



# Creating Your Résumé and Cover Letter

## RÉSUMÉ - Getting Started

So, you've reached the point in your life when you need a résumé. Perhaps you are applying for a part-time job, internship, or your first "real job" after college. You may know what a résumé is, but how do you get started on creating a résumé? And more importantly, how do you create a résumé that will get you to the next step in the hiring process – the interview?

**What is a résumé?** A résumé showcases your qualifications and experiences. A good résumé is:

- Concise
- Visually appealing
- One page (ideal length for students or recent graduates)
- Targeted to each position
- Error free

### How do I get started?

**Step 1:** Take an inventory of your qualifications and experiences. Don't worry if something doesn't seem to fit into a standard category – you can fine-tune later - more information about optional section or categories can be found on page 3.

**Step 2:** It can be helpful to create a working document or "master résumé" with all of your qualifications. Remember, a good résumé is targeted to each position, so you probably won't need to include every item for every job.

**Step 3:** Use the job posting and list of required and preferred qualifications as a guide to craft a tailored résumé. For example, if the job posting lists *public speaking experience* as a required qualification, be sure to include examples of how you meet this qualification in your résumé. Use formula on page 4 as a guide.

**Step 4:** Review, review, review! Ask a friend or classmate to review your résumé. You can also email your résumé to [careerserv@unk.edu](mailto:careerserv@unk.edu).

## RÉSUMÉ - Basics

### Rule of Relevancy

- Place your most valuable information near the top of the résumé

### Format

- Reverse Chronological (most recent experience first)
  - Functional résumé format NOT suggested as it can appear that you have something to hide
- Use consistent formatting throughout
- Right align all dates

### Font

- Size: 10-12 point (name should be a few points larger)
- Style: Cambria, Calibri, or Garamond – avoid Times New Roman (*outdated*) or *Comic Sans* (*childish*)
- Color: Black
- Other font tips:
  - Use the same font throughout
  - Limit *italics* and underlining, **bold** is ok

### General

- Résumé must be error free – you can be eliminated from the applicant pool for just one typo!
- Print on white or ivory quality bond paper, using a laser printer, one side only
- Only list one address, email, and phone number

## Email, Phone and Voicemail Etiquette

- If you don't already have one, create a professional email and check it daily
- Establish a professional voicemail greeting
- Make sure your voicemail box is not full

## What to leave off your résumé

- High school information
- A picture of yourself

## RÉSUMÉ – Education and Experience

For a college student, recent or upcoming graduate, education information should be listed at top of your résumé.

- List only the institutions from which you have earned degrees, unless you pursued it is relevant to the job
  - If listing more than one institution, list most recent educational information first
- Cite name and location of institution, degree and graduation date, major/minor/endorsement/emphasis
- 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.

### Education Examples:

**University of Nebraska-Kearney**, Kearney, NE May 2019  
Bachelor of Science – **Business Administration Comprehensive, Finance Emphasis**

**University of Nebraska at Kearney**, Kearney, NE Anticipated May 2020  
Bachelor of Science in **Social Work Comprehensive**

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 2018

## RÉSUMÉ – Experience

- Include full-time, part-time, temporary, volunteer, field experience, observation, internship, military, 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 name, location (city and state), and dates right-aligned (month/year)
- Provide a bulleted description of experiences – see next page
- Make it easy for employers to skim for detail; they will not read lengthy paragraphs

### Experience Examples:

**Tutor**, Horizon Middle School, Kearney, NE January - May 2019  
• 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 2017 - May 2018  
• Used presentation skills to conduct seminars, educating 150 freshmen on Student Code of Conduct

Because you may not have the exact experience the employers are looking for, be sure to highlight your transferrable skills/competencies listed below. Transferrable skills are needed in a variety of settings and occupations

Top Competencies Employers Seek	
#1 Critical Thinking/Problem Solving	#5 Leadership
#2 Teamwork/Collaboration	#6 Information Technology Application
#3 Professionalism/Work Ethic	#7 Career Management
#4 Oral/Written Communications	#8 Global/Multi-cultural Fluency

\*According to NACE Job Outlook 2020 survey

# RÉSUMÉ – Developing Strong Bullets Using the Winning Formula

## WINNING FORMULA - Action Verb + *Subject* + Purpose / Method / Result

### Action Verb

- Use the correct tense
  - Current job or experience, use a present tense verb (i.e. *communicate*);
  - Prior job or experience use a past tense verb (i.e. *communicated*)
- Use strong verbs
  - Weaker: Did, used, helped, made
  - Stronger: Performed, communicated, evaluated, innovated
- Mix it up! Try not to use the same verb over and over. Consult a thesaurus or the table below for new alternative verbs

Action 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

### Subject

- What did you do?
- Who did you work with?

