
Résumés & Cover Letters

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CAREER CENTER
for VOCATION & DEVELOPMENT



Résumé Writing: Getting Started

Your résumé, along with a cover letter, is an introduction to a potential employer, or person in your network. The purpose of the résumé is to create interest in you and, hopefully, result in an invitation to an interview. Employers will spend only 10-20 seconds reviewing your resume. Thus, you have to be FOCUSED and FORTHRIGHT. The goal is to remain focused on the match between your skills and experiences and what the employer needs. You must be forthright in communicating your experiences and the transferable skills you have gained. A well-crafted résumé will highlight your skills and accomplishments and demonstrate why you are the best candidate. To compose your résumé, follow the recommended steps below:

STEP 1

Before writing your résumé, it is critical for you to answer the following questions:

- *Who will be reading my résumé?*
- *What skill sets and qualifications is the employer looking for in my résumé?*
- *How can I demonstrate, through specific examples, my skills and experiences to a potential employer?*

The content and design of your résumé should reflect your responses to these questions. Remember we read top to bottom and left to right. So, the information that is most important to your reader should appear at the top of your résumé.

STEP 2

Research the area of work you are interested in and review job descriptions. If you were to pursue a specific position, what skills and experiences would the employer or recruiter expect?

To find out what skills are needed for a particular occupation, consult the following resources:

- **Occupational Outlook Handbook** (<http://www.bls.gov/OCO/>) – Published by the U.S. Department of Labor, this resource provides comprehensive overviews of specific occupations.
- **O*Net** (<http://online.oNetCenter.org>) – Search occupations based on your self-prescribed skill sets.
- **Professional Associations in Your Field of Interest** – not sure who or what this might be? Ask a faculty member, or check out http://dir.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/organizations/professional/

STEP 3

An employer is interested in the transferable skills you have developed through a variety of experiences. Transferable skills are qualities or abilities sought by a majority of employers which are useful in multiple areas. Develop a list of your accomplishments, skills, and personality characteristics. This will help you match your skills and abilities to the position requirements. Transferable skills demonstrate to the employer your extensive range of abilities including:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| → Communication (verbal and written) | → Teamwork |
| → Critical thinking | → Multicultural understanding |
| → Problem-solving | → Motivation |
| → Leadership | → Integrity |

★For more on transferable skills: www.messiah.edu/offices/career/students/transskills.html

RÉSUMÉ CHECKLIST

- One page in length (*Talk with a career coach if you're having difficulty keeping it to one page*).
- Reflects the position and employer's needs for which you are applying.
- Showcases your strengths and transferable skills as they relate to the position.
- Includes all **relevant** experiences including internships, international experience, research experience, part-time jobs, volunteer work, involvement in student or community organizations, leadership experience, significant class projects, etc.
- Is neat and well-organized; easy to scan quickly and visually appealing.
- Has consistent format, font, and grammar usage.
- Avoids template résumés.
- Is error free; correct grammar and punctuation.
- Is printed on quality résumé paper.
- Presents a professional image.
- Uses compelling action verbs and "buzz words" (*For a comprehensive list of sample action verbs, visit our website: www.messiah.edu/offices/career/students/resumes.html*).
- Displays action-oriented and results-oriented bullet points under each experience.
- Avoids personal pronouns and paragraphs.
- Is proofread by several individuals, including a career coach!
- Avoids high school information.
- Does not use anything smaller than 10-point font and .8 inch margins.

RÉSUMÉ GUIDELINES

Objective Statements

The purpose of an objective statement is to tell the reader the reason for sending your résumé. This is especially helpful if you have a broad, liberal arts major or if you are seeking a position that is loosely connected to your major. Additionally, the objective sets the framework for the body of your résumé. Everything mentioned below your objective statement should demonstrate to the reader what you have to offer. However, if you need the space on your résumé, you may want to rephrase the objective and tie it into your cover letter and omit it from your résumé.

Samples

To obtain an internship utilizing my writing, organizational, and administrative skills within a government or private setting.

To obtain an entry-level position in the import/export industry that will utilize both my knowledge of business and my language, leadership, and communication skills.

Education Section

As a new college graduate, your education should be located toward the top of your résumé.

- Spell out your degree – no abbreviations! You may want to check with your department to confirm the official title of the degree.
- List your GPA if it is over 3.0. Only include both your major and cumulative GPAs if your major GPA is higher than your cumulative GPA.
- You may consider listing a study abroad experience under this section as well. However, if you have had several international experiences, you may consider highlighting those under a separate section with the heading of “International Experience “ or “Cross-Cultural Experience.”

