

WRITING RESUMES, COVER LETTERS & OTHER PROFESSIONAL DOCUMENTS

“Now, be faithful, be true, go forward, be ambitious. Don't short-circuit yourself. Don't stop now. Keep growing. Keep going. Educate your minds and your spirits and never lose sight of the fact that you are a child of God with a divine destiny and capability of doing great and good and wonderful things. Don't sell yourselves short.”

- Pres. Hinckley to BYU-Idaho students

Academic Discovery Center

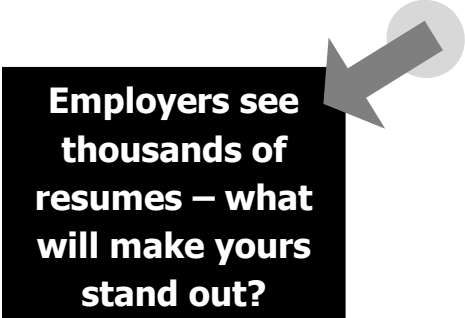
MC 129 ▪ 208.496.9825 ▪ academicdiscoverycenter@byui.edu

Build a Résumé that Gets Noticed

It is important to understand the function, appropriate format, and necessary content of a résumé. It is a critical document as it represents all that you are to people who don't know you. A résumé should be professional and exceptional! Please take the résumé writing process seriously; a good résumé will take considerable amount of time to develop and will require several critiques and revisions. Résumés also need to be updated & tailored to each job you seek. Take advantage of the university resources, Optimal Résumé and appointments w/ Career Preparation Mentors to improve yours!

General Tips

- Build your résumé with a strategy. Select type (chronological, functional or hybrid) depending on what you want to showcase.
- Pay attention to format (margins, bullets, bold, font size) and be consistent.
- Use the same font throughout or no more than 2 fonts (Times New Roman or a simple professional looking font).
- Try not to use acronyms (unless widely accepted within your industry) and avoid abbreviations.
- Do NOT use personal pronouns (I, me, you).
- Companies often scan résumés electronically to find qualified candidates. Be sure your résumé has important "keywords" that matches your experience with the position description.



Employers see thousands of resumes – what will make yours stand out?

6 P's of Resumes

PERFECT: NO MISTAKES

- Make certain everything on your résumé is spelled correctly and use proper grammar.
- Have several people proofread it (including a professional you trust).

POSITIONING: PUT "WOW" ITEMS UP TOP

- Most important/relevant information should go top and to the left.
- A résumé is a marketing tool: everything you say must be true (and you must be prepared to address it in an interview) but it need not be comprehensive. Put what relates to the job.

PAINLESS: QUICK AND EASY TO READ

- Text should be 10-12 pt. font; section headings should be larger and usually bold (12-14 pt. font).
- Margins should be between .5 and 1 inch; all tabs should line up and be consistent.

PAGE: NOT TOO LONG

- For most college graduates, one page is appropriate.
- Be sure to fill the entire page.

PAPER: GET IT NOTICED

- Copies of your résumé should be on nice résumé paper (24 lb).
- If mailing your résumé to a prospective employer, do not fold it – use a large envelope.

POSITION: SHOW YOU ARE A GOOD FIT

- Tailor your résumé to the required and preferred skills listed in the position description.
- If applicable, use words specified in the job description on your résumé.

Résumé Outline

NAME/ADDRESS

- Name should be large, bold, and stand out (20-24 pt. font).
- Address, phone, and email should be smaller (10-12 pt. font).
- Make sure email address is professional and appropriate (like gmail).



OBJECTIVE OR PROFILE

- Objectives and profiles are optional, but can be a strong element on a résumé.
- Opt for an objective when you know the industry, company, or position you are applying for (but be aware these are not considered as relevant or powerful by many).
- Opt for a profile when you are open within an industry, but would like to highlight your skills.
- Objectives and profiles should be specific.

EDUCATION

- List most recent first; can list community college and/or AA degree; do NOT list high school. Typically only list institutions where you received a degree/certificate unless non-degree-seeking coursework provides strategic connection to the company or organization.
- Be sure to bold your degree and major; list your minor (can be bold if related to the position).
- Can include related coursework – list relevant/interesting course titles (not course numbers).
- Include your GPA if competitive and the month/year you plan to graduate.
- If you have studied abroad, list the school, location, and dates.

QUALIFICATIONS/SKILLS/SUMMARY

- Must be specific and relevant to the position you are applying for.
- You need at least three bullets to make the section worthwhile.
- Can list knowledge gained in classes, computer skills, languages, certificates, licenses, etc.

