Résumé with Cover Letter

Unit: Communication Skills

Problem Area: Demonstrate Written Communication Skills

Lesson: Résumé with Cover Letter

■ **Student Learning Objectives.** Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

1 **Identify the components of a cover letter.**

2 **Write a résumé.**

3 **Explain the procedure to post an online résumé.**

■ **Resources.** The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

"Action Verbs," *Quintessential Careers*™. Accessed April 7, 2010. <http://www.quintcareers.com/action_skills.html>.

"Free Résumé Templates," *JobStar Central.* Accessed April 7, 2010. <http://jobstar.org/tools/resume/index.php>.

Hansen, Katherine, and Randall S. Hansen. "The Dynamic Cover Letters Formula for Job-Search Success," *Quintessential Careers.* Accessed April 7, 2010. <http://www.quintcareers.com/cover_letters.html>.

Matherne, Bobby. *Tidbit of Humor: Quotes from Real Résumés, Cover Letters, and Appraisals.* Accessed April 7, 2010. <http://www.doyletics.com/tidbits/resumes.htm>.

"Prepare Your Résumé for Email and Online Posting," *The Riley Guide.* Accessed April 7, 2010. <http://www.rileyguide.com/eresume.html>.

"Résumé Presentation and Procedure Tips," *Career Consulting Corner.* Accessed April 7, 2010. <http://www.careercc.com/resumpr.shtml>.

"Résumé Writing Guide," *Rivier College.* Accessed April 7, 2010.
<http://www.rivier.edu/departments/Cardev/Jobsearch_Guides/
an_effective_resume.htm>.

"Sample Résumés," *Best Sample Resume.com.* Accessed April 7, 2010.
<http://www.bestsampleresume.com/>.

"Student Résumé No-No's," *California State University (Chico) Career Center.*
Accessed April 7, 2010. <http://www.csuchico.edu/careers/students-
alumni/job-search-tools/resumes-letters/resume-video.shtml>.

■ Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities

- ✓ Overhead or PowerPoint projector
- ✓ Visual(s) from accompanying master(s)
- ✓ Copies of sample test, lab sheet(s), and/or other items designed for duplication
- ✓ Materials listed on duplicated items
- ✓ Computers with printers and Internet access
- ✓ Classroom resource and reference materials

■ Key Terms. The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

- ► chronological résumé
- ► cover letter
- ► electronic résumé
- ► electronic résumé bank
- ► first person
- ► functional résumé
- ► HTML
- ► plain text résumé
- ► printed résumé
- ► privacy policy
- ► PAR statements
- ► résumé
- ► scannable résumé

■ Interest Approach. Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situations. A possible approach is included here.

Why is proofreading a resume an important task? Some people do not proofread before they submit their résumé. For example, an actual résumé included the following line: "I have lurnt Word Perfect 6.0 computor and spreadsheet pogroms." (Write this sentence on the board and then read it aloud to the class.) Next, proofread other lines from real résumés and identify and correct

the mistakes. See VM–A for other lines from real résumés and cover letters. Use VM–A to conduct a class discussion of common résumé mistakes and the corrections.

CONTENT SUMMARY AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Objective 1: Identify the components of a cover letter.

Anticipated Problem: What are the components of a cover letter?

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

    A. Effective cover letters should:

        1. Be free of errors

        2. Be written in a professional manner

        3. Include information about the company

        4. Use terms significant to the employer

        5. Be specific to the company's job opening, not a general or generic letter

        6. Be brief (e.g., one page or one screen)

        7. Be followed up with a phone call or email

    B. Cover letter format

        1. The first paragraph should grab the attention and interest of the employer by explaining how hiring the applicant would benefit the company.

        2. The second paragraph should provide more details about the applicant's professional qualifications related to the specific job.

        3. The third paragraph explains why the applicant is the best candidate for the position.

        4. The fourth paragraph requests an interview.

    C. A cover letter should:

        1. Be sent to the specific person in the corporation who is responsible for hiring

        2. Address a specific posted position or a position of interest

        3. State the specific skills and qualifications the applicant possesses for a specific position

Teaching Strategy: *Use VM–B, VM–C, and VM–D to facilitate a discussion. Assign LS–A.*

Anticipated Problem: What is the process to write a résumé?

