



RÉSUMÉS AND COVER LETTERS

In general, the purpose of a résumé is to provide the employer with a fair and strong assessment of your potential as an effective employee in the employer's organization. This picture must be favorable enough to get an interview. So, the desired result of a résumé is not to get a job but to get an interview □ an important distinction. Your résumé must reflect the best of who you are and what you have to offer but not so comprehensively that there is no reason to call you in for an interview. It must be targeted and concise!

How Do I Get Started on My Résumé?

Often the hardest part of writing a résumé is just getting started. Frequently, this happens because the project seems harder than it actually is, especially when one considers how much is at stake. Reduce this tension by treating résumé writing as the process of outlining the basic information about who you are, what you have done, what you know, and what you want to do in the future.

There are three primary steps in writing an effective résumé:

Step One:

Research jobs or programs of advanced study in your field of interest and learn what skills, knowledge, experience, and other credentials are desired. This can be done using a variety of print advertising, electronic media, and personal contacts. You will then be able to create a clear professional objective and highlight your qualifications related to your objective.

Step Two:

Develop a first draft of your résumé. Consider creating an outline for this draft using the headings in the next section of this article. Don't be concerned at first about the words that you use or about including too much information. Your first draft should list everything, with the idea of paring it down and choosing the best words in subsequent drafts. Focus on including skills, experiences, knowledge areas, and, in many cases most importantly, accomplishments. Once you have finished, go over it again to create a second and third draft that is more professional in how you are presenting yourself.

Step Three:

Get a critique of your final résumé. You might approach someone who is employed in your targeted field and has experience hiring others. Or, you might ask a faculty member or someone in Career & Transfer Services to offer his/her suggestions. It is often helpful to have several people look over your résumé, although remember that everyone will have his/her own suggestions, ones that may be contradictory to other advice you have received. In the final analysis, you need to go with the suggestions that make the most sense to you and highlight you as a unique, talented and professional candidate.

What are the Most Common Section Headings on a Résumé?

HEADING	EXAMPLE
<p>Name and Address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No heading title is needed for this section. Do not label your résumé using <i>“Résumé”</i> or <i>“Vitae”</i> at the top. Use complete mailing address, both a permanent and a local address if you are going to school away from home. When there is just one address, center it below the name. Include telephone numbers where you can be reached, both a home number and, if applicable, a cell number. Make sure that your voice mail message is appropriate for employers. Include your email address and check your mail often. If need be, create a second email address that reflects a professional image. 	<p style="text-align: center;"> <i>Jane E. Smith 606 Main Street Anytown, MD 21550 home: 301-555-5555 cell: 301-123-4567 jesmith@hotmail.com</i> </p>
<p>Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit the length of your objective to one or two statements. Include the type of position you are seeking, the type of organization you hope to work for, the skills and other contributions you have to offer, and/or with whom you want to work. Be specific to one job and do not lump several together. If you are targeting several different jobs, you may need to have several different versions of your résumé. Focus more on what you have to offer the employer than what you are seeking to gain. Avoid vague and/or over used phrases, such as <i>“meaningful contribution,”</i> <i>“challenging position,”</i> <i>“working with people,”</i> and <i>“seeking advancement.”</i> 	<p><i>Seeking a position in retail management with the ability to contribute strong customer service, financial, and leadership skills.</i></p> <p><i>A teacher’s assistant position in an elementary school using demonstrated abilities in program design and group supervision.</i></p>
<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you are a recent graduate, this section comes immediately after the objective, especially if you are looking for work or advanced education that is related to your degree. Include the name of the college, city and state, and the date of graduation. Include the level of your degree and the major and/or concentration. Academic honors and a GPA, if over 3.0, can be included. List relevant courses that demonstrate specific skills and knowledge. Do not include high school. 	<p><i>A.A.S., Agricultural Management Garrett College, McHenry, MD Expected in May 2006 Current GPA: 3.4/4.0</i></p> <p><i>Related Courses:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Agricultural Finance & Records</i> <i>Nutrient Management</i> <i>Water Quality Assessment</i>
<p>Experience or Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you have related or otherwise noteworthy experience, cite it here. If not, you may want to include campus involvement, military experience, volunteer activities, etc., under the title <i>“experience.”</i> Use reverse chronological order; that is, start with your most recent experience and work your way backwards. For each entry, use a consistent banner: title, company name, city/state, and dates of employment. Describe your main responsibilities using action verbs and other words that describe you as an effective, contributing employee. Do not use pronouns. Start each phrase with a verb in the past tense, even for current jobs. Qualify and quantify your accomplishments to dramatically improve the effectiveness of your résumé. Show how you made a difference! Avoid passive phrases: e.g., <i>“Was responsible for,”</i> <i>“Duties included”</i> Describe your most important function and accomplishment first, even if it occupied only a small percentage of your time. OPTION: Either because you prefer not to use a chronological format or because you lack significant work experience, you may opt to use a functional format which emphasizes your skills apart from an actual work or other experience. 	<p><i><u>Marketing/Sales Intern</u> Progressive Products, Albany, NY 9/2003-7/2006 Marketed personal computer hardware and software to individuals and businesses. Developed and implemented marketing and advertising strategies that resulted in a sales increase of at least 15% in each evaluation cycle. Participated in numerous microcomputer trade shows.</i></p>

