

RESUME AND COVER LETTER WRITING GUIDE



***iSucceed* Stages Utilized:**

1. *iExplore* (Self-Assessment)
2. *iResearch* (Occupational Research)
3. *iDecide* (Combine Career & Self-Awareness)

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What Is A Resume?

Your resume is a sales tool; advertising your skills, qualifications and goals. It is often a prospective employer's first look at you, so you must make this an effective introduction - a concise statement of your skills and strengths.

The primary purpose of your resume is to get an interview. It should emphasize why an employer should meet and hire you. Stress your skills and abilities and give examples of your accomplishments.

Resume Writing Steps

Step 1: Target Your Job-Determine the type of position for which you are applying.

- What are the skill areas needed?
- What do you have to offer that specific employer?
- Why do you want to work for that employer?
- What will set you apart from the competition with respect to this particular position?

Step 2: Choose a Format -What format style best suits your needs?

There are at least three different resume formats each with a different purpose and layout. Choose [which format is right](#) for you to find out more information about resume styles.

Step 3: [Getting Started](#) - Writing your resume step-by-step.

Step 4: Writing the Cover Letter - [Cover Letter Do's and Don'ts](#)

Step 5: Review and Revise – Have others have reviewed your resume, than make an appointment with the Office of Career Development so we can review your resume together.

In reality, your resume, once submitted to a potential employer, will be read by different people with individual preferences on resume style/format. Once you've created a first draft, take your resume to other trusted individuals and allow them to review. **After having several individuals critique your resume, call or stop in to the Office of Career Development and we can review it with you.** Take all criticisms into consideration and make the necessary revisions to finalize your resume. Remain focused on your purpose. Your resume should be professional, neat, error-free and, most importantly, supportive of your objective.



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Which format is right for you?

There are various formats that may be used in preparing a resume. Content and format should reflect your own personality and style. However, most employers prefer conventional resumes with clearly written and organized information. The following basic principles may be useful in creating your resume:

- Don't expect to write a good resume with one try!
- Check and double check for spelling, grammatical, and typing errors.
- Use a good quality 8.5" x 11" resume paper - white, ivory or light gray.
- Make it easy to read - highlight by using bold, capital letters or underlining, but don't overdo!
- Use a consistent style!
- Limit your resume to one (preferred) or two pages.
- Use a computer with a good laser printer.
- It should look well-balanced, with 1" margins at top, bottom and sides.
- Don't include personal data (e.g. age, height, marital status, health).
- Don't state reasons for leaving past jobs.
- Salary requirements should not be listed.
- Don't use personal pronouns in job descriptions ('I' or "my").

Resume Formats

In general, your resume should be well organized, professional looking, easy to read and informative. Remember, its main purpose is to impress an employer enough to grant you an interview where you can sell yourself in person.

Three common resume formats are the chronological, functional and combination.

Chronological Resume

Data is organized in reverse time order starting with your present or most recent experience or education, includes dates and emphasizes whatever abilities and skills support your career objective. It is the most common style used and is most familiar to employers. Most students will probably use this format. See [example](#) below.

Functional Resume

Skills are highlighted rather than work history. Often a job history is not even included. Skills can be demonstrated from work experience, volunteer activities or class work. The skills described should support your career objective.

Combination Resume

Combines chronological and functional formats, data is organized according to skills (as in functional approach) but includes brief employment history, and points out your qualifications in terms of your job functions. This type highlights major areas of accomplishments and strengths and eliminates repetition of job assignments. It can also be more effective if you are changing careers and want to highlight transferable skills.



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Resume Writing: Getting Starting

1. Take a blank paper and begin with identifying information - your Name, Address and Phone number. Don't use nicknames or abbreviations except for state (PA, NJ, DE) and include area code for phone number.
2. Write your Objective - Think about what type of position you are seeking now. Don't be so vague and general that it becomes meaningless. It is better to have different versions of your resume with specific objectives targeting certain positions.
3. Education may be your next section. Start with Immaculata University, major, expected date of graduation, GPA (if 3.0 or better). If you have another degree, list that also. If you attended another college/university for a few credits before enrolling at Immaculata, it is not necessary to list it. If applying for a co-op or internship, you might also want to list major courses completed. Listing courses or all clinical experiences is not necessary for graduating seniors. Include any honors or awards received or make a separate category for them. Further along in your career, put employment before education.
4. Professional experience goes next - List the name, city and state, job title in reverse chronological order. Support your objective with brief job descriptions using [action words](#). When possible, quantify and give specific results or accomplishments.
5. Use any of the following headings that are applicable and support your objective: field experience, volunteer work, computer skills, activities, interests, language skills, etc., references available upon request is last, and is not even necessary to include if it makes your resume go over one page.