II. 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.

   A. An effective résumé
      1. Is one page in length
      2. Avoids the use of **first person** words (e.g., I, me, my)
      3. Uses action verbs to begin phrases
      4. Explains all initials or acronyms used in the résumé
      5. Describes all terms that may not be familiar to the reader
      6. Emphasizes accomplishments, rather than past job positions
      7. Includes hobbies ONLY if the hobbies relate to the position
      8. Uses high-quality paper in a pastel color (e.g., ivory or light gray)
      9. Is sent flat in a large 9" × 12" envelope
      10. Includes **PAR statements** (Problem-Action-Results) by indicating a problem tackled in a previous position, the action taken, and the results of that action
      11. Is word processed, rather than using a template, for increased flexibility and ease in changing the format
   B. Types
      1. **Chronological résumé**
         a. It lists the last job first.
         b. It is best for someone who has several years of employment.
      2. **Functional résumé**
         a. It highlights skills.
         b. It is best for new graduates or those with little experience.
      3. Combination résumé
         a. It include elements of the chronological résumé.
         b. It includes elements of the functional résumé.
      4. **Electronic résumé**
         a. It is posted online.
         b. It is best when an employer requests a scannable résumé.
   C. Sections
      1. Heading
         a. It should include the applicant's name, address, phone number, and email address. The email address should be one that would not offend a potential employer.
         b. It should be shown in a larger font than the remainder of the résumé.

2. Education
   a. It should be listed with the most recent degree first.
   b. When postsecondary degrees are included, a high school education is not listed.
3. Only activities related to the position should be listed.
   a. Internships
   b. Coursework
   c. Projects
   d. Volunteer experiences
   e. Extra-curricular activities
   f. Community involvement
4. Only hobbies related to the desired position should be listed.
5. Work experience should always be listed. When experience changes frequently, only the past 15 years should be listed.
6. Awards received should be listed, explaining the award if necessary.
7. Professional organizations should be listed, and it is essential to state any leadership roles.
8. Computer, technology, and foreign language skills and/or other skills related to the position should be listed.
9. References
   a. It is necessary for the applicant to include his or her references' name, position, address, phone number, and email address.
   b. It is essential to ask for permission before using someone as a reference.
10. Employment objective: Consider the addition of an 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 there is a lack of decision-making skills on the part of the applicant.

D. Versions
   1. *Printed résumé*
      a. Bullet points and highlights may be used.
      b. It should be ready to mail to perspective employers.
   2. *Scannable résumé*
      a. It contains fewer bells and whistles.
      b. It uses plain text, unadorned text, and simple formatting.
   3. *Plain text résumé* (also known as a text-only copy or an email résumé)
      a. It may be copied and pasted into online forms.
      b. It is a text-only copy.
      c. It is formatted to fit email length requirements.

Teaching Strategy: *Use VM–E as a handout for all students. Use VM–F, VM–G, and VM–H to facilitate a discussion. Have students use the Internet to find samples of the résumé types in this objective. Assign LS–B and LS–C.*

Objective 3: Explain the procedure to post an online résumé.

Anticipated Problem: What is the procedure for posting an online résumé?

III. Prepare a résumé for email and online posting

    A. Formats for an Internet-ready résumé

        1. It is necessary to use plain text without a template to customize the résumé for different positions.

        2. The applicant should select the résumé format that meets an individual need: chronological or functional.

        3. The applicant should proofread for spelling and typing errors.

    B. Using a HyperText Markup Language (**HTML**) résumé

        1. It is appropriate when creating and formatting a structured Web document with links.

        2. It is appropriate when someone (e.g., a computer programmer or a graphic artist) wishes to share a portfolio of work electronically.

        3. An HTML résumé is rarely used alone. A personal résumé is always sent and would not be linked to the HTML document.

    C. Guidelines for sending an online résumé

        1. The accurate title of the position should be used in the subject line.

        2. A cover letter should be included with all résumés, including those sent online.

        3. Résumés should be sent as part of the body in the text, not as an attachment.

        4. To send a résumé via email, it needs to be formatted to fit the screen.

        5. An **electronic résumé bank** (database) specific to the desired position should be selected.

    D. Tips for posting a cyber-safe résumé

        1. Before posting a résumé, an applicant should review the Web site's **privacy policy** (how and to whom the Web site shares data) to determine the policy of selling personal information.