<p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include activities that are related to your objective and/or that show evidence of certain related skills. • Include offices, clubs, volunteer activities, committees, and other extra-curricular events. • Be specific as to why you are including them without going into long explanations. • Include dates of involvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>World View International Club: Member, 2003-2006; Treasurer, 2004-2005</i> • <i>American Marketing Association: Member, 2003-present. Coordinated calendar sales project, which raised \$5,000.</i> • <i>Habitat for Humanity, Student Volunteer, 2001-2002</i>
<p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include this section if you have specialized skills, such as computer skills or foreign language skills. • Include level of expertise where appropriate. • If a certain skill is particularly relevant to your employment objective, you may want to include them in a section labeled with the skill (e.g., "Computer Skills" as the section heading rather than "Skills"). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Proficient in Microsoft Word, Access, Power Point, and Adobe Photo Shop.</i> • <i>Fluent in Estonian with some conversational ability in Russian.</i> • <i>Communication skills include writing, group presentations, and debate developed through campus activities.</i>
<p>Other Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be other headings that would help in an employer's evaluation of you for a specific employment objective. These may include: community service, leadership activities, citizenship status or work authorization, travel, publications, awards, special certifications or licenses, memberships and other affiliations, athletic experiences, and presentations. • Use other headings sparingly and only when they are related to your objective. • Do not create a heading for only one item. 	<p>Certifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Wilderness First Responder Certification, 2004.</i> • <i>CPR and First Aid Certification, 2003.</i> • <i>MD Top Rope Rock Climbing Instructor Certification, 2003.</i>
<p>References</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In most cases, a statement at the end of the résumé saying that references will be available upon request is sufficient. • Most appropriate is to have your references listed on a separate page, one that is sent to employers only when requested. • Cite name of the reference, title, company/organization, mailing address, phone number and email address. Also, include a brief statement of your affiliation with this individual. • Select people who can speak to your experience and potential for the type of work you are targeting. • Always get the individual's permission to use him/her as a reference beforehand. And consider giving your references a copy of your résumé in order to enable them to speak about your strengths and qualifications. • Include 3-5 names on your reference sheet. 	<p><i>Available upon request.</i></p> <p><i>Thomas P. Jones, Director of Maintenance, Memorial Hospital, 234 Central Ave., Oakland, MD 21550 301-555-5432 tpjones@internet.com Past Supervisor</i></p>

Keywords and Action Verbs:

The following is a collection of action verbs that may be appropriate for use in your résumé. Try this go through the full list and circle those verbs that apply to your qualifications. Create a résumé phrase by adding details and a results statement to each verb.

<p>Management Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> administered analyzed assigned attained chaired contracted consolidated coordinated delegated developed directed evaluated executed improved increased organized oversaw planned prioritized produced recommended reviewed scheduled strengthened supervised 	<p>Communication Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> addressed arbitrated arranged authored corresponded developed directed drafted edited enlisted formulated influenced interpreted lectured mediated moderated motivated negotiated persuaded promoted publicized reconciled recruited spoke translated wrote 	<p>Detail-Oriented Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> approved arranged catalogued classified collected compiled dispatched executed generated implemented inspected monitored operated organized prepared processed purchased recorded retrieved screened specified systematized tabulated validated 	<p>Research Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assessed clarified collected critiqued diagnosed evaluated examined extracted identified inspected interpreted interviewed investigated organized prepared reviewed summarized surveyed systematized 	<p>Technical Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assembled built calculated computed designed devised engineered fabricated maintained operated overhauled programmed remodeled repair solved trained upgraded
<p>Teaching/Instruction Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> adapted advised clarified coached communicated coordinated developed enabled encouraged evaluated explained facilitated guided informed initiated instructed persuaded set goals stimulated taught 	<p>Financial Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> administered allocated analyzed appraised audited balanced budgeted calculated computed developed forecasted managed marketed planned projected researched 	<p>Creative Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> acted conceptualized created designed developed directed envisioned established fashioned founded illustrated initiated instituted integrated introduced invented originated performed planned revitalized shaped 	<p>Helping Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> accommodated assessed assisted clarified coached counseled demonstrated diagnosed educated expedited facilitated familiarized guided referred rehabilitated represented 	<p>Other Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> accomplished achieved acquired applied broadened corresponded determined effected extended exceeded founded increased launched maintained prevented reduced solved supported unified

