

RESUME AND COVER LETTERS

This section will explain how to craft a well-articulated resume that concisely highlights your skills and accomplishments, while teaching you how to develop a cover letter that gives more depth to your experiences. Check out the samples in this section and on careers.gmu.edu to get a better idea of how you can develop your own documents.

Important Note: *Your resume and cover letter will change every time you apply for a position. You will revisit this step over and over to tailor your documents appropriately.*

You will learn...

- The different resume formats.
- What should be included in a cover letter.
- About other letters and how to compose them.
- How to ask for reference and know the format for including them in your application.

In This
Section

The Four-Step Process

Finding an internship or a job involves four steps:



As you continue your search for an internship or job, consider these four steps as a way to be more diligent, targeted, and purposeful about your search. If you find you are not getting interviews, ask yourself on which of the above steps you are not spending enough time. If you are only focusing on step four and are not spending enough time on the first three, try to change your patterns to rebalance your efforts. Fully engaging in all the steps will help you be more successful in your search and lead to an interview.

Documents (resume/cover letter) are Step 1 in the process. Check out the rest of this section for details and samples on how to develop your best resume or cover letter.

Resumes

A resume is a brief summary of your qualifications, education, and experiences relevant to your job search objective. Employers will spend less than 30 seconds reviewing your resume; therefore, the information must be conveyed in a clear, well-organized style.

RESUME CONTENTS

Identifying Information

- Name
- Address—permanent and current, if applicable
- Telephone number(s)—Include numbers where you can be reached during the day as well as evening. **Be sure your voice-mail message is appropriate for employers.**
- E-mail address—While a student, you may use your Mason e-mail is recommended. **Your username should reflect your professionalism.**
- Website URL (optional)—Your website should look professional and contain information you would want an employer to see.

Objective (optional)

An objective communicates to the prospective employer what opportunity you are seeking and what relevant skills and knowledge you can contribute to the employer. It is important for the remainder of your resume to highlight skills, knowledge, and experience that support the objective.

A strong, targeted objective should include the following:

- Type of position you are seeking
- Type of organization or industry you are pursuing
- Relevant skills you will contribute to position/organization

Your objective should be tailored to each opportunity or position. Avoid general, unfocused objectives, such as “a challenging and rewarding position that uses my education and experience.” If you

are pursuing several career objectives that emphasize different skills and knowledge, you can create a separate resume for each.

Sample Objectives

Trainee position in real estate property management, with opportunity to contribute strong financial skills and relevant experience. Administrative position in community health care education, with special emphasis on community relations and educating local employers.

Summary of Qualifications (optional)

Instead of an objective or in combination with an objective, you may include a summary of qualifications. Be sure to summarize the experience, skills, and credentials most pertinent to the positions you are seeking. The summary of qualifications is brief, usually with no more than five qualification statements in bulleted format.

Sample Summary of Qualifications

- Excel at oral communications, evidenced by four successful years on Forensic Team.
- Highly organized, able to manage multiple tasks with proven ability to meet deadlines.
- Work well independently and as a team member.
- Able to develop, write, and edit marketing materials.
- Extensive computer application experience using Word, Access, Excel, PowerPoint, Adobe QuarkXPress.

For an example of a summary with an objective, see the sample resume for Ricardo Castro in this section.

Education

The education section follows immediately after the objective or summary of qualifications, unless you graduated several years ago and have experience that is a stronger qualification. Begin with

your most recent education and list your qualifications in reverse chronological order. Include the following:

- Degree(s) awarded
- Major and minor
- Month and year degree was (or will be) awarded
- Name and location of college or university

If you are about to graduate and transferred from a school where you received an associate degree or no degree, you may choose to list the school to call attention to your degree, relevant honors, courses, or accomplishments. However, listing the earlier school(s) is optional.

If no degree was awarded, list major (if applicable), name and location of school, number of credits completed, and dates attended.

High school is rarely included unless you are a recent high school graduate or wish to draw attention to something special about your high school experience.

Other academic information, if relevant and supportive of your objective, could include the following:

- GPA (overall and/or in major) if 3.00 or higher
- Relevant courses (list up to five course titles and no course numbers)
- Scholarships, honors, awards, and honor societies
- Course projects
- Thesis or dissertation topic
- Clinical or field experience
- Special training programs, certifications, or licensure
- Study abroad

If you have two or more honors and awards, you may choose to create a separate section titled Honors and Awards in which to list these for greater emphasis. Likewise, if course projects, internships, and clinical or field experiences are among your most relevant qualifications, consider creating a separate section, which may be titled Related Experience. For an example of a Related Experience section, see the sample resume for Annie Tran in this section.

