

RESUMES AND COVER LETTERS

HOW TO GET NOTICED

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT
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Career Development Center
APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY

The MPA program would like to thank Ms. Michelle Brown in AppState's Career Development Center for producing and sharing this presentation.

Ms. Brown has invaluable experience and expertise working with MPA students and she is happy to work with you individually if you reach out to her.



1 owner
Garage kept
60,000 miles



Rental car
4 major repairs
110,000 miles

*Sometimes we pick the one
that looks the best.*

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Presentation is just as important for a resume as it is for an interview – in fact, you may not get the latter with the former.

Remember...

It *isn't* always the *most qualified* candidates who get the jobs; instead it's the candidates who *market* themselves *most effectively*.



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Your resume and cover letter must be thought of as marketing materials. Look to reduce/eliminate distractions on your materials so that the reader can focus on your credentials and experiences. In short, the 'good stuff' can be lost amongst 'all the stuff'.

What will make **YOU** stand out from the rest?



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You must look at your resume from a reader's point of view.

Your resume is not an all-inclusive autobiography- you have to exclude some content in order for the most advantageous elements to stand out. Yes, the resume is 'about' you, but it is not 'for' you.

20 *Seconds*

Exercise: Have someone look at your resume for 20 seconds. What stood out to them? Could they identify your interests, ambitions, and core strengths?

WHERE DO I START?

Michelle Marketer

michelle.marketer@gmail.com
(700) 555-6543

111 Grand Blvd
Boone, NC 28607

- Name should be biggest words on page
- Information is current, correct and professional

EDUCATION

✓ Include:

- Degree/major in progress and degree(s) completed
- School name & location
- Graduation date
- Major(s), concentration (if applicable), and minor(s)

✓ Not necessary to list schools from which you did not earn a degree

✓ Do *not* list high school information!

✓ *Optional*

- Graduate level Academic/Service honors and Scholarships
- Certifications (CPR, etc.)
- Study abroad

Education:

Master of Public Administration

Appalachian State University, Boone NC, Anticipated May 2016



Education should come first on your resume until you have had 3-5 years of professional experience.

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The degree, not the school, should be prominent (same goes for job title, not employer). Put “exp.” before your MPA graduation date.

TIPS!

- ✓ Use **bolding** and *italics* to highlight degree
- ✓ Spell out **MPA**, **BS** and **BA**-looks more professional
- ✓ Education can move down on your resume after 3+ years, not before than
- ✓ Include **month** and **year** of graduation



You need to tailor your resume for the job ad to which you are responding = you don't have one, all-purpose resume.

FUNCTIONAL HEADINGS

- ◆ **Related Experience**
- ◆ **Leadership Experience**
- ◆ Related Projects
- ◆ Related Work Experience
- ◆ **Work Experience**
- ◆ Skills and Competencies
- ◆ Affiliations
- ◆ Volunteer Experience
- ◆ Languages
- ◆ Presentations
- ◆ Publications
- ◆ **Field Experience**
- ◆ Research Experience
- ◆ Related Skills
- ◆ Skills & Accomplishments
- ◆ Training & Certifications
- ◆ Honors & Awards
- ◆ **Summary of Qualifications**
- ◆ Technical Skills
- ◆ **Professional Involvement**
- ◆ Conferences and Workshops
- ◆ Teaching Experience

EXPERIENCE

- ◆ *What skills/experience* are important to this position?
- ◆ *What* is important for this employer to know about *you*?



10 skills employers seek on your resume

Leadership (tied for first)

Teamwork (tied for first)

Communication (written)

Problem Solving

Strong Work Ethic

Analytical/Quantitative

Technical Skills

Communication (verbal)

Initiative

Flexibility/Adaptability

How will your resume demonstrate these skills?

*National Association of Colleges and Employer November 2014 survey of employers

JOB DESCRIPTION AND A HIGHLIGHTER

Risk Analyst

Principle Duties and Responsibilities

- **Gather data for and prepare metrics** required for insurance applications collaborating with other internal departments.
- **Develop, prepare and distribute safety** and injury frequency rate metrics.
- **Analyze, review and prepare** monopolistic state premium billings, applications and requests for information.
- **Maintain Safety Data Sheet** library in coordination with vendor.
- **Complete Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) survey** requests and other requests for safety and/or OSHA statistics.
- **Coordinate the safety poster program** for stores completing the topics and distribution of safety information.
- **Maintain materials and process** to provide stores with updated safety program materials.