Some General Do's and Don'ts

1. **DO NOT make your résumé too long.** Usually, your résumé should be limited to one page, especially as a student. There are occasions when a longer résumé is warranted, usually for people who have more than 10 years of experience.
2. **DO proof read your résumé** to ensure there are no typographical, grammatical or spelling errors. These types of errors suggest that the applicant is careless, lacks intelligence and/or education, and unprofessional. Do not rely on computerized spell- and grammar checkers! Consider having at least two other people read your résumé for errors.
3. **DO NOT use a résumé that is hard to read.** Print your résumés directly from the computer in order to avoid poor photocopies. Fancy type fonts, including italics, should be avoided and should be no smaller than 10 or 11-points. Arial, Helvetica, and Times are the most common and easiest to read fonts.
4. **DO NOT be verbose** □ that is, using too many words to say too little! Do not use complete sentences and paragraphs. Rather, start each phrase, especially in the job descriptions, with an action verb (see the previous section of this résumé). Avoid jargon, slang, and abbreviations (except for states).
5. **DO NOT include too little information.** There is a balance between too much and too little; be aware that too much white space on a résumé may make it look like you don't have much to offer. Give more than the bare essentials, enough that the employer can evaluate you as a talented, qualified individual. Emphasize your strengths!
6. **DO NOT include irrelevant information.** When possible, customize each résumé to the position you are seeking. For each item, ask yourself, □How will this emphasize my qualifications as related to this position?□ Do not include marital status, health information, age, sex, church membership, political affiliation, children, social security number, etc.
7. **DO NOT be obviously generic!** Your résumé is not effective if it just screams out to an employer, □give me a job □ any job!□ You need to make the employer feel that you are interested in a specific position within his/her company. Research the company, research the position, and, most important, research yourself before you finalize your résumé.
8. **DO be professional and simple in your presentation.** Avoid exotic types of papers, colored papers, photographs, graphics, binders and other covers, and the like unless you are applying for a creative position for which the uniqueness of your résumé will be evaluated. With an increasing number of companies scanning résumés into an applicant tracking system, you should use white paper, black ink, plain type, and avoid symbols, underlining and italics.
9. **DO make your résumé as dynamic as possible.** One way to do this is to start your résumé phrases with action verbs and by describing the results of your action on the job. Don't write about what you were assigned to do; write about what you did and how you made a difference. Avoid repeating words, especially those that start your phrases.
10. **DO put your best self forward.** An effective résumé is one that is not too modest. Showcase your qualifications and your accomplishments in order to stand out in the competition. Never, however, misrepresent yourself, falsify your credentials and experience, or be arrogant.

RÉSUMÉ SAMPLE: Chronological

A chronological résumé presents your education and work experience in a reverse chronological order. That is, in each section of the résumé, you start with your most recent experience and work backwards to your oldest experience. This résumé format works best for people whose experience and education is related to their targeted objective.

SAMPLE

JAMES O'CONNELL

Local

444 Sunshine Way
Oakland, MD 21550
301-555-1223
joconnell@internet.net

Permanent

123 Fourth St., NW
Washington, DC 20052
202-555-4322

OBJECTIVE Sales and marketing position in building upon demonstrated abilities in customer service, public relations, and computer software/hardware understanding.