Experience Section

Although all of your experiences may not be directly related to the position at hand, there are most likely transferable aspects of your past experiences which the prospective employer would value.

- Include experiences from internships, part-time and summer jobs, volunteer work, involvement in student organizations, leadership experience, etc.
- Bullet points under the heading of each experience should begin with strong action verbs.
- Demonstrate your strongest transferable skills from the experience.
- Show how your contributions lead to significant results.
- Explain what you learned/gained professionally as a result of the experience.

Other Categories

Other sample categories or sections on your résumé might include the following:

- Campus and Community Involvement
- Leadership Experience
- Honors/Activities
- International Experience
- Computer or Lab Related Skills

NOTE: This is a sample résumé for you to follow. Remember every résumé is unique to the individual. You may choose to use a different format or headings for your own experiences.

Length should be one page unless you have extensive experience

Your Name Here

College Address: Messiah College, PO Box 0000, Grantham, PA 17027

Permanent Address: 123 Street Address, City, State, Zip

Email address Phone number LinkedIn/Twitter or own URL Website listed here

OBJECTIVE Use concise language to describe the position you are seeking

EDUCATION **Spell out degree** (ex. "Bachelor of Arts in Psychology")
Messiah College, Grantham, PA, Graduation Date (Month/Year)
List GPA if over 3.0 (ex. 3.3/4.0) and academic honors/scholarships if desired

Semester Abroad, Program Name

School, Country

- If you have spent a semester abroad, this is a good place for your information
- If applicable, include bullets detailing significant experience you gained

RELATED EXPERIENCE

Title of position

Name of Organization, City and State, Dates (Use consistent format throughout résumé)

- Start in reverse chronological order, most recent experience first
- Begin bullet points with action verbs to describe responsibilities and accomplishments
- Include examples of transferable skills such as teamwork, leadership, organization, and communication

Title of position

Name of Organization, City and State, Dates

- Be sure to list internships or field projects
- Include campus or other organization involvements that are relevant to the position
- List both paid and unpaid experiences that are related to the position you are seeking

WORK EXPERIENCE

Job Title

Name of Organization, City and State, Dates

- List other unrelated work experiences in this section
- Include the transferable skills utilized in this position

SKILLS

List computer and other technical skills; foreign languages

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

If you have had extensive cross-cultural experience (including service trips), it's appropriate to create a separate category for those experiences. Make sure to mention skills that you gained as a result of your experience.

ACTIVITIES

Include extracurricular activities and volunteer or service projects. Mention membership and leadership positions in campus or professional organizations.

*Keep font size between .10 and .12
Avoid decorative or embellished fonts that may not copy or scan well (Times New Roman or Arial are standard fonts.)*

Dates can be flushed right across from the position as a way to add balance to the résumé and to spread out the information so it's not as dense.

TIP: Do not list references on your résumé. Prepare a separate reference sheet to take to your interview.

TIP: It's recommended that you have a one-page résumé. If you go to two pages, you must have a least a page and a half of good, relevant material. Because you do not staple a résumé, make sure you put your name and page two in the upper right hand corner.

CORY R. MITCHELL

corymitchell@messiah.edu | 555.555.5555

Messiah College, P.O. Box 0101, Grantham, PA 17027

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Project management and consulting experience primarily focused on non-profit, government-related projects requiring quick turnaround time and extensive troubleshooting
- Proven skills in planning, strategy development, and knowledge of customer and client business processes
- Excellent team-building and management skills with proven success
- Recognized by peers and professors for creating high-performance teams

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration, May 2009

Messiah College, Grantham, PA

- Cumulative GPA: 3.5/4.0; Major GPA: 3.8/4.0
- Financed 70% of college expenses through summer jobs and HOPE Scholarship

COMPUTER SKILLS

- **Programming Languages:** Visual Basic, SQL, C, C++, Java
- **Operating Systems:** Windows NT/2000/XP/Vista, Linux, Unix
- **Database:** SQL, Server, MS Access, Oracle
- **Internet:** ASP, VB Script, JavaScript, HTML, XML, Dreamweaver, ASP.NET, Java Server, Perl
- **Software:** JCL, SQL, DB2, MS Visio, MS Excel, MS FrontPage, MS Word