EXPERIENCE EXAMPLE

Corning Consumer Products Company

Corning, NY 2005, 2006

- Responsibilities included reviewing factory store leases.
- Acted as the liaison.
- Prepare files.
- I organized and submitted reports

What is wrong?



Your resume is your first opportunity to show that you are detail-oriented and take pride in any work that has your name on it.

EXPERIENCE EXAMPLE

Legal Intern, Corning Consumer Products Company, Corning NY

Summers 2014, 2015

- Reviewed factory store leases informing outlets of clauses and stipulations of contracts
- Prepared 200+ confidential files for state qualifications and name changes
- Organized and submitted reports consisting of quality statements and contracts for managerial decision-making
- Served as the liaison between the legal department and outlet landlords

- Use bulleted phrase beginning with power verbs
- Highlight skills/knowledge utilized/gained, results and accomplishments
- Do *not* list years only
- Consistency in periods and tenses
- Avoid phrases like “responsibilities or duties included”
- Include job titles for all experiences
- Do not use “I” statements
- Use **bolding** and *italics* to emphasize company name or job title
- Use clear concise phrases
- Use power words
- Do not over or under describe
- Use numbers when appropriate

List your experience in reverse chronological order = newest first (same goes for Education). Be sure to draw attention to your volunteer experience.

WRITING BULLET PHRASES

- Organized and submitted reports consisting of quality statements, contracts and department reports for managerial decision-making
- Power verb (correct tense) who/what for/by/resulting in (purpose/results)

Be wary of too many too many bullets per job (max. 5 for especially relevant experiences, but 2 should be enough for most), or points that are too lengthy.

PRACTICE!

A high-quality resume cannot be written in a hurry, or in one sitting

TYPES OF EXPERIENCE

Experience is *not* limited to paid work

- Internship
- Graduate Assistantship
- Volunteer
- Organizational Involvement
- Relevant Coursework/ Research Projects
- Work

Use *same layout* for internship, volunteer, and leadership experiences as you would for work

Organize experiences from *most recent/relevant to least recent/relevant* to the job.

Your most *Related Experience* should come first on your resume

Focus on transferable skills and experiences.

Be sure to avoid student activity/volunteer “overload”

Vice President, Student Government Association

Appalachian State University, Boone NC

August 2014-May 2015

- Implement and direct the new Senator Orientation Program indoctrinating student representatives to policies and procedures of the SGA
- Organize and facilitate various committee meetings to include university officers, faculty, and staff members informing them of students issues and concerns
- Re-wrote SGA Constitution to remain current with university regulations, policies, and procedures

Marketing Research Project

Appalachian State University, Boone NC

Spring 2014

- Complete group marketing research project on local art supply business
- Conduct focus groups and surveys....
- Input and analyze data....
- Document and report results

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Sometimes called “Profile”
- Summarizes most relevant experiences for job
- 3-5 points
- Only used when you have gained a significant amount of experience in a given field (3+ years)

- **Five years experience training and managing staff in hospitality industry**
- **Three years experience providing training and consultation in staff development**
- **Five years experience in providing customer service in fast paced environment**

FINAL TIPS!

*Employers look at resumes for an average of 20-30 seconds
Ask yourself these questions*

- Has my resume been reviewed **at least 2 times**?
- Is information **easy to find** or am I having a hard time reading it?
- Is my resume **consistent**?
- Does my resume show that I am very **detail oriented** and that I took my time?
- If you did not do your **best** on a resume, what kind of employee will you be?

Carefully proofread your resume to look for consistency in format, layout, spacing, font, etc.

FINAL TIPS!

