

Resume Writing

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with some basic information about resume writing. Your resume will serve as a critical tool in your search for internships, graduate schools, part-time/summer jobs, or full-time employment.

Your resume is a "sales piece" which tells a potential employer that you are qualified for a job and that you deserve an interview. A resume is a "living document"; the contents can change depending on the position for which you are applying. It is suggested that you tailor your resume to each position by highlighting your relevant skills, experiences and accomplishments.

- ▶ A resume is used to **OUTLINE** your skills and experiences.
- ▶ A cover letter is used to **MATCH** your skills and experiences to a specific job position and **EXPLAIN** how these skills and experiences will benefit the employer.
- ▶ A resume is for generating **INTERVIEWS**, not job offers (*you do that*)!

There are no absolute rules for writing a resume. However, we have included some general guidelines in the following pages. Johnson State College's Career Services is here to help you create an effective resume.

The process of writing a resume is good preparation for a job search. It encourages you to review your accomplishments and identify experiences that are relevant to your job target. An effective resume is likely to stimulate the interest of a potential employer. It is a tool to help you obtain a job interview. You don't need to include everything you have experienced, just enough to spark the interest an employer to meet with you in person. The test of a good resume is whether or not you are getting interviews.

Different Occupations Expect Different Resume Styles

There is no one right way to write a resume. Within each profession there are expectations of what a “good” resume will look like. Some employers look for evidence of a well-rounded individual. Others look for a concrete focus supported with relevant experience, while others are impressed with accomplishments that show stability and long-term commitment. Have your drafts reviewed at Career Services and also ask someone in your target profession to critique it. If you are looking for jobs in more than one field, you may need more than one resume.

Some Basic Principles

- Do not try to be everything to everyone. Have your job search narrowed down to a couple of occupational areas based on your career goals, education, and experience. The contents of your resume should be targeted toward your goals.
- Keep it brief! One to two pages are acceptable —your resume should not be an autobiography.
- Describe your accomplishments positively and accurately. This is not the place for modesty or exaggeration. Use quantities, amounts, and percentages, dollar values where they enhance the description.
- **There are no absolute rules regarding resume format —only guidelines.** Pick a format that best highlights your **relevant** skills and accomplishments that match your career objective.
- Lead with your strengths! Put your most relevant experiences toward the top of your resume.
- Don't limit the resume content to just your work experience. There are many transferable skills that can be developed through volunteer positions, involvement in student and professional organizations, and through class projects. In many cases, we do our best work on volunteer positions as they involve activities we really enjoy doing.
- Omit personal pronouns, such as “I,” “me,” “my,” etc.
- Omit all personal data, such as height, weight, marital status, age, health, etc.
- Don't mention salary or wages on your resume.
- Do not include personal references as a part of your resume. Rather, have available at least three references on a separate sheet to be provided when asked for by an employer. The line “References Available Upon Request” can also be omitted, as this is a given.
- **ALWAYS** send a neatly typed cover letter with your resume to introduce yourself.
- **Visual presentation counts.** Maintain an eye-pleasing balance. Be creative not bizarre. Once you have drafted your resume, complete the process by adding professionalism to the final format. Use a good laser printer and quality paper.
- Make sure that your resume and cover letter have no typing or grammatical errors. Employers consistently cite this as the first reason they eliminate applicants.
- Always carry extra copies of your resume with you during your job search.

How To Get Started

- 1) **Use a blank worksheet to generate information on your education, work history, activities, and additional data.** Don't worry about the final format at this point – your main objective is to identify relevant information and accomplishments. You may not end up using all of this in your resume, but it is important to get it on paper to consider. Once you have determined what to include on your resume, it will be easier to choose a format that best highlights your relevant skills and experiences.
 - **Education:** List schools attended, dates, courses taken, degrees, special projects, subjects, extra-curricular activities, special skills developed, and academic accomplishments.
 - **Work History:** Start with your most recent job and work backwards. List such information as the name, city, and state of your employer, job title, dates of employment, duties, skills developed and accomplishments. The accomplishment statements you use to describe your experiences are the most important part of your resume. This is where you have the opportunity to market yourself and show the results of your work-related efforts.
 - **Additional Data:** List relevant hobbies, volunteer activities, special talents, or aptitudes (such as leadership skills or experiences, travel, foreign languages, computer skills, musical abilities, etc.).

