# RESUME AND COVER LETTER GUIDE

## APPLY DIFFERENTLY

# RESUMES

A resume is a professional representation of your education, experience, and skills. It is one of the primary marketing tools you will use to obtain internships, jobs, research experience, and entrance into graduate and professional programs. The goal of your resume is to obtain an interview.

## RESUME FORMAT

There is not one correct way to design a resume. The format is based on your professional and educational experiences and should be unique to you.

### CHRONOLOGICAL

Resumes typically list education, job experiences, and accomplishments in reverse chronological order. Start with your current or most recent experience and end with your earliest position. Typically, chronological resumes are one to two pages long.

### LENGTH

Resumes are typically one page for undergraduates and two pages for graduate students and alumni; however, this varies by field. Avoid only filling half a page.

### MARGINS

All margins should be consistent; ½ inch to 1 inch from each side is appropriate.

### DIGITAL FORMAT

Learn some tips to make your resume computer friendly. For example, convert the document into a PDF to ensure that formatting does not change once it reaches the employer.

### CONSISTENCY

The resume should not be too text heavy, nor should it have too much white space. Strive for a balance that is appealing to the eye.

### TEXT VS. WHITE SPACE

The content of the resume should be single-spaced; use double-spacing between sections and headings. Maintain consistent formatting throughout, including the use of bold, italics, or underlines. Do not over-design the resume.

**NOTE:** Students seeking opportunities within certain industries (e.g.,Communications, Multimedia, Advertising, or Marketing) should note that this guide is a general overview. Resumes for more creative fields offer additional flexibility and may not always follow the included formats. For more in-depth information and to have your creative resume reviewed, drop in and meet with a Career Coach at the Toppel Career Center.

# REQUIRED COMPONENTS

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Include your most current contact information at the top of the resume. It is important to provide accurate information so employers can easily reach you.

▶ Write your full name (font size should be a bit larger so that it stands out)

▶ List a professional email address and telephone number with area code (make sure to have an appropriate voicemail message)

## EDUCATION

Academic credentials are important, particularly if you are relatively new to the job market or pursuing a job that requires specific training.

▶ Only list your current institution or those from which you have received a degree

▶ Avoid listing high school education after your first year

▶ List study abroad experience

▶ Write out the institution's name, city and state (UM is in Coral Gables, FL), full degree title (Bachelor of Science), and graduation date

▶ OPTIONAL: including GPA is recommended if it is 3.5 or above

▶ Consider listing cognate courses (i.e., Completed cluster of three thematic courses addressing issues related to ecology conservation)

## SAMPLES

**UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI,** Coral Gables, FL
Bachelor of Science in Communication, May 2016
Majors in Broadcast Journalism and English

**Bachelor of Business Administration,**  December 2018
University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL
Major in International Finance and Marketing
3.67 GPA

Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia
**Study Abroad,** Summer 2017

## EXPERIENCE

This is the most important section of your resume because it highlights experiences and skills you have acquired. This section can include, but is not limited to paid or unpaid internships, leadership experiences, and part-time and full-time jobs.

## ACCOMPLISHMENT STATEMENTS

It is important to create accomplishment statements:

▶ Emphasize transferable skills you have developed

▶ Shine light on positive outcomes

▶ Provide specific details

▶ Tell a brief, descriptive story

This is the section where you should articulate essential skills you possess (e.g., communication, teamwork/collaboration, adaptability, problem solving, critical observation, conflict resolution).

## TO HELP GET YOU STARTED, FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

1. List experience in reverse chronological order (most recent first).

2. Indicate the company/organization name, city, state, position, title, and dates of employment (month and year).

3. Begin every bullet point with an **action verb** and use the correct tense (present tense for current jobs and past tense for previous jobs).

4. If referring to organizations by abbreviations, write out the full name the first time you use it.

5. Develop bulleted accomplishment statements using the formula below to highlight key responsibilities and skills:

## [ACTION VERB] + WHAT I DID + SKILLS I USED = SPECIFIC RESULTS I ACHIEVED

**What I Did:** Describe the tasks at hand and the role you played in that experience.

**Skills I Used:** Examples include oral/written communication, customer service, and proficiency with computer programs.

**Results I Got:** An effective result is concrete, measurable, and describes the goal of your actions. (e.g., an increase in sales percentage, improved customer service, etc)

## SAMPLES

- Strengthened relationships with customers utilizing outstanding communication skills, exceeding sales objectives by 5%
- Planned and implemented a day long campus-wide community service project with over 100 student volunteers

## SKILLS

List specific technical and language skills that are quantifiable. Essential skills (e.g., teamwork, critical thinking) should *not* be listed in this section.

▶ List all relevant software and languages. Indicate your proficiency level with each.

