STILL DECIDING

Step-by-Step Resume & Cover Letter Guide

Fall 2020 – Spring 2021

Resume

A resume is a document that articulates a candidate's most relevant and recent experiences to a potential employer or graduate/professional school program.

The strongest resumes are targeted for a specific opportunity and focus on a candidate's key credentials, skills, interests, and accomplishments. They should encourage an employer to read your cover letter, and ultimately, invite you to interview.

Effective resumes are organized and easy for an employer to easily scan. Most employers spend <u>10 seconds</u> looking at your resume before making a decision about your candidacy, so you want to make sure it's as visually appealing as possible.

General Information about the Resume

While there is no single preferred format for a resume, you should keep this in mind…

A resume should:
- Be only one page
- Be only one font (suggested fonts including Times New Roman, Calibri, Ariel, Garamond, or Cambria)
- Have margins no smaller than .5"
- Have a font size between 10 – 12 point
- Be single-spaced
- Have dates with experiences listed in reverse chronological order (the most recent goes first, and then you go back in time)
- Consistent in dates; you can use seasons (i.e., Fall 20XX) or months (September 20XX – December 20XX) to list dates, but whichever you choose, remain consistent.
- Avoid redundancies
- Be submitted as a PDF to the employer

A resume should not:
- Include too much personal information (for example, your age, social security number, citizenship, marital status, political or religious affiliation)
- Have too much narration – stick to the facts of what you have done
- Include the statement "References available upon request". Employers may ask for these later or separately
- Overstate your abilities, experiences, or job titles
- Include an "Objective" – this eats up valuable space on the page, and has content that is often better stated in the cover letter

Step One: Create Your Header

The header includes your basic contact information:

- First and Last Name *(what you prefer to be called – not your legal name)*
- Address *(this can be your home or school address – select the address that is in closer proximity to the opportunity to you are applying for)*
- Phone Number *(make sure that your voicemail inbox accepts messages, and that your greeting message is professional)*
- Email Address *(use your Skidmore email address, even if you prefer Gmail or another server)*

Below are a few examples of how this information could be laid out:

Example 1:

Lucy Scribner

815 North Broadway   518-580-5000
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866   lscribner@skidmore.edu

Example 2:

Lucy Scribner
815 North Broadway | Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 | 518-580-5000 | lscribner@skidmore.edu

Example 3:

Lucy Scribner
815 North Broadway, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
518-580-5000 | lscribner@skidmore.edu

Step Two: Education

This section will come first for college students and recent graduates. It typically includes the following:

- Institution Names, City, State, and Country (if outside the United States)
- Expected date of graduation
- Majors and minors
- Type of degree – Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science
- GPA and Honors (optional)
  - Cumulative GPAs of 3.0 or higher should always be included
  - If your Cumulative GPA is not over a 3.0, check your major GPA
- Study Abroad

Example 1: (Undeclared Major)

Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY   May 2024
Bachelor of Arts Candidate

Saratoga Springs High School, Saratoga Springs, NY   June 2020
IB Diploma; Highest Honors

Note: High School is kept on a resume through second semester sophomore year.

Example 2: (Declared Major)

Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY   May 2024
Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry, minor in Anthropology
Overall GPA: 3.65, Major GPA: 3.45

Example 3: (Double Major and Study Abroad)

Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY   May 2021
Bachelor of Science in Management and Business and Economics (Double Major)
Overall GPA: 3.3

Study Abroad: Kings College, London, United Kingdom   Spring 2020
European Financial Systems

Step Three: Map Out Your Headers

Organization is critical for successfully communicating to the reader. **While resumes ARE organized in reverse-chronological order, the writer gets to decide what the headers are called, and what order they are placed.**

Readers will assume two things:
1. Whatever section comes first after education is the most relevant experience to the opportunity
2. Whatever section gets the greatest amount of space is the most important

Start by going through the list below to select 3 – 4 headers that will serve as the skeleton of your resume, or use these as inspiration to think of your own.

Additional Experience	Direct-Care Experience	Quantitative Experience
Advocacy Experience	Gallery Management Experience	**Related Coursework**
Analytical Experience	Government & Law Experience	Related Projects
Arts & Design Experience	Healthcare Experience	**Relevant Experience**
Communications Experience	Laboratory Experience	Research Experience
Community Engagement Experience	**Leadership & Co-Curricular Experience**	Teaching Experience
Coding and Programming Experience	Marketing & Advertising Experience	Team Projects & Collaboration Experience
Constituent Support Experience	Non-Profit Management Experience	Volunteering Experience
Design Experience		Writing & Editing Experience

The bolded headers are the most commonly selected headers by still deciding Skidmore students.