- 2) **Develop a rough draft.** Examples of different formats are included in the following pages of this handout, **but feel free to develop your own.** If you want to see additional examples of resumes, visit the Career Resource Center at Career Services. Concentrate on accomplishments and skills. Avoid using “I” statements —begin phrases with action verbs. Edit and type the rough draft. **Avoid using templates because they are not original** – your resume will look like everyone else's and you won't be able to customize it easily to your formatting needs.

- 3) **Have someone critique your resume draft.** Look for the following:
 - **Overall Appearance:** At a glance, can you identify significant data, such as your degree, work experience and leadership qualities. Are the spacing, layout, margins, and typestyle neat and consistent? How could the appearance be improved?
 - **Length:** Could anything be deleted, shortened, or combined? One-page resumes are still preferred by employers however two-pages are acceptable as long as the information is relevant.
 - **Action Orientation:** Do the phrases begin with action verbs? See the list of action verbs in this handout for examples. Do descriptions give an active impression?
 - **Specificity:** Does the resume highlight specific skills, accomplishments, and areas of knowledge? Are accomplishments quantified wherever possible?
 - **Completeness:** Is all the important information included? Could anything be added without distracting the reader?
 - **Effectiveness:** How well does the resume accomplish its purpose? Does the resume suggest a “fit” with the job tasks and requirements of your targeted area?

- 4) **Have your resume critiqued by someone working in your target profession** – preferably someone who reviews resumes of job applicants. JSC faculty members can be a great resource for this as well.

Common Resume Elements

Name Block: It is preferred for you to use your full first name. Avoid using nicknames, which are “cutesy” or “pet names.” Your address should not contain abbreviations. Provide a phone number where you have a professional sounding voice mail. Add an email address if you check it frequently and it’s professional (not partygirl@hotmail.com) and web site if it’s up-to-date, not “under construction.” Make sure your name stands out – use a slightly larger, bolded font.

Employment/Career Objective: An employment objective should be stated only if you have a specific career goal in mind or if you know the exact title of the position for which you are applying. It should be concise, not flowery and philosophical. The objective is an optional part of your resume; however, if you do not use an objective be sure to state your career objective in your cover letter.

Summary/Profile of Qualifications/Accomplishments: This is an overview of the qualifications and accomplishments, highlighting skills which support your job objective. It is an optional part of the resume, but can be very effective in focusing the attention of the employer. Include key skills, related accomplishments, and positive personal attributes.

Employment History: Usually the guideline here is to list your most recent job first, and include jobs you have had in the last ten years. Since the employer will read your resume from the top to the bottom, it may be better for you to highlight your most relevant experience first, followed by your other experiences. If you have large gaps in employment, frequent job changes, or are making a major career transition, you may consider using a functional format.

Organizations/Affiliations: List organizational memberships, which are related to your job goals and show professional standings. Avoid non-employment related or controversial organizations. Generally, it is best **not** to mention any involvement with a specific religious or political affiliation, or other potentially controversial groups unless they directly relate to the job you want.

Awards or Recognition: Let the employer know of any awards or recognition you may have received (such as “employee of the month,” etc.), if it is timely and appropriate.

Education: If the emphasis is on employment, list your education last and include only the basic details. If the emphasis is on education, (i.e. a recent graduate) then your education section should go first. If you have graduated from college, state the name of the institution, location (city and state), degree earned, and field of study. If you are worried about age discrimination, don’t list your date of graduation. Omit your high school diploma if you have taken any higher education classes. Even if you haven’t graduated, include any job related courses you have completed. Include specialized training you may have received from previous employment or independent studies.

Military: If you have military experience that fills in employment gaps or supports your employment objectives, include it as part of your work history. Remember to “civilianize” your military language.

Hobbies/Personal Interests: Include only if employment related, and not controversial.

Suggested Resume Headings

Most individuals are surprised to learn that there are *many different* ways to organize the information you include on a resume. Ideally, your resume should be organized to highlight areas of *relevancy* to the type of job or career to which you are applying, emphasizing the skills, experience and personal attributes sought by the employer.