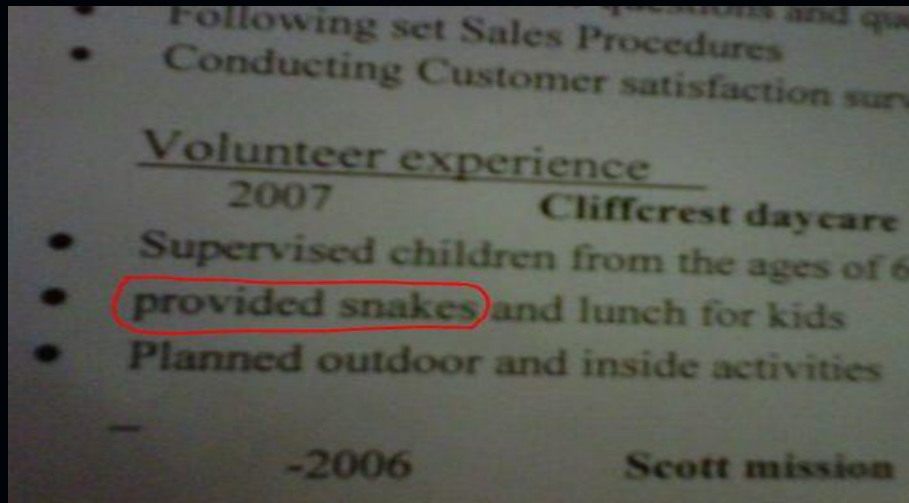
- **Avoid templates!**
- **Consistency!**
- **Error Free!**
- **Neat!**
- **Watch Tenses**
- **Avoid any negativity**
- **Don't overuse the same adjectives, adverbs or verbs**
- **Conservative font, not fancy**
- **Use resume paper-not flashy**



You cannot rely on spell-check – words can be misspelled to form other words (e.g. manager and manger, and statute and statue)

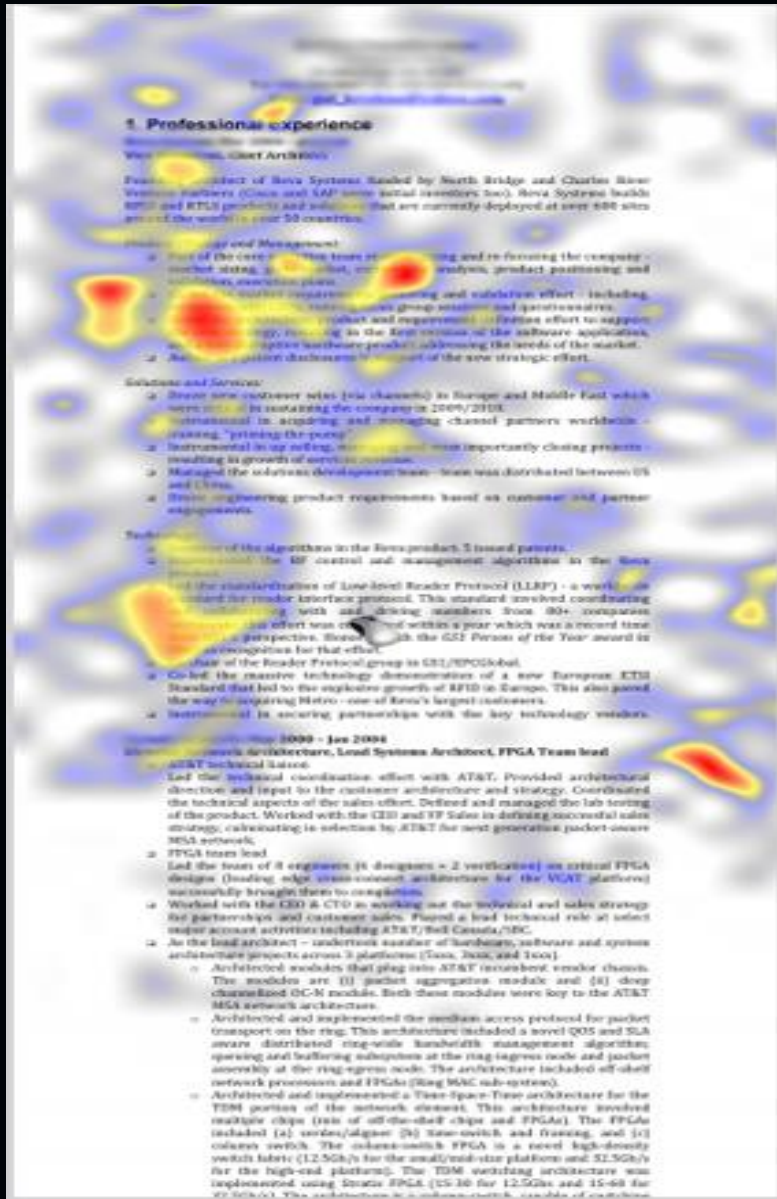
FINAL TIPS!

- Put name on all pages
- Spell out acronyms
- Separate page for references
- Use all of the paper, eliminate empty white space
- Do not overcrowd
- Extend margins to .5 if needed



One page maximum for class. Two-page resumes are increasingly okay in the real world, but be sure to repeat your full contact info on the second page, and fill up the second page – the problem of too much white space holds for page 2 too.

