

# RESUME WRITING OVERVIEW

All that we know about you is what is listed on this page, so make it count.

## CREATE A MASTER RESUME

Start by making a complete list of experiences. Focus on the past four years if you are a current student, the past ten if you took time off to work. Use the categories below to organize your information.

Required sections are noted with a \*

- Contact Information \*
- Objective or summary
- Education \*
- Work Experience (Related and Other)\*
- Volunteer Experience
- Professional Affiliations
- Exhibitions
- Performances
- Publications
- Skills

## CREATE TARGETED RESUMES

It is ok (and expected!) to have several versions of your resume. Your master resume may take up three pages, or you may struggle to fill a page. **The ideal resume is one page in length**—no more, no less. So the way you cut or expand information, and how you arrange content depends on what the industry expects AND what you want to emphasize.

## KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Resume expectations vary depending on what you want to do and where you want to work. **Gather information about employer expectations** for content, format, and in-demand skills and experience. Sometimes there are very specific expectations (i.e., an actor's resume), but often you have the flexibility to arrange your resume in the way you feel best reflects your experience.

## KNOW YOUR VALUE

A strong resume goes beyond listing your work history- it should show off your strengths and uniqueness. Start with an honest assessment of **what makes you worth hiring**- and make sure your resume reflects this. Choose your 3 or 4 top skills- communication, organization, expert Photoshop abilities, for example. This will become your message. You may explicitly state your message in an Objective or Summary, but more importantly, your message will help you decide what to include, what to cut, and how to arrange your resume.

## MAKE IT LOOK GOOD

Your resume has to reflect your experience, but it is also a branding opportunity. If you have a portfolio, website, or business card, be sure they all fit together visually. If you are in a portfolio-based field, be sure that your resume is designed to match your type treatment and color scheme.

## THINK OUTSIDE THE PAGE

A print resume is no longer the center of a job search. Online resumes and portfolios are standard at this point. Embed links in your PDF or website so you can link to companies you have worked for, examples of your work, or anything else (**professional**) you can think of.

## GET FEEDBACK

When you spend hours on your resume, sometimes it's hard to see your own mistakes. Be sure to have at least two professionals review your resume before you send it out. This can be your instructors, supervisors, or Career Initiatives staff. They will help check for errors, but can also help you judge whether your resume is representing you well.

## DESCRIBING YOUR WORK

Write job descriptions carefully so they paint a clear and accurate picture of your role on the job. Go beyond 'responsibilities' to think about what you contributed.

- Use bullets to make descriptions easy to read.
- Write in phrases, not sentences.
- Start with strong, action verbs.
- A cheat sheet is available on another PDF if you get stuck.
- Provide context. Try to include the who, what, why, and how often for each duty. Who were you calling? What were you copying? Why were you filing papers?

Think about **why your job was necessary for the company to operate**, what you were complimented or praised for, and what you were proudest of on the job.

## FORMAT/DESIGN TIPS

There are a few general rules for anyone thinking about resume format and design:

- Font size should not go smaller than 10 or larger than 12.
- Avoid cursive or other hard to read fonts.
- Bold, underlining, and indents are all good ways to separate content. But centering your content is not ideal and can make it harder to read.
- Keep it simple. Good design adds to a resume and bad design definitely detracts. Avoid background images or large, distracting design. Simple use of color, lines, and spacing is usually all you need.
- Know Illustrator/In Design/Photoshop? Use them! If you can use them well, don't feel tied to a Word document.
- Templates: don't use them. This is a good way to guarantee that your resume looks just like someone else's! They also make it hard to move content around, and we definitely want content to be mobile. You can do just as well on your own.

# COVER LETTERS

Cover letters should always accompany a resume- whether or not a company specifically asks for them. A good cover letter will add something to the application. It should cover:

1. What are you applying for?
2. Why are you interested?
3. Why are you the person for the job?

Cover letters allow you to tie your experiences in to the job at hand. If you have a job description, start by mapping out skills required to do the job, and how you can show them that you have the skills they need.

Then work this into a 3 – 4 paragraph letter. Research the company you are applying to, and integrate what you learn into the cover letter to show how you would fit with their main initiatives. Take a look at the guide on our website for an idea about how to break it down. But the standard rules apply- make sure it's **free of errors, well written, and interesting to read.**

## Job Duties and Requirements

## Evidence You Can Do It