Objective:

- Objective
- Job Objective
- Career Objective
- Professional Objective

Qualification & Accomplishments:

- Areas of Knowledge
- Areas of Expertise
- Computer Skills
- Language Skills
- Background Highlights
- Career Highlights
- Professional Skills
- Personal Skills
- Summary of Qualifications
- Experience Summary
- Experience Highlights
- Achievements
- Career Achievements
- Part Time and Summer and Employment
- Special Skills
- Special Talents

Education:

- Education
- Educational Background
- Educational Preparation
- Academic Background
- Academic Training
- Special Training
- Certification
- Credentials
- Areas of Knowledge
- Educational Highlights
- Course Highlights
- International Study
- Senior Research Project
- Scholarships

Relevant Experience:

- Experience
- Professional Background
- Employment History
- Work History
- Employment
- Additional Experience
- Related Experience
- Internships
- Work Experience
- Volunteer Activities
- Leadership
- Military Experience
- Travel Abroad
- Areas of Experience

Other Related Experience:

- International Study
- Related Activities
- Leadership
- Travel Abroad
- Travel
- Language Competencies
- Presentations
- Publications
- Areas of Experience
- Conferences Attended

Activities & Memberships:

- Civic Activities
- Professional Activities
- Community Activities
- College Activities
- Membership
- Professional Organizations
- Professional Memberships
- Professional Affiliations

Awards & Honors:

- Activities
- Special Honors
- College Distinctions
- Honors & Distinctions
- Honors/Awards

Writing Effective Skills Phrases

The most effective resumes are those that show *results* or *accomplishments* reflected in the skill phrases you use to describe your experiences. Consider the following questions to help you qualify and quantify (when possible) your experiences:

- What was the purpose of the goal or activity?
- What happened as a result of your work?

Different Versions of Skills Statements

Mediocre

- Managed office
- Taught chemistry to students
- Managed farm

Better

- Managed office operations and staff of twelve
- Taught the gas laws to a group of high school students
- Managed 50 head of dairy cattle on farm

Best

- Managed sales office operations and staff of twelve to record productivity
- Utilized cooperative learning in teaching the gas laws to 25 high school students
- Managed 50 head of dairy cattle and utilized ration balancing which enhanced milk production by 37%

Skill Phrases With Results

Meeting or Surpassing Goals/Standards

- Exceeded sales department's yearly goals by 150% over a nine-month period.
- Learned all aspects associated with sales office, including functions of cashier, wire operator, order desk and research library assistant.
- Designed complete computer software to replicate the four-phase mode of the human heart as an intern.
- Co-wrote and edited a training manual for the Carbonate Rock Society. Three years later, the manual is still in use.

Promotion or Increased Responsibility

- Created new position of Public Relations Director to fill corporate need.
- Promoted to Staff Trainer after working as a waitress for three summers.

Increasing Efficiency, Cutting Time Spent On Tasks

- Organized computer system to log approximately 200 grant proposals per month, resulting in a 20% reduction in the time spent on this task.
- Restructured sanding department work priorities, which resulted in a four-fold increase in efficiency during a summer job.

Initiating Change/New Idea That Was Utilized

- Designed and implemented magnet setting in new classroom, which has now been adopted by the entire school.
- Organized recreational, social and education programs for housing project. Increased program from two to 24 classes.

Action Words

Management Skills

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

Research Skills

clarified
collected
critiqued
diagnosed
evaluated
examined
extracted
identified
inspected
interpreted
interviewed
investigated
organized
reviewed
summarized
surveyed
systematized

Technical Skills

assembled
built
calculated
computed
designed
devised
engineered
fabricated
maintained
operated
overhauled
programmed
remodeled
repaired
solved
trained
upgraded

Teaching Skills

adapted
advised
clarified
coached
communicated
coordinated
developed
enabled
encouraged
evaluated
explained
facilitated
guided
informed
initiated
instructed
persuaded
set goals
stimulated

Financial Skills

administered
allocated
analyzed
appraised
audited
balanced
budgeted
calculated
computed
developed
forecasted
managed
marketed
planned
projected
researched

Helping Skills

assessed
assisted
clarified
coached
counseled
demonstrated
diagnosed
educated
expedited
facilitated
familiarized
guided
referred
rehabilitated
represented

Communication Skills

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

Creative Skills

acted
conceptualized
created
designed
developed
directed
established
fashioned
founded
illustrated
instituted
integrated
introduced
invented
originated
performed

Detail Skills

approved
arranged
catalogued
classified
collected
compiled
dispatched
executed
generated
implemented
inspected
monitored
operated
organized
prepared
processed
purchased
recorded
retrieved
screened
specified
systematized

Resume Formats to Consider

Chronological Resume

The chronological format presents information in a fast and easy-to-read manner and is also the easiest to write. Jobs are listed in chronological order, starting with the most recent or present (which generally receives the greatest emphasis) and working back through the years. Job title, employment dates, and name of the organization precede a description of the job tasks and accomplishments.

