



# Resume/Cover Letter Checklist

## What is a resume?

A resume is a brief summary of your experiences including work, volunteer, extracurricular activities, educational background, and relevant skills that highlights your qualifications for jobs, internships, specialized programs, or positions.

The purpose of a resume is to market yourself to employers by summarizing your education, experience and skills, ultimately aiming to convince employers to invite you to an interview. A resume is like an advertisement: it must attract attention, create interest, and generate action on the part of the reader. The resume tells a potential employer what you have done, what you can do, who you are, and what you know. It also states what kind of work you seek. A good resume will lead an employer to invite you to an interview to discuss how your background and personality fit the organization.

## Resume Format

- All dates, bullets, and sections are aligned evenly and consistently throughout the resume.
- Resume is tailored to a specific position, job type or industry.
- Resume is easy to read, with proper grammar, punctuation and spelling.

## Resume includes the following:

- Name, City, Telephone Number, Email Address
- A clear and specific job objective tailored to the exact position with a unique approach (or remove objective)
- Summary of Qualifications (only highlight skills relevant to the position you're applying for)
- Education (including current education) in reverse chronological order (most recent first)
- Work/Volunteer Experience
  - A minimum of two to three statements, effectively communicating a demonstration of a skill, experience or ability
  - Includes: Name of organization, job title, location, and dates
  - Begins each phrase with an action verb and these verbs are not repeated several times

## Resume Do's & Don'ts

### Do:

- Emphasize results produced, significant achievements, and recognition from others
- Quantify when possible and use specific examples of your skills
- Check the spelling of every word; make sure grammar and punctuation are correct
- Have someone else proofread your resume
- Get feedback from several people (different staff members, parents, faculty)
- Be truthful about your accomplishments
- Keep your resume to one page unless you have extensive experience directly related to the position you are seeking

### Don't:

- Use resume templates (or resume wizard). It is difficult to adjust sections and your resume looks like all other candidates who used the same template.
- Use personal pronouns (i.e. "I", "me", "you", "we")
- Personal information such as marital status, social security number, age or national origin, photograph
- List unrelated duties that do not directly apply to the position
- Exaggerate your experience
- Start phrases in the experience section with "my responsibilities (or duties) included"
- Use of abbreviations or acronyms unrelated to the industry
- Use generic "fluff" statements such as: team player, excellent verbal and written communication skills, hard-work, flexible, people-person, easy to work with, fast learner, cashier, seeking challenging position, etc.
- A blank or mostly blank last page
- Leave areas of unanswered or unused template sections on resume
- Different font sizes or use of multiple colors (except for design/creative resumes)
- Autobiography of every bit of detailed information about your personal and work history

### **What is a cover letter?**

A cover letter accompanies your resume to introduce you to a prospective employer as a knowledgeable and capable applicant. Ideally, the content of the cover letter should address why you would be a good fit for the organization to which you are applying. It should be written in business format and be no longer than one page. You are not trying to address or cover every aspect of the position in a cover letter. Remember that your goal is to market yourself by clearly explaining why the employer should consider hiring you. You should highlight what sets you apart from other candidates and how this difference will ultimately benefit the employer. Do thorough research on the organization so you can articulate your competitive advantage.

### **Cover Letter Format**

- Cover letter has a heading (top contact information) that is identical to the resume.
- Include the full address and contact information of the company/organization
  - Contact name, contact title, company/organization, full address
- Use a three-paragraph structure that is approximately ½ page long to ¾ page long
  - Introduction paragraph – Three to four sentences indicating the exact position you are interested in and a brief reason why you feel you are qualified for the position (similar to a thesis statement).
  - Main body – Majority of your cover letter that responds to your introductory paragraph/thesis statement and how your qualifications and interests align with the company to benefit the employer.
  - Final paragraph – End your letter with confidence (don't beg) and a way to communicate with you for a follow-up interview. Make sure you thank the reader for their time.

### **Cover Letter Do's & Don'ts**

#### **Do:**

- Research the company and describe how their mission aligns with your own approach or professional interests
- Provide a simple and concise theme with your knowledge of the company/organization
- Explain why you are passionate about the industry or company
- Include relevant work experience, education, skills, and abilities to support your purpose for your interest in the company and position
- Address your cover letter to a named individual with their title
- Is brief and to the point
- Project confidence and enthusiasm in your cover letter
- Minimize "I" statements, monotonous sentence structure, or excessive redundancy
- Proofread your cover letter (spell check is not enough)

#### **Don't:**

- Send your resume without a cover letter. Always send a cover letter even if an employer does not request one.
- Be negative or desperate (avoid using words such as: please, hope, honored etc.)
- Mention your lack of skill or experience
- Include false claims or exaggeration of your skill or abilities
- Wait for the employer to follow up with you
- Send written material with typos or poorly constructed sentence structure, grammar and/or syntax
- Indicate how you would benefit from, learn, grow, or use the position as a stepping stone or temporary position for your other goals
- Using only your education and personal interest as the purpose for pursuing the position. It is important to translate transferrable skills from previous positions that would apply to the current position you are seeking.
- Rehash your resume or include too much detail that is already on your resume.