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# *How to Write a Resume & Cover Letter*

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## *The Brickley Center Career Services*

*Eastern Nazarene College*

*Contact Career Services for Resume & Cover Letter Reviews*

*617-745-3892*

Updated 6/13

## What is a Resume?

A resume, along with a cover letter, is an introduction to a potential employer. The purpose of a resume is to create interest in you and hopefully, result in an invitation to an interview. A well-crafted resume will highlight your education, experience, skills, accomplishments, interests, and activities as they relate to the type of employment you are seeking.

“Your resume is a short (one- or two- page), outlined, persuasive presentation of your potential to contribute to the success of a particular type of organization.” \*

### 1. Be relevant

Select information that supports your job objective and enhances your qualifications in the mind of the reader.

### 2. Be brief

Your resume may get as little as 15-30 seconds consideration. Limit it to 1 (not more than 2) page(s). Be sure that essential information is readily noticeable.

### 3. Be consistent in layout and writing style

Stylistic techniques (e.g. underlining, bolding, bullets, columns, indenting, and italics) should be used effectively. If you choose to boldface a job title, boldface all job titles.

### 4. Highlighting information

Be aware that information presented on the first page, at the beginning of a section, in the left hand margin, or in a column, gets extra attention.

### 5. Avoid pronouns and certain phrases / Correct use of verb tenses

Avoid first person pronouns (e.g., “I”, “me”, and “my”). Current position should be written in present tense; previous positions in past tense.

### 6. Emphasize your skills

Use action verb phrases (e.g., “organized a promotional campaign” or “developed and taught in-service courses”).

### 7. Be conscious of image

Remember that your resume and cover letter are often your first contacts with a prospective employer. Resumes should be visually appealing with no typos or grammatical errors. Generally, font sizes between 10 and 12 are appropriate. They should be laser printed on bond paper, white or off-white. It’s also important to have your resume in these three electronic formats: Word, PDF and ASCII (for scanning purposes).

*\*“How to Write Powerful College Student Resumes & Cover Letters,” Schultze & Kim, 2010*

## Writing Your Resume

### Step 1:

Before writing your resume, answer the following questions:

*\*Who will be reading my resume?*

*\*What skill set is the employer looking for in my resume? What “key words” does the job description include, that you can incorporate into your resume?*

*\*How can I demonstrate my skills and experience to a potential employer?*

*\*What achievements can I include (preferably using specific numbers)?*

The content and design of your resume should reflect your responses to these questions. You may have several resumes containing the same basic information but presented or “packaged” in a way that targets specific positions or opportunities. Research the work you are interested in and read job descriptions. If you were to pursue a specific position, what skills and experience would the employer or recruiter expect?

### Step 2:

Take the time to list all of your experiences and activities that you have been a part of in the last 3-4 years while in college. This should include internships, activities, paid positions, and volunteer and community outreach. Then develop a list of your accomplishments, skills and personality characteristics / traits. This will help you match your skills and abilities to the position requirements.

An employer is also interested in transferable skills you have developed that match the job description. Transferable skills are qualities or abilities sought by a majority of employers which are useful in multiple areas, and demonstrate to the employer that you have an extensive range of abilities.

From your experiences, identify the skills that will benefit the employer, knowledge that you have to offer, and specific achievements that you want to highlight.

### Step 3:

You are now ready to write your resume. Remember to place the most important and relevant information near the top. See below for information on what should be included on your resume. Once you complete your resume, submit it to Career Services to be critiqued, and if needed, talk about improvements with a Career Counselor.

1. **Identifying Information:** Should be typed at the top of the resume. It can be centered, on the left side, or if you have a temporary AND permanent address, you can have an address on both the left and the right side. Make sure phone numbers are complete and emails are professional.

Example:

**Brian E. Jones**  
113 River Lane, Jones, VT 00890  
(704) 387-1645  
[bjones@gmail.com](mailto:bjones@gmail.com)

2. **Summary Statement:** in place of a traditional objective, you can include a sentence geared toward a specific career and position, which focuses on your job-related skills, knowledge, and traits. It's like a "news headline" which tells the "who, what, where, when and why" of your resume.