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Action Words

Your resume should convey the skills you can offer an employer. The words you use to describe your experience, activities, etc. can convey the skills you have developed. These words are crucial to your purpose of obtaining a job interview. Use concise phrasing rather than complete sentences. Remember to use past tense for past jobs and present tense for current jobs.

Below are some action verbs that stress skills:

| | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Accelerated | Accomplished | Achieved | Adapted |
| Administered | Advertised | Advised | Analyzed |
| Answered | Approved | Arranged | Assisted |
| Broadened | Built | Calculated | Compiled |
| Completed | Conceived | Conducted | Controlled |
| Coordinated | Counseled | Created | Delegated |
| Delivered | Demonstrated | Designated | Designed |
| Developed | Directed | Displayed | Edited |
| Effectuated | Established | Eliminated | Evaluated |
| Examined | Expanded | Expedited | Facilitated |
| Filed | Fisted | Found | Generated |
| Guided | Handled | Helped | Hired |
| Identified | Implemented | Improved | Increased |
| Influenced | Interviewed | Judged | Launched |
| Lectured | Led | Managed | Maintained |
| Mastered | Monitored | Motivated | Negotiated |
| Obtained | Ordered | Originated | Organized |
| Observed | Operated | Participated | Performed |
| Pinpointed | Placed | Planned | Prepared |
| Presented | Processed | Produced | Programmed |
| Proposed | Proved | Provided | Publicized |
| Purchased | Recommended | Recorded | Recruited |
| Reduced | Reinforced | Reorganized | Reported |
| Researched | Reviewed | Revised | Revamped |
| Rewrote | Scheduled | Screened | Selected |
| Served | Set Up | Simplified | Sold |
| Solved | Structured | Streamlined | Strengthened |
| Supervised | Supported | Surveyed | Systematized |
| Taught | Tested | Tracked | Trained |
| Translated | Tutored | Typed | Updated |
| Utilized | Verified | Won | Wrote |

Most Standard Competencies

1. Achievement/results orientation
2. Initiative
3. Impact and influence
4. Customer service orientation
5. Interpersonal understanding
6. Organizational awareness
7. Analytical thinking
8. Conceptual thinking
9. Information seeking
10. Integrity
11. Leadership Skills
12. Project Management
13. Problem Solving and Analysis
14. Presentation and Communication Skills
15. Work as Team Player



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Elements of a Chronological Resume

Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
(Area Code) Telephone Number
Email address
Linkedin address

Objective

The objective of your resume should be specific; focusing on the position available and what you goals at the present time. Some example statements would include:

- To acquire a management trainee position in financial services.
- To utilize my biology degree in pharmaceutical research.
- A position in human services utilizing and developing my communication and counseling skills.
- A position as a registered nurse in a long-term care facility.

Summary of Qualifications

Use three or four bullets to describe your skills, [competencies](#), and qualifications. Remember to use [action words](#) to get your points across.

Education

Name of School (*list the most recent school first*)

City, State

Major and Minor

Graduation Date (*provide expected date if applicable*)

GPA (*include only if over 3.0*)

Major Courses Completed

(this is particularly good for co-ops or internships so that prospective employer can anticipate skill level)

Honors/Awards/Scholarships

Note: It is not necessary to include high school unless there is a special reason to do so.

Experience (*list the most recent experience first*)

Name of Company, City, State, Month/20xx - Present

Job Title Job

Duties/Accomplishments

- Use action words in description of responsibilities.
- Use present tense for current position, past tense for former jobs.
- Include any special accomplishments.

Name of Company, City, State, Month/20xx – 20xx
Job Title Job
Duties/Accomplishments

Note: You might also want to separate into 2 headings: Related Experience and Employment if that provides a clearer picture of your experience or to include extensive experience obtained through volunteer and/or class work.

Skills

It is important to highlight computer knowledge, fluency in foreign languages, etc.

Activities

Collegiate sports, student government or club memberships, Leadership Certificate, community volunteer activities, etc.

Note: Do not identify with specific religious, ethnic or political groups, but keep generic.

Professional Organizations

Mention professional organizations or affiliations here.