EDUCATION A.A., Business Administration with special emphasis in Computer Information Technology
Garrett College, McHenry Maryland May 2009
G.P.A. 3.6/4.0

Related Coursework:

Principles of Accounting, I and II
Introduction to Business
Economics, Micro and Macro
Microsoft Access, PowerPoint

Introduction to Management
Principles of Marketing
E-Commerce
Integrated Applications

EXPERIENCE Marketing/Sales Intern, Progressive Microproducts, Somerset, PA May 2008-present
Marketed personal computer hardware and software using strategies targeted to individual and business clients. Developed and implemented marketing and advertising strategies that were always within budget. Participated in numerous microcomputer trade shows. Consistently received outstanding performance evaluations, which resulted in a service award in August 2004.

Management Trainee/Salesperson, Grand Auto, LaVale, MD August 2006-May 2008
Provided sales and customer service for an auto parts store with an annual sales exceeding \$35 million. Effectively used interpersonal skills to work with customers and other employees. Maintained a large store inventory using a computerized inventory system. Implemented a parts department reorganization which resulted in an enhanced work flow.

Salesperson, WalMart, Oakland, MD September 2004-August 2006
Performed general merchandising sales in the Audio/Visual Department. Handled cash with 100% accuracy on closing of the drawer. Performed inventory control, assisted customers, and provided clerical tasks as needed. Trained sales personnel and participated in the development of curricula for training sessions. Received an employer college scholarship in recognition of merit.

LEADERSHIP - American Marketing Association, Student Member, 2007-present
- Math Club, Garrett College, 2007-present. Served as Publicity and Special Events Coordinator, 2007-2008

REFERENCES Available upon request.

RÉSUMÉ SAMPLE: Functional

A functional résumé emphasizes the skills that you have used related to your job objective rather than the jobs you have held. It is particularly effective if your work experience is not closely related to your objective, if you are changing careers, or if you are seeking a promotion. In a functional résumé, you elaborate on the skills needed to perform the desired job and how you have demonstrated these skills without regard to where you demonstrated them

SAMPLE

JAMES O'CONNELL

Local

444 Sunshine Way
Oakland, MD 21550
301-555-1223
joconnell@internet.net

Permanent

123 Fourth St., NW
Washington, DC 20052
202-555-4322

OBJECTIVE Sales and marketing position in building upon demonstrated abilities in customer service, public relations, and computer software/hardware understanding.

EDUCATION A.A., Business Administration with special emphasis in Computer Information Technology
Garrett College, McHenry Maryland
G.P.A. 3.6/4.0 Graduation in May 2009

AREAS OF POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION

MARKETING/SALES:

- Marketed personal computer hardware and software using strategies targeted to varied clients.
- Developed and implemented marketing and advertising strategies that were always within budget.
- Participated in numerous microcomputer trade shows.
- Provided sales and customer service for an auto parts store with an annual sales exceeding \$35 million.

ORGANIZATION/PLANNING:

- Maintained a large store inventory using a computerized inventory system.
- Implemented a parts department reorganization which resulted in an enhanced work flow.
- Developed effective in-store and window displays, one of which resulted in a service award.
- Completed all required paperwork with 100% accuracy and punctuality.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS:

- Effectively used interpersonal skills to work with customers and other employees.
- Trained sales personnel and participated in the development of curricula for training sessions.
- Presented material to supervisors and managers on peripheral hardware for inventory control system.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Marketing/Sales Intern, Progressive Microproducts, Somerset, PA	May 2008-present
Management Trainee/Salesperson, Grand Auto, LaVale, MD	August 2006-May 2008
Salesperson, WalMart, Oakland, MD	September 2004-August 2006

LEADERSHIP

- American Marketing Association, Student Member, 2007-present
- Math Club, Garrett College, 2007-present. Served as Publicity and Special Events Coordinator, 2007-2008.

REFERENCES

Available upon request

Now That I Have a Résumé, Do I Need a Cover Letter?

Yes if you are mailing your résumé. While the résumé relates your skills, abilities and your general qualifications to an employer, the cover letter allows you to be more specific and to let the employer know what kind of person you are. It is the initial contact between you and the employer and should be used whenever you send your résumé (which is most of the time) to a prospective employer, whether it be by U.S. mail, e-mail or fax. An effective cover letter indicates your seriousness of intent, your strongest assets as required by the company, your enthusiasm for the job, your professionalism -- in general, it makes a good first impression and lets them know that you believe yourself to be a well-qualified candidate.

Do not send a résumé without a cover letter or, conversely, a letter without a résumé. While it is a good idea to create a general cover letter, it must be customized for each job that to which you are applying. This is tremendously important, as generic cover letters rarely are received with great enthusiasm by employers. They want to know that you have targeted their organizations and are specifically interested in employment with them.