Eye Tracking Experiment of Resumes



The resume on the left is too busy and cramped. The one on the right uses bolding and has “breathing room.”

Your Name
Address
Phone
email@appstate.edu

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts, Communication May 20XX
Appalachian State University, Boone, NC
Other information to include may be your major(s), minor(s), GPA (overall and/or major, if favorable), relevant courses, certifications, dean's list, scholarships.

RELATED EXPERIENCE

Position Title

Name of Business or Organization, City, State June 20XX – Present

- Related experience is anything you have done related to your job objective.
- Examine your experiences in their entirety including full or part-time work, volunteer work, internships, student teaching, assistantships, other experiences to determine a strategic order for the presentation of your information.
- Organize headings to focus on certain types of experiences or skills, for example, "Sales Experience" or "Experience Working with Youth"; list first what is most attractive to your target reader or choose to have one large heading "Related Experience".
- Categorize less related experiences together in a heading "Selected Work Experience" or "Additional Experience"; see next section.
- List your experiences in reverse chronological order within each heading. (most recent first.)

Position Title

Name of Business or Organization, City, State May – August 20XX

- Describe in detail starting each phrase with a power word, what you did, why you did it, who you did it with, what equipment you used, the results, and what supervision you had or provided to others.
- Arrange descriptive phrases in order of relevance to the position for which you are applying.
- Quantify your results, if possible. Identify personal strengths and skills used to achieve your accomplishments.
- Use terminology that is common to the field you are pursuing.
- Always write out or explain technical terminology and abbreviations; do not leave anything to the employer's imagination or interpretation.
- Avoid using diluted phrases such as "responsible for" or "in charge of".

SELECTED WORK EXPERIENCE

Position Title

Name of Business or Organization, City, State Summers 20XX - 20XX

- Describe part-time jobs/seasonal jobs that are not related to your job objective; you may choose to list your work and not describe each if the title and the duties performed are self-explanatory or obvious.

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Position Title

Name of Business or Organization, City, State Fall 20XX - Spring 20XX

- List and describe organizations, position(s) held, volunteer work or other leadership and involvement or other experience of value to the prospect employer.

This resume is nicely balanced. Do not "stack" contact information. Don't use "responsibilities included" or "References available."

REFERENCES

- Separate page from resume
- Make sure your references **know they are references!**
- Correct Contact Information!
- Include minimum of 3 references

Examples of references

- Direct supervisor
- Faculty advisor
- Volunteer Supervisor
- Club/Organization Advisor
- *Not* friends or relatives

EXAMPLE OF REFERENCE PAGE

Michelle Resume

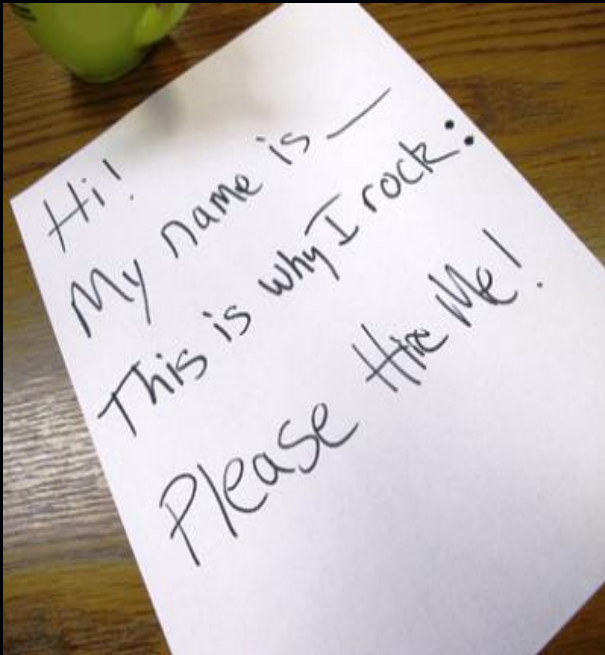
400 Center Court Drive
Boone, NC 28607
828-555-5555
brownmd@gmail.com

References

Cindy Day
Director of Investments
Bank of America
222 First Street
Charlotte NC 22222
555-555-0099
Cindyday@bankofamerica.gov
Direct supervisor 3 years

Always indicate the relationship to the reference. This helps the hiring official pick which references to contact. Be sure to provide your full contact info at the top of a Reference Page.

COVER LETTERS



Why send a cover letter?