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JENNIFER WANNAJOB

2709 Rolling Rock Lane • Aston, PA 19810
610-555-5555 • jenniferwannajob@hotmail.com
<http://www.linkedin.com/in/jenniferwannajob>

OBJECTIVE

To obtain an entry level Human Resources position.

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Energetic and goal oriented with strong interpersonal skills.
- Ability to successfully work in a fast paced environment.
- Excellent writing skills.
- Able to evaluate information and situations realistically and anticipate problems or difficulties.
- Working knowledge of Microsoft Office and SPSS.

*Customer Service • Leadership/Motivation • Training and Development
Client Communications • Operational Success*

EDUCATION

Immaculata University, Immaculata, PA

Bachelor of Arts, Psychology **Minor: Business**

GPA: 3.52, Dean's List Fall 2002 **Expected Graduation Date: May 2008**

- **Relevant Coursework: Human Resource Management**, Business Management & Organization, International Business, Accounting Principles I & II, Measurement & Statistics, Counseling Theories, Social Psychology

WORK EXPERIENCE

Server

January 2004 to Present

Chili's Grill and Bar, Wilmington, DE

- Interact and serve restaurant guests.
- Handle multiple tasks at one time. Quick decision making and problem solving.
- Work as a team to ensure quality service.
- Recognized numerous times for providing guests with outstanding service.

Dietary Aide

March 2000 to December 2001

Shipley Manor Marriott Senior Living Center, Wilmington, DE

- Coordinated meals for patients specific needs and wants.
- Interacted with patients to better meet their dietary needs and wants.
- Delivered meals to patients.

Sales Associate

April 1999 to March 2000

Platypus, Wilmington, DE

- Assisted customers with purchase decisions.
- Helped organize and track stock.
- Promoted to supervisory duties after 4 months.
- Monitored and trained new employees on sales floor.

AFFILIATIONS

- Delta Gamma Women's Fraternity (since April 2001)

Common Employer Criticisms of Resumes

- Too long, short or condensed
- Poor layout and physical appearance
- Hard to understand or requires too much interpretation
- Misspellings, bad grammar and wordiness
- Poor punctuation
- Unexplained time gaps
- Lengthy phrases, sentences and paragraphs
- Critical categories missing
- Does not convey accomplishments
- Too slick, amateurish and "gimmicky"
- Text does not support objective
- Too boastful or dishonest
- Unclear objective
- Poorly typed or reproduced
- Lacks credibility and content
- Irrelevant information
- Too much jargon

Referenced From:

High Impact Resumes and Letters by Krannich & Bards

The following are some tips from a panel of human resource specialists on the topic of what employers want in a resume.

Should I bypass the Human Resource Office?

The advice to skip HR or Personnel and get your resume to a decision maker, such as the VP of Marketing or Finance has become almost a "mantra". The panel agreed that while they don't like it much, the suggestion is well founded. If a senior manager wants to hire a specific candidate, it will probably happen. But you should have your resume or application on file with the Personnel Office as well.

Should I send two resumes?

With computers reading resumes, should you send two copies - a plain one for scanning, and one more attractively formatted? The panel said "no". It creates too much paperwork for the HR department. Send only a plain version if you are not sure if a resume will be scanned. You can call a company in advance to see if they scan resumes.

Must a cover letter be attached?

Yes. Cover letters are essential. Be sure to sign it and have your name typed below the signature. (Do not staple - staples can rip the paper!).

Must you reveal salary history?

When your salary requirement is requested in a recruitment ad, what happens when you duck the issue? One strategy is to list "negotiable" or a broad (\$5000) range for salary. And don't forget benefits!

What is a resume worth?

A resume is an absolutely critical tool in evaluating each potential candidate's qualifications. Recruiters search for key words and phrases, they review and evaluate accomplishments and they are critical in assessing the quality of the written document.



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Elements of a Cover Letter

A cover letter is a formal document. The following is an example of how your letter should be arranged and what it should include. For assistance with composing a formal letter, you may wish to schedule a session with someone in the [Writing Center](#) in 103 Loyola Hall (610-647-4400 Ext. 3494).

Do's and Don'ts of a Cover Letter

DO:

- Send a cover letter with every resume you send
- Address letter to a specific person and title
- Type each letter individually
- Limit to 1 page containing 3 paragraphs
- Sign your name

DON'T:

- Address your cover letter to just a title or department
- Be pushy or assuming
- Mass produce you cover letter. Each letter should be written to reflect the position for which you are applying.



