

Creating Your Résumé and Cover Letter

INTRODUCTION

So, you've reached the point in your life at which someone tells you that you need a résumé. You may be wondering, what is a résumé and why do I need one? And, even if I do know what it is, I don't have a clue where or how to start!

Well, no worries, this packet can lead you through the process and help you create a résumé that works! Let's start at the beginning.

What is a résumé? It is a brief (usually one page) document that showcases your best – most *relevant* – skills, experiences, and qualifications. Think of it as a summary, or a snapshot – a very clear and concise image of you and your professional abilities.

Employers typically spend 8 - 10 **seconds** reviewing a résumé. Consequently, you need to make every line and every word count!

Why do I need a résumé? Various documents are required during the job search process. Your résumé – and accompanying cover letter – are your marketing materials. They get attention, introduce you to employers, and [hopefully] convince those employers to invite you to the next phase of the process – the interview.

How do I get started? The best way to begin is to take inventory. Develop a list that includes your education, experience, skills, abilities, honors, and activities. What have you achieved that makes you stand out? What have you accomplished that will make you a great candidate for the positions you're seeking? What special skills, certifications, and training do you have? How have you contributed through volunteer work or community service? What leadership positions have you taken on? If you have military experience, be sure to include that, too. Demonstrate the match between your skills and the prospective employer's needs.

Read on to learn the finer points of résumé writing!

Transferable Skills

Give yourself credit for the transferable / employability skills you possess. These skills are valued by employers in all types of work environments.

How have you developed your ability to . . .

1. **Work with a team?**
 2. **Make decisions and solve problems?**
 3. **Plan, organize, and prioritize?**
 4. **Communicate with people inside and outside an organization?**
 5. **Obtain and process information?**
 6. **Analyze quantitative data?**
 7. **Understand technical information?**
 8. **Operate computer hardware and software?**
 9. **Create and/or edit written reports?**
 10. **Sell, negotiate, motivate, or influence others?**
- Emphasize these valuable skills to set yourself apart!

FIRST AND LAST NAME

IN BOLD, A FEW POINTS
LARGER THAN THE BODY TEXT

Street Address ■ City, State Zip Code ■ Phone Number ■ Email Address ■ LinkedIn URL

EDUCATION

- List most recent educational information first (reverse chronological order)
- Cite name and location of institution, degree and graduation date, major/minor/endorsement/emphasis
- List only the institutions from which you have earned degrees, unless you pursued a particular area of study that is relevant to your reader
- Optional: GPA - **if above 3.0**, honors, awards, scholarships, training, class projects, research, study abroad experience, languages, related coursework. Some of these could be separate sections, as well.
- Right-align dates

Education Examples:

University of Nebraska-Kearney, Kearney, NE May 2015
Bachelor of Science – **Business Administration, Finance Emphasis**

University of Nebraska at Kearney, Kearney, NE Anticipated May 2016
Bachelor of Science in **Social Work**
Major GPA: 4.0/4.0

- Honors Program, 4 years
- Awarded the Artice Miles Scholarship for students showing potential in the field of Social Work 2015

EXPERIENCE

- Include full-time positions, as well as part-time, seasonal, temporary, volunteer, field experience, observation, internship, etc.
- Consider using different section headings; i.e., Related, Teaching, Professional, or Leadership Experience
- List most recent and/or relevant experience first
- **Lead with position title**, organization, location (city and state), and dates (month/year) right-aligned
- Present information in a consistent order and a consistent format throughout your résumé
- Provide a bulleted description of experiences, with emphasis on **skills** and **accomplishments**, **NOT** routine duties
- Make it easy for employers to skim for detail; they will not read lengthy paragraphs
- Use action verbs to lead statements and avoid using personal pronouns
- Apply the **Winning Formula: Action Verb + Subject + Purpose / Method / Result** (*See list of Action Verbs on page 4.)