Next, place the headers in the order that places your most relevant and important experiences first.

Using this structure allows flexibility in organizing experiences by "theme", not "type".
For example, a section could be called "Communications Experience", and include a writing class at Skidmore, a position as a journalist at a local newspaper, and a summer writing camp.

Step Four: Generate Content & Create Bulleted Action Statements

Content can come from anywhere – it's all about how you present the information.

If you present the information in an unprofessional way, it will be received unprofessionally.

Likewise, if you present the information professionally, it will be taken seriously.

Below are some ways to generate content:

Co-Curricular Activities
Collaborative Research
Experience
Internships
Job Shadowing
Jobs

Leadership Activities
On-Campus Employment
Projects from Classes
Relevant Coursework
Volunteering

Consistency in presentation of experiences is critical. Each experience should include:
- Title (your title, or the title of the class/project)
- Organization (who you worked for, or the institution)
- Location (city, state or city, country)
- Dates
- Bulleted action statements
  - These describe the specific actions you performed and the skills you gained.

How to Write a Bulleted Action Statement:
- A bullet should include a description of what you did, with supporting examples
- Start with an action verb (see the "Skills List" at the end of the guide for ideas). Avoid passive verbs, like "assisted, watched"
- If the experience is complete, use past tense. If it is ongoing, use present tense
- Quantify activities wherever possible. "Managed 50 students" is eye-catching
- Do not repeat verbs in consecutive bullet points

For Example:
Poor: Customer Service

Better: Provided customer service for clients

Best: Resolved consumer problems, explained services and policies, and communicated knowledge of financial planning, resulting in greater customer satisfaction

Example 1:

Business & Finance Experience:

Financial Analyst Intern, Ayco Company, Saratoga Springs, NY   Spring 2020
- Researched client leads in areas including income taxes, employee benefits, wealth transfer planning and insurance in the Family Division; composed and presented case briefings to Vice Presidents
- Organized and compiled charitable donation files to prepare for annual tax filings
- Updated confidential client net-worth summaries using MS Excel

Introduction to Management and Business, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY   Fall 2019
- Developed executive presentation in simulation to increase Patagonia Provisions revenue by $20 million, while decreasing carbon footprint by 10%, by 2025
- Conducted SWOT analysis and analyzed financial statements to identify points of improvement
- Brainstormed solutions and projected financial feasibility
- Synthesized findings into concise 20 minute presentation delivered to panel of guest executives

Example 2:

Advocacy Experience:

Animals in History, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY   Fall 2020
- Examined questions on the intersection between animals, humans and the history the two groups share; probe into the philosophical, theological, and historical distinctions made between humans and animals
- Studied the impact of European imperialism on the animal world and explored animals as historical actors
- Composed an 8-page paper comparing perception of horses before and after European imperialism

Member, Animal Alliance, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY   Fall 2019
- Raised awareness about animal rights on-campus through fun and educational events; collaborated with a group of 12 to plan and execute fundraising bake sale
- Coordinated and organized therapy dog session to help relieve stress on-campus

Volunteer, Saratoga Animal Shelter, Saratoga Springs, NY   Fall 2019 – Present
- Support Adoption Clinic days; set up displays for animals, distribute and collect adoption applications, handle adoption fees
- Prepare the animal for adoption; socialize and determine animal characteristics to best find a match that would meet the animal's personality

Action Statement Verbs (Transferable Skills Clusters)

MANAGEMENT	COMMUNICATION	FINANCIAL	HELPING
Developed	Influenced	Calculated	Related
Planned	Persuaded	Computed	Guided
Organized	Helped	Planned	Led
Executed	Directed	Managed	Referred
Supervised	Motivated	Budgeted	Rendered
Assigned	Reasoned	Solved	Attended
Directed	Developed	Accounted	Cared
Coordinated	Recruited	Audited	Sensitivity
Analyzed	Created	Appraised	Listened
Prioritized	Negotiated	Researched	Advocated
Delegated	Liaised	Analyzed	Spoke
Recommend	Arranged	Prepared	Directed
Evaluated	Mediated	Detailed	Perceived
Administered	Reconciled	Accuracy	
Produced	Write	Allocated	
	Interpreted	Administered	
		Quantified	
		Developed	