        2. In the heading, the applicant should use an email address that contains his or her name rather than the full heading used in mailed résumés.

        3. The résumé should be removed from Web sites when a position is obtained.

Teaching Strategy: *Use VM–I, VM–J, VM–K, and VM–L to facilitate the discussion on the procedure for posting a résumé online.*

■ **Review/Summary.** Use the student learning objectives to summarize the lesson. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Student responses can be used in determining which objectives need to be reviewed or taught from a different angle.

■ **Application.** Use the included visual master(s) and lab sheet(s) to apply the information presented in the lesson.

■ **Evaluation.** Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. A sample written test is provided.

■ Answers to Sample Test:

Part One: Matching

1. j
2. e
3. d
4. a
5. f
6. b
7. c
8. g
9. h
10. i

Part Two: Short Answer

1. The content included in the four paragraphs of a cover letter:
   a. The first paragraph should grab the attention and interest of the employer by explaining how hiring the applicant would benefit the company.
   b. The second paragraph should provide more details about the applicant's professional qualifications related to the specific job.
   c. The third paragraph should explain why the applicant is the best candidate for the position.
   d. The fourth paragraph should request an interview.
2. Answers will vary but should include eight of the following sections:
   a. Heading
   b. Education
   c. Activities
   d. Hobbies
   e. Work experience
   f. Awards
   g. Professional organizations
   h. Skills
   i. References
   j. Employment objective

Part Three: True/False

1. T
2. T
3. T
4. F
5. F
6. F
7. T
8. T
9. T
10. F

Name _____

Résumé with Cover Letter

▶ **Part One: Matching**

Instructions: **Match the term with the correct definition.**

a. chronological résumé   f. functional résumé
b. electronic résumé   g. HTML
c. electronic résumé bank   h. plain text résumé
d. résumé   i. privacy policy
e. cover letter   j. scannable résumé

_____1. A résumé that uses plain text, unadorned text, and simple formatting

_____2. An item sent with a résumé to provide additional information

_____3. A marketing tool used by candidates to present their work experiences, coursework, and skills

_____4. A résumé that lists the last job first

_____5. A résumé that highlights skills

_____6. A résumé posted online

_____7. A database of jobs found online

_____8. A language used to create and format a structured Web document with links

_____9. A résumé that may be copied and pasted into online forms

____10. Something that is concerned with the selling of personal information

▶ Part Two: Short Answer

Instructions: **Answer the following.**

1. What content should be included in the four paragraphs of a cover letter?

   a. Paragraph 1:

   b. Paragraph 2:

   c. Paragraph 3:

   d. Paragraph 4:

2. List eight sections commonly included in a résumé.

▶ Part Three: True/False

Instructions: **Write *T* for true or *F* for false.**

_____1. Typically, employers decide within the first 40 seconds if they should continue reading an applicant's résumé.

_____2. Explain all initials of organizations used in the résumé.

_____3. Describe all terms that may not be familiar to the reader of the résumé.

_____4. Emphasize your past positions in a résumé.

_____5. When sending a résumé by email, keep the same format as for a printed résumé.

_____6. Keep your résumé on the Web sites after you secure a position.

_____7. Include a cover letter with all résumés, including those sent online.

_____8. Avoid sending a folded résumé.

_____9. Use action verbs to start phrases on a résumé.

_____10. A résumé should be about five pages.

QUOTES FROM ACTUAL RÉSUMÉS

Proofread these quotes from actual résumés and cover letters. Identify the mistakes, and correct each line.

1. "I have lurnt Word Perfect 6.0 computor and spread-sheet pogroms."

2. "Am a perfectionist and rarely if if ever forget details."

3. "Received a plague for Salesperson of the Year."

4. "Wholly responsible for two (2) failed financial institutions."

5. "Reason for leaving last job: maturity leave."

6. "Failed bar exam with relatively high grades."