Sample Education Section

**BS in Economics, minor in Spanish, expected May 2013
George Mason University, Fairfax, VA**

Relevant Course Work: Money and Banking, Economic Problems and Public Policies, International Economics, International Money and Finance, Economic Development of Latin America

Study Abroad: University of Madrid, Spain, fall 2010 and spring 2011 semesters

Completed extensive course work in economics and Spanish language and culture.

Financed 75 percent of college costs through part-time employment.

Experience

This section may include the following:

- Full-time experience
- Part-time experience
- Internships and co-op positions
- Significant volunteer, leadership, field, and practicum experiences
- Significant course projects

For each experience, include the job title; name and location (city and state) of organization; the dates you participated; and a description of the skills, competencies, accomplishments, and knowledge you demonstrated. To choose a format that best highlights your experience, see examples of the chronological, related, or relevant experience, and functional formats displayed later in this section.

Sample Experience Description

**Accounting Assistant, ABC Accounting, Fairfax, VA
May 2010–present**

- Maintained accounts payable and receivable for more than 200 office clients.
- Created and implemented a system for ordering and maintaining inventory of office supplies using Access.
- Developed a tracking log of client contacts resulting in greater office efficiency.

Tips for Creating the Most Effective Descriptions

- **Action Verbs:** State your experiences in phrases that begin with action verbs and show the scope and results of your activity (e.g., improved a procedure, clarified a problem, increased efficiency).
- **Quantify:** Qualify and quantify your accomplishments (e.g., “trained more than 300 persons from 100 companies to use...”) Well-chosen descriptive details help communicate your initiative, follow through, and problem-solving skills.
- **Keywords:** Use keyword nouns in experience descriptions (and throughout your resume). Employers often search electronic resume databases using key words to locate candidates with preferred qualifications.
- **No Passive Phrases:** Avoid passive phrases, such as “Responsible for,” “Duties included,” or “Assisted with.”
- **Order of Importance:** Describe your most responsible functions first even if they occupied only a small percentage of your time.
- **Outcomes:** Always include the outcome of your efforts or accomplishments (e.g., report was used by the account executive to brief the board).

Skills

Specialized skills, such as computer or foreign language skills, may be included in your resume. List relevant skills and your level of expertise. Or, if certain skills are particularly relevant to your objective, you may choose to list them under a separate “Computer Skills” or “Technical Skills” section.

Sample Skills Section

- Computer proficiency in MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint. Use Internet effectively for research
- Familiar with database management using MS Access
- Fluent in Spanish and English; conversational ability in French
- Effective leadership and oral communication skills exhibited in campus activities and organizations

Other Resume Categories

Other categories that illustrate competencies might include the following:

- Student activities
- Community service
- Volunteer work
- Course projects
- Presentations
- Leadership experience
- Research
- Publications
- Certifications or licenses
- Honors and awards
- Professional memberships

- International experience
- Interests
- Security clearances

When deciding whether to create a separate resume category, ask if the information is important or relevant enough to warrant its own section or would it fit just as well under another major heading. Avoid creating a category that has only one item.

Sample Student Activity Section

President, American Marketing Association George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, 2012– present

- Coordinate the activities of 75 members and lead a committee of five officers.
- Plan monthly professional development programs with local community businesses.
- Market all chapter activities to students through class presentations, activity fairs, and electronic communication.



Quick Links

Sample Resumes

careers.gmu.edu (Resume and Cover Letter section)

Quick Tip

Have your resume critiqued and conduct a practice interview with an employer representative at the beginning of each fall and spring semester. See the career calendar at careers.gmu.edu/calendar.

KEY WORDS FOR RESUME PREPARATION—ACTION VERBS

Use action verbs at the beginning of each statement that describes your experiences.

ADMINISTRATIVE

accomplished
administered
approved
arranged
classified
compiled
developed
documented

maintained
managed
monitored
operated
organized
prepared
prioritized
provided

purchased
recorded
resolved
retrieved
screened
systematized

MANAGEMENT

accomplished
achieved
administered
analyzed
appointed
assessed
assigned
chaired
coached
consulted
contracted
controlled
coordinated
developed
directed
established
evaluated
examined
exceeded
executed
implemented

improved
increased
initiated
led
managed
marketed
negotiated
organized
planned
prepared
prioritized
produced
promoted
recommended
reconciled
recruited
reviewed
supervised
targeted
trained
transformed

COMMUNICATION

addressed
advised
aided
arranged
articulated
authored
clarified
communicated
completed
composed
conceived
conducted
consulted

contributed
cooperated
coordinated
corresponded
counseled
debated
defined
directed
drafted
edited
enlisted
explained
formulated

helped
influenced
informed
inspired
interpreted
interviewed
lectured
marketed
mediated
moderated
motivated
persuaded
presented

promoted
recruited
represented
spoke
suggested
summarized
supervised
trained
updated