## SAMPLES

Proficient in Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop

Social media fluency including Twitter, Instagram, and Tik Tok

Working knowledge of SPSS and Excel

Fluent in Spanish

# OPTIONAL COMPONENTS

## HONORS/AWARDS

▶ List any academic honors bestowed on you by the University or an outside organization

▶ Include scholarships/honor societies (do not include dollar amounts for scholarships)

▶ Do not abbreviate

## ACTIVITIES/LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

▶ List activities you are involved in at the University or through outside organizations (volunteer, community service, or professional affiliation)

▶ Indicate positions held (e.g., board member, treasurer, or president)

▶ Do not list dates

## RELEVANT/SIGNIFICANT COURSES

This section can be extremely helpful to those who are pursuing careers in fields that do not directly align with their major or experience. List any relevant course work that highlights exposure to the desired field/industry. Remember this section is meant to set you apart, *not* to restate your transcript.

▶ Only list upper level courses in a specialized area

▶ Do not list course numbers; simply include the course title

▶ Consider adding relevant class projects (include accomplishment statements)

## LICENSURE/CERTIFICATION

If you currently hold a license relevant to your field, include this information. For example, Accountants, Financial Planners and Teachers require licensing.

## WEBSITES/SOCIAL MEDIA

Include a link to any relevant social media platforms you utilize such as LinkedIn. You can include Twitter if it's professional. Instagram or Tik Tok are appropriate if you're applying to social media or creative positions. Never include Facebook, no matter how clean you keep it.

# ACTION VERBS

## MANAGEMENT

Acted • Anticipated • Appraised • Charged • Consolidated • Decided Coordinated • Oversaw • Motivated • Managed • Led • Launched • Instituted Influenced • Implemented • Headed • Executed • Established • Enforced Enabled • Directed • Determined • Delegated • Specialized • Prioritized Recruited • Strengthened • Supervised • Trained

## COMMUNICATION

Addressed • Advertised • Authored • Answered • Briefed • Collaborated Clarified • Communicated • Composed • Corresponded • Consulted • Debated Edited • Explained • Expressed • Informed • Interpreted • Marketed • Interviewed • Narrated • Participated • Persuaded • Promoted • Publicized Read • Referred • Reported • Summarized • Translated • Verified • Wrote

## RESEARCH

Applied • Collected • Compared • Conducted • Compiled • Critiqued Correlated • Defined • Diagnosed • Discovered • Estimated • Evaluated Experimented •Explored • Extracted • Formulated • Gathered • Investigated Indexed • Measured • Manipulated • Observed • Predicted • Proved Questioned • Recorded •Researched • Studied • Substantiated • Surveyed Theorized • Validated

## TECHNICAL

Assembled • Built • Constructed • Engineered • Formed • Inspected Maintained • Monitored • Operated • Navigated • Programmed • Repaired Restored • Solved • Supplied • Upgraded

## CREATIVE

Conceived • Conceptualized • Created • Customized • Designed • Developed Devised • Drafted • Fashioned • Illustrated • Imagined • Integrated • Invented Performed • Practiced • Produced • Proposed • Published • Revamped Visualized

## ADMINISTRATIVE

Approved • Arranged • Checked • Classified • Copied • Distributed Documented • Inventoried • Logged • Ordered • Organized • Planned Prepared • Purchased • Processed • Received • Responded • Reviewed Scanned • Scheduled • Screened • Streamlined • Tabulated • Utilized

## ANALYTICAL/FINANCIAL

Fulfilled • Gained • Generated • Guaranteed • Increased • Improved • Initiated Learned • Mastered • Maximized • Minimized • Modified • Negotiated Obtained • Raised • Reduced • Succeeded • Sustained • Transformed

## TEACHING/HELPING

Adapted • Advised • Advocated • Aided • Assisted • Cared • Coached Comforted • Cooperated • Counseled • Displayed • Educated • Empathized Encouraged • Facilitated • Fostered • Guided • Helped • Instructed • Lectured Listened • Mediated • Mentored • Presented • Provided • Stimulated Supported • Taught • Tutored

## RESUME CHECKLIST

☐ Individually tailor your resume to fit a specific job

☐ Double check content for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors

☐ Use a professional email address

☐ Do not use personal pronouns such as I, me, or my

☐ Do not include salary requirements or information

☐ Be honest; don't exaggerate or falsify information

☐ Do not list personal information, including age, hobbies, social security number, or photo

☐ Keep your resume current by updating it often

☐ Have numerous people review your resume before you send it

☐ Use bullets to make the resume easier to follow

☐ Resumes should be concise and include easy-to-read language

## HAVEN'T HEARD BACK?

Wait 1-2 weeks after submitting your resume and then contact the employer to see if the position is still open.

▶ Phone or email is appropriate

▶ Be polite

▶ Offer to send your resume again if they did not receive it

▶ Be persistent, not pushy

## REFERENCES

References should be listed on a separate page from the resume and provided only upon request by the employer. It is a waste of space to indicate "References available upon request" on the resume; this is implied.

### SAMPLES

Dr. Sebastian Ibis
President, University of Miami
Former Professor
305-284-5155
presidentsebastian@miami.edu

# COVER LETTERS

The purpose of a cover letter is to introduce yourself and to elaborate on your most significant and relevant experiences. Your cover letter should **demonstrate a fit between the skills and strengths you possess and those required to fulfill the position you are seeking**. Avoid simply repeating items from your resume. Instead, use the cover letter as an opportunity to provide specific examples and expand upon experiences not listed on your resume.