7. "It's best for employers that I not work with people."

8. "Let's meet, so you can 'ooh' and 'aah' over my experience."

9. "I was working for my mom until she decided to move."

10. "Marital status: Single. Unmarried. Unengaged. Uninvolved. No commitments."

11. "I have an excellent track record, although I am not a horse."

12. "I am loyal to my employer at all costs... Please feel free to respond to my résumé on my office voice mail."

13. "My goal is to be a meteorologist. But since I possess no training in Meteorology, I suppose I should try stock brokerage."

14. "I procrastinate, especially when the task is unpleasant."

15. "Personal interests: Donating blood. Fourteen gallons so far."

16. "Instrumental in ruining entire operation for a Midwest chain store."

17. "Note: Please don't misconstrue my 14 jobs as 'job-hopping'. I have never quit a job."

18. "Marital status: Often. Children: Various."

19. "The company made me a scapegoat, just like my three previous employers."

20. "Finished eighth in class of ten."

21. "References: None. I've left a path of destruction behind me."

EFFECTIVE COVER LETTERS

♦ A cover letter is sent with the résumé to provide additional information.

♦ Effective cover letters should:

- Be free of errors and written in a professional manner
- Include information about the company
- Use terms significant to the employer
- Be specific to the company's job opening rather than a general or generic letter
- Be brief: one page or one screen (online)
- Be followed with a phone call or an email

COVER LETTER FORMAT

◆ **Paragraph 1:** It grabs the attention and interest of the employer by explaining how hiring the applicant would benefit the company.

◆ **Paragraph 2:** It provides more details about the applicant's professional qualifications related to the specific job.

◆ **Paragraph 3:** It explains why the applicant is the best candidate for the position.

◆ **Paragraph 4:** It requests an interview.

COVER LETTER STANDARDS

A cover letter should:

Be sent to the specific person in the corporation who is responsible for hiring

Address a specific posted position or a position of interest

State the specific skills and qualifications the applicant possesses for a specific position

HINTS FOR DESIGNING AN EFFECTIVE RÉSUMÉ

A résumé is a marketing tool used by candidates to present their work experiences, coursework, and skills.

An effective résumé:

1. Is one page in length

2. Avoids the use of first person words (I, me, my)

3. Uses action verbs to begin phrases

4. Explains all initials or acronyms used in the résumé

5. Describes all terms that may not be familiar to the reader

6. Emphasizes accomplishments, rather than past job positions

7. Includes hobbies ONLY if the hobbies relate to the position

8. Uses high-quality paper in a pastel color (e.g., ivory or light gray), not parchment paper

9. Is sent flat in a large 9" × 12" envelope, not folded

10. Includes PAR statements (Problem-Action-Results)— a problem tackled in a previous position, the action taken, and the results of that action

11. Is word processed rather than created using a template for increased flexibility and ease in changing the format

TYPES OF RÉSUMÉS

Chronological résumé

    a. It lists the last job first.

    b. It is best for someone who has several years of employment.

Functional résumé

    a. It highlights skills.

    b. It is the best for new graduates or those with little experience.

Combination résumé

    a. It has elements of the chronological résumé.

    b. It has elements of the functional résumé.

Electronic résumé

    a. It is posted online.

    b. It is best when an employer requests a scannable résumé.

RÉSUMÉ SECTIONS

Heading

a. It should include the applicant's name, address, phone number, and email address.

b. It should be shown in a larger font than the remainder of the résumé.

Education

a. It should be listed with the most recent degree first.

b. When postsecondary degrees are included, high school education is not listed.

Activities: List only those related to the position.

a. Internships

b. Course work

c. Projects

d. Volunteer experiences

e. Extra-curricular activities

f. Community involvement

Hobbies: List only those related to the desired position.

Work experience: Always include work experience. When experience changes frequently, list only the past 15 years.

Awards: List those received, explaining the award if necessary.

Professional organizations: List and state any leadership roles.