RELATED EXPERIENCE

Financial Network Services, Pty Ltd., Sydney Australia, Summer 2007

Unix Administrator Assistant

- Operated Unix Hp/Ux 11i in the transferring of files between development and testing regions
- Led team of four to configure notebooks and install multilingual software for overseas consultants
- Created user accounts and set permissions and passwords with UNIX – SCO
- Performed hardware maintenance, technical support, and software research

PROJECT EXPERIENCE

Mechanicsburg Area Humane Society, Mechanicsburg, PA, January 2008-Present

MIST 4620: Systems Analysis and Design

- Served as project team leader and developed a database to track the adoption of animals
- Designed website that allowed viewing of specific animals for adoption
- Used Visual Basic to set up the user interface
- Incorporated Java, HTML, and Flash interactive website (www.aahumane.gov)

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

Student Government Association (SGA), Messiah College, September 2007-Present

Treasurer

- Managed a budget of \$10,000 and allocated funds as needed
- Handled all transactions and purchases while ensuring proper account balances

Self-Employed Lawn Service, New Cumberland, PA, Summers 2005-2008

Lawn Maintenance

- Established and retained customer base in local neighborhoods
- Gained experience establishing a small business

HONORS/ACTIVITIES

- Boyer Scholar Recipient—recognizes academic accomplishments, distinguished leadership, and service
- Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE)

Michelle L. Brooks

Mbrooks@messiah.edu | 25 Falcon Avenue, Grantham, PA 17027 | 555.555.5555

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts in Politics, Honors Program, Expected May 2009

Messiah College, Grantham, PA

GPA: 3.7/4.0

Certificate in Personal and Organizational Leadership

- Participant in highly selective, individualized two-year leadership development program including academic courses, personal assessments, externships, team building, and community service

Study Abroad: Oxford University, Oxford, England, Summer 2008

- Earned 6 credit hours while being immersed in European culture

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

ABC Company: Marketing Consultant, Harrisburg, PA, August 2008-Present

- Analyze market investment trends in business and real estate
- Create strategic marketing plan for business-to-business and consumer marketing
- Partner public and private interest groups for common development goals
- Manage external communications and lead consulting team project

These should be in a past tense format, even though the date indicates "present." The rationale is that these are skills used prior to this day, even though the context is present.

The Population Institute: Intern, Washington, D.C., June 2008-August 2008

- Conceptualized, created, and negotiated student scholarship program that serves 15 students per year
- Managed public relations for World Population Day Symposium with international press, NGOs, and government employees
- Successfully wrote grant proposals and worked to improve the effectiveness of direct mail fundraising
- Advocated with Congress and NGOs for issue awareness in legislative decisions

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Messiah College Department of Residence Life: Resident Assistant, Grantham, PA, August 2008-Present

- Designed, implemented, and evaluated educational programs for up to 100 residents
- Extensively utilized communication and counseling skills in supervising 65 women in residence hall
- Responded to various crises in a building housing 200 residents
- Explained, interpreted, and enforced College housing policies
- Compiled an annual facility inventory and report

YMCA Camp Program: Carlisle, PA

Leadership Counselors Program, Summer 2007

- Developed leadership training curriculum to be used by 36 counselors
- Taught leadership lessons to groups of 5-15 children ages 10-15
- Managed cabin of 12 students

Head Counselor, Summer 2006

- Interviewed, hired, and trained 35 counselors
- Designed camp schedule; maintained order in daily activities involving 250+ campers

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Harrisburg City Mentor Program: Mentor, September 2007-May 2008

