully sold it. I have trained sales staffs in effective selling techniques and instituted sales policies and procedures. I have held sales presentations for senior executive staffs and made presentations at local colleges. I have written business plans and had complete profit-and-loss responsibility.

I possess professional oral and written communications skills and work well in a team environment. I have broad computer knowledge, extensive public speaking, managerial and administrative experience. I am a self-disciplined, focused and committed person.

I have had a long-term interest in the field of pharmaceutical sales and have read extensively on the subject. I am open to relocation and am available to travel to your corporate headquarters for an interview.

I hope that you will carefully consider my background and invite me to an interview. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Russell Nelson

Enclosure: Resume