CREATIVE

acted
adapted
composed
conceived
conceptualized
crafted
created
customized
designed
developed
directed
fashioned
founded
generated
illustrated

improvised
initiated
innovated
integrated
invented
marketed
originated
performed
problem solved
revitalized
shaped
synthesized
traveled

HELPING

advised
aided
assessed
assisted
attended
cared for
clarified
coached
coordinated
counseled
delivered
demonstrated
developed
diagnosed
educated
engaged
facilitated
furnished
mentored
overcame
provided
referred
served

RESEARCH

calculated
cataloged
clarified
collected
computed
correlated
critiqued
diagnosed
discovered

evaluated
examined
experimented
extrapolated
gathered
identified
inspected
investigated
monitored

observed
organized
proved
surveyed
tested

TEACHING

adapted
advised
clarified
coached
coordinated
explained

guided
informed
instructed
served
taught
trained

FINANCIAL

administered
allocated
analyzed
appraised
audited
balanced
budgeted
calculated
compiled
developed
financed

forecasted
formulated
invested
maintained
managed
marketed
prepared
projected
targeted
tracked

TECHNICAL

administered
analyzed
assembled
built
calculated
computed
configured
constructed
created

designed
determined
developed
installed
led
maintained
managed
operated
overhauled

oversaw
programmed
simulated
tested
troubleshoot
used

RESUME FORMATS

There is no single way to format your resume. The format you choose should present your strengths clearly.

Chronological Format

- Is most familiar to employers.
- Presents your experience and education in reverse chronological sequence, starting with the most recent.
- Lists date, job title, organization's name, and location, and describes your activities as part of the experience section.
- Is simple, straightforward, and especially useful for anyone with directly relevant experience.

Visit careers.gmu.edu for tips and additional samples.

Sample Chronological Format Resume

RICARDO CASTRO rcastro@gmu.edu	
Permanent Address: 1028 Aztec Place Richmond, VA 22039 814-986-4523	Campus Address: 7567 Chain Bridge Road Fairfax, VA 22030 703-993-1111

OBJECTIVE
A summer internship in public affairs. Special interest in the federal government.

QUALIFICATION HIGHLIGHTS

- Strong written and oral communication skills with two years on forensics team.
- Ability to establish rapport with people easily and make skillful presentations.
- Experience as coordinator of a variety of campus events.
- Fluent in Spanish; conversational ability in French and Italian.
- Proficiency in MS Word and PowerPoint; experience in Excel.

EDUCATION
Communication major, concentration in **Persuasive and Political Communication**.
Expected graduation December 2014
George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, Major GPA 3.0
Course work includes: Interpersonal, Non-Verbal, and Male-Female Communication;
Persuasive and Expository Speaking, Communication in Problem- Solving Groups, Writing for
Business, and French Language and Culture.

EXPERIENCE
Vice President, George Mason University Student Government
Fairfax, VA, October 2011-August 2014

- Supervised four committees totaling more than 80 members.
- Conducted weekly meetings for both chairpersons and committee members.
- Planned the orientation schedule and activities for new leaders.
- Led daily training sessions during orientation week for newly elected committee members.
- Served as liaison among the students, staff advisors, and Dean of Students.

Career Assistant, George Mason University Career Services
Fairfax, VA, September 2011 - September 2012

- Responded to phone inquiries from students, employers, and faculty regarding career counseling appointments, job listings, cooperative education, and various other services provided.
- Scheduled appointments for 12 staff members via GroupWise calendar system.
- Accurately entered job listings into database for student access via the Internet.
- Compiled job listing information for use by counselors in class presentations.

LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES & HONORS
Campus Ambassador and Tour Guide for Admissions Office, 2012-present.
Activities Reviewer for the **Broadside** student newspaper 2011-present.
Student Government Representative for Sophomore Class, 2012.
Rush Chairperson, Alpha Beta Fraternity, Spring 2012.

Related Experience

- This is an effective way to list your career-related experience first if it is not your most recent experience.
- Use two experience headings: "Related Experience" and "Additional Experience."
- Visit careers.gmu.edu for tips and additional samples.

Sample Related Experience Format Resume

ANNIE TRAN
3456 Holiday Drive • Falls Church, VA 22043 • 693-555-9876 • atran7@gmu.edu

OBJECTIVE
A position in human services requiring excellent analytical and interpersonal communication skills. Special interest in women's issues.