Experience Examples:

Tutor, Horizon Middle School, Kearney, NE January - May 2015
• Coached 5 third-grade students in reading skills, resulting in an average 3-point improvement on assessments

Resident Assistant, UNK North Residence Hall, Kearney, NE August - May 2014
• Used presentation skills to conduct seminars, educating 150 freshmen on Student Code of Conduct

IMPORTANT RÉSUMÉ POINTS AND FORMATTING GUIDELINES:

- Organize the résumé information in order of relevancy and interest to your reader
- Present information to establish that you have the knowledge, skills, abilities, or personality traits that an employer is seeking, by including key words and phrases important to the position or industry
- Limit **italics** and **underlining**
- List only **one** address and **one** phone number
- Use easy-to-read **fonts**, usually Calibri or Cambria, 10-12 points
- Set **margins** between .5 and 1 inch
- Limit résumé to one (two at the most) page in length – **NO ERRORS!**
- **Print** on white or ivory quality bond paper, using a laser printer, one side only

OPTIONAL RÉSUMÉ SECTIONS

QUALIFICATIONS SUMMARY

- A strong summary of specific skills or experiences directly related to the position you are applying for
- Be sure to use key words and phrases that reflect those found in the job description and company information

Example:

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Three years' experience providing NetWare Operating Systems support, file server installations, troubleshooting and technical consulting
- Proficient in Novell NetWare 4x, NDS, DOS and client tools; familiar with NetWare DHCP and DNS administration

RELEVANT COURSEWORK or EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

- For college students or recent graduates, your education might be your biggest selling point. If you have completed a special project or learned a particular skill, be sure to highlight it for potential employers.

LEADERSHIP

- If you have held leadership roles on campus or in other organizations, you have two options: include that information in your Experience section, **or** create a separate section to highlight leadership roles.

SPECIAL SKILLS

- A section that highlights expertise you may have in foreign languages, computer operation / programming, equipment you can use, or other areas of excellence that have not been mentioned elsewhere.
- Indicate your skill level, such as Intermediate MS Excel, Advanced conversational proficiency in Spanish, etc.

RESEARCH / PRESENTATIONS

- If you have done extensive research in your field, you may wish to state the title or thesis of the paper and a brief description of your findings.
- Give insight into your professional expertise (useful for graduate school applications). If you published / presented your research at a conference, include the name, location, and date of the publication and / or the conference.

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Honors such as Dean's List, membership in an academic honorary, or scholarships can be included in the "Education" section, or they may be listed in a separate section.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- If you have joined a professional association related to your chosen field, list it here. Write out the name.
- If applicable, include information about your involvement in the association: leadership positions held, conferences or workshops attended, special programs, projects, etc.

ADDITIONAL TRAINING

- You may list any significant seminars, workshops, or other training that has enhanced your knowledge or will be helpful in your chosen career field.

CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT / STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

- Sometimes it's appropriate to label this type of experience as "Leadership," but you may include it in its own section, if you choose.

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE or COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Shows a level of selflessness and a willingness to be a "team player." It can potentially open a door, especially if the reader shares a similar interest.

MILITARY EXPERIENCE

- This could be listed under its own heading, or as work or leadership experience. Be sure to reflect promotions you received in addition to describing your responsibilities and accomplishments.

ACTION VERBS

When describing experiences on your résumé, begin with action verbs such as those listed below. Refer to a thesaurus for additional verbs.

Communication			Creative		
addressed	negotiated	authored	acted	created	composed
contacted	edited	mediated	directed	conducted	originated
presented	promoted	published	designed	performed	introduced
Finance			Helping		
balanced	budgeted	allocated	advised	advocated	clarified
calculated	analyzed	appraised	assessed	facilitated	rehabilitated
projected	reconciled	forecasted	evaluated	coached	supported
Management			Organization		
administered	analyzed	evaluated	generated	classified	monitored
consulted	delegated	prioritized	arranged	inspected	compiled
recommended	recruited	scheduled	implemented	screened	distributed
Results			Instruction		
achieved	accomplished	attained	adapted	applied	facilitated
reduced	established	improved	developed	trained	evaluated
launched	contributed	recognized	implemented	motivated	modified
Technical					
assembled	built	calculated	operated	designed	devised
engineered	fabricated	maintained	trained	upgraded	programmed

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Emphasize and quantify transferable skills using the **Winning Formula: Action Verb + Subject + Purpose / Method / Result.** See examples below for some ideas:

- ♦ Used creativity and communication skills to develop and facilitate weekly team-building activities for 30 members of on-campus residence hall community
- ♦ Motivated 6 fraternity brothers to participate in St. Jude's Children's Hospital annual fundraiser, increasing the contribution from our chapter by 20 percent over previous years
- ♦ Collaborated with faculty mentor to develop research project, conducting background research, constructing a hypothesis, and running additional surveys to test the theory
 - Presented findings of study, "Job satisfaction in relation to vocational callings," at Undergraduate Research Symposium
- ♦ Organized 3 summer basketball camps for local youth, with approximately 35 youth attending each camp
 - Contracted with facility manager to secure adequate gym space for all camps
 - Hired and trained 6 coaches, as well as several time-keepers and assistants
 - Coordinated logistics, i.e., registration processes and fees, facilities and schedules, drop-off and pick-up locations, camp t-shirts, and more

SAMPLE CHRONOLOGICAL RÉSUMÉ #1

Louie Loper

8956 12th Street
Kearney, NE 68845

308.123.4567
loperll@unk.edu
www.linkedin.com/in/loperll

EDUCATION	University of Nebraska at Kearney , Kearney, NE Bachelor of Science, Business Administration Minor: Entrepreneurship Cumulative GPA: 3.7/4.0	May 2015
STUDY ABROAD	Shanghai University , Shanghai, China Studied Business, Language, and Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gained appreciation of diversity and expanded cultural horizons• Increased confidence and independence, gaining new friendships and networking abilities	Summer 2013
INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE	World Wide Logistics Ltd. , Corporate Services, Shanghai, China <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assisted Corporate Services Agent with general customer service, resulting in a measurable 5% increase in customer satisfaction over 3 months• Provided clients with pricing quotes for upcoming projects in order to secure their business• Gained knowledge of supply chain efficiency and cost reduction Antelope Café , Kearney, NE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assisted local business owner with the development of a new off-campus restaurant• Participated in marketing strategy meetings and created a social media campaign to increase awareness throughout the community• Created a profit-loss spreadsheet to document income and expense categories	Summer 2014 January 2013 – May 2013
LEADERSHIP	Team Member , UNK Students in Free Enterprise <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worked with team of 8 to teach 30 high school students steps to starting a business during the school's "Entrepreneurship Day"• Served as a judge for a middle school "Money Smart Week" essay contest that tested students' knowledge of budgeting and money management Resident Assistant UNK, Kearney, NE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developed strong time management skills through balancing a full course load and spending approximately 20 hours per week fulfilling Resident Assistant duties• Conducted team-building activities to assist residents in developing relationships with each other• Conducted floor meetings to educate residents on the policies and procedures of Residential Life and to encourage participation in campus events• Assisted students with academic concerns by hosting weekly study groups	Aug 2013 – May 2015 Aug 2012 – May 2014
HONORS & ACTIVITIES	Presenter , National Conference on Undergraduate Research <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research title, "Creating a business plan in a global society"• Created presentation using Prezi; fielded questions from 40 attendees Team Captain , American Cancer Society Relay for Life	May 2013 April 2013

◆ Include References on a Separate Sheet – not on the Résumé ◆

SAMPLE CHRONOLOGICAL RÉSUMÉ #2

Lisa J. Loper

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308-765-4321 • loperlj@unk.edu • linkedin.com/in/loperlj

EDUCATION

University of Nebraska at Kearney, Kearney, NE
Bachelor of Science – **Sports Management**

December 2015

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

United States Olympic Committee (USOC), Colorado Springs, CO May 2015 – July 2015

- Assisted staff with membership, marketing and Team USA projects
- Applied excellent communication skills while contacting 150+ members by phone and email to promote member benefits
- Gained a broad knowledge of many aspects of running a successful athletic organization
- Attended USOC workshops including relationships in the workplace and first aid response

Lincoln Salt Dogs, Lincoln, NE

May 2014– July 2014

- Executed in-game promotions, enhancing the fan experience between innings
- Placed cold calls with the ticket sales department resulting in the sale of 6 corporate packages, for net sales totaling almost \$3,600.00
- Escorted team mascot to kid's club movie matinees as a part of community relations program
- Maintained database with demographic and ticket-order information for 1,200 customers

ATHLETIC and LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Student-Athlete/Team Captain, UNK Women's Soccer, Kearney, NE

Aug 2012 – Dec 2015

- Developed strong time management skills through balancing a full course load with practice, team travel and competitions
- Learned to communicate with a diverse group of people by connecting with teammates and focusing on common goals
- Analyzed constructive criticism from coaching staff and used it to improve performance
- Served as Team Captain for the 2014-2015 seasons motivating and leading student athletes

