

Resume, References, and Cover Letter Guide

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RESUMES

GUIDELINES FOR POLISHING YOUR RESUME

A resume is a brief, yet explicit, outline of your educational background, employment experience, student activities, professional accomplishments, and other qualifications that pertain to your employment goals. It is important to keep in mind that an employer may spend less than one minute scanning your resume the first time before they decide whether or not you match the qualifications they are seeking. Therefore, it is important to treat your resume as a marketing tool that advertises you to the employer in order to receive an interview.

Whether you have an initial layout of your accomplishments or already have a resume put together, use the following information in this booklet to set up your information or cross-check the resume you already have.

Remember, there is not one “right” way to do a resume. But, there are important formatting, styling, and organizing guidelines to keep in mind:

- List your categories in order of importance. This order may change for each job you send your resume to.
- Your resume isn't limited to one page in length but should be no more than two pages. However, make sure that all information on your resume is relevant to each job that it's sent to.
- Be consistent with your formatting. You are free to make choices here, but you can't mix and match. For example, if you underline one section name, you have to underline all section names.
- Tailor your resume to the specific position you are applying for by using keywords from the job description.
- All text should be the same size and style. Don't go bigger than a 12pt but don't go smaller than a 10pt. The only exception is your name at the top, which can be bigger.
- **DO NOT** use a template to create your resume. The formatting of a template can cause issues when reorganizing your information. It is best to use a blank word processing document.
- **DO NOT** list references or state that they are available upon request. Use your resume to talk about your accomplishments only. References are listed on a completely separate document.
- **DO NOT** include high school education and experiences unless you recently graduated
- **DO NOT** use first-person such as “I” or “we” or “my.”

Again, these are general tips to use when developing your resume as a whole. Your experiences and accomplishments are unique to you, which means your final resume may end up looking different from these examples. Continue through this booklet for specific information on designing each individual category on your resume.

CONTACT INFORMATION

While you can change the order of your categories depending on the job, **your contact information should always be first and at the top**. If an employer is interested, he or she needs to know how to get a hold of you!

This section is straightforward in terms of what information needs to be included:

- Your name – the font size for your name can be bigger than the rest of the font on your resume!
- Your phone number
- Your preferred email – make sure it sounds professional!
- Your street address OR the URL to your LinkedIn profile

But, keep in mind that this information does have to be in this order on your resume. As long as you have all four items, you can chose the order.

Example One

Jamie Kensington

1717 Drury Lane, Vale, Oregon 51711 | 214-703-4001 | kensington@yahoo.com

Example Two

Jamie Kensington

214.703.4001, kensington@yahoo.com

1717 Drury Lane, Vale, Oregon 51711

Example Three

Jamie Kensington

1717 Drury Lane • Vale, Oregon 51711

kensington@yahoo.com • 214-703-4001

Example Four

214.703.4001

kensington@yahoo.com

Jamie Kensington

1717 Drury Lane

Vale, Oregon 51711

EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATIONS

If you have educational experience, including it on your resume is important. Showing employers that you are furthering your education or that you have already earned a degree or certification can help increase your employability. Once you have started college, you should no longer be listing out your high school experience.

When listing your education, there are four items which have to be included, but there are also optional items:

MUST HAVE

- Full name of the school (no acronyms)
- Full name of the degree (no acronyms!)
- City and state where the school is located
- Date of graduation or expected graduation

OPTIONAL

- GPA if it's a 3.0/4.0 or higher
- Honors and awards
- Minor studies
- Organizational memberships
- Relevant coursework

Similar to the required items for an educational experience, a **certification should list:**

- Name of the certification
- City and state where the certification was awarded
- Date of completion
- Name of the awarding institution

Example One (Education)

Associate of Business in Marketing, *Anticipated Graduation: December 2017*
Grand Rapids Community College, Grand Rapids, MI

Example Two (Education)

Grand Rapids Community College
Associate of Applied Arts and Science in Culinary Arts

Grand Rapids, MI
April 2015

Example Three (Education)

Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science, Grand Valley State University
Expected Graduation: May 2018

Allendale, MI

Associate of Arts in Pre-Exercise Science, Grand Rapids Community College
Graduated: December 2015

Grand Rapids, MI

Example Four (Certification)

First Aid – June 2015, American Red Cross, Grand Rapids, MI

Adult CPR – March 2015, American Red Cross, Grand Rapids, MI

EXPERIENCE (WORK, VOLUNTEER, ON-CAMPUS, ETC.)

Describing your experiences is a great way to showcase the skills you've gained and the responsibilities that you've had at different positions.

When listing experiences, there is general information that you'll need to list out:

- Position title
- Name of the business
- Range of dates (month and year)
- Location (city and state)

Along with this basic information, which can be listed in any order as long as you are consistent, you'll also want to make sure that you include action statements for each position. **These are extremely important to include because they show your transferrable skills.** Be sure to take your time writing them out.

There are a few points to consider while writing your bullets:

- **Always** start each bullet point with an action verb. These verbs should be in present-tense for current roles and past-tense for former positions. For further description on action verbs, scroll to the next page.
- Don't simply say what you did. While still sounding professional, use examples and details to **describe how and why** you did something.
- Each bullet should be one sentence in length.
- Each experience should have 3 – 5 bullets. Volunteering or on-campus experiences may just have 1 – 2.

If you use these guidelines, you can take any weak bullet and turn it into a strong, detailed bullet. Here are a few examples:

Weak bullet: Filed incoming paperwork.

Strong bullet: Organized and filed over 150 new packets of paperwork per week in newly designed filing system.

The strong bullet gives the same essential message, but offers much more description and sounds more meaningful.

Example of an Experience

SALES ASSOCIATE, February 2013 – November 2014

Pet Paradise, Vale, OR

- Greeted all customers with a friendly demeanor and provided active listening to ascertain their needs.
- Maintained up-to-date knowledge of store products and policies in order to offer exceptional service to customers.
- Utilized cash-handling experience to assist customers at fast-paced point-of-sales systems.

ACTION VERBS (CONTINUED FROM EXPERIENCE)

Action statements are used to help qualify and quantify the tasks you performed, projects you finalized, ideas you implemented etc., at your previous positions and experiences. Using these statements allows you to better describe your skills and qualifications. Chose action verbs from the list below to start your own action statements. Don't see a verb that works quite right? A simple internet search for action verbs will offer many more options!

List of Action Verbs

Assist	Implemented	Ranked
Achieve	Improved	Received
Accomplished	Improvised	Recommended
Advanced	Influenced	Redesigned
Conduct	Launched	Reengineered
Consult	Lobbied	Reorganized
Committed	Maintained	Represented
Conducted	Managed	Restructured
Contributed	Marketed	Revised
Coordinated	Maximized	Safeguarded
Delegated	Mediated	Secured
Develop	Modernized	Selected
Deliver	Motivated	Specified
Design	Negotiated	Spearheaded
Defined	Observed	Standardized
Diversified	Obtained	Strengthened
Devoted	Operated	Structured
Distinguished	Organized	Suggested
Encourage	Originated	Superseded
Earned	Overhauled	Supervised
Enhance	Oversaw	Targeted
Evaluate	Participated	Taught
Examined	Performed	Tested
Facilitate	Pioneered	Trained
Formulate	Planned	Unified
Fulfilled	Prepared	Upgraded
Forecasted	Presented	Utilized
Generated	Promoted	Validated
Gained	Provided	Valued
Gathered	Published	Wrote
Gave	Pursued	
Headed	Quantified	
Hosted		
Identified		

OPTIONAL SECTIONS

While there are sections that definitely need to be included on your resume, there are a number of sections that are completely optional to include. If you do chose to include any of these additional categories, just make sure the information within them is relevant to the job you are applying for.

Objective OR Summary

These are sections the briefly describe your skills. You would use one or the other, not both. Additionally, if you do include one, it should appear right below your contact information.

SUMMARY

- Briefly describes how your range of skills are applicable
- Shares what the company can gain from you
- Written in paragraph form or as an opening sentence with bullets afterward
- Often seen on resumes for skilled work

OBJECTIVE

- States your specific goals
- Discusses what you want to gain from the company
- Useful for those seeking an internship or changing career fields

Skills

A skills section is useful for highlighting special accomplishments. If you chose to include a skills section, make sure that you are listing things that are measurable such as knowledge of a computer program or a second language. A skills section **is not** the space to list out your personality traits or characteristics.

Continue to the next two pages to view examples of completed resumes.

WEAK RESUME EXAMPLE

Below is an example of a bad resume. Can you pick out the reasons why?

Taylor Reynolds

1010 Sassafras Drive, Grand Rapids, MI 49504
t_money@gmail.com

Education and Training

Union High School
Grand Rapids, MI (2010-2014)
Diploma in General Education

GRCC

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

CASHIER, Meijer
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Qualifications Summary

I am a cashier with experience in the customer service field requiring social skills, organization, ethics, and being able to work with a team. Goal oriented and a people person. Competencies include:

Microsoft Word
Computer Literate
General Labor
Operating telephones
Working with others

EXPERIENCE HIGHLIGHTS

Customer Service

Worked with customers to answer questions, find products in the store, complete transactions and ensure they got everything they needed out of their time shopping.

I counted money and made sure everything the store made was accounted for including products.

Occasionally did data entry with store inventory

Kept my station tidy and I made sure the front area was clean before each night ended

STRONG RESUME

Below is an example of a good resume. But remember, if yours looks different, *that's okay!*

Carrie Sanders

8114 Roseland Drive, Walker, MI 49534
csanders@msn.com, 892-446-1726

EDUCATION

Associate of Arts in Pre-Business, Expected Graduation: May 2017
Grand Rapids Community College, Grand Rapids, MI

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Cashier, July 2013 to Present
Meijer, Walker, MI

- Assist customers by locating products and answering any questions regarding the products.
- Create a team-like atmosphere by communicating with coworkers especially during peak store hours.
- Perform various transactions including customer purchases, returns, and exchanges.
- Maintain cleanliness and organization around the cash register and check-out aisle.

Team Member, October 2011 to January 2014
Tim Hortons, Grand Rapids, MI

- Ensured customer satisfaction by being efficient when taking complicated food orders in a fast-paced environment.
- Answered customer questions concerning products by maintaining knowledge of all menu items and ingredients.
- Practiced self-motivation by finding additional tasks to complete during down-time such stocking and cleaning.

SKILLS

Computer Literacy

- Experience using Microsoft Office, Blackboard, and Prezi.

Language

- Proficient in conversational and written Spanish.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

References should be listed on a separate document rather than directly on your resume. There is no need to include the line, "References available upon request." When creating your reference sheet, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- Format your contact information as well as the font size and style of this document to match your resume.
- Provide 3 - 5 professional references. Professional references may include supervisors from internships, past positions, volunteer work, professors, academic advisers, or student group advisers. Professional references **do not** include family members, neighbors, or friends.
- Make sure you ask someone's permission before you using them as a reference.
- Be sure to have your references prepared and printed as your potential employer could request them at any time.

A list of references is simple and straightforward. Here is the information that needs to be included for each reference:

- Reference's full name
- The reference's position title
- Full address of the business
- Phone number for the business
- The reference's business email

Continue to the next page to view an example of a completed reference page.