RESEARCH	CREATIVE	TEACHING	DETAIL
Clarified	Innovated	Influencing	Approved
Surveyed	Developed	Persuaded	Validated
Interviewed	Created	Briefed	Retained
Investigated	Imagined	Informed	Executed
Inspected	Designed	Encouraged	Dispatched
Gathered	Planned	Communicated	Responded
Synthesized	Conceptualized	Advised	Followed
Examined	Synthesized	Guided	Enforced
Diagnosed	Integrated	Coached	Arranged
Reviewed	Abstracted	Instructed	Varied
Organized	Generated	Explained	Memorized
Evaluated	Perceived	Invented	
Critiqued	Memorized	Adapted	
Perceived	Visualized		
Collected			
Composed			
Interpreted			

Action Statement Verbs (Alphabetical)

Accommodated	Contracted	Expanded	Managed	Reasoned
Accomplished	Contributed	Experimented	Mapped	Recommend
Accounted	Controlled	Explained	Measured	Reconciled
Acquired	Cooperated	Explored	Mediated	Recorded
Acted	Coordinated	Expressed	Met	Recruited
Adapted	Corresponded		Memorized	Reflected
Addressed	Created	Fashioned	Merchandized	Researched
Adjusted	Critiqued	Fixed	Moderated	Resolved
Administered		Forecasted	Modified	Responded
Advertised	Dealt	Formulated	Monitored	Revised
Advocated	Debated	Found	Motivated	Reviewed
Allocated	Decorated	Fundraised		Risked
Analyzed	Defined		Navigated	
Anticipated	Delivered	Gathered	Negotiated	Scheduled
Appraised	Delegated	Graphed	Nursed	Screened
Approved	Demonstrated	Grouped		Serviced
Arranged	Designed	Guided	Observed	Served
Assembled	Detailed		Obtained	Shaped
Assessed	Detected	Handled	Operated	Sorted
Assigned	Determined	Helped	Ordered	Simulated
Assisted	Developed	Hosted	Organized	Studied
Audited	Devised		Outfitted	Strategized
	Diagnosed	Identified	Oversaw	Summarized
Balanced	Directed	Imagined		Structured
Bargained	Discovered	Implemented	Participated	Supervised
Built	Discussed	Improved	Perceived	Supported
Brainstormed	Disciplined	Indexed	Performed	Synthesized
Budgeted	Displayed	Influenced	Persuaded	
	Dissected	Informed	Planned	Targeted
Calculated	Distributed	Initiated	Populated	Tabulated
Catalogued	Drafted	Innovated	Predicted	Taught
Catered	Drew	Inspected	Prepared	Tended
Changed		Inspired	Presented	Tested
Classified	Edited	Instructed	Presided	Trained
Coached	Educated	Interpreted	Printed	Translated
Collaborated	Empathized	Interviewed	Prioritized	Transmitted
Collected	Encouraged	Invented	Processed	Traveled
Combined	Enforced	Investigated	Programmed	
Communicated	Enlarged	Itemized	Promoted	Understood
Compared	Enlisted		Proposed	Utilized
Completed	Ensured	Judged	Proofread	Updated
Composed	Entertained	Justified	Provided	
Computed	Established		Publicized	Validated
Conceived	Estimated	Led	Purchased	Verbalized
Conceptualized	Evaluated	Learned		Visualized
Conducted	Examined	Lectured	Raised	
Confronted	Excelled	Listened	Reacted	Worked
Constructed	Exercised		Read	Wrote
Contacted	Exhibited	Maintained		

Step Five: Skills

The skills section is reserved for hard skills you may have, including:
- Computer proficiencies and programming
- Languages
- Technical skills
- Lab techniques
- Certifications

Try not to include soft skills, such as teamwork, organization, communication, etc. These skills are better demonstrated through the bulleted action statements in the experience sections.

