

# **RESUMES AND COVER LETTERS**

*A Brief Tutorial*

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Your resume is a **MARKETING** document: A clear and concise summary of those qualities that make you an ideal candidate for the targeted position you seek!

Evaluating a Resume: Does it get you an interview?

*Some resume “do’s” and “don’ts”:*

**DO:**

- Use action verbs to describe what you can do
- Have a “third party” proof the resume
- Demonstrate your strengths and value
- Sell yourself!
- Keep it simple
- Use phrases
- Be specific; give examples
- Be honest
- Include volunteer experience
- Keep it to less than 2 pages
- Define your terms, i.e., “manager” at one company may mean something different than “manager” at another company
- Include your GPA if it’s at least 3.5
- Make phrases match your “theme” statement
- “Field Test” your resume with professionals in your chosen occupation
- Quantify: use numbers wherever possible (do not spell them out!)
- Use the highest quality paper you can afford...white or off-white
- Use a word processor
- Separate sections of resume with **Bold**, underline or CAPS
- Use bullets
- Make sections visually distinct
- Put “Education” section at the end if you have applicable work experience

**DON’T:**

- Use paragraphs or long sentences
- Misspell anything
- Repeat words....get a thesaurus!!!
- Crowd the page
- Lie or misrepresent yourself
- Use jargon or fancy words
- Use fancy fonts
- Include personal information
- Mention salary
- Limit yourself with a closed objective
- List references
- Tell your life history
- Use dark or flashy paper colors
- Include reasons for leaving jobs
- Include names of supervisors
- Put “References available upon request” at the bottom of the page

## **Getting Started:**

Know what you have to offer that your “market” wants

- Research
- Cataloging your skills and abilities

## **Approaching the job market in a PROACTIVE way:**

- Know what employers want (research advertisements, talk to hiring officials, talk to people in the field)
- Know what you have to offer them (transferable skills, personality traits, special knowledge or abilities)
- Know what YOU want!!!
- Ask yourself, “With what kind of an organization do I want to spend my most productive time?” rather than “Who will give me a job?”.

## **Choosing the Best Format:**

There are basically three resume formats or outlines to choose from when formatting your resume, each designed to present your qualifications in the most helpful fashion.

**Chronological** – Most widely used resume format for candidates choosing to remain in their current career field or industry. Presents work history in reverse ‘chronological’ order starting with your current or most recent job and working backward. Widely used by job seekers with a stable work history in one or only a few career fields who can demonstrate upward mobility in progressively responsible positions.

**Functional** – Popular format for frequent job changers or those wishing to emphasize ‘functional’ or transferable work skills and accomplishments rather than work history. Particularly useful for those who are changing career fields or reentering the job market, or for those with ‘gaps’ in their work history.

**Combination** -- The combined resume blends the best elements of the chronological and functional formats. It helps to highlight steady advancement in a particular career field or a variety of related positions within an industry, while emphasizing achievements in specific functional areas like management to increase marketability.

Remember, your first resume will be ‘on trial’ until you’ve tested it against the reality of the job market, and you *can* and *probably will* modify or even reformat it if necessary. Keep in mind that the ‘best’ resume is the one that helps you get interviews that lead to a desirable job. When it comes to *your* job search, it’s *what works for you* that matters, and if it’s not working, you can always change it!

## **Sections on the resume:**

1. Contact Information:
  - Use the name that you are called by
  - Include an email address if possible
2. Profile or summary statement
  - NOT an objective (objective is about what you want, not what’s good for the employer—use a cover letter)
    - Objectives can screen you out
    - Use a theme statement...it shows the results you’ll bring an employer....THAT’s a grabber!!!
3. Work History
  - Always go from most current backward
4. Skills and Abilities (if using functional style)---USE “P-A-R” STATEMENTS!
  - Use action verbs to describe what you did
  - Quantify results you generated wherever possible
5. Professional Associations or Community Activities
  - List memberships, offices held, etc.
  - Good place to demonstrate skills developed in volunteer positions
6. Education
  - List special classes that are applicable to your career objective
  - List places/types of internships if they apply to your theme statement

## **Identifying Your Unique Skills and Abilities**

### **THREE KINDS OF SKILLS:**

1. Transferable Skills: capabilities that you’ve developed from jobs, classes, or volunteer roles which translate into skills desired by an employer. For example, the ability to analyze lab samples, or the ability to write policy, or the ability to train others in health management techniques, or the ability to sell your ideas.

2. Job-Specific Skills: have limited transferability... like the ability to operate a dialysis machine, or the working knowledge of a specific strain of cancer, etc.
3. Self-Management Skills: personal traits and characteristics that would make you a valuable employee to anyone. “Soft Skills”. For example, dependable, reliable, hard working, energetic, open-minded, honest, results-oriented, etc.

