

Résumé with Cover Letter

THE FIRST STEP to finding a job is creating a great résumé and cover letter. Potential employers often sift through dozens or even hundreds of résumés before narrowing down the list to a few candidates to call in for an interview. You may have all the necessary qualifications and perform great in interviews, but a poorly written or error-filled résumé will likely be discarded without another thought.



Objective:



Explain how to write a résumé and cover letter.

Key Terms:



chronological résumé

functional résumé

privacy policy

cover letter

HTML

résumé

electronic résumé

PAR statements

scannable résumé

electronic résumé bank

plain text résumé

first person

printed résumé

Understanding Résumés and Cover Letters

It is not enough to write a single résumé and cover letter to send to every employer in your town. It is better to customize your documents, depending on the recipient. The cover letter provides you with an opportunity to highlight skills for different potential jobs. For example, you should focus on your communication skills for a job in which you would provide customer service, but highlight your computer skills for an office job. Your basic skills are the same, but you are focusing on the ones that are most important for each job.

COVER LETTER

A **cover letter** is an item sent with a résumé to provide additional information.

Effective Cover Letter

An effective cover letter is free of errors and is written in a professional manner. Include information about the company, and use terms that are significant to the employer. Each letter should be specific to the company's job opening instead of a generic letter. Be brief. The letter should be no more than one page or one screen, if sending it by email. Follow up with a phone call or email a few days after sending the letter.

Format

The proper format will improve your cover letter. Regardless, the first paragraph should grab the attention and interest of the employer by explaining how hiring you would benefit the company. In the next paragraph, provide more details about your professional qualifications related to the specific job. The third paragraph should explain why you are the best candidate for the position. In the final paragraph, request an interview.

Specific

Send the cover letter to the specific person in the corporation who is responsible for hiring. Address a specific posted position or a position of interest rather than vaguely stating you would like a job. Also, state the specific skills and qualifications you have for the desired position.

RÉSUMÉ

A **résumé** is a marketing tool used by candidates to present his or her work experiences, coursework, and skills. Typically, an employer decides within the first 40 seconds to reject or to continue reading an applicant's résumé.

Effective Résumé

An effective résumé is one page in length. On it, avoid the use of **first person** words (e.g., "I" and "we"). Use action verbs to



FIGURE 1. Employers may decide within the first 40 seconds to reject or to continue reading your résumé, so it is essential to make a good first impression.

begin phrases. For example, “Supervised a team of four employees” is better than “I was in charge of four employees.”

Explain all initials and/or acronyms used, and define all terms that may not be familiar to the reader. Emphasize accomplishments instead of past positions. In addition, include information about your hobbies only if the hobbies relate to the position.

Include **PAR statements**, which are communications with the Problem-Action-Results stated. For instance, indicate a problem you tackled in a previous position. Explain the action you took and the results.

Create your résumé using a word-processing program, not a template. As a result, you will have increased flexibility and ease in changing the format. But make sure you use high-quality paper in a pastel color (e.g., ivory or light gray), and mail résumés flat in a 9" × 12" envelope.

Types

- ◆ A **chronological résumé** is a professional and personalized communication that lists your last job first. It is best for someone who has several years of employment.
- ◆ A **functional résumé** is a professional and personalized communication that highlights skills. It is best for new graduates or those with little work experience. A combination résumé includes elements of chronological and functional résumés.
- ◆ An **electronic résumé** is a professional and personalized communication posted online. It is best to use this when an employer requests a scannable résumé.

Sections

Each résumé starts with a heading. It should include your name, address, phone number, and email address. The email address should be one that would not offend a potential employer. Consider creating a new account that uses your name in the address rather than something such as “footballchamp1.” The heading should appear in a larger font than the remainder of the résumé.

- ◆ List your educational achievements with the most recent degree first. If you list postsecondary degrees, do not list your high school education.
- ◆ List only the activities and hobbies related to the position. Examples of relevant activities are internships, coursework, projects, volunteer experiences, extra-curricular activities, and community involvement.
- ◆ Always list your work experience. If you have a long work history with many changes, include only information for the past 15 years.
- ◆ List any work-related awards you have achieved, explaining the award if necessary. In addition, list the professional organizations to which you belong, and note any leadership roles you have held. Add details of any other skills related to the position (e.g., computer, technology, and foreign language skills).
- ◆ List the name, position, address, phone number, and email address of your references. Yet you should always ask permission before using someone as a reference.