Here are several ways that you can customize the letter:

1. Avoid "To Whom It May Concern" as a salutation. Whenever possible, address your letter to a certain individual. It's less likely this way to be considered "junk mail." You can use the company's website or a call to the company's main number to get the name of the person doing the hiring.
2. Do your homework by researching the company before writing your letter. Then, include specific information references to company projects, names of various business ventures, information from the company's press releases about company recognitions, etc. and how your skills and interests match these company specific bits of information.
3. When you are responding to a want ad, use the words included in the ad and relate them to your skills and qualifications. In this way, when the cover letter is reviewed, the employer can see how you match up with the specific qualifications that are being sought.
4. Show that you understand the unique issues faced by the organization by stating related facts and offering other information. For example, if the job you are applying for is working with a certain group of people, mention the unique challenges that this group of people face and how you are equipped to deal with these challenges.

Cover letters must always be typed and should not be longer than one page. Use the same good quality bond paper that you used for your résumé. So that the letter best matches the résumé, use the same font and font size, and avoid using italics (except for emphasis) and script and other unusual fonts. Cover letters and résumés should never be stapled together; rather they should be mailed together in an envelope that matches the quality of paper. Using a standard business sized envelope is fine.

Remember to leave room to sign your cover letters!

What Format Should I Use When Creating My Cover Letter?

Cover letters should follow normal business letter formats. Such letters always include in more or less this order your return address, the date, the name of the receiver and his/her full mailing address, a salutation ("Dear so-and-so"), 3 or 4 paragraphs that market you as a qualified candidate and show your interest in the position, and a close with room for your signature above your typed name.

Consider the APET format and order for your paragraphs:

Paragraph #1 -- **A = Awareness**

1. How did you learn about the position?
2. A catchy, personal statement about your skills or the company.
3. Refer to the résumé included

Paragraph #2 -- **P = Parallel**

1. How you match the educational requirements
2. How you match the skill requirements
3. How you match other requirements (use words from the job description)
4. Give examples of how you are prepared to succeed on this job

Paragraph #3 -- **E = Enthusiasm**

1. Give a statement about the company's reputation and how wonderful it is
2. Include information that shows your high level of enthusiasm for the job

Paragraph #4 -- **T = Thank You**

1. Thank the employer for his/her time
2. Indicate how and when you can be reached
3. Consider stating that you will make a follow-up call within a certain period of time. Then, make sure that you remember to call!

After you send the cover letter and résumé, a rule of thumb is that you should call to follow-up seven to ten days later. During this call, you can inquire as to whether your letter and résumé were received, if any additional information is needed from you, and what the next steps in the decision making process will be. Not only does this ensure that your résumé is part of the candidate pool, but it also will draw attention to your application and indicate your high level of interest in and enthusiasm for the position.

Turn the page for a sample cover letter.

SAMPLE COVER LETTER:

Additional samples can be found in the Career Library. Come to Room 412 to view these samples.

961 Mosser Road
McHenry, MD 21541

May 23, 2009

Mr, Craig Allen
T. Rowe Price Associates, Inc.
100 East Pratt Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Mr. Allen:

In this month's issue of *The Financial News*, I noticed your ad for a Financial Sales Trainee. Please know that I am greatly interested in this position and am forwarding my résumé for your consideration.

In May, I will graduate from Garrett College with an Associate's degree in Business Administration. My interest in business started in Junior Achievement while in high school and developed further through a variety of sales and retail positions in college. Finance has always been of interest to me, and my internship with a local bank convinced me to pursue a career in financial sales. While researching the leading companies in this industry, T. Rowe Price emerged as having a strong market position, an excellent training program, and a reputation for excellence in customer service. In short, your company provides the kind of professional environment I seek and the reputation for quality with which I want to be associated.

As you can see on my résumé, my education and work experience match the qualifications you seek in your financial sales trainees, but they don't tell the whole story. I know from customer and supervisor feedback that I have the interpersonal skills and motivation needed to build a successful career in financial sales. And, my relatively extensive experience gives me confidence in my career direction and my abilities to perform competently.

I know how busy you must be, but I would very much appreciate a few minutes of your time. I will call you during the week of June 1 to discuss employment possibilities. In the meantime, if you need to contact me, my cell phone number is 301-555-1234. Please leave a message if I am not available, and I will return your call.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you in the very near future.

Sincerely,

Christine S. Watson

Christine S. Watson