EXPERIENCE

- Include all paid or unpaid full- or part-time jobs, as well as volunteer experience, internships, and significant or relevant class/leadership projects.
- List most recent employment or experiences first (past jobs must be written in past tense).
- Usually job titles should stand out (bold or caps) over the company, but use discretion.
- Always list the company, city, and state (or country).
- List more than just job duties; describe specific accomplishments and achievements.
- Lead sentences with action words (see page 5).
- May list dates of experience on the right-hand side (either tabbed or right-justified).

ACTIVITIES/INVOLVEMENT/LEADERSHIP (title the section as appropriate for your activities)

- List all relevant involvement in clubs/organizations, sororities/fraternities, athletic activities, etc.
- Include the organization, your role, and dates; listing your accomplishments is optional.

HONORS/AWARDS

- List scholarships, distinctions, awards, etc.
- Include the name/title of the recognition, the organization name, and dates.

REFERENCES (on a separate page that matches the heading and format of your resume)

- Do NOT include a reference section or put "References available upon request".
- List at least 3-4 people (no more than 5), and check with references before listing them.
- Avoid non-professional references. If possible, stick to employers, advisors, and/or faculty.
- Include each person's title, company, full address, phone number, and email address.

Sample Job Descriptions and Accomplishments

Job descriptions on your résumé should include the skills you gained and demonstrated in your past positions as well as your accomplishments. Simply stating your duties will not get you noticed by potential employers! Use the samples below as a guide to develop your own specific descriptions of your skills, experiences, and accomplishments.

Example: Possess excellent customer service skills

Better: Applied courtesy and problem solving skills to ensure customer satisfaction, which resulted in 10 awards for superior customer service

CASHIER/SALES

- Selected to cashier the express lane because of speed and accuracy of transactions.
- Balanced cash, which often exceeded \$2,500 in a single shift.
- Quickly learned price scanner system and kept up-to-date on feature-priced items and coupon deals.
- Actively promoted the store's donation drive; helped the store raise \$125,000 during 3-month campaign.
- Trained, scheduled, and supervised 15 cashiers; developed new week-long training program.
- Recognized by management for lowest register shortages in July 2010.
- Monitored and kept daily records of cash flow; compiled and conducted nightly bank deposits.
- Exhibited strong selling techniques, exceeded sales goals by 5% for every month of employment.
- Constructed effective end-of-aisle displays that dramatically increased sales.
- Regarded as one of the fastest cashiers; quickly and accurately handled orders while developing rapport.

STOCKING/INVENTORY

- Ordered merchandise for entire store, which included 4 unique departments.
- Developed a new method for tracking inventory which saved the company time and money.
- Oversaw stockroom staff to ensure nightly goals were met.

SERVER

- Efficiently served 50+ patrons per dinner shift; provided details of a 30-entrée menu.
- Trained new servers in protocol and etiquette.
- Began as hostess and was quickly promoted to server; ultimately ascended to managerial staff.
- Commended for multitasking abilities; frequently assigned largest section of restaurant during peak hours.

GENERAL

- Demonstrated responsibility by working with no direct oversight, trusted by supervisors.
- Worked full-time to support 100% of college education expenses.
- Maintained perfect attendance for 2 consecutive years.
- Performed duties as supervisor when necessary.
- Received "exemplary" and "exceeds expectations" ratings on all performance reviews.

Action Words

- A -

Accepted
Accommodated
Accomplished
Accounted
Achieved
Acquired
Acted
Adapted
Added
Adjusted
Administered
Adopted
Advanced
Advised
Aided
Allocated
Analyzed
Anticipated
Applied
Appointed
Approved
Arranged
Assembled
Assessed
Assigned
Assisted
Attained
Audited
Authorized
Awarded

- B -

Balanced
Billed
Boosted
Budgeted
Built

- C -

Calculated
Certified
Chaired
Changed
Checked
Coached
Collaborated
Collected
Committed
Communicated
Compared
Compiled
Completed
Conceptualized
Conducted
Consolidated

Constructed
Consulted
Contributed
Controlled
Converted
Conveyed
Coordinated
Copied
Corresponded
Counseled
Created
Critiqued
Cultivated
Cut

- D -

Dedicated
Delegated
Demonstrated
Described
Designated
Designed
Detailed
Detected
Determined
Developed
Devised
Diagnosed
Directed
Disbursed
Discovered
Displayed
Disseminated
Distributed
Documented
Doubled
Drafted