Proficiencies should be included for Computer and Language skills:

- **For Languages, the options are:** Basic, Proficient, Advanced, Fluent, Bilingual, Trilingual, etc.
- **For Computer skills, the options are:** Basic, Proficient, Advanced

Example 1:

Skills:
Computer: Advanced MS Office, Proficient in Adobe Creative Suite, Basic HTML and JAVA
Languages: Fluent in French, Basic German
12 Years of Competitive Alpine Skiing, CPR and Wilderness First Aid Certified (June 2020)

Example 2:

Skills:
Proficient in Spanish and German, Advanced MS Word, Proficient in MS Excel, STATA, SPSS, Basic Adobe Creative Suite

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Need Help Brainstorming Skills?
Take a look at your syllabus from classes; often, it will include the names of technical skills and software you learned in the class. Examples of this could include:
- GIS
- HTML
- JAVA
- C++
- Python

- Adobe Creative Suite
- Laboratory techniques and equipment
- STATA
- SPSS
- MATLAB

Lucy Scribner

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518-580-5000
lscribner@skidmore.edu

Education:

Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY   May 2021
Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, Minors in Classics and Spanish
Overall GPA: 3.68, Major GPA: 3.89; Deans List (Fall 2017 – Spring 2018)

Study Abroad: Skidmore in London, London, United Kingdom   Spring 2020

Leadership Experience:

Web Designer, Environmental Action Committee, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY   Fall 2018 – Present
- Develop and maintain club's website, use to educate the community and publicize events
- Plan club programs, including guest speakers, dinners, field trips to local farms, and month-long campaigns
- Provide consultation for Skidmore's senior leadership to provide student perspective on projects including geothermal heating, solar panel farm, and composting program

Senator-at-Large, Student Government Association, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY   Fall 2018
- Elected to serve as representative in student senate; oversaw the disbursement of a $1 million dollar budget to over 100 clubs; reviewed petitions for the creation of new clubs; revised policies and procedures to ensure adherence to local laws and insurance
- Interviewed and recommended candidates for executive leadership positions
- Sat on Search Committees to fill roles including Vice President of Advancement, Vice President of Communications, and Vice President of Student Affairs

Respect Matters Campaign, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY   Fall 2018
- Developed campus-wide campaign promoting diversity and awareness on-campus
- Served as Peer Advisor to two leadership-focused groups for incoming First Year and Sophomore Leaders; facilitated group meetings and discussed concerns
- Brainstormed and implemented initiatives to proactively educate Skidmore community

Additional Experience:

Summer Marketing Intern, National Sculpture Society, New York, NY   Summer 2018
- Assisted with planning, installing, and de-installing exhibitions
- Developed bi-monthly news bulletins and publicity for web pages
- Created online slide shows of organizations for events
- Prepared instruction manual for staff members on how to create online slideshows and basic template for web

Resident Assistant, Skidmore College Office of Residential Life, Saratoga Springs, NY   Spring 2018 – Fall 2019
- Ensured safety and management of co-ed residential building; completed rounds and accurately reported Incident Reports to Campus Safety and Facilities
- Planned and executive community building programs

Campus Representative, Apple Inc., Saratoga Springs, NY   Spring 2018
- Carried out numerous marketing campaigns per month; collaborated with Campus Bookstore to drive sales
- Hosted demonstration tables and workshops; served as a resource for existing and prospective customers

Skills & Languages:

MS Office, Adobe Creative Suite: Photoshop, Dreamweaver, InDesign and Flash; Fluent in Spanish

Lucy Scribner

Phone: 518-580-5000 **Address:** 815 North Broadway, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 **Email:** lscribner@skidmore.edu

EDUCATION

SKIDMORE COLLEGE, Saratoga Spring, NY   May 2021
Bachelor of Arts in American Studies
Cumulated GPA: 3.93

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY STUDY ABROAD: University of Trier, Trier, Germany   Spring 2019

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY: Washington, DC: Washington Semester in American Politics   Fall 2018

RESEARCH/ANALYTICAL PROJECTS

U.S. Department of Education: Intern, Office of the Deputy Secretary, Washington, DC   Summer 2020
- Generated concise written synopses of current legislative action for use by the Department, Congress members, and general public through ED website
- Researched and presented to policymakers several successful school designs and construction projects to support Administration's "Schools as Centers of Community" proposal

Washington Semester Independent Research Project: American University   Fall 2019
- Examined how increasing dependence of needy students on federal loans instead of grants for higher education has affected college access and enrollment; culminated in 65-page long paper

Historical Society of Saratoga Springs: Research Assistant, Saratoga Springs, NY   Spring 2018
- Researched archival materials, wrote text panels, and selected objects for exhibit on Saratoga in the 1930s