Advantages

- Professional interviewers are most familiar with this format
- It is the easiest to prepare since familiar dates, companies and titles structure its content
- A stable employment record (without much job hopping) is put into the best perspective
- It provides the interviewer with an easy guide for discussing work experiences

Disadvantages

- It draws attention to employment gaps
- It may put undesired emphasis on job areas that an applicant wants to minimize
- Skill areas are difficult to spotlight unless they are reflected in most recent jobs

Functional Resume

The functional resume allows more flexibility than the chronological. Job skills are featured by grouping similar skill phrases together regardless of where or when the experience was gained. This format ignores historical sequence. Elements of training and experience from several sources are grouped to show their applicability to your career goal.

Advantages

- It stresses selected skill areas which are marketable or in demand
- It can help to camouflage a spotty employment record
- It allows you to emphasize professional growth
- Positions not related to current career goals are not highlighted

Disadvantages

- Many employers want to see additional work history information
- It doesn't allow you to highlight companies or organizations you've worked for

Combination Resume

This resume contains elements similar to both the chronological and functional formats. Work experiences are presented chronologically, but you can also set aside relevant skill areas in separate categories. This allows you to highlight related areas of expertise and at the same time satisfies the employer's desire to know names and dates.

Advantages

- Provides a good opportunity to emphasize relevant skills and abilities
- Gaps in employment can be de-emphasized
- It can highlight a steady work history, while also specifying relevant skills and experience

Resume Critiquing Guidelines

Layout/Appearance:

- Is it neat, concise and easy to read?
- Do topic headings (and your name!) stand out?
- Is your resume free of typographical errors and misspelled words?
- Is the resume well organized and professional looking?
- Were you consistent with verb tenses and placement of headings and content?
- If your resume is more than one page, is the most important information on the first page?
- Can your layout be modified to get everything to fit on one page?

Content:

- If more than one phone number and address is included, is it clear when each is to be used?
- If an objective statement appears, does it project knowledge of the desired career field by using appropriate phrasing?
- Have you presented schools, degrees, areas of concentration, relevant academic experiences, courses, and honors?
- Have you included all experiences that project skills, accomplishments, and show results (noting facts and figures when appropriate)?
- Did you describe experiences in action phrases?
- Does your resume match your best skills with the needs of the employer?
- Are experiences grouped according to topics that relate to your goals or objectives?
- Have you presented experiences in reverse chronological order? If not, is there logic behind the presentation?
- Have you presented your skills in the language of potential employers, industry or profession?
- Have you listed appropriate activities, noting leadership positions?
- If you included organizations that might be controversial, have you considered how a potential employer might react?
- Did you leave out personal information that could be viewed negatively or used to discriminate against you?
- Does it lead with your strengths and accomplishments, and focus on relevant experience?
- Will your resume make a strong, positive, and professional impression on the reader?
- Is your resume the most professional presentation of your ability to complete a task effectively and successfully?

Chronological Resume Example

Polly Ester

1234 Railroad Street
Johnson, VT 05656
(802) 635-0000
Polly.Ester@jsc.vsc.edu

OBJECTIVE

To obtain a position utilizing agricultural business and agronomy/horticultural skills

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Science, Environmental Science

Concentration in Natural Resources
Johnson State College, Johnson, VT May, 2002
GPA 3.73/4.0, Dean's List
Received Departmental Award in Environmental Science

RELEVANT COURSEWORK/PROJECTS

- Land Use Planning • Water Resources • Energy & Mineral Resources • Toxic and Solid Waste Management
- Fundamentals of Soil Science • Environmental Geology • Forest Ecology
- Initiated and organized a composting program at four local schools

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Intern, Morrisville Tree Farm, VT, 2000-Present

- Planted, cultivated, irrigated and sprayed over 300 evergreens for ornamental/Christmas tree use
- Properly maintained seedling stock to ensure future supplies
- Supervised 20 employees and created additional training opportunities to ensure quality work
- Commended for providing a positive work atmosphere, which increased employee motivation and output

