

Cleveland State University

Career Services

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. Your resume should highlight the key experiences that best represent the skills you will need for the desired position.

Choosing a Resume Format

Many kinds of experiences may be listed on a resume, such as internships, volunteer work, part-time jobs, leadership positions, co-operative education work, research, and on-campus 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

We recommend that most students start with a chronological resume. It is the most common resume format. This style focuses on your education and work 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 you are transitioning to a new field. Based on the desired qualifications listed in the job description, you create skill sections highlighting your experiences and competencies. Action verbs are used to describe each accomplishment, which exemplifies a skill relating to the job qualifications. You then simply list the organizations where you worked, along with your title and dates, in a separate section.

Technical Resume

Engineering and Applied Science students may consider developing a technical resume. The focus is on the student’s technical skills, coursework, and technical work experience, such as an internship or co-operative educational opportunity.

Typically, technically-oriented professionals such as Engineering Managers, IT Managers, and Research & Development Managers evaluate students’ resumes to determine how well they meet the job requirements. Therefore, it is important for engineering students to be specific and detailed in conveying their skills and abilities in a professional format.

Resume Layout

Most resumes include several standard sections. You may decide to customize your section headings depending on your background and desired position. Do not underline or use italics. These formats do not scan well.

Use capital letters for all of your headings.

Place the names of places on the left with city and state in the middle and dates on the far right for your entries.

Personal Contact Information

List your name, address, phone number, and e-mail. You may include both a local and permanent address. Your e-mail address should be professional and include your name. Make sure your voice message for the phone number that you list is appropriate for employers.

Summary/Objective

Phrase describing type of job you want or job title emphasizing two or three skills you have that match the job posting.

Education

Begin with the most recent degree you are pursuing or have earned. Include the institution, degree you will earn, your major(s) and minor(s), month and year of completion, and location with city and state. List additional degrees in reverse chronological order. Additional educational experiences may also be listed in this section, including study abroad and other summer or academic programs. Transfer students with solid experience another university might also list that educational institution. However, if you transferred after a year or less and have been

at your current institution for longer than the first institution, you may omit it from your resume. Dual degree students should list both institutions. Relevant, advanced and technical coursework can also be included in this section. List only courses that are relevant to the desired job. High school details should be included only in your freshman and sophomore years. By your junior year, your college experiences should replace any from high school.

Honors, Awards & Activities

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

Experience

This section includes work, internship, co-ops, leadership, research, student group and volunteer experiences. Employers consider experience, paid or unpaid, an integral part of your resume. Highlight your accomplishments and skills related to each specific 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 with regard to describing your knowledge or proficiency level. Use appropriate wording to describe your language ability (fluent, proficient, or some knowledge). You can quantify your experience as well (e.g., two semesters of college-level French).

Resume Writing Tips

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

- Focus on the employer's needs, not yours. Determine which of your qualifications best match that "ideal" candidate description and highlight those in your bullet points.
- 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 transferred to other client based work.

- Limit your resume to one page, make it visually clean, and ensure there are no spelling or typing errors.
- Begin your bullet points with action verbs (do not use "responsibilities included"). Demonstrate what you achieved or accomplished by including specific duties, program names and actual numbers, dollars, or percentages
- 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. 3.47/4.0 not 3.5/4.0). If you have questions about whether or not to list your GPA, consult a Talent Development Coordinator.
- Check for consistency and parallel structure. Employers spend just seconds reviewing each resume; make the information on your resume easy to absorb. Make sure that each of your 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. Check your use of parallel structure in any bullet points.
- Use a conservative font such as Times New Roman and use 10-12 point type. In general, do not mix fonts within a resume. Top, bottom and side margins may vary between half-inch and one-inch.
- Spell out the names of organizations that go by acronyms. Employers may not be familiar with your campus clubs. In general, you should also avoid abbreviations, particularly when you have room to spell out the full word.