## PREPARATION

Always tailor your cover letter to a specific position or organization. For this reason, it is important to conduct company research before drafting your letter.

▶ Scan your resume for experiences that can be elaborated on to best demonstrate these skills

▶ Review the job description and company website to identify relevant skills and strengths you should highlight in your cover letter

▶ Attend employer events at the Toppel Career Center to acquire contact names and learn more about available positions

▶ Schedule an informational interview with someone working in that organization to gain an insider's perspective

## IDENTIFYING A CONTACT

Most job and internship listings do not provide a contact name. However, it is helpful to address your letter to a specific individual within the organization. Taking this extra step to personalize your letter can make a difference in setting yourself apart as a candidate. Below are some tips for acquiring a contact name.

▶ Search the company website for a listing of employee names

▶ Reach out to individuals in your personal and professional network who could assist you in locating a contact

▶ Call the company and politely ask for the name of the hiring manager in charge of the position you are seeking

▶ As a last resort, address your letter to "hiring manager" or "human resources representative"

# DO'S & DON'TS OF COVER LETTERS

## DO:

1. **Get to the Point.**
   State the purpose of your letter in the first paragraph. Small talk is generally a waste of space.
2. **Tailor Your Letter To The Reader.**
   Focus on the needs of the specific organization, not on your own requirements as a job seeker. Visit your potential employer's website or read the company's annual report to learn more about it, then use your cover letter to demonstrate how your skills and experience can benefit the organization.
3. **Highlight Your Biggest Successes**.
   Highlight the achievements in your career that most relate to the position for which you are applying.
5. **Use Strong Words.**
   Use strong action words to share your experiences and showcase your qualifications. Be sure to tailor the cover letter to the job description.  Use the cover letter to sell yourself.

## DON'T:

1. Provide salary information when it is not requested.
2. Address a letter's recipient by anything other than their name (and avoid "Dear Sirs" at all costs).
3. Write a generic letter that looks like it was copied from a book.
4. Make spelling errors and typos.
5. Include irrelevant personal information or job experience.

# OTHER TYPES OF LETTERS

In addition to cover letters, it is important to consider additional types of letters that you might utilize in your job search. Some of these may include:

▶ **Letter of Inquiry:** used to obtain information about available opportunities at a specific company.

▶ **Networking Letter:** used to request an informational interview in order to explore a career or organization.

▶ **Thank You Letter:** used to show gratitude to someone who has assisted you in your career path (interview, informational interview, or reference).

▶ **Job Offer Acceptance Letter**: used to formally accept a position and to reiterate the terms of your employment.

▶ **Job Offer Rejection Letter**: used to formally reject a position while maintaining a level of professionalism and leaving a positive impression.

Tip: All of these types of letters can be sent through email. Remember that emails to a potential employer should follow the same guidelines outlined in this guide and maintain a high level of professionalism.

# TACKLING THE COVER LETTER

With all the emphasis on resume writing, the cover letter is often overlooked. Many employers, however, request a cover letter along with a resume. A cover letter reflects your ability to communicate, provides an opportunity to establish a unique connection with an employer, and convinces an employer to take the next step - an interview. This worksheet will help organize the content of a cover letter. Note that this is a general format. Actual content and layout will vary.

Your Address

The Company's Address

Dear _____

## PARAGRAPH ONE (PROVIDE BRIEF SENTENCES BELOW)

1. Why are you writing this letter? What's your objective in contacting this person?

2. Articulate how a position within this organization would greatly enhance your career path.

*Optional: Mention any source(s) you received information from regarding this organization or opportunity.

## PARAGRAPH TWO (PROVIDE BRIEF SENTENCES BELOW)

1. Describe how your past work experience has allowed you to develop certain marketable skills; explain them.

2. Cite any practical experience you may have obtained outside the classroom.

3. Summarize your personal attributes and illustrate how they would allow you to contribute to this organization and/or optimally perform in the workplace.

## PARAGRAPH THREE (PROVIDE BRIEF SENTENCES BELOW)

1. Write a closing statement that once again conveys your interest and fit for the role.

2. Provide a phone number and an email address in case the employer has additional questions.

3. Thank the employer for their time.

Sincerely,

[Your Signature]

Your Name

# DROP-IN COACHING

For assistance with resumes and cover letters, come to the Toppel Career Center during Drop-In Coaching. Visit HireACane.com and click on Resources for resume templates and samples.

**Drop-In Hours: Monday - Friday, 10:00am - 4:00pm**
**No Appointment Needed**

# APPLYING FOR JOBS & INTERNSHIPS WITH YOUR NEW RESUME!

Upload your resume on Handshake to apply for jobs and internships. Please allow 3-5 business days for approval.

**Toppel Career Center**
5225 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Coral Gables, FL 33146
HireACane.com  |  toppel@miami.edu  |  305-284-5451