"Your goal should be to start your resume with a focus on the employer and his or her needs. Tell readers what you can do for them." \*

Examples:

- A hard-working marine biologist with cross-cultural experience and collaborative research skills seeks to contribute to the success of a marine organization committed to environmental stewardship.
- A goal-oriented, self-motivated problem solver with multimedia skills seeks to join an innovative sports marketing team.
- A compassionate, proactive, bilingual speech-language pathology graduate desires a hospital internship to learn more about serving children with language and learning disabilities and oral deficits.
- A conscientious, dependable economist with strong interpersonal skills and extensive database abilities desires to serve a governmental agency's consumer affairs division.

These statements contain 3 critical elements:

- Demonstrable Traits (e.g.- hardworking, conscientious)
- Demonstrable Skills and Knowledge (e.g.- research, computers, relationships)
- Desire to Serve a Particular Kind of Organization

*\*"How to Write Powerful College Student Resumes & Cover Letters," Schultze & Kim, 2010*

3. **Education:** list the degree received, name and address of college, and date of graduation. Include in this section: minors, certifications, awards, honors, study abroad experiences and GPA (IF higher than 3.5).

Examples:

**Education:**

**Bachelor of Arts in Computer Engineering**, Projected May 2015  
Eastern Nazarene College, Quincy, MA

- GPA: 3.8 / 4.0

**Honors:** Dean's List, Honor Roll, Academic Scholarship

**Relevant Coursework:** Financial Management, Cost Accounting

4. **Experience:** include brief descriptions of your responsibilities and accomplishments. Use sentence fragments that begin with action verbs. See page 6 for sample action words. Example:

**Resident Assistant**, Eastern Nazarene College  
Quincy, MA, 2012-2013

- Contributed to the personal growth and education of 40 college women
- Provided support and information for all dormitory residents
- Organized social, educational, and spiritually focused activities
- Participated in monthly dormitory leadership meetings
- Mentored student leaders
- Provided crisis intervention and participated in student-to-student counseling in mental health related concerns.

5. **Relevant Skills / Activities / Volunteer / Extracurricular (Several Options for Heading Titles):** list other skills you have or activities you've been involved with that relate to your ability to lead, understand a variety of cultures, etc.

Examples:

Sign Language Club, Eastern Nazarene College, 2012-Present  
Varsity Baseball, Eastern Nazarene College, 2010-2012, Co-Captain, 2012  
Gospel Choir, Eastern Nazarene College, 2010  
(Other technical skills, foreign language, cross-cultural experiences, etc)

6. **Review Online and Print Resources for Sample Resumes:**

[www.resumes4collegestudents.com](http://www.resumes4collegestudents.com)

<http://resumecompanion.com/resume-builder-edu-2/enc>

How to Write Powerful College Student Resumes & Cover Letters, Schultze & Kim, 2010  
Best Resumes for College Students and New Grads, Louise M Kursmark, 2003

## Action Verbs

(from BU career services office)

### Management

Achieved  
Administered  
Analyzed  
Attained  
Assigned  
Chaired  
Completed  
Contracted  
Consolidated  
Coordinated  
Delegated  
Drafted  
Developed  
Directed  
Eliminated  
Evaluated  
Executed  
Implemented  
Increased  
Organized  
Oversaw  
Planned  
Prioritized  
Produced  
Recommended  
Reviewed  
Scheduled  
Strengthened  
Supervised

### Helping

Advocated  
Aided  
Assessed  
Clarified  
Coached  
Collaborated  
Counseled  
Demonstrated  
Diagnosed  
Educated  
Expedited  
Facilitated  
Guided  
Lead  
Mentored  
Referred

### Communication

Advertised  
Addressed  
Arbitrated  
Authored  
Arranged  
Clarified  
Composed  
Contacted  
Corresponded  
Demonstrated  
Developed  
Directed  
Discussed  
Edited  
Enlisted  
Formulated  
Informed  
Interviewed  
Lectured  
Mediated  
Moderated  
Motivated  
Negotiated  
Notified  
Promoted  
Publicized  
Reconciled  
Recruited  
Spoke  
Translated  
Wrote

