

Writing an Effective Resume

Heading

- Bold your name and use 16-pt. font.
- Make sure that the voicemail for the number you provide is professional.
- Your email address should be job appropriate.
- You may place a line underneath your heading to set it apart.

Career Objective

- Target it toward the type of position and organization for which you are applying and include a few skills that you can bring to the organization. Use the job description to help you choose which skills to include.

Education

- List your education in reverse chronological order.
- Include anticipated or earned degree/certificate, major, minor, university and expected year of graduation.
- Bold the name of your degree and place it on the first line.
- List your GPA.
- Include honors and awards.
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Experience

- Include title, name of organization, location and dates for each position.
- Write out the month and year for both beginning and end dates (e.g., May 2013–June 2014).
- Emphasize your strongest accomplishments, rather than a list of job duties.
- Begin each bullet with an action verb (Ex: Cooked, Served, Prepared).
- Keep bullet points short and concise, yet specific.
- Abbreviate states with capital letters (e.g., IN, CA, NY).
- Quantify when possible (Ex: Supervised 15 employees, Decreased expenses by 15 percent, Managed a \$30,000 budget).
- If you have relevant experience in the field (Ex: Food Service), you may title this section to be more specific to the position (Ex: Food Service/Culinary Arts Experience).

Final Tips

- Be sure to tailor your resume for each position.
- Do not exaggerate your experiences. Find a position that matches your current skill set.
- Absolutely no typos!
- Don't overcrowd the page. Use no less than 11-pt. font and .75 margins.
Recommended fonts include Times and Arial.
- Avoid acronyms.
- Do not include personal information (e.g. relationship status, age, siblings, etc.).
- Be consistent in your format (e.g., If you list dates on the right in your experience section, you must list them on the right for all sections).

Providing References

- Select three to five business references to provide to the employer. The individuals you select should be able to expand upon your work.
- Choose references that are really going to sing your praises. If you have any doubt about what someone might say about you, don't use them.
- Ask permission before giving their name out as a reference.
- Ask your references for the best method and time to be reached.
- Create a separate reference sheet that matches your resume format. The reference sheet should match the heading on your resume as well as the font and margins.
- Verify that all contact information is current. You should include: name, title, address, phone number, and email address.
- Finally, let your references know when and where you have accepted a position, and thank them for helping you in the job search process.

Providing Letters of Recommendation

A letter of recommendation may be requested by employers or professional programs when applying.

1. Choose individuals who can provide evidence of your past accomplishments that prove that you have the skills and qualities needed. Past supervisors, professors, mentors, and coaches are all great options. Refrain from asking family members to write recommendations.
2. Give your recommenders plenty of time to write the letter. Share with them the position/program to which you are applying as well as supplemental information that will help them select the experiences to share in the letter. Send along any relevant projects/papers as well as a deadline.
3. Always follow up with your recommenders with a thank you letter and update them on the results of your application.

TIP: Even if an employer has not requested a letter of recommendation, it could be very beneficial to send one along with your resume and cover letter. Many applicants do not, which could give you a competitive edge!

Composing a Cover Letter

Pick a couple of your strongest experiences and expand on them in your letter. The experiences you choose should coincide specifically with the skills required for the position.

- Keep it to one page.
- Use a font type and size that matches your resume.
- Edit carefully for spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.
- Do not mass produce a cover letter—create one specifically for each job description.
- Do not overuse the personal pronoun “I.”

Cover Letter Format

Address Blocks

At the top left hand side of the page, include your street address, followed by the date and the employer's address.

Greeting

Address your cover letter to a specific person. If you are unable to find a contact person's name use "Dear Hiring Manager:"

Introduction Paragraph

The introduction paragraph should state the purpose for which you are writing. Be specific about the title of the position. If you were referred by a professional contact, you may state their name here. Tell the reader what you will bring to the position in terms of skills and accomplishments, and how they align with the objectives of the position. Then go on to prove those skills in the following paragraphs.

Body Paragraphs

The body paragraphs allow you to elaborate on the skills you mentioned in your introduction. Provide good examples of how your skills have been demonstrated. Describe your past accomplishments and how they predict success in future endeavors.

Closing Paragraph

Complement the skills you highlight by describing personal qualities which will enable you to perform well. Also, ask the employer for an interview and include contact information.