EDUCATION
B.S. in Psychology, Minor in Women's Studies, Expected December 2014
George Mason University, Fairfax, VA. Major GPA: 3.3
Relevant coursework includes: Therapeutic Communication, Statistics, Social Psychology Research Techniques, Physiological Psychology, Legal & Ethical Issues in Human Services
Financed 80% of educational costs through part-time work and scholarships

RELATED EXPERIENCE
Resident Advisor, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA, Fall 2012 - present

- Manage and regulate freshman student residence hall; enforce university safety policies.
- Advise students on academic and personal issues; refer students to appropriate university life resources and services available on campus
- Assess student needs and interests to develop suitable programs; arrange for presenters and handle logistics for three programs each semester. Achieved highest attendance of all residence hall offerings, Fall 2008

Crisis Counselor, Rape Crisis Center, Falls Church, VA, Fall 2011 – present

- Provide hot-line counseling 10 hours per week to women who have experienced sexual assault.
- Listen attentively and ask probing questions sensitively in order to make referrals to appropriate community resources.
- Provide advice on legal and medical procedures and victim rights.

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE
Administrative Assistant, Arlington Family Services, Arlington, VA, Summer 2011

- Efficiently handled all incoming phone calls and provided information to clients.
- Typed correspondence; securely maintained confidential files for staff of 10.
- Selected to translate for Vietnamese clients to assist with interviews and forms.

Waitress, Pho 99 Restaurant, Falls Church, VA, June 2010 – June 2011

- Provided outstanding customer service and translated menu items to English.

HONORS/ACTIVITIES

- Recipient of the Falls Church Professional Women's Association Scholarship, 2012
- Active Member, Psi Chi Honor Society, George Mason University, 2012 – present
- Volunteer, University Dispute Resolution Project, George Mason University, 2011
- Active Member, Vietnamese Student Association, 2011 – present

SKILLS

- Proficient in Microsoft Word, Access, and using the Internet
- Working knowledge of PowerPoint
- Fluent in English and Vietnamese

Technical Resume

- A technical resume should clearly show a candidate's technical skills.
- Typically, you should include the following:
 - Upper-level course titles (optional), the duration, and the result.
 - Projects completed, including platform used (front-end and back-end).
 - Initiatives and performances that enhanced efficiency (faster work, monetary savings, and the like). Focus on your most impressive technical projects and achievements.
 - Technical certifications, hardware, operating systems, networking and protocols, programming and languages, web and database applications.
 - Qualifications, such as personality development, marketing diploma, or research study.

Sample Technical Resume

GEORGIA DISK	
1000 Main Street, # 233 • Fairfax, VA 22003 • 703-555-5555 • gdisk@gmu.edu	
OBJECTIVE	
Seeking career-related experience in computer science. Special interest in networking, software development, and database applications.	
EDUCATION	
BS, Computer Science, expected May 2013 George Mason University, Fairfax, VA	Major GPA: 3.50
CITIZENSHIP	
Permanent Resident: Citizenship expected June 2014	
RELATED COURSE WORK	
Computer Science I-III (C++, Java programming) Data Structures Computer Graphics and Software Concurrent and Distributed Systems Database Concepts Computer Systems and Programming	Operating Systems Introduction to Software Engineering Design Networking Systems
COMPUTER SKILLS	
Languages:	Java, Java Script, C++, Visual C++, Visual Basic, Assembly Language, ASP
Applications:	WordPerfect, Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Matlab
Databases:	SQL, Microsoft Access, Oracle 9i
Networking:	LAN/WAN, TCP/IP, Data Encryption, Router Configuration
Operating Systems:	Windows XP, NT, 2000, UNIX
COMPUTER PROJECTS	
Software:	Developed software system that emulates protocol suite TCP/IP over SLIP or PPP level.
Engineering:	Designed Personal Student Advising System (PSAS), using UML and C++, that allows students and faculty to view and make changes to class schedules and rosters on line.
Object Oriented:	Created telephone directory, using C++, that allows users to search by name.
Programming:	Simulated clock to display current time, using C++.
Database Design:	Developed library system database, using MS Access and Oracle, that assists users in searching for items by subject, call number, and ISBN number or title. Created airline reservation system that maintains information on passengers and their destinations, using Oracle.
WORK HISTORY	
Sales Clerk, Patriot Computers, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA, July 2012–Present	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide exemplary service to students and faculty in purchase of computers and computer supplies.• Install new software on store computers and demonstrate uses to customers.• Selected as Employee of the Month, June 2007	
Student Assistant, Computer Science Department, George Mason University, Fairfax VA, May-June 2012	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entered information about prospective students into Access database and generated mailing labels.• Answered incoming calls for three professors and directed inquiries to appropriate resource.	
OTHER INFORMATION	
Multilingual: English, Arabic, and Spanish	

Federal Style Resumes

Although most U.S. government agencies will accept a “simple” resume, you can make yourself more competitive by creating the longer federal resume. There is an excellent federal resume builder on www.usajobs.gov that can help you properly format your resume and ensure that you include the necessary information.