Field Technician, Burlington Intervale, Burlington, VT, summers 1998-2000

- Increased the productivity of soil sampling and plant tissue sampling by 15%
- Efficiently managed weekly employee scheduling
- Trained volunteers and ensured that they handled procedures properly

Laborer, Deerfield Nursery, Deerfield, MA, 1995-1996

- Performed such tasks as tilling, cultivating, and harvesting horticultural crops
- Accurately installed, operated and maintained irrigation equipment which prevented loss of crops
- Supervised a harvesting crew consisting of ten employees from diverse backgrounds

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

Child Care Provider, Wendorf Family, Morrisville, VT 1997-1999

Customer Service Representative, Friendly's Restaurant, Deerfield, MA, 1995-1997

Food Preparation Technician, Friendly's Restaurant, Deerfield, MA, 1994-1995

Functional Resume Example

Ivana B. Jung

Current: 1234 Portland Street, Morrisville, VT 54022 (802) 888-0000

Permanent: 12 Roxy Lane, Greenfield, MA, 01314 (555) 555-5555

Education

Bachelor of Arts, Psychology
Johnson State College, Johnson, VT, May 2002

Areas of Effectiveness

Communication/Advising Skills

- Advised new college students on the selection of appropriate courses and scheduling
- Provided general information about preparing for the first year of college and offered appropriate referrals when necessary
- Utilized both written and verbal communication skills to inform parents of their children's daily activities and welfare
- Experienced in effectively communicating with a diverse population of customers/students to promptly and thoroughly meet their individual needs

Leadership Skills

Coordinated a "Hunger Cleanup" and raised \$475.00 to benefit the local food shelf

- Assisted in coordinating Habitat for Humanity's Third Annual Fun Run
- Co-Led a group of 10 students during a week-long Break Away trip to volunteer with Habitat for Humanity in rural West Virginia

Planning and Organizational Skills

- Facilitated planning meetings, organized fundraising events and made travel arrangement for 10 students involved in a week-long service learning trip.
- Organized four educational campus events on hunger issues reaching 62 people
- Designed flyers, signs, and press releases for campus and area events to raise awareness of the campus
- Served as a contact name for area businesses in order to implement Habitat for Humanity donation boxes

Computer Skills

- WordPerfect • Adobe PageMaker • MS Word • MS Access • MS Excel
- Groupwise • HP ScanJet ADF • Campground Manager • MS Publisher

Work Experience

Phone-In Advisor, Advising and Career Services, JSC, Johnson, VT	1999-Present
Reservations Specialist, Zoar Outdoor, Deerfield, MA	1999 Season
Campus Assistant, Advising and Career Services, JSC, Johnson, VT	1998-1999
Childcare Provider, Connie's Just For Kids, Greenfield, MA	1996-1998
Waitress/Fountain Worker, Friendly's Restaurant, Greenfield, MA	1996 Season

Volunteer Experience & Activities

Habitat For Humanity
Center for Service Learning

St. Patrick's Education Program
America Reads, Literacy Partner

Combination Resume Example

Dan Salnite

255 Hogback Road, Waterville, VT 05651
(802) 644-0000, Dan.Salnite@jsc.vsc.edu

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts, Business Management
Johnson State College, Johnson, VT (2002)
Dean's List, Cumulative GPA 3.79/4.0

QUALIFICATIONS

Ability to balance multiple tasks in a fast paced environment
Strong background in Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Access, Power Point) and Internet Research
Excellent communication skills
Successful at working individually or in a team environment

MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE

Assistant Manager, 2002-Present

Pier One Imports, Burlington, VT

- Effectively manage 10 employees by assigning daily tasks and supervising sales
- Responsible for resolving employee issues to the satisfaction of the company and employee
- Recruit, hire and train new employees
- Create weekly schedule, meeting company standards and ensuring proper distribution of hours
- Generate sales by providing excellent customer service
- Demonstrate effective communication skills

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

Tutor, 2003 – Present

Learning Resource Center, Johnson State College, Johnson, VT

- Tutor students in Marketing Strategies and Principles of Management on a weekly basis
- Encourage good study habits and time management skills
- Provide detailed class notes for students with academic needs

Campus Assistant, 2000-2002

Maintenance Department, Johnson State College, Johnson, VT

- Communicated with faculty and maintenance department to fulfill job requests
- Completed projects to the satisfaction of faculty, staff and maintenance department
- Ensured safety and accessibility of campus stairways through daily snow removal
- Provided detailed cleaning of college vehicles