Preparing for an Interview



- Analyze your interests, skills and accomplishments, not to mention your passions and dreams. Identify examples of success from your past experiences. You should be able to tell short stories that explain problems or situations you encountered, the action you took to solve those problems and the results of your actions.
- Identify two or three "selling points." Distinguish your employment candidacy from that of others. A selling point could be an example of your strong leadership experience, your role in a meaningful community service project, or direct experience in your field of interest.
- Research the organization prior to the interview using the organization's website. Key facts to gather before interviewing include: Key people in the organization, major products or services, mission and vision statements, and latest news reports on the company or on local or national news that affects the company.
- Acquire as much information as possible about the position. What skills are required for this position? What are the position responsibilities?
- Remember that the interview is a two-way exchange of information. Your goal is to discover if the organization is a good fit for you. The goal of the employer is to assess whether you are a good fit for their organization. Be sure to prepare questions about the position and

organization.

- Leave your cell phone in the car or turn it off during the interview so that you are not interrupted.
- Always take contact information for the employer with you in case you are late or have to reschedule.
- Make sure you are aware of your meeting location and the best route to get there.

Interview Questions

- Tell me about a time when you had to choose between two or more important opportunities.
- *Prepare a 45 second elevator speech about felony and show how it was a positive, learning experience.*
- Give a specific example that best illustrates your ability to deal with an uncooperative person.
- Tell me about a time when you had to work with someone who had a negative opinion of you and how you overcame this.
- Recall a time when you participated on a team.
- Tell me an important lesson you learned that is useful to you today.
- Think about someone whose leadership you admire. What qualities impress you?
- Tell me about a time when you experienced a lack of motivation and how you overcame this.
- Tell me about a time that best illustrates your ability to persevere in a tough situation.
- Give an example that illustrates your ability to make a tough decision.
- Describe a situation that illustrates your ability to analyze and solve a problem.
- Describe a problem that seemed almost overwhelming to you and how you handled it.
- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want to work for our company?
- What interests you about this position?
- How have your educational and work experiences prepared you for this position?
- What work experiences have been most valuable to you and why?
- In what way do you think you can contribute to our company?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strength? Weakness?
- What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?

Questions You Can Ask Employers

- Please describe the typical career path of a _____ in this department/organization.
- What are the goals for this department/organization for the near future?
- Why do you enjoy working for this organization?
- Can you tell me where the process will go from here? (This will help you determine how quickly the company plans to make a decision)

Tough Interview Questions and Response Starters

Tell me about yourself.

This is typically the first question of the interview. Refrain from providing personal information and instead start selling your skills right from the start. Start by reviewing the job description and pick out two or three of the skills that the employer is looking for that you also possess. Then, provide brief yet convincing examples from your past that proves that you have the skills they are looking for in a candidate.

What is your greatest weakness?

It is important not to respond with an answer that is too incriminating (e.g., I have a hard time staying motivated). Instead, state an area that you have already begun to improve upon. You may briefly state the weakness and then spend a majority of the time discussing the steps you have taken to address it, and your plan going forward to ensure that it is resolved.

Interview Attire

What to Wear

Women

- Dark suit (pants or knee-length skirts are acceptable)
- A nicely pressed blouse or conservative shirt with appropriate neckline
- Closed-toe dress shoes
- Neat, well maintained hair and conservative makeup
- Minimal or no perfume
- Minimal and subtle jewelry
- Clean, trimmed fingernails (clear or conservative polish)
- Minimal accessories/bags



Men

- White or light-colored pressed dress shirt with conservative tie
- Dark, polished dress shoes, dress socks, and matching belt
- Neat, well maintained hair (including facial hair)
- Minimal or no cologne
- Clean, trimmed fingernails



What Not to Wear

Men

- Shorts
- Ripped jeans
- Dirty clothes
- Wrinkled clothes
- Sweatshirts or T-shirts



Women

- Short skirts/shorts
- High heels
- Sweatshirts or T-shirts
- Too much make up
- Low necklines
- Wrinkled clothes
- Dirty clothes
- Ripped jeans



After the Interview: Send a Thank You

Thank you letters should be clear and concise. They should include a brief statement about when and where the interview occurred, and your expressed thoughts of appreciation. Reiterate a couple of your skills or specifics that you learned during your time at the interview.

Send your thank you letter promptly, preferably within 24 hours of the interview. If you choose to send your letter via postal mail, keep in mind the delivery time of the mail as well as the time line of the company's hiring process. You want to ensure that your letter arrives prior to their final decision. One option is to e-mail a thank you letter right after the interview, and follow up with a hand written or typed letter.

Helpful Links

- Interview Dos and Don'ts: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1ucmfPOBV8>
- What to Ask your Interviewer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUx14pX4Rjc>
- How to Ace an Interview: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHDrj0_bMQ0
- What Not to Wear: <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewattire/ss/Interview-Fashion-Faux-Pas-What-Not-To-Wear-To-An-Interview.htm#step1>