The federal resume requires information not usually included in a resume for the private sector. It can be up to five to six pages in length. Your federal resume should include the following:

- The job announcement number, job title, and job grade of the job for which you are applying.
- Your full name, full mailing address, day and evening phone numbers, and home e-mail.
- Social Security number.
- Country of citizenship.
- Veteran’s preference.
- Reinstatement eligibility (for former federal employees).
- Highest federal civilian grade held, including job series and dates held.
- Education, college name, city, state, zip code, your majors, and type and year of degrees held or number of semester hours completed. Also if requested, your high school name, city, state, zip code, and date of your diploma or GED.
- All work experience, paid and unpaid (job title, duties and accomplishments, employer’s name and address, including zip code; supervisor’s name and phone number, starting and ending dates (month and year), hours per week, and salary. List each experience as a separate entry on the resume.
- Indicate whether your current supervisor can be contacted for a reference.

- Job-related training courses (title and year).
- Job-related knowledge or skills.
- Current job-related certificates and licenses.
- Honors, awards, special accomplishments, leadership activities, memberships, or publications—both university and job-related.

Additional Resume Tips

- Analyze the announcements carefully for key words and government jargon.
- Include your accomplishments, including work, academic, extra-curricular, volunteer, and other activities; don’t be shy but be truthful.
- Focus on the mission of the agency and translate your experience into terms that make sense for that agency.
- Use more nouns and titles (e.g., writer, team leader, database administrator) to allow for selection in a keyword search.
- After creating a draft of your federal style resume, schedule a meeting with your career counselor.



Quick Link

For an example of a federal style resume, visit careers.gmu.edu.

Additional Resources

The Career Services Library has a large section of books that provide a wealth of information. In particular, *The Student’s Federal Career Guide*, *Ten Steps to a Federal Job*, *The Federal Resume Guidebook*, and *Guide to America’s Federal Jobs* by Kathryn Kraemer Troutman are excellent step-by-step guides with good samples on writing an effective federal resume.

Quick Tips

- Design your descriptions to focus on your accomplishments, using action verbs to clearly indicate the skills you’ve used.
- Try quantifying results in your descriptions, such as “Created marketing campaign that increased club membership by 25 percent”.
- Don’t make your margins and font size too small.
- If providing a hard copy, print your resume on good quality bond paper, either white or conservative tones.
- Accompany your resume with a cover letter whenever possible.
- Only include high school experiences if you are a freshman or sophomore.
- If you are an international student who has obtained permanent residency or U.S. citizenship, list this information on your resume. If not, do not include your non-immigrant visa status or address outside the U.S.
- Have others look over your resume for content and grammar. Career Counselors and industry advisors are available to critique your resume.

RESUME CHECK LIST

LAYOUT AND APPEARANCE	YES	NO	COUNSELOR COMMENTS
Is my name at the top of the page and in bold?			
Are my address, phone number, and e-mail address easy to read?			
Is my resume an appropriate length? (one page preferred)			
Does my resume have about 1-inch margins (½-inch minimum)?			
Is the font size 11 minimum or 12 maximum?			
Is formatting (e.g., bold font, bullet sizes, heading styles) consistent throughout the resume?			
Are the headings and statements evenly spaced?			
Are verb tenses in the present tense for current jobs? Are verb tenses in the past tense for previous jobs?			
Do I have approximately two to six statements per job? (Bullet format is recommended.)			
CONTENT			
Does my objective statement clearly state what I am seeking and what I will bring to the position?			
Did I include the following headings: Education, Experience, and Skills?			
Does my education section state my official degree and expected graduation date?			
Does my education section state my official degree and expected graduation date? Did I include my cumulative GPA (if a 3.00 or above)? Is my GPA accurate?			
Do my statements demonstrate major accomplishments rather than routine tasks and duties?			
Check the statements that demonstrate your accomplishments. Do my accomplishment statements start with action verbs?			
Do my accomplishment statements demonstrate the use of key skills?			
Do my statements demonstrate the results of my accomplishments? Did I quantify my results (i.e., use numbers when possible)?			
Does my resume end with strength? (e.g., Skills, Activities section)			
Is my resume completely free from spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors?			

