

# Resumes and Cover Letters SparkCharts

SparkNotes

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**\* Résumés and Cover Letters**

**RESUMES**

**WHAT IS A RESUME?**

- A brief summary of your job experience, education, and career goals.
- A list of **qualifications** that shows your suitability for a job.
- A **resume is a job-bidding** or a company you'd like to work for, along with a cover letter that explains your job.

**COMPONENTS OF A RESUME**

**1. Contact information:** At the top of the resume, list your name, address, telephone number, and email address.

**2. Objective statement:** Write a very short statement that describes the job title you want. The statement you want to include is one of the goals you want to meet. It should be clear.

- Be 100 words or less, and no longer than 100.
- Be the first item to follow the contact information.
- Be concise "concise" or "pithy".
- Not include salary expectations.

**3. Summary statement:** Write a short paragraph that summarizes your experience and qualifications.

- If your resume is accompanied by a cover letter, the resume should include a summary section.

**4. Education:** List your academic degrees and experience.

- Include your high school graduation only if you have not completed college.
- List degree chronological order, with your most recent degree first.
- Each entry should include the name and location of the college, the degree earned or anticipated, the major or minor field of study, and the date or expected date of graduation.

**5. Work experience:** The list of your work experience is the most important component of your resume.

- In addition to the title and description of your position, provide a concise description of the specific activities in which you participated.
- Think about your activities of your previous positions to the position for which you are applying.
- Under your description of your work experience to the position and field for which you are applying, list major accomplishments as a percentage of your work. Focus on the interactions with others if applying for a job in a professional, but avoid focus on the interpersonal skills if applying for a job in a research position.

**6. Awards, honors, and activities (optional):** Highlight your outstanding achievements or present a more well-rounded view of yourself.

- Include this section only if you are a student or a very recent graduate.
- Always include the date and institution for the award or honor so that the person reading your resume understands the significance of the award or honor.

**CREATING A RESUME**

**LAYOUT**

- The most important rule of designing your resume is to make your layout clean and readable.
- Bullet-point section breaks are more effective than bold and italics.
- Clearly label the resume's parts.
- Order is order: No section should be more than 7 lines long.
- Double-check spelling and grammar. A spell-checker can help your spelling.
- Make sure all information about items on your resume is correct and accurate.
- Use top-quality 8 1/2" x 11" paper that is at least 20% cotton fiber. White, off-white, and ivory are the only acceptable colors for a resume.
- Print on a laser printer. Use margin at the top and bottom of the page.
- If you are sending the same resume to more than one potential employer, use separate envelopes instead of using photocopies.

**LANGUAGE**

- The language of your resume should be formal and professional.
- Use short sentences that describe facts and accomplishments of a job.
- Use fragments that begin with a verb, leaving out "I".
- Correct abbreviations: Use formal or multiple abbreviations. Do not use abbreviations of employer publications.
- Abbreviate: Abbreviate the names of multiple publications.
- Use action verbs (see below) rather than nouns of being.

**COVER LETTERS**

**WHAT IS A COVER LETTER?**

- A short and concise letter written in business letter format.
- Should act like a sales pitch, giving your prospective employer a good first impression of you and emphasizing how your skills and experience can help the company to which the letter is addressed.
- Should always be tailored to the specific company to which you are applying.
- Should be printed on the same type of paper as your resume and sent in a matching envelope.

**CONTENT GUIDELINES**

- Address your letter to a person rather than to a firm. If you don't know who will be reading your letter and resume, call the company and find out.
- Be brief. Fit the letter on one page.
- Use strong, dynamic language.

**DO:**

- Explain why you are writing.
- State your reader's attention. Use intelligent language "It is not a unique angle on the position."
- Explain why you are the best candidate for the job.
- List the skills you would bring to the company.
- Mention any especially outstanding awards and qualifications.
- Show some knowledge of the company's business field.

**DO NOT:**

- Say anything negative.
- Repeat information already mentioned on your resume, unless:
  - You can add a personal angle that wouldn't make it on a resume.
  - The fact is an especially outstanding qualification in your own mind.

**AN EXCELLENT COVER LETTER**

**DO:**

- Explain why you are writing.
- State your reader's attention. Use intelligent language "It is not a unique angle on the position."
- Explain why you are the best candidate for the job.
- List the skills you would bring to the company.
- Mention any especially outstanding awards and qualifications.
- Show some knowledge of the company's business field.

**DO NOT:**

- Repeat information already mentioned on your resume, unless:
  - You can add a personal angle that wouldn't make it on a resume.
  - The fact is an especially outstanding qualification in your own mind.

**ACTION VERBS**

achieved	analyzed	assessed	calculated	communicated	coordinated
created	developed	designed	directed	discovered	distributed
executed	facilitated	forecasted	generated	implemented	improved
initiated	integrated	investigated	maintained	monitored	negotiated
operated	organized	planned	presented	promoted	produced
reached	reduced	researched	revised	reviewed	selected
supported	supervised	supplied	synthesized	tabulated	tested
troubled	uncovered	updated	utilized	verified	visited
worked	wrote	worked	worked	worked	worked

**WARNING! DO NOT INCLUDE:**

- The word "resume" on your resume.
- Any bulleted or your memberships in social organizations.
- Any reasons for leaving your current or previous jobs.
- Bad results of former employers or employers.
- Positively negative information.
- The phrase "References available upon request".
- A simple list of former or current.
- Use of gross exaggerations.
- More than one set of contact information unless absolutely necessary (e.g., you are a college student about to visit a family for the summer).
- Errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation.
- A handwritten title name or small address on address your resume and cover letter (electronic).
- Apologies for lack of experience.

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