Chapter President, UNK Iota Gamma Fraternity, Kearney, NE

Jan 2013 – Dec 2013

- Provided leadership to a chapter with 65 active members by conducting weekly chapter meetings
- Worked with executive board to oversee the success of the fraternity in the areas of academic success, philanthropy, fundraising, recruitment and campus involvement
- Trained recruitment team, emphasizing core goals and mission of the fraternity

HONORS AND ACTIVITIES

- Three-time Academic All-Conference Selection 2012 - 2014
- Team Representative on Student Athlete Advisory Council 2013 - 2014
- Hoops-for-Heart Marketing Committee Spring 2014

◆ Include References on a Separate Sheet – not on the Résumé ◆

WRITING A COVER LETTER

Your cover letter, which **always accompanies your résumé**, may be the first thing prospective employers see even before they read the résumé you have so carefully prepared. It may be your first chance to market yourself. It is important to spend a good deal of thought and time writing an effective cover letter, one that will inspire the employer to seek out more information about you. **Avoid copying** sample cover letters – **they will not** represent you adequately and will probably sound artificial. In addition, a **cover letter should:**

- **Link your skills and experience** to the **employer's needs** and show your enthusiasm for this position
- Express your individuality and be **tailored to each position** and/or employer
- Be addressed to a **specific person**

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

Your Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Date (i.e. September 26, 2015)

Name of person who is hiring for this position **(If not listed, call the company and find out.)**

His/Her Job Title

Company / Organization

Street Address

City, State Zip Code

Dear Ms. / Mr. / Dr. / Mrs. _____: **(If no name is available:** Dear Personnel Director, or Dear Search Committee.)

Paragraph 1 - Why are you writing?

The beginning of your letter should capture the reader's attention, while avoiding clichés and gimmicks. Also, tell why you are writing (name the specific position or type of work you are applying for) and mention the resource used in finding out about the opening. *Briefly* introduce your credentials, professional experiences and personality traits.

Paragraph 2 - Qualifications

Explain why you are interested in working for this specific employer or in this field of work, and most importantly, what your qualifications are (academic background/training, work experience, personal skills). **Point out your accomplishments and skills that relate to the position** without duplicating exactly what is included on your résumé. Then, connect those things to the company's needs to show you have done your **research** about the company (or the industry) and are aware of how you could be of benefit. This paragraph should essentially answer the employer's question, "Why should I hire you?"

Paragraph 3 - Take Action

Refer the reader to your enclosed (or attached) résumé and point out that it provides further details of your qualifications. Indicate your desire for an interview and bring attention to your contact information (phone and email). Many applicants take a more active approach and give a timeframe in which they will contact the company. If you do this, be sure to follow up when you say you will.

Paragraph 4 - Thank You

Thank the reader for his/her time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(Your **handwritten signature** – blue or black ink)

Type your name

Phone number (including area code)

Email Address

Enclosure: Résumé

IMPORTANT COVER LETTER POINTS AND FORMATTING GUIDELINES:

- One page, produced on word processor and laser printer.
- No spelling or typing errors. Check grammar, punctuation, and syntax.
- Use quality bond paper, 8 ½ x 11 inches, which matches your résumé.
- If printed, sign with blue or black pen.
- Avoid folding: mail in 9" x 12" envelope with résumé behind the letter.
- Choose a conservative stamp for your envelope.
- Keep notes on date of mailing and date for follow-up communication.

USE OF A REFERENCE SHEET

- Select **3-4 references** who have worked with you and are able to talk with employers about your skills and abilities.
 - *Examples:* Current or previous supervisors, college professors, advisors or instructors
- **Always contact references** to obtain their permission prior to listing them on your reference sheet.
- References are **not part of a résumé**, so they should be listed on a separate page.
- Enclose a reference sheet with your résumé and cover letter only if the employer specifically requests references.

SAMPLE REFERENCE SHEET

Heading

(Name and contact information as it looks on your résumé.)

REFERENCES: (remember to list 3-4 references)

Name of Reference (First and Last)

Title

Organization

Mailing Address

City, State, ZIP

Phone Number

Email

Relationship, if unclear in letter or résumé (**i.e., Dr. Pepper is my advisor and research mentor.**)

Name of Reference (First and Last)

Title

Organization

Mailing Address

City, State, ZIP

Phone Number

Email

Relationship, if unclear in letter or résumé