Skills: List computer, technology, and foreign language skills and/or others related to the position.
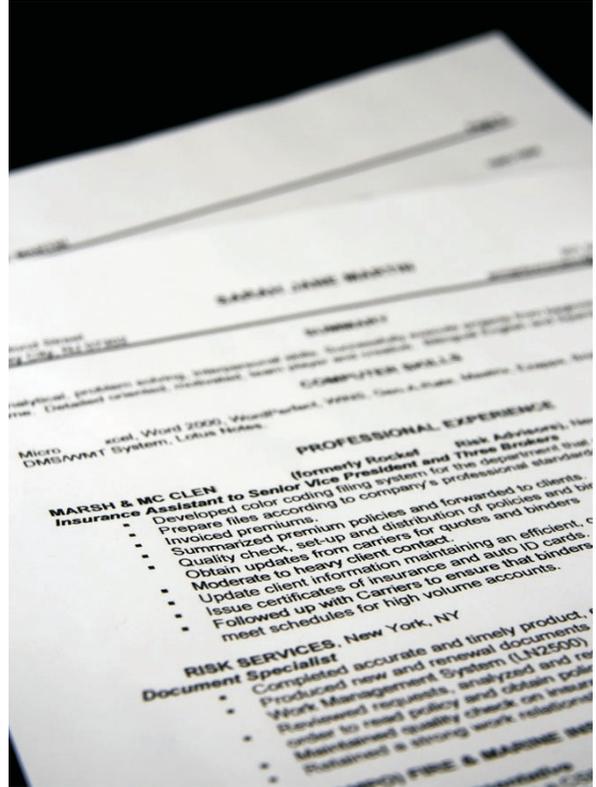
References

a. Include the name, position, address, phone number, and email address of each reference.

b. Ask permission before using someone as a reference.

Employment objective: Consider the addition of 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 there is a lack of decision-making skills on the part of the applicant.

RÉSUMÉ VERSIONS

Printed résumé

    a. It may use bullet points and highlights.

    b. It should be ready to mail to perspective employers.
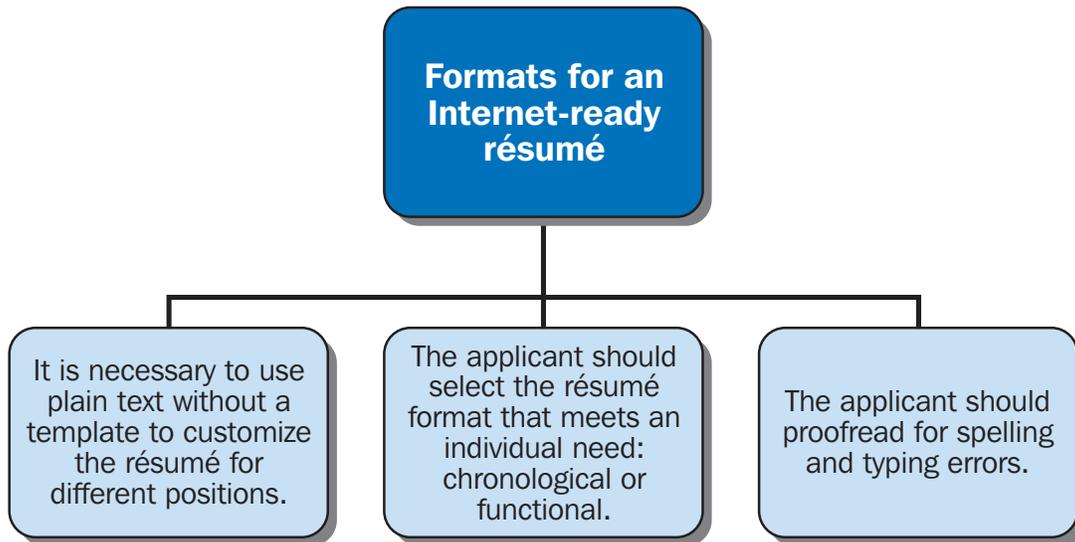
Scannable résumé

    a. It contains fewer bells and whistles.

    b. It uses plain text, unadorned text, and simple formatting.

Plain text résumé (also known as a text-only copy or an email résumé)

    a. It may be copied and pasted into online forms.

    b. It is a text-only copy.

    c. It is formatted to fit email length requirements.