- Mentored a sixth-grade girl bi-weekly at an alternative school

SUSAN B. MEYER

MESSIAH COLLEGE • ONE COLLEGE AVE. • BOX 5555 • GRANTHAM, PA 17027
PHONE 717-555-5555 • E-MAIL SW1440@MESSIAH.EDU

- OBJECTIVE** To utilize my organizational, leadership and team work skills in community development through a non-profit organization
- EDUCATION** **Bachelor of Arts** – Sociology, Minor in Peace and Conflict Studies, May 2007
Messiah College, Grantham, PA
- GPA: 3.8 on a 4.0 scale
- Chiang Mai University**, Chiang Mai, Thailand, Spring 2005
- Intensive Thai Language and Culture Study
- Temple University**, Philadelphia, PA, Fall 2005
- Semester at Messiah College Satellite Campus
- RELATED EXPERIENCE** **Student Director**
Agapé Center Outreach Teams, Messiah College, Grantham, PA, Fall 2006-Spring 2007
- Coordinated and led 13-person team in organizing local service opportunities
 - Managed the Outreach Team budget
 - Communicated with the student body about Outreach activities
- Delegate Member**
NGO Committee on the Status of Women 2006, New York City, NY, February 2005
- Attended the conference with the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom delegation
- Development Intern**
Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Philadelphia, PA, Fall 2005
- Assisted in fundraising work and development for national campaigns
 - Organized lodging arrangements for the fall board meeting
 - Attended the United National Security Council meeting on Resolution 1325
- Student Member**, MICAH Committee, Messiah College, Fall 2004 and 2006
- Participated on a student-faculty committee on racial reconciliation and multicultural education
- GLOBAL EXPERIENCE** **Service Work**
- Thailand**, Summer 2006
- Interned for eight weeks at Chiang Mai Home for Boys and assisted staff in English translation
 - Cared for children of migrant workers for six weeks at Burmese Childcare Center
- Bolivia**, Summer 2004
- Cared for young girls at Bolivian Youth Ministries for five weeks
- Mexico**, Spring 2002
- Worked at a home for children, facilitated youth activities, and built homes
- WORK ACTIVITIES** **Food Service Worker**, Messiah College Dining Services, Grantham, PA, August 2003 – May 2006
- Planning Team Member**, Unlearn Week, Spring 2006
- Member**, Alpha Kappa Delta International Sociology Honor Society, Spring 2006 – Present
- Student Member**, Student Government Association Forum, Fall 2004 and 2006
- Chairperson**, National Marrow Donor Program Drive, Spring 2005
- Volunteer**, Silence of Mary Home, Fall 2003 – Fall 2004
- HONORS** **Barnabas Award**, Messiah College, Fall 2006
- Received servant leadership award given to two seniors of the Class of 2007

Cover Letters

The cover letter, along with your résumé, is often your first introduction to a prospective employer. Unless otherwise specified, you should always send a cover letter with your résumé. An effective cover letter will provide an introduction, explain the purpose of writing (to apply for a specific job or internship opportunity; to inquire about opportunities with the organization; to request an information interview), and create enough interest to generate an interview. The letter should demonstrate your written communication skills, outline how your skills and experience match the employer's needs, and express your interest and enthusiasm for the position. Do not use a generic cover letter for each résumé that you send. Instead, compose a letter that responds specifically to the organization's needs.

COVER LETTER CHECKLIST

- Do not exceed one page in length.
- Do your best to address the letter to a specific individual as opposed to “Sir or Madame” or “To Whom It May Concern.” You may need to contact Human Resources to request this information.
- Use the same high-quality paper that you did for your résumé.
- As with your résumé, target content to the position for which you're applying.
- Refer to specific experiences that will grab the reader's attention.
- Provide examples of your most significant and relevant skills.
- The core emphasis of the letter is stating why you're a good fit and how you can contribute to the company.
- When emphasizing your “fit” for the position, demonstrate your knowledge of the company.
- Avoid simply duplicating your résumé; instead highlight and expand on your most relevant skills and experiences.
- Avoid clichés or slang.
- Watch for spelling and grammar errors.
- If being sent hard copy, always sign the letter.
- Never staple your résumé and cover letter.
- Mail résumé and cover letter in a large envelope; avoid folding.

Sample Cover Letter Format

Your street address
City, state, zip

Month, Day, Year

Mr./Ms./Dr. Name of contact person
Title of contact person
Name of organization
Street address
City, state, zip

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. Last Name:

(First paragraph) Explain why you are writing and indicate the position for which you are applying. Tell how you heard about the position and the organization. Introduce basic information about yourself that explains why you would be the best candidate for the position. The first paragraph should catch the attention of the reader and create initial interest in you. If you are not applying for a specific position, still emphasize why you are interested in the organization.

(Second paragraph) Emphasize your skills and qualifications, and demonstrate how your experience meets the requirements for the position. Do not merely repeat the information listed on your résumé; instead, highlight and expand on your qualifications and experiences that are most relevant to this particular employer. Outline the skills you will bring to the position and communicate how you will contribute to the organization.

(Third paragraph) Refer the reader to the documents you have enclosed, such as your résumé, application, transcripts, etc. Reiterate your strong interest in the position/company. Provide contact numbers and the best way to reach you. Specify how you plan to follow up. Thank the reader for taking the time to consider your résumé.