References

- Prepare a list of references on a separate page instead of writing "References available upon request." That way, you will have them ready to go if an employer asks for them. Copy and paste your 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. Great people to list include professors, employers, student group advisors, and internship supervisors. Contact all

references before you list them to ensure that they are comfortable acting as a reference for you. Once you have provided the reference list to an employer, contact each reference and provide him/her with the job title, description, company name and the name of the person who will be in contact.

- Print your resume and references page on quality 24 lb. white or off-white paper. Do not use regular copy paper.

Resume Review

Ask several people to review your resume for flow, grammar, and formatting. For a critique, contact Career Success Network to schedule an appointment.

Cover Letter Writing

A cover letter is your 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 as a candidate. In fact, some employers consider it even more important than your resume.

Your cover letter should create 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. Occasionally, in engineering fields, a summary statement replaces a cover letter. Make an advising appointment to learn more about engineering summary statements.

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 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.”
- Do not address your letter “To whom It May Concern.”
- In general, cover letters specifically state the position you are seeking (do this 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).

- Research the organization, study the position description, and tailor your letter accordingly.. 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. Business writing is different from academic writing. Keep it simple, straight-forward and to the point. See the samples in this packet.
- 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.
- 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.

Submitting Your Application Materials

There are several ways to send your cover letter and resume to an employer. Sometimes the position description indicates if the employer prefers or requires a particular method.

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 “FirstNameLast Name, Job Title application.”

When you send your cover letter and resume via e-mail, we generally recommend that you send it as a MS Word attachment so it will print out as nicely as if you had mailed it. 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.

SAMPLE ACTION VERBS

Communication

/ Interacting

with People

Aided
Arbitrated
Advised
Apprised
Arranged
Clarified
Collaborated
Conferred
Consulted
Contributed
Coordinated
Counseled
Debated
Defined
Directed
Enlisted
Explained
Expressed
Helped
Influenced
Informed
Inspired
Interpreted
Interviewed
Manipulated
Mediated
Merged
Negotiated
Participated
Promoted
Recommended
Represented
Resolved
Spoke
Suggested
Unified
Verbalized
Wrote

Creative

Acted
Abstracted

Adapted
Composed
Conceptualized
Created
Designed
Developed
Directed
Drew
Fashioned
Generated
Illustrated
Imagined
Improvised
Integrated
Innovated
Painted
Performed
Planned
Problem
Solved
Shaped
Synthesized
Visualized
Wrote

Detail Oriented

Analyzed
Approved
Arranged
Classified
Collated
Compared
Compiled
Documented
Enforced
Followed through
Met deadlines
Prepared
Processed
Recorded
Retrieved
Set priorities
Systematized
Tabulated

Financial

Administered
Allocated
Analyzed
Appraised
Audited
Budgeted
Calculated
Computed
Developed
Figured
Managed
Performed
Prepared
Projected
Tracked records

Investigative/

Research

Calculated
Catalogued
Collected
Computed
Correlated
Critiqued
Diagnosed
Discovered
Examined
Experimented
Extrapolated
Evaluated
Gathered
Identified
Inspected
Interpreted
Investigated
Monitored
Observed
Organized
Proved
Reviewed
Surveyed
Tested

Managerial

Achieved

Assigned
Administered
Consulted
Contracted
Controlled
Coordinated
Decided
Delegated
Developed
Directed
Established
Evaluated
Fired
Hired
Implemented
Initiated
Led
Negotiated
Organized
Planned
Prioritized
Produced
Recommended
Reported

Manual Skills

Arranged
Assembled Bound
Built
Checked
Classified
Constructed
Controlled
Cut
Drove
Drilled
Handled
Installed
Lifted
Maintained
Prepared
Pulled
Operated
Tested

Service

Advised

Attended
Cared
Carried Out
Coached
Coordinated
Counseled
Delivered
Demonstrated
Earned
Empathized
Expanded
Explained
Facilitated
Furnished
Generated
Inspected
Installed
Issued
Mentored
Referred
Related
Repaired
Provided
Purchased
Sent
Served
Serviced
Submitted
Transmitted
Technical
Authored
Charted
Compiled
Condensed
Eliminated
Estimated
Graphed
Installed
Instructed
Invented
Logged
Minimized
Routed
Upgraded