Cover Letters

The cover letter is a standard business letter that accompanies a resume. The goal of the cover letter is to encourage employers to look at your resume. Effective cover letters are tailored for the particular job and organization to which you are applying. Taking the time to personalize your cover letter will demonstrate to the employer a level of enthusiasm and interest in the position and could help you stand out more as a candidate.

There are two basic types of cover letters:

- **Application Letter**—Used to apply for an open position within an organization; includes pertinent details about your qualifications and requests an interview.
- **Prospecting Letter/Letter of Inquiry**—Used to contact an employer where no known opening exists to express an interest in the organization and request an opportunity to interview for an appropriate position.

COVER LETTER CONTENTS

Address
City, State, Zip
Date

Name of Addressee
Title
Organization Name
Address
City, State, Zip

Salutation

If you do not have a name, call the department or human resources to find out to whom your letter should be addressed. As a last resort, address your letter to the personnel manager, hiring manager, or recruiting representative.

First Paragraph

The main purpose of the first paragraph is to introduce yourself and tell why you are writing.

- You want to grab the employer's attention.
- Indicate why you are interested in the position and/or why this organization.
- Use your community. If someone has referred you to the organization (a current employee, friend, or family member), include his or her name in the first sentence.

Second/Third Paragraph

Tell the employer your story.

- Describe your qualifications for the type of position you seek using specific examples from academic, work, volunteer, and/or cocurricular experiences.
- Connect your accomplishments, skills, and knowledge directly to the type of position, organization, and/or field.
- Avoid repeating facts outlined on your resume by focusing on key concepts.

Final Paragraph

- Summarize or give a final statement of interest and qualifications.
- Thank the employer for his or time and consideration.
- Plan to follow up with the employer with a phone call or e-mail.

Closing

Sincerely,
Your Name

SAMPLE COVER LETTER: PROSPECTING

Mr. Mark Parker
Internship Coordinator
EC International Development Inc.
111 Connecticut Avenue
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Mr. Parker,

While conducting research on the field of international development on LinkedIn, I came across your organization and decided to learn more by visiting your website. I am excited about the current projects you provide in Latin America in support of human rights. I noticed on the George Mason University system HireMason that an internship was available with your organization last summer, and I would like to inquire about anticipated internship openings within the next six months. My extensive knowledge of international affairs, along with my Spanish language skills and enthusiasm for empowering international communities, would allow me to make a valuable contribution to your organization.

I will graduate from George Mason University in May 2013 with a bachelor's degree in global affairs and a minor in Spanish. I have consistently received positive feedback from my professors concerning the accuracy and efficiency of my research projects, and I have played leadership roles in many academic group projects. I have learned a great deal about Latino cultures and global issues associated with human rights and poverty, and I would like to put my knowledge to good use. I am interested in getting experience at an organization that aims to make a difference for disadvantaged individuals in developing countries. In fall 2011, I completed a study abroad program in Argentina, where I practiced my Spanish skills and served as a volunteer for a community project to benefit orphans. I would like to continue to contribute my relevant skills to your organization as a student intern.

I look forward to speaking with you further about potential internship and opportunities within your organization. I have attached my resume for your review. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone (202-555-5555) or by e-mail (aramx@masonlive.gmu.edu). If I do not hear from you by October 18, 2014, I will call you to follow up. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Amanda Ramirez

SAMPLE COVER LETTER: INTERNSHIP

Example of Internship Description

Highlighted key words indicate skills, competencies, experience, or knowledge areas that the candidate must possess and include on his or her resume, cover letter, and supporting materials to be considered for an interview. If the key elements are not there, you won't be selected. Be prepared to discuss and give examples of your qualifications at the interview.

Congressional Internship

Student Conservation Association (SCA)

Job Function: Public Administration/Public Affairs/Public Policy/Transportation

Application Deadline: 11/15/2014

SCA and Unilever Corporation have partnered to offer a unique congressional internship opportunity that will give students a chance to change the world. Working in either a Democratic or Republican office, students will gain firsthand knowledge of how government policy shapes our national park system. After spending 15 weeks on Capitol Hill, interns will be placed in the field at a national park to help implement those policies.

Minimum Requirements

- Strong communication skills, both written and verbal
- Interest in public policy and environmental issues
- Strong customer service skills and comfortable dealing with the public
- Willingness to work in a Democratic or Republican congressional office
- Computer proficiency with spreadsheets or databases
- Ability to conduct Internet research
- Current undergraduate or recent graduate with a GPA of 3.00 or higher
- Detailed resume
- Directed writing sample and college transcript

Location: Washington, D.C., and an assigned national park

Position Type: Internship—Paid or stipend

Desired Major: Public policy, government, political science

To Apply

Send resume, cover letter, and college transcript via George Mason University's HireMason database or to SCA Human Resources Office at www.theSCA.org/hr by the November 15, 2014, deadline.