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Student Government Association: Vice President / Academic Affairs Skidmore College   Spring 2020 – Present
- Chaired 60-member body representing each academic department and student perspectives of curricular issues
- Participated in college-wide policy decisions concerning ethical issues as sale of cigarettes on-campus
- Made detailed oral and written presentations of curricular reforms actions in public student forum

Presidential Search Committee: Student Representative Skidmore College   Spring 2019
- Served as one of two students on college-wide committee to nominate President of Skidmore College, through all stages
- Conducted detailed self-study of institutional needs and goals to determine selection criteria
- Searched for, and hired, higher-education specialty consultant
- Interviewed and wrote evaluation of each applicant, made final recommendation to Board of Trustees

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Peer Mentor, First Year Experience, Skidmore College   Fall 2019 – Spring 2020
Skidmore Community Orchestra: French Horn, Skidmore College   Fall 2019 – Spring 2020
Student Worker, Skidmore Dining Services, Skidmore College   Fall 2019 – Spring 2020

COMPUTER/LANGUAGE SKILLS

Fluent in Spanish; Adobe InDesign, Illustrator, MS Word, MS Access

Cover Letter

A cover letter is a persuasive document that highlights a candidate's skills, knowledge of the employer, and ability to contribute to the organization.

- Think of this like a class paper – have a thesis (why you would be beneficial to the organization), develop evidence to support your thesis, and defend it.

General Information About the Cover Letter

A cover letter should:

- Be only one page, and in the same font as your resume
- Be 12 point font
- Be specific to the position and company you are applying to
- Be addressed to specific person
    - If you don't know who to address the letter to, call the employer! Simply state which position you are applying for, and ask who you should be addressing the cover letter.
    - If that's not available, the following are acceptable alternatives:
        - Hiring Manager
        - Internship Coordinator
        - Recruiting Coordinator
- Provide your contact information
- Avoid the passive voice

A cover letter should not:

- Be mass produced – generic cover letters are obvious and not impressive
- Provide a list of accomplishments without showing the connection to the employer's needs
- Overstate your accomplishments
- Use slang, abbreviation, or other casual language
- Use "Mrs." Always use Mr. or Ms.
    - The safest option is "Dear FULL NAME" (i.e., "Dear Lucy Scribner")

Stuck on how to pick the best content?:

- Place your strongest evidence first – lead off with your most compelling story. Think like a lawyer; provide evidence (a story) that demonstrates the skill you say you have (for example, communication)
- Classes, clubs, and internships are all excellent places to find stories
- Review your resume; are there entries that need more context? If so, use the cover letter as space for providing more insight into an experience

Sample Cover Letter Format

Your Name
Your Address
Your City, State ZIP CODE
Your Phone Number
Your Email

Date

Name
Title
Organization's Address
City, State ZIP CODE

Dear NAME,

First Paragraph: *Why Are You Writing?*
The first paragraph states why you are writing and to which position you are applying. Include the name of a mutual contact if you have one, or how you heard about the position. Tailor your letter to the organization. *Avoid starting with "My name is Lucy Scribner and I will be graduating from Skidmore College in May"* – this information can be found on your resume. State why you are interested in the specific position and organization. This paragraph should be short!

Middle Paragraphs: *What You Have to Offer*
These paragraphs give you the opportunity to explain why you are qualified for the position and how you may enhance the company. Make connections between your abilities and their needs. Be concise.
- Review the job description and create a list of skills the employer required
- Look at your resume and write down examples from your background that demonstrate you have those skills, Make sure you clarify the connection!
- Avoid using sentences that start with "I" or writing in the passive voice. Use active descriptions!

Final Paragraph: *How You Will Follow Up*
Indicate your desire for an interview and express gratification for the reader for their time. Finally, state HOW and WHEN you plan to follow up (it is your responsibility, not the employer's).

Sincerely,

Your Name

References

- References should be a SEPARATE DOCUMENT
- You should have between 3 – 5 references, and should have the following information:
  - Name
  - Title
  - Organization
  - Address
  - Phone Number
  - Email Address
  - Nature of relationship
  - Timeframe of relationship
- List your best and most applicable references first

Selecting References

- Choose people who know you well, can compare you to your peers, and who have direct knowledge of your skills and abilities
- Someone in your field of interest who you have worked with before is your best choice
- Make sure you ask if they are willing to serve as a reference **before** you list them

Example:

Lucy Scribner
Founder
Skidmore College
815North Broadway
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
518-580-5000
lscribner@skidmore.edu
Supervisor, Spring 2018