**What are the skills that YOU can bring to an employer in your chosen area?**  
(papers, class projects, past jobs, volunteer work)

ACTIVITY:	SKILLS

**Make a list of the skills that (1) you know you have and (2) you know employers in your field will be looking for (doesn't matter where you gained that skill!)**

Transferable or Job-Specific Skills	“Soft” Skills; Self-Management

**Identifying your Accomplishments:**

You can begin to identify your accomplishments by asking yourself if there's ever been a time when you:

- Solved a long-standing problem
- Achieved a technical breakthrough
- Improved sales
- Made headlines or did something newsworthy
- Improved staff or team morale

- Identified new markets
- Invented or improved something
- Achieved more with fewer resources
- Saved money
- Reduced costs
- Improved productivity or operations
- Saved time
- Was recognized for outstanding performance
- Completed a project ahead of schedule and below cost

### **Writing Accomplishment Statements Using the “PAR” Formula:**

**P- *PROBLEM***

**A- *ACTION***

**R- *RESULT***

### **P-A-R Statements become bullet items on your resume!**

- Begin with a strong action verb that describes a functional skill
- Quantify (use numbers) results in any way possible

### **Here’s an example:**

(P) Evening shift workers were complaining of eyestrain. (A) Conducted lighting survey, identified areas of poor lighting, and made recommendations for placement of additional lighting fixtures. (R) Company used my idea; fewer evening workers complained of eyestrain.

### **Here’s how it would look on a resume:**

- Made recommendations that the company used to improve lighting
- Reduced incidence of eyestrain by 80% for evening workers by improving work area lighting based on an objective survey

### **Try your own P-A-R Statement:**

**P-**

**A-**

**R-**

### **How would you translate that into a bullet item for your resume?**

- Write several P-A-R for each of the jobs you've held, volunteer assignments you've done, or projects you've done.
- After you've written your accomplishments in this way, you can come back later and choose which ones you will hi-light on your resume. Re-write these as resume bullet items. The statements you don't use for your resume can be used later for cover letters and interviews!

### Examples of Functional Categories

<u>Communication</u>	<u>Creative</u>	<u>Financial</u>	<u>Human Relations</u>
edited	designed	accounted	advised
explained	developed	administered	assisted
influenced	established	allocated	counseled
interpreted	illustrated	audited	mediated
improvised	budgeted	guided	served
promoted	invented	calculated	listened
translated	performed	projected	motivated
wrote	revitalized	invested	represented
<u>Public Relations</u>	<u>Management</u>	<u>Research</u>	<u>Training</u>
conducted	communicated	assessed	adapted
consulted	consulted	calculated	communicated
informed	coordinated	collected	demonstrated
planned	delegated	diagnosed	evaluated
presented	directed	evaluated	instructed
researched	led	examined	planned
produced	negotiated	investigated	developed

### Developing Your Personal "Theme" Statement

Once you know what your potential employers want and you have examined where your own strengths are, you are ready to develop your own personal THEME statement

This will become a central part of your job search. It will be used as the introductory statement on your resume, and will also be used for cover letters, informational meetings, and job interviews.

**Format for THEME statements:**

- Should be phrases
- Statement should include:
  1. What you want to do/general description of credentials
  2. No more than three of your greatest strengths
  3. A few personality traits/ soft skills
  4. Two “results” areas that employers are looking for---THIS IS KEY!!!!....  
NOT just about what you want, but what you’re about and how that relates to you bringing VALUE to an employer, i.e.,
    - Increasing efficiency
    - Reducing waste
    - Preventing spread of disease
    - Saving money
    - Providing better information

**Example of a THEME statement:**

*Master’s level Public Health graduate with concentration in Health Behavior able to develop creative teaching methods and evaluate effectiveness of techniques. Good written/verbal communication skills, reliable and a fast learner. Will help an organization improve training effectiveness and will assist underserved populations in making healthier lifestyle choices.*

## Cover Letters and Application Forms

### Cover Letters:

- NEVER send a resume without a cover letter of some sort!
- Keep the cover letter *brief*

P1: Why you are writing—to get an interview for “X” job opening

P2: Your theme statement and where you are in your career at this point

P3: Specific things that demonstrate how you match the job

P4: Request a meeting; say when you’ll follow up (10 days on the outside)

### RESPONDING TO CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS:

The most effective cover letter for newspaper and other advertisements—when you KNOW you match the job description—is called a “**T-Letter**”. This is a 3-paragraph format. The first paragraph is a combination of P1 and P2 (at the end of this, write “Please consider the following:”), and the fourth paragraph becomes the 3<sup>rd</sup> and last paragraph. For the new P2, create a table for the reader to see how closely you match the job:

Your Requirements  
(specifics of the ad)

\*Master’s Degree

\*5 years industry experience

My Qualifications  
(what you have to offer)

\*MSPH, 2000, UAB

\*6 years experience

If there is something listed in the ad that you DON’T have, indicate what you HAVE that demonstrates your ability to do the job, for example,

\*Recent biostatistical experience

\*Outstanding performance  
in biostatistics classes

## **Application Forms:**

- Don't leave any blanks! Write n/a if not applicable
- Look up addresses of former employers and know your exact start and end