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Your Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Today's Date

Contact Person
Title
Department
Company
Street Address
City, State Zip code

Dear Ms. Doe: *(formal greeting)*

The **opening paragraph** should state why you are writing and why you are interested in the organization. If you are writing a letter of application, you should name the position for which you are applying and tell the employer how you became aware of it. A letter of inquiry should provide evidence of your career-mindedness. It helps to refer to specific job functions, if not titles. If you were referred to the employer by someone such as a career counselor, a former employer, or an aunt, this is also the best place to mention that person's name and to point out that s/he suggested you write.

The **middle paragraph** draws attention to your resume and highlights specific skills relevant to the potential employer. Present your motives for seeking employment with the organization and cite achievements, and qualifications related to the position desired. If you have qualifications that are not noted on your resume, this is your opportunity to discuss them.

The **closing paragraph** states what you will do next (such as calling to arrange an interview at the employer's convenience) or what you would like the recipient of the letter to do next. An assertive statement explaining what you plan to do and what you hope the employer will do is harder to ignore than a vague request for consideration.

Sincerely,

(Signature here)

Your name typed

Enclosure *(This indicated that your resume or additional materials are enclosed.)*

RESPONSE TO A CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENT

2709 Rolling Rock Lane
Aston, PA 19810
(610) 555-5555

September 13, 2007

Mr. Pat Cummings
Partner
Acme Corporation
1140 Main Street
Chicago, IL 60605

Dear Mr. Cummings:

I am writing in response to your advertisement in the September 11th edition of the New York Times. I have recently graduated from New England School of Law and it is my intention to relocate to Chicago. I have enclosed my resume for your consideration.

My work experience and my scholastic endeavors have thoroughly prepared me for employment in a firm that specializes in various segments of law. The fall and past summer, I have been working for a small general practice firm where I am entrusted with a great deal of responsibility. I write appellate briefs, memoranda in corporate, contract, and criminal law, and I draft complaints and answers. I also actively participate in attorney-client conferences by questioning clients and by describing how the law affects the clients' suits.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and discuss how my qualifications could be guided to meet your needs.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to meeting with you at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Wannajob

Jennifer Wannajob

Enclosure

NETWORKING

2709 Rolling Rock Lane
Aston, PA 19810
(610) 555-5555

September 13, 2007

Mr. Pat Cummings
Partner
Acme Corporation
1140 Main Street
Chicago, IL 60605

Dear Mr. Cummings:

Peggy Sullivan recently indicated to me that you may have an opening for a set designer and suggested that I contact you. I seek a creative position involving stage design in television.

I was graduated in December from Purdue University with a Bachelor's degree in Theater Arts and a concentration in Studio Art. In addition to modern drama and music and sound in theater, I studied set creation and design, intermediate painting, and wood cutting. As a member of the drama club, I designed and helped create props for numerous campus productions, including A Midsummer Nights Dream and Vinegar Tom.

As for work experience, I co-designed and co-created the props and decorations for a new miniature golf course with a tropical island theme, which was immensely popular. I also gained valuable skills working as an apprentice to a busy carpenter and painting houses for a large company.

Enclosed is my resume as well as some photographs of my work. I have some interesting ideas for the sets of "Wheel of Trivia" and "Late Night Videos" which I would like to discuss with you in a personal interview. I may be reached at the above listed number after 1:00 p.m. on weekdays.

Thank you for your consideration of my application.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Wannajob

Jennifer Wannajob

Enclosure

“COLD” COVER LETTER TO A POTENTIAL EMPLOYER

2709 Rolling Rock Lane
Aston, PA 19810

September 13, 2007

Mr. Pat Cummings
Partner
Acme Corporation
1140 Main Street
Chicago, IL 60605

Dear Mr. Cummings:

My interest in continuing my professional career in the health care field has prompted me to submit my resume for your review.

For fifteen years, I have dedicated myself to providing quality health care in medical staff support in diverse areas including patient care, orientation and training of volunteer staffs, inventory control, facilities reorganization, and service coordination.

The enclosed resume summarizes my background and experience in these and other areas. I will be glad to furnish you will any additional information during a personal interview or by phone at (610) 555-5555.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Wannajob

Jennifer Wannajob

Enclosure

Online Resumes Tools

- Job Smart Resume Guide <http://Jobstar.org/tools/career/spec-car.cfm>
- Resumania On-Line <http://www.resumania.com/>
- Salary Calculator <http://www.homefair.com/real-estate/salary-calculator.asp>



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