- E -

Earned
Edited
Educated
Elected
Elicited
Eliminated
Empowered
Enabled
Encouraged
Enforced
Enhanced
Engineered
Enlarged
Envisioned
Established
Estimated
Evaluated

Examined
Excelled
Executed
Exhibited
Expanded
Expedited
Experienced
Explained

- F -

Facilitated
Familiarized
Figured
Finalized
Financed
Forecasted
Formed
Formulated
Fostered
Fulfilled
Functioned as

- G -

Gained
Gathered
Generated
Graded
Grew
Guided

- H -

Handled
Headed
Hired

- I -

Identified
Implemented
Improved
Increased
Influenced
Informed
Initiated
Innovated
Inspected
Inspired
Installed
Instituted
Instructed
Insured
Integrated
Interpreted
Interviewed
Introduced
Inventoried
Investigated

Issued
Itemized

- J -

Joined
Judged
Justified

- L -

Launched
Lectured
Led
Licensed

- M -

Maintained
Managed
Manufactured
Marketed
Mastered
Met with
Minimized
Modified
Monitored
Motivated
Multiplied

- N -

Negotiated
Notified

- O -

Observed
Obtained
Officiated
Operated
Optimized
Ordered
Orchestrated
Ordered
Organized
Outlined
Overcame
Overhauled
Oversaw

- P -

Participated
Performed
Persuaded
Pinpointed
Pioneered
Planned
Predicted
Prepared
Presented

Presided
Prioritized
Processed
Produced
Programmed
Projected
Promoted
Proposed
Proved
Provided
Publicized
Purchased

- R -

Raised
Realized
Recommended
Reconciled
Recognized
Recorded
Recruited
Reduced
Referred
Refined
Reformed
Regarded
Reinforced
Remedied
Remodeled
Reorganized
Repaired
Reported
Represented
Researched
Resolved
Restored
Retrieved
Revamped
Reviewed
Revised
Revitalized

- S -

Saved
Scheduled
Screened
Secured
Selected
Separated
Served
Set goals
Set up
Shaped
Simplified
Sold
Solicited



Solved
Spearheaded
Specified
Staffed
Standardized
Streamlined
Strengthened
Studied
Submitted
Succeeded
Suggested
Summarized
Supervised
Supported
Surpassed
Surveyed
Systematized

- T -

Tailored
Taught
Tested
Trained
Transcribed
Transformed
Translated
Tripled
Tutored

- U -

Underwrote
Updated
Upgraded
Used
Utilized

- V -

Validated

- W -

Won
Wrote

Résumé Worksheet

Objective or Profile

Education

Degree, major(s), minor(s) _____ GPA _____

School _____ City, State _____ Grad date _____

Relevant coursework or other additional information _____

Degree, major(s), minor(s) _____ GPA _____

School _____ City, State _____ Grad date _____

Relevant coursework or other additional information _____

Qualifications/Skills/Summary (What do you want to highlight? Show you are qualified for the position.)

Experience

Title _____ Dates _____

Organization _____ City, State _____

Accomplishments _____

Title _____ Dates _____

Organization _____ City, State _____

Accomplishments _____

Title _____ Dates _____

Organization _____ City, State _____

Accomplishments _____

Activities/Involvement/Leadership

Title/Role _____ Dates _____

Organization _____ City, State _____

Accomplishments (optional) _____

Title/Role _____ Dates _____

Organization _____ City, State _____

Accomplishments (optional) _____

Honors/Awards

Name of award _____ Organization _____ Date _____

Name of award _____ Organization _____ Date _____

Name of award _____ Organization _____ Date _____

Write an Effective Cover Letter

Cover letters are a critical component of a successful job search. They introduce your résumé to an employer and are often the first thing they read. It is essential that your cover letter reflects your experience and skills as they relate to the position you are applying for. Highlight what you have to offer the employer in a concise, professional format.

General Tips

- A good cover letter should be like a movie trailer; it should incite interest so the employer wants to see more.
- Research the company and study the job description.
- Focus on the needs of the company instead of your own needs and wants.
- Because this is the first document a prospective employer will read, you should provide a platform of skills on which the rest of your job search documents can build.
- Use specific examples and be personable.
- Don't simply restate your résumé.
- If there are any required qualifications for the positions that aren't included in your résumé, address them in your cover letter.




Format

- One page (3-4 paragraphs), 12 pt. font, one-inch borders.
- Always write in a professional and formal manner – no slang or abbreviations.
- Print your cover letter on the same paper as your résumé.
- Be sure to have someone proofread your cover letter before sending it.
- Use the same heading as your résumé including your contact information.
- You may address similar skills for multiple jobs; however, you must change each letter to match the position for which you are applying.