FORMAT RÉSUMÉS FOR THE INTERNET

Formats for an Internet-ready résumé

It is necessary to use plain text without a template to customize the résumé for different positions.

The applicant should select the résumé format that meets an individual need: chronological or functional.

The applicant should proofread for spelling and typing errors.

RESUMÉ

HTML RÉSUMÉS

When to use a HTML (or HyperText Markup Language) résumé—

1. It is appropriate when creating and formatting a structured Web document with links.

2. It is appropriate when someone (e.g., a computer programmer or a graphic artist) wishes to share a portfolio of work electronically.

3. An HTML résumé is rarely used alone. A personal résumé is always sent and would not be linked to the HTML document.

GUIDELINES FOR SENDING ONLINE RÉSUMÉS

◆ Subject line: Use the accurate title of the position in the subject line.

◆ Cover letter: Include a cover letter with all résumés, including those sent online.

◆ Sending: Send résumés as part of the body in the text, not as an attachment.

◆ Email: To send a résumé via email, format it to fit the screen.

◆ Select an electronic résumé bank (database) specific to the desired position.

TIPS FOR POSTING A CYBER-SAFE RÉSUMÉ

♦ Before posting, review the Web site's privacy policy to determine the 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 Web sites when you have secured a position.

Write a Cover Letter to Accompany a Résumé

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to write a cover letter to accompany your résumé.

Objectives

1. Identify the components of an effective cover letter.

2. Proofread the cover letter.

Materials

♦ lab sheet

♦ paper

♦ writing utensil

Procedure

1. Select a company for which you would enjoy working.

2. Brainstorm on paper. Then draft a cover letter to accompany your résumé about a position of interest. Word process your cover letter using the following guidelines:

   a. PARAGRAPH 1: Grab the interest of the employer by explaining how you would benefit the company.

   b. PARAGRAPH 2: Add more details about your professional qualifications related to the specific job for which you are applying.

   c. PARAGRAPH 3: Explain why you are the best candidate for the position.

   d. PARAGRAPH 4: Request an interview.

3. Proofread the cover letter for errors.

4. Trade your cover letter with a partner and proofread the letters for errors.

5. Make corrections as needed.

6. Submit your letter to the instructor.

Write Using Action Verb Statements

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to practice writing action verbs for use on a résumé.

Objectives

1. Identify action words that may be used on a résumé.

2. Compare and contrast action verbs used on a résumé.

Materials

♦ lab sheet

♦ paper

♦ writing utensil

Procedure

1. Access the Web site http://www.quitcareers.com/action_skills.html.

2. Write one action verb statement in each skill category in each section.

3. Be very specific, and choose your use action verbs carefully. For example, which statement is most specific?

    a. Statement 1: *"Worked with FCCLA on an after-school project."*

    b. Statement 2: *"Directed a Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America after-school peer education project."*

4. What caused you to choose Statement 1 or 2?

Action Verb Statements

Résumé Skill Category	Action Verb Statement
Communication	Example—"Addressed the Anytown Park District Board and presented a proposal on the Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America clean-up project for the city park."
Creative	
Data/financial	
Helping	
Management/leadership	
Organizational	
Research	

Résumé Skill Category	Action Verb Statement
Teaching	
Technical	

5. Submit the lab sheet to the instructor.

Name _____

Write a Résumé for a Future Job

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to write a résumé for a future job.

Objectives

1. Identify information necessary to complete a résumé.

2. Classify the information into sections of a résumé.

Materials

♦ lab sheet

♦ writing utensil

Procedure

1. Identify a career you would enjoy. List it below.

2. Identify a job in that career. List the job below.

3. Access and review sample résumés at http://www.bestsampleresume.com/.

4. Word process a résumé using the outline on the Web site as a guide. Do not duplicate the information.

5. Use action verb statements to complete your résumé. Review action verbs at http://www.quitcareers.com/action_skills.html.

6. Include current and future information. For example, if you intend to receive a certification or other postsecondary degree following high school, include that type of information.

7. Print a draft of your résumé.

8. Ask two classmates to proofread your résumé.

9. Make any needed edits based on the proofreading suggestions.

10. Print a copy of your résumé and submit it to your instructor for comments.

11. Produce a final copy.