Example of Tailored Cover Letter

1234 Campus Road
Fairfax, VA 22030

September 1, 2014

Internship Coordinator
Student Conservation Association
Street Address
Washington, DC Zip code

Dear Internship Coordinator:

I am writing this letter in response to a posting on www.idealists.org for the Student Conservation Association 2013 congressional internship. My academic major at George Mason University is government and international politics. Conservation ecology has been an interest of mine for many years, and I am eager to obtain experience with a nonprofit advocacy organization as an intern.

My volunteer work in high school and college was with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. My college course work is writing-intensive, and the enclosed writing sample illustrates my experience during the annual Maryland Cleanup, Project Clean Stream. I find the opportunity to work on Capitol Hill as an SCA intern in the office of an elected official very exciting because it would combine my academic major and environmental interests and aspirations. I anticipate that my course work will come alive working alongside staff and elected officials in the legislative branch of government. I am willing to contribute my proficiencies in conducting research, as well as administrative and computer spreadsheet and database skills.

I have enclosed my resume that highlights my customer service and public relations experience, and transcripts for your review. I will follow up next week to ask whether you will need additional information. I may be reached by e-mail at student27@gmu.edu or telephone at 703-555-3456. Thank you for your consideration and time.

Sincerely,

Samantha Student
George Mason University

Enclosure

SAMPLE COVER LETTER: JOB

Example of Professional Job Description

Fairfax County Public Schools
Title: School Counselor, Rachel Carson Middle School
Job Function: Counseling/Consulting/Crisis Intervention/Program Assessment and Evaluation

Duties: School counselor will work with students from multicultural and diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Provide developmentally appropriate information, knowledge, and skills to promote student success in academic, career, personal, and social areas. Serve as a consultant to parents and teachers helping them to be more effective in working with students through individual or group conferences, staff development activities, or parent educational workshops. Provide crisis intervention addressing specific concerns of students at risk or with identified needs consulting with parents and/or teachers as appropriate. Assess needs of students and staff, evaluate programs and make changes in the school counseling program to increase effectiveness. Act as liaison between teachers, parents/guardians, support personnel, and community resources to facilitate successful student development. Be an advocate ensuring equitable access to programs and services for all students.

To Apply: E-mail resume and cover letter to aford@fcps.edu by August 15, 2014.

Example of an Application Letter

2201 Wentworth Way
Fairfax, VA 22030
September 15, 2014

Alice Ford, Recruitment Specialist
Fairfax County Public Schools
8115 Gatehouse Road
Falls Church, VA 22042

Dear Ms. Ford:

I am applying for the position of school counselor at Rachel Carson Middle School as advertised on the Fairfax County Public Schools website on March 15, 2012. As a graduate student at George Mason University, I will complete an M.Ed. in counseling and development with a concentration in school counseling in May 2012. The possibility of working at Rachel Carson is exciting to me because of its multicultural student body, its nontraditional teaching methods, and the innovative programs initiated by the school to help each child develop to his or her fullest potential.

In the past year and a half, I have held a counseling internship conducting individual and group counseling sessions covering anger management, social skills development, study skills, friendship, grief, deployment, and divorce. In addition, I worked with a diverse student body that included many non-English speaking recent immigrants at Bailey's Elementary School for the Arts and Sciences. During this practicum, I conducted individual and group sessions addressing attendance, academic, career, and social concerns.

Enclosed is a current resume for your consideration. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you in person so we might discuss more fully the scope of the position and my qualifications for it. I can most easily be reached on my cell phone at 703-555-4398.

Sincerely,

Joanna Spellman

Quick Tips

- Use social media and the organization's website to gather information for your cover letter. Focus on skills and attributes the employer is seeking in applicants and discuss these skills in the body of your cover letter.
- Cover letters also showcase your writing abilities. It is imperative that your cover letter is error-free and grammatically sound. Don't begin every sentence with "I."
- Letters addressed to a specific person demonstrate a higher level of investment and enthusiasm for the position, so try to find out the name of the person you want to read your letter.