Addressing the Letter

- Address cover letters to a specific person rather than a department or a generic title. Be sure to spell the name(s) correctly. If it's not possible, then address the letter to what the advertisement states (i.e., Human Resource Department, Selection Committee, etc.). If no information is available, use "To Whom It May Concern." (You can also call the company to find a specific person.)
- Make sure you know the gender of the person you are addressing the letter to. If you're not sure, use the full name. If addressing the letter to a woman and you are not sure of marital status, use "Ms."



The better you do at matching yourself to the positions, the more likely you are to get an interview.

COVER LETTER OUTLINE

FIRST M. LAST

Street address
City, State Zip

Phone number
Email address

Date

Contact Person, Title
Organization/Company
Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear (Contact Name):

FIRST PARAGRAPH: State the reason why you are writing and the specific position you are applying for. Indicate how you learned about the employer and/or opening, and mention the name of any referring person. Explain briefly why you want to work for this company (based on your research) and that you are a good fit for the position.

BODY OF THE LETTER (should be two paragraphs): Briefly explain your background (education and/or experience) and why you are interested in this type of position/company. Summarize some of your strongest qualifications as they relate to the job (be specific). State clearly why you are the best candidate for the job.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH: Refer the reader to your résumé. Declare again your interest in the position and state that you look forward to an interview and/or talking with them in more detail about the position and your qualifications. End the letter with an appropriate closing such as "Thank you for your time and consideration."

Sincerely,

{*Signature*}

Your name (typed)

Enclosure(s)

COVER LETTER OUTLINE (BUSINESS BLOCK STYLE)

Your Name (Optional)

Phone Number

Street Address

City, State Zip

Email Address (keep it professional)

Date

Contact Person, Title

Organization/Company

Street Address

City, State Zip

Dear (Contact Name):

FIRST PARAGRAPH: State your reason for writing and the specific position you are applying for. Indicate how you learned about the employer and/or opening, and mention the name of any referring person. Include something that grabs the attention of the reader and makes you stand out as an applicant. Explain briefly why you want to work for this company (based on your research) and make claims that show you are a good fit for the position.

BODY OF THE LETTER (Normally 1-2 paragraphs): Briefly explain your background, building upon the claims you made in the first paragraph (usually in terms of education and/or experience). Summarize some of your strongest qualifications as they relate to the job generally and specifically.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH: State clearly why you are the best candidate for the job, and refer the reader to your résumé for further details. Declare again your interest in the position and state that you look forward to an interview and/or talking with them in more detail about the position and your qualifications. End the letter with an appropriate closing such as "Thank you for your time and consideration."

Sincerely/Cordially/Best Regards (Any appropriate salutation),

{Signature}

Your Name (typed)

Enclosure(s)/Attachment(s) – (# of Attachments)

Solicit Strong Letters of Recommendation

Graduate schools require letters of recommendation (or evaluation), and faculty members are an excellent resource. (In fact, health professions schools require that applicants submit at least 1 letter written by a professor.) It is important for potential applicants to develop a professional relationship with faculty members throughout their undergraduate academic career. The best letters of evaluation come from faculty members who can speak for your academic ability and for your personal qualities and characteristics. Faculty members want to help students succeed in their career aspirations, but students need to take the initiative in developing and fostering the relationship.

General Tips

- Do your best in your academic coursework.
- Be aware of deadlines for submission to graduate schools. Plan to submit very early.
- Seek out a professor/employer who knows you well to write a letter of recommendation.
- Ask them frankly if they feel they are in a position to write a strong letter for you.
- Make it easy for your recommender to glow about you. Provide a copy of your résumé, a writing sample, a list of skills or characteristics your industry is looking for and ask if more information is needed. If so, share that too.
- Give your letter-writer clear directions for submitting the letter, along with a projected timeline. Allow at least 2 weeks. (If appropriate, include an addressed, stamped envelope.)
- Check back with your recommender if you haven't heard within the agreed-upon timeline.
- Be grateful. A thank you note is always appreciated.



**Can your
recommender
“glow” about
you?**

Things You Can Expect A Recommender to Include:

- How long they have known you and in what capacity (school, employment, church, family association, etc.)
- How they compare you to your peers
- Career motivation and professional promise
- Academic performance and potential
- Personal attributes
- Greatest asset(s) as a candidate
- Weak area(s) as a candidate
- Leadership
- Service
- Any other information that would be useful in evaluating you