Sincerely,

(Your handwritten signature)

Type your name here

Enclosure(s) *(This indicates that there are accompanying documents, such as your résumé, a reference list, etc.)*

SAMPLE COVER LETTER #1

One College Ave
P.O. Box 5555
Grantham, PA 17027

February 2, 2009

Ms. Fran Smith, RN
Director of Nursing
Children's Hospital Boston
P.O. Box 549252
Waltham, MA 02454

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am writing to express my interest in a position as a registered nurse at your hospital. In May 2009, I will graduate from Messiah College with a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing. As one of the top pediatric hospitals in the United States, your hospital offers the opportunity to further develop my knowledge and skills, and to grow as a professional pediatric nurse. I would strongly consider any staff nursing positions that may be available.

As indicated in my résumé, I have worked with children in a variety of settings. These experiences, along with an excellent clinical rotation at Hershey Medical Center, have provided a broad foundational understanding regarding the issues of child health. In addition to my nursing skills, I will bring strong leadership and organizational skills gained through my extra-curricular involvement. Advisors, supervisors, and clinical instructors have commented on my ability to manage multiple tasks simultaneously while maintaining a level of enthusiasm for the project at hand. I would be honored to join Children's Hospital Boston as a highly functional team member, able to contribute to the care of your patients in the manner you so clearly require of your staff.

Thank you for giving my résumé careful consideration. I will contact you early next week to see if we can arrange a time to discuss employment possibilities. If you prefer, you may contact me at 717-555-1212 or via email at doe@internetprovider.com.

I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

Enclosure(s)

SAMPLE COVER LETTER #2

632 Job Search Lane
New York, NY 55555

January 12, 2009

Ms. Wanda Miller
Vice President of Operations and Federal Relations
The Capitol Association for International Affairs
9999 C. Street
Washington, D.C. 14444-0003

Dear Ms. Miller:

I am writing in response to the email from the International Affairs Organization regarding summer internships with The Capitol Association for International Affairs. As a junior Politics major at Messiah College, I am very interested in applying my academic experience while gaining relevant skills and experience through an internship. Additionally, I would like to explore career options in the field of international affairs, cultivate professional networks, and develop greater awareness of global issues. I believe the combination of my education along with my campus leadership roles make me a strong candidate for this internship.

As the Fundraising Committee Representative for Student Life, I have demonstrated the ability to operate in a complex environment. My duties consisted of marketing fundraising opportunities to members and managing a budget of \$15,000. This responsibility has taught me careful attention to detail as well as working successfully as part of a team. I hope to have the opportunity to apply these skills and experience as an intern at The Capitol Association for International Affairs.

I am a team player and an active and enthusiastic contributor in all of my endeavors. If given the opportunity, I would be committed to contributing my fluency in French and Spanish, leadership and communication skills, and positive attitude to meet the needs and goals of your organization.

Thank you for giving my application careful consideration. I will follow up with you within the next two weeks to discuss internship opportunities. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me at mwilliams@jobsearch.net or 555.555.5555. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Maya Williams

Enclosure(s)

SAMPLE COVER LETTER #3

85 Unemployed Drive
Harrisburg, PA 17777

October 1, 2008

Ms. Charlotte Johnson
Director of College Recruiting
City Textiles Company
987 Locust Lane
Boston, MA 55555

Dear Ms. Johnson:

I am writing to inquire about professional sales opportunities at City Textiles Company. As someone with a genuine interest and respect for the apparel industry, I am very eager to learn about career opportunities with your prestigious organization. My business education, work experience, and strong interpersonal and persuasive skills have provided me with valuable skill sets which could be an asset to your organization.

As a Business Administration major and marketing minor, I have acquired excellent quantitative and analytical skills. In addition to my academic coursework, my internship with XYZ, Inc. and volunteer work with Children First have taught me valuable skills in time management, leadership, interpersonal communication, and self-directedness. During my internship with XYZ, Inc., I was required to meet strict deadlines, learn to be resourceful, and demonstrate flexibility in the midst of a fast-paced environment. These are skills that I know would be useful in a sales position with City Textiles Company.

Attached is my résumé which further details my experiences and qualifications. If any questions arise or you would like additional information, you may contact me at jfoster12@hotmail.com or 555.555.5555. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Jack R. Foster

Enclosure

*This is known as a sample **letter of inquiry**. If no positions are publicly posted, you may want to send your application materials expressing your interest and what you have to offer.*