Quick Links

careers.gmu.edu (Resumes and Cover Letters section)

collegegrad.com

Cover letter tips, samples, and templates

careerlab.com

Lots of cover letter examples for job hunters

rileyguide.com

Cover letter tips and examples

COVER LETTER CHECKLIST

FORMAT AND APPEARANCE	YES	NO	COUNSELOR COMMENTS
Did I include my name, address, zip code, e-mail address, and telephone number?			
Is my cover letter an appropriate length? (One page preferred)			
Did I check and correct any spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors?			
Does the paper quality match my resume paper?			
Is the letter vertically centered on the page?			
Did I use a business letter format (full block, modified block, or indented format)?			
CONTENT			
Did I address my letter to an individual in a hiring position? If I could not find an individual, did I address it "Dear Employer" or "Dear Hiring Manager"?			
Does the first line state why I am writing the letter and the position for which I am applying?			
Was I concise and specific when discussing career goals and qualifications?			
Do I describe what I can contribute to an employer and not what I can get out of the organization?			
Did I include information that will intrigue the employer to read my resume, or did I just restate what is on my resume?			
Did I communicate actively by using strong verbs and avoiding contractions (e.g., I'd, didn't, it's)?			
Did I limit the use of sentences starting with "I"? Instead, did I use "This experience" or "In this internship, I demonstrated"?			
Is my cover letter tailored to my reader, showing that I have researched the organization?			
Have I demonstrated knowledge of the industry?			
Did I demonstrate enthusiasm and energy for the position?			
Did I refer to personal qualities that are crucial to success in the field?			
Did I tell the reader why they should hire me?			
Did I end my letter stating the action I will take next? For example, did I state that I would be calling to request an appointment to discuss the position?			

Letters of Recommendation

Recommendation letters are typically requested when applying to graduate school or for a scholarship and by employers in certain fields.

Provide your letter writers with the following:

- Four to six weeks lead time to write the letter.
- A copy of your resume.
- Written highlights of your academic courses.
- Examples of projects and research papers.
- Your transcripts.
- Any other information that serves to distinguish you for the purpose of the recommendation.
- Stamped and addressed envelopes.
- A handwritten thank-you letter or card.

Save a copy of your recommendation letters. They may be used again but should be updated by the original writer after one year.

OTHER LETTERS <i>Visit careers.gmu.edu for samples.</i>	
NETWORKING letter	Written to develop a contact in a field or organization and may be used to request an information interview, job lead, or help with preparing job search materials.
THANK-YOU Letter	Follows an interview and conveys appreciation for the interview and reiterates your interest in the position.
Letter of APOLOGY	Expresses your regret for missing an interview Conveys your continued interest and states your desire to reschedule the meeting.
ACCEPTANCE Letter	Serves as an ethical contract between you and the employer after you have been offered a job. It should be brief, express your appreciation, restate the terms and conditions of employment (salary and benefits), and the starting date.
REJECTION Letter	Declines a job offer and expresses appreciation for the employer's time and the offer in a positive, tactful manner.
WITHDRAWAL Letter	Notifies an employer in a considerate and positive tone that you no longer wish to be considered for a position with that organization.

References

Employers may require you to provide a list of references and/or reference letters for them to review. References verify your experience and confirm your credibility. Employers use references to assess past job and school performance as an indicator to determine whether you would be a good fit for the position. Careful consideration should be given to whom you ask to serve as your references.

IDENTIFYING YOUR REFERENCES

- Consider asking professors, advisors, supervisors and bosses, or co-workers to be a reference for you.
- As a college student or recent alumnus, at least one reference should be a professor or faculty member.
- Choose wisely. If an individual has minimal knowledge of your professional experience, do not ask him or her to serve as your reference. You should select an individual who knows you well and can speak of your skills, rather than a well-respected professional in your field who knows very little about you.
- If the person seems hesitant to serve as your reference, ask someone else.

REQUESTING REFERENCES

- Personally contact each person to ask whether he or she will serve as a reference.
- Share the types of positions you are interested in applying for and how you see your qualifications fitting with those positions.
- Ask well in advance of date they will be contacted and/or need to turn in their letters.
- Build your recommendation portfolio by asking your employer or supervisor to write you a letter whenever you leave or complete your job if you left on good terms. If you had great interactions with a professor and did well in class, you may also ask them to write a letter for you at the end of the semester.

PROVIDING YOUR REFERENCES WITH INFORMATION

- Notify your references when you have included them in a job application.
- If you are requesting the reference to write a letter of recommendation, provide a stamped and addressed envelope. Also, you may include a cover sheet with a list of the graduate schools or employers for which you are requesting letters to be sent.

REFERENCE LIST FORMAT

The names of references should not be included on the resume. Create a separate page with your complete contact information at the top followed by a list of your references (see sample below).

Do not send your list of references with the resume unless requested to do so; instead, give it to the employer at the interview.

- Employers will usually contact your references by phone or e-mail.
- References may include current or former supervisors, co-workers, or faculty.
- Before listing persons as references, ask their permission and make sure they are prepared to provide positive references.
- Keep your references updated on your job search, and supply them with a copy of your
- current resume and a job announcement, if applicable.

Daniel Faircloth

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REFERENCES

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