### Research

Clarified  
Collected  
Compared  
Detected  
Diagnosed  
Evaluated  
Examined  
Experimented  
Explored  
Gathered  
Extracted  
Identified  
Inspected  
Inquired  
Interpreted  
Organized  
Repaired  
Reported  
Researched  
Summarized  
Surveyed  
Systematized

### Teaching

Analyzed  
Adapted  
Advised  
Clarified  
Coached  
Communicated  
Coordinated  
Developed  
Educated  
Enabled  
Explained  
Encouraged  
Evaluated  
Facilitated  
Guided  
Informed  
Initiated  
Instructed  
Initiated  
Instructed  
Persuaded  
Planned

### Technical

Applied  
Assembled  
Built  
Calculated  
Coded  
Constructed  
Converted  
Debugged  
Designed  
Devised  
Engineered  
Maintained  
Overhauled  
Printed  
Programmed  
Regulated  
Restored  
Solved  
Standardized  
Trained  
Upgraded  
Utilized

### Finance

Administered  
Adjusted  
Allocated  
Audited  
Balanced  
Budgeted  
Calculated  
Developed  
Estimated  
Forecasted  
Managed  
Marketed  
Netted  
Planned  
Projected  
Reconciled  
Reduced

### Administrative

Approved  
Arranged  
Catalogued  
Categorized  
Classified  
Collected  
Compiled  
Distributed  
Executed  
Generated  
Implemented  
Inspected  
Operated  
Organized  
Purchased  
Recorded  
Reviewed  
Tabulated

### Creative

Acted  
Conceptualized  
Conceived  
Created  
Designed  
Developed  
Directed  
Illustrated  
Initiated  
Instituted  
Integrated  
Introduced  
Invented  
Originated  
Performed  
Planned  
Produced  
Revitalized  
Shaped

## Writing a Cover Letter

A cover letter should always be included with a resume submission, unless you're asked NOT to include it. The cover letter is part of your first introduction to a prospective employer, along with your resume. An effective cover letter will provide an introduction, explain the purpose of writing (to apply for a specific job or internship opportunity), and create enough interest to generate an interview. The letter should demonstrate your written communication skills, outline how your skills and experience match the employer's needs, and express your interest and enthusiasm for the position. Do not use a generic cover letter for each resume that you send. Instead, compose a letter that responds specifically to the organization's needs.

"Except in rare circumstances, a cover letter should fit on one page, be crisp and punchy, and demonstrate that you're familiar with the organization you're applying to."

### The Cover Letter Should:

- 1. Be directed to a specific individual (if possible)**
  - a. Try to direct your cover letter to a specific person. This increases the chances that the letter will end up in the hands of the person doing the hiring. It also provides the name of the person to follow up with once the letter has been sent.
  
- 2. Be well researched and written – focused on the specific requirements of the position for which you are applying**
  - a. It is best to know something about the organization to which you are applying. You will be able to do most of your research online. The better informed you are about the business (what it does, where its offices are located, number of employees, growth pattern, etc.) the better prepared you will be to write a cover letter describing how you fit into the company's future.
  - b. You also need to know about the duties and responsibilities of the job for which you are applying. This will enable you to respond in your cover letter to the skill requirements and describe the qualifications that you possess that match those requirements.
  
- 3. State only your very best qualifications**
  - a. You will want to include your skills, knowledge, experience, education and attitudes that most closely relate to the job requirements that were listed in the job announcement. It is also best to state in the cover letter any unique qualifications you possess that other applicants may not have.
  
- 4. Request a meeting/interview with the potential employer**
  - a. When ending a cover letter, it is suggested that you request an interview. This should be a positive statement like "I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to further describe my qualifications for the clerical opening within the church's administrative offices."

References: "How to Write Powerful College Student Resumes & Cover Letters," Schultze & Kim, 2010  
"Resumes, Cover Letters & Interviewing: Setting the Stage for Success" by Clifford and Lynn Eischen, 2000

Your Contact Information (Same format and style as your resume header)

Date

Name of Person (if at all possible, obtain the name of a specific person)

Title

Name of Organization

Street address

City, state, zip

Dear \_\_\_\_\_: (a colon indicates formality)

(First Paragraph) Explain why you are writing and indicate the position for which you are applying. Tell how you heard about the position and the organization. The first paragraph should catch the attention of the reader and create interest in you as a potential candidate. It's also helpful to conduct some research on the position and company, which demonstrates proactive interest in the position.