- Introduce yourself to an employer
- Showcase your writing skills
- Give overview of background and abilities
- Make a good first impression
- Demonstrate your professionalism

Show how YOU will be a good fit for the organization and what you can contribute

This is an opportunity to highlight/expand upon an experience that is indicated on your resume. So be sure to use this opportunity to good effect.

COVER LETTERS

1st Paragraph

- State the position you are applying for and how you became aware of the vacancy
- Get the reader's attention immediately! **Show enthusiasm!**
- If someone referred you to the position, mention it in this section
- Say something that **shows interest in the company**



Be sure to indicate how you heard about the job opportunity, especially if you heard about it through a reference or other 'informal' means. And remember that many people will look at your application, not just the person to whom you send it to.

COVER LETTERS

Middle paragraph(s)

- Highlight specific skills and achievements relevant to the employer
- Use **keywords** from the job description
- Demonstrate **knowledge and goals** of the organization and industry
- Show **how you will be an asset** to this particular working environment

A Cover Letter

Dear person I don't know,
I am awesome! At least that is what my mom and friends tell me. Please validate my time and thousands of dollars spent on education... you can do this by offering me a job.
Sincerely (at least kinda),
Desperate Grad

Tailor cover letters to the job ad and use terminology from the ad in your letter.

COVER LETTERS

Closing Paragraph

- Reiterate your interest in the position
- Make a request for future communication with the employer
- Provide email address and phone number
- Thank the employer



You must convey that you are a strong candidate for THIS job, not just that you are looking for any old job.

COVER LETTER TIPS

- One size does **NOT** fit all...**tailor** your cover letter
- No longer than **one page**, typically 3-4 paragraphs
- Professional tone and writing style, avoid slang and being too informal
- Use business letter “block” paragraph style
- Create it to look like part of a **well put together application packet** – font size/type, margins are the same as your resume
- If emailing, attach as PDF with cover letter first, then resume and saved with descriptive title
 - Example: Michelle Brown resume and cover letter for xzy position

One page maximum. Look for ways to reduce space on the page (e.g. in Word, select “eliminate space between paragraph”)

COVER LETTER TIPS

- **PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD!**
- Print on quality resume paper that matches your resume
- Call to request the name and title of the individual responsible for hiring this position
- Do not use Dear Sir, Madam or To Whom it May Concern
 - If you cannot get a name, address the letter to the director/supervisor of the department
 - Example: Dear Director of Human Resources

Always find a person to whom to address the letter, and provide their full address at top (along with your full address).

Your contact information

Employer info

Position applying for

Why you are a good fit

Your experience

Smooth closing

Sign your name

123 Oak Street
Boone, NC 28607

Sample Cover Letter!

April 15, 200X

Ms. Martha Brown
445 Locust Lane, Suite 100
Blue Moon Rising Enterprises
Louisville, KY 40409

Dear Ms. Brown:

I am writing in response to the job posted to the Career Development Center at Appalachian State University seeking an assistant editor for the Blue Moon Rising Newsletter and promotional events for Blue Moon. Please consider me as an official applicant for this position.

It is with enthusiasm that I consider the opportunity to bring my strong editing and writing skills to Blue Moon. With my two years of experience writing articles for The Appalachian, our University newspaper, I bring the experience of producing two articles per week and consistently meeting print deadlines. I also gained strong experience interviewing diverse populations and gearing my articles for both student and professional faculty and staff readers.

My involvement with the art community in Boone, NC makes me well qualified to meet the needs of your well established relations in the art and business community in Louisville. My internship with the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce let me prove my abilities with promotional writing for the Art In The Park events. I also worked with the Chamber Director on a new initiative to draw more of the art galleries together in a new monthly event for summer tourist season. This event has yet to be officially named, but assisting with these endeavors provided me with experience in starting a program from the very beginning with community leaders in art and business.

Thanks for the time you will take in reviewing my resume and the enclosed sketch of my portfolio. A detailed portfolio can be found at careers.appstate.edu/portfolio/sl1234.

I look forward to the opportunity to interview with you in person and can make the trip to Louisville on very short notice. I also look forward to making Louisville my home and plan to relocate there in June.

Sincerely,

Shelley Long

Career Development Center

APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Everyone's resume is different. Schedule appointment with me for assistance. All appointments are scheduled online at careergear.appstate.edu.

Michelle Brown

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Career Counselor, College of Arts & Sciences

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262-2180

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careers.appstate.edu

Drop-Ins

2-4, M-F