### Purpose / Method / Result

- Purpose – Why was this important to your employer/organization?
- Method - How did you achieved this?
- What was the end result?
  - Quantify when possible (number of people you worked with, % increase, etc.)

### **Strong Bullet Examples:**

- ◆ **Utilized** *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 by creating a poster and developing a PowerPoint and oral presentation*
- ◆ **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 and 2 timekeepers to guarantee consistent rules followed*
  - **Coordinated** *all logistics, including registration processes and fees, facilities and schedules, drop-off and pick-up locations, and camp t-shirts to ensure a successful camp experience for all participants*

## **RÉSUMÉ - Optional 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.

### **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 full 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.

### **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.

# RÉSUMÉ - Example 1

**Louie Loper**

8956 12<sup>th</sup> Street  
Kearney, NE 68845

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

<b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>University of Nebraska at Kearney</b> , Kearney, NE Bachelor of Science, <b>Business Administration</b> Minor: <b>Entrepreneurship</b> Cumulative GPA: 3.7/4.0	May 2019
<b>STUDY ABROAD</b>	<b>Shanghai University</b> , Shanghai, China Studied Business, Language, and Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gained appreciation of diversity and expanded cultural horizons</li><li>• Increased confidence and independence, gaining new friendships and networking abilities</li></ul>	Summer 2017
<b>INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE</b>	<b>World Wide Logistics Ltd.</b> , Corporate Services, Shanghai, China <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assisted Corporate Services Agent with general customer service, resulting in a measurable 5% increase in customer satisfaction over 3 months</li><li>• Provided clients with pricing quotes for upcoming projects in order to secure their business</li><li>• Gained knowledge of supply chain efficiency and cost reduction</li></ul> <b>Antelope Café</b> , Kearney, NE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assisted local business owner with the development of a new restaurant</li><li>• Participated in marketing strategy meetings and created a social media campaign to increase awareness throughout the community</li><li>• Created a profit-loss spreadsheet to document income and expense categories</li></ul>	Summer 2018 January 2017 – May 2017
<b>LEADERSHIP</b>	<b>Team Member</b> , UNK Students in Free Enterprise <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Worked with team of 8 to teach 30 high school students the steps to starting a business during the school's "Entrepreneurship Day"</li><li>• Served as a judge for a middle school "Money Smart Week" essay contest that tested students' knowledge of budgeting and money management</li></ul> <b>Resident Assistant</b> UNK, Kearney, NE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developed strong time management skills through balancing a full course load and spending approximately 20 hours per week fulfilling Resident Assistant duties</li><li>• Conducted team-building activities to assist residents in developing relationships with each other</li><li>• Conducted floor meetings to educate residents on the policies and procedures of Residential Life and to encourage participation in campus events</li><li>• Assisted students with academic concerns by hosting weekly study groups</li></ul>	Aug 2017 – May 2019 Aug 2016 – May 2018
<b>HONORS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>Presenter</b> , National Conference on Undergraduate Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research title, "Creating a business plan in a global society"</li><li>• Created presentation using Prezi; fielded questions from 40 attendees</li></ul> <b>Team Captain</b> , American Cancer Society Relay for Life	May 2017 April 2017

# RÉSUMÉ - Example 2

1942 University Drive • Kearney, NE 68845

**Lisa J. Loper**

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

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## EDUCATION

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

December 2019

## INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

**United States Olympic Committee (USOC)**, Colorado Springs, CO May 2019 – July 2019

- 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 2018– July 2018

- 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 2016 – Dec 2019

- 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 2018-2019 seasons motivating and leading student athletes

**Chapter President**, UNK Iota Gamma Fraternity, Kearney, NE Jan 2017 – Dec 2017

- 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 2016 - 2018
- Team Representative on Student Athlete Advisory Council 2017 - 2018
- Hoops-for-Heart Marketing Committee Spring 2018

# COVER LETTER

Your cover letter, which almost 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**

## Other Important Cover Letter Notes:

- One-page typed letter, printed on quality bond paper, 8 ½ x 11 inches, which matches your résumé
- No spelling or typing errors - check grammar, punctuation, and syntax
- Sign with blue or black pen
- Avoid folding - instead 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

## SAMPLE COVER LETTER

Your Street Address  
City, State Zip Code

Date (i.e. May 26, 2020)

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. / \_\_\_\_\_: **(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 and/or the industry. 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

# REFERENCES

Select references who have worked with you and are able to talk with employers about your skills and abilities.

- Select **3 – 5 references**, making sure to include the minimum number of references required by the job posting.
  - If you're not sure how many to include, three references is usually a safe bet.
- People to use as a reference: Current or previous work supervisors, college professors, advisors, research mentor, etc.
- **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
- Consider sending your references an updated résumé and information about the job(s) you are applying for

## 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