FURTHER EXPLORATION...

ONLINE CONNECTION: Résumé Design

Content may be appropriate in a résumé for one potential job, but it may not work for another job. Some industries tend to favor simple, straightforward text designs. However, other industries may value something a little more colorful and creative. It is up to you to decide on a case-by-case basis whether the potential employers would appreciate a traditional or more creative résumé and cover letter. For example, you likely would have more leeway applying for a job as a graphic designer than for an accounting job.

Visit the following websites to learn more about how and when to incorporate visual elements into your résumé. Then create a short list of pros and cons for including graphics in your résumé, based on the job you would most like to pursue.

<http://mashable.com/2011/02/21/dynamic-digital-resumes/>

<http://jobmob.co.il/blog/beautiful-resume-ideas-that-work/>

<http://www.recruiter.com/i/the-resume-graphics-you-think-you-don%E2%80%99t-like/>

- ◆ Consider adding an employment objective at the beginning of the résumé. Stating a job objective may limit the positions offered. In contrast, not listing an objective may indicate to a potential employer that you lack decision-making skills.

Versions

- ◆ A **printed résumé** is a professional and personalized communication that uses bullet points and highlights; it should be ready to mail to perspective employers.
- ◆ A **scannable résumé** is a professional and personalized communication that uses plain text, unadorned text, and simple formatting.
- ◆ A **plain text résumé**, also known as a text-only copy or an email résumé, is a professional and personalized communication that may be copied and pasted into online forms. It is formatted to fit email length requirements.

POSTING AN ONLINE RÉSUMÉ

An Internet-ready résumé requires a special format. Use plain text without a template to customize the résumé for different positions. Select the résumé format that meets an individual need: chronological or functional. Then proofread the document for spelling and typing errors.

HTML

An **HTML** (HyperText Markup Language) résumé is appropriate when creating and formatting a structured Web document with links. It would be appropriate, for example, for a com-

puter programmer or a graphic artist who wants to share a portfolio of work electronically. An HTML résumé, however, is rarely used alone. Send a personal résumé that is not linked to the HTML document as well.

Guidelines

There are several guidelines you should follow when sending an online résumé. Use the accurate title of the position in the subject line instead of a generic subject (e.g., job search). Include a cover letter with all résumés, including those sent online. Send résumés as part of the body in the text, not as an attachment. Format the résumé to fit the screen, if you are sending it via email. Select an **electronic résumé bank** (database) specific to the desired position.

Privacy Policy

Before posting a résumé, review the website's **privacy policy**, which is the course of action regarding how and to whom the website shares data. This helps you determine the site's policy of selling personal information. In the heading, use an email address that contains your name, rather than the full heading used in mailed résumés.

Remove your résumé from websites when you obtain a position.

Summary:



The most important factors in writing résumés and cover letters are professionalism and accuracy. All documents should be free of errors. They should be brief and specific to the company's job opening. A cover letter is an item sent with a résumé to provide additional information. A résumé is a marketing tool used by candidates to present their work experiences, coursework, and skills. Typically, an employer decides within the first 40 seconds to reject or to continue reading an applicant's résumé, so it is essential to make a good first impression. Different types of résumés are appropriate for different situations. In some cases, you will mail a printed résumé and cover letter, but there may be other times in which you email your résumé or post it online.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What are the components of a cover letter?
2. Why should you write a new cover letter for each potential job?
3. What are the four types of résumés?
4. What are the sections of a résumé?
5. What are the guidelines for sending an online résumé?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Find sample résumés online. Review them, and decide whether they are chronological, functional, or a combination. Proofread them for errors. Make at least two suggestions for changes the author could make to create a more effective résumé.

Web Links:



Cover Letters

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2011/03/24/how-to-write-a-cover-letter/>

Résumé Writing

<http://career-advice.monster.com/resumes-cover-letters/resume-writing-tips/how-to-write-a-resume/article.aspx>

Tips for Success

<http://www.dailywritingtips.com/resume-writing-tips/>