REFERENCE LIST EXAMPLE

Hayden Green

green_h@yahoo.com • 704.119.2819 • 12 Wumbly Drive, Chattanooga, TN 37410

REFERENCES

Bronte Scaccia

Site Supervisor with Habit for Humanity
300 Callie Avenue, Chattanooga, TN 37403
574-779-1831
scacciabr@yahoo.com

Rachel Cutright

Supervisor at Target
6017 Belleview Drive, Chattanooga, TN 37407
215-424-2001
rcutright@target.com

Kate Pike

Owner and Manager at Salon 42
141 7th Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104
734-845-5244
salon42_kp@msn.com

COVER LETTERS

COVER LETTERS

A cover letter is a place to expand upon your experiences and qualifications on your resume but **is not** a place to simply restate what's on your resume. Just like your resume, your cover letter is an opportunity to market yourself. A cover letter may not always be requested, but it will always help you if you do include one. It not only shows that you are willing to put extra time and effort into your endeavors, but it is also an opportunity for you to demonstrate your professional writing abilities.

While every cover letter you write will be different for every position you apply to, there are a few general rules to keep in mind:

- Your contact information at the top, as well as the size and style of the text in the entire letter, should match the formatting of the contact information on your resume and reference sheet.
- A cover letter should be no more than one page in length.
- It is best to do research on the company and to be familiar with the specific job description so that you can keep your letter relevant.
- **Do not** write "To Whom it May Concern" when addressing the letter. Do your best to find a name. But, if you can't find one, general options are to say, "Dear Sir or Madame" or "Dear Hiring Committee."

There is no "correct" wording for a cover letter since each one is individual and specific to you and the job description, but, there are several points to touch on in each section of the letter:

FIRST PARAGRAPH

- Introduce yourself briefly.
- State the position you are applying for and how you heard about it.
- Mention something that interests you about the company. This is another reason why research will be useful.
- Include a relevant contact if you have one. Networking can help!

BODY PARAGRAPH

- This is where you relate your skills and experiences to the specific job description.
- **Do not** simply copy and paste your bullet points here! This is your chance to say more than what you could on the resume and really get descriptive and use examples to say why you're the best fit for the job!
- From the job description, chose around four of the main skills being asked for and then use examples from your experiences to say describe how you have those skills. It's okay to think outside the box here! You don't have use examples only from work. You can also describe experiences from class projects, volunteering, campus organizations, etc.
- Remember, this letter is to talk about what the company can gain from you and **not** what you can gain.

FINAL PARAGRAPH

- Include a general sentence summarizing everything you said in the body paragraph.
- Discuss follow up. Mention when you will reach back out with questions. But, list out your contact information in case they employer wants to reach you sooner.
- Always thank the employer for their time and consideration.

Continue to the next page for an example of a completed cover letter.

COVER LETTER EXAMPLE

Ryan Connors

88011 Wilson Avenue
Walker, MI 49534

connorsry@gmail.com
616-228-7622

September 14, 2014

Charlotte Brooks
Preschool Director
GRCC Laboratory Preschool
227 East Fulton
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Dear Ms. Brooks,

Hello, my name is Ryan Connors, and I am pursuing an Associate of Applied Arts and Sciences degree in Child Development at Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC). I am writing in regard to the Toddler Room assistant position available in the Preschool, which I found a posting for in the GRCC Student Employment Services job database. I highly enjoy working with children, and being able to use my skills at the GRCC Preschool would be an exciting opportunity.

It is through the babysitting position I began last summer that I discovered my passion for child development. Caring for two children at once made me realize just how essential it is that each child gets the attention she requires in order to thrive and develop. Although it was necessary for me to pay special attention to the baby with Down Syndrome in order to promote her development, it quickly became clear that the other child still required an immense amount of care and consideration in order to learn and grow as well. Additionally, I needed to understand that both girls learned differently and that I would need to adapt my teaching and caring techniques in order to best influence both children. At the GRCC Preschool, I will use this same adaption technique in order to ensure that I am reaching and influencing each child I work with in a way that best suites each individual's needs.

I am extremely interested in meeting with you to discuss the Toddler Room position further. I can best be contacted through my email connorsry@gmail.com or at my phone number 616-228-7622 during the afternoon. If I do not hear from you within two weeks, I will follow up through email regarding my interest in the position. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Ryan Connors

Student Employment Services, Room 103 Main
gccc.edu/ses 616.234.4170



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