(Second Paragraph) Emphasize your skills and qualifications, and demonstrate how your experience meets the requirements for the position. Do not merely repeat the information listed on your resume, but expand on the experiences that are most relevant to this particular employer. Outline the skills, traits and knowledge you will bring to the position and communicate how you think you will contribute to the organization.

(Third Paragraph) Refer the reader to the documents you have enclosed or attached, such as your resume, application, transcripts, etc. Close the letter by asking for an opportunity to meet to discuss the position. Provide contact numbers and the best way to reach you. Take the initiative and note that you plan to follow up with a phone call. Thank the reader for taking the time to consider your resume.

Sincerely,

*(Handwrite your signature, if sending a paper cover letter & resume)*

Your name here

Enclosure(s)

Examples:

**Jane Smith**

*23 East Elm Ave*

*Quincy, MA 02170*

*Phone Number: 617-745-5555*

*Email: jane.smith@enc.edu*

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Date

Timothy Johnson

Company

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear Mr. Johnson:

I am writing to apply for the public relations assistant account manager position distributed through the alumni network of my college. I have reviewed the job description posted on your firm's website and conducted a Google news search for all of the articles mentioning your company during the past five years. My combination of skills, knowledge and traits fits both your current job opening and your client profile.

During and after college I developed my skills as an organized, positive team builder. As my resume shows, I have helped for-profit and nonprofit teams with short-term and long-term projects. I have worked with local media, neighborhood associations, a chamber of commerce, and numerous retail businesses. I have managed schedules, planned meetings, organized special events, and coordinated workshops.

Moreover, I am self-motivated. I love working hard and find great satisfaction in completing tasks. While working as an organizer for the City Neighborhood Association, I took on projects that were well beyond what was required for the position. In Wilson, Texas, I created a new neighborhood organization that is now serving local citizens. While working there, I also designed a plan for future summer interns to continue the work I had begun.

I know the importance and dynamics of public relations in the community. I recognize the importance of business, government and citizens' groups understanding each other.

Thank you for considering my application and a possible interview. I would be delighted to provide additional information beyond my attached resume.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

*Cover Letter Example from: How to Write Powerful College Student Resumes & Cover Letters, Schultze & Kim, 2010*

**Jane Smith**  
23 East Elm Ave  
Quincy, MA 02170  
Phone Number: 617-745-5555  
Email: jane.smith@enc.edu

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**SUMMARY:** One sentences summary which contains your traits, skills, knowledge and desire to serve a specific company

**EDUCATION:** **List degree here,** Anticipated May 2015  
Name of College, City and State

**RELATED EXPERIENCE:** **Title of Position,** Name of Organization  
City and State, January 2010-Present

- Start in reverse chronological order, most recent experience first
- Mention achievements in the first or second bulleted sentence
- Begin sentence fragments with action verbs to describe responsibilities and accomplishments
- Include examples of transferable skills such as teamwork, leadership, organization and communication

**Title of Position,** Name of Organization  
City and State, June 2008-December 2010

- Be sure to list internships or field projects
- Include campus or other organization involvements that are relevant to the position
- List both paid and unpaid experiences that are related to the position that you are seeking, but indicate if position was a paid experience

**ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE:** **Job Title,** Name of Organization  
City and State, Dates

- List other unrelated work experiences in this section
- Include the transferable skills utilized in this position

**SKILLS / ACTIVITIES:** List computer and other technical skills, foreign languages, and cross-cultural experiences. Include extracurricular activities and volunteer or service projects. Mention membership and leadership positions in related campus or professional organizations. Don't need as much detail here

*The résumé's length should be 1 page unless you have extensive experience. In general, include 3-5 references, but include them on a separate page with your name at the top. Keep font size between 10 and 12. Avoid decorative or embellished fonts that may not copy or scan well (Times New Roman or Arial are standard fonts). Use good quality paper (white or light color).*

**Jane Smith**  
23 East Elm Ave  
Quincy, MA 02170  
Phone Number: 617-745-5555  
Email: [jane.smith@enc.edu](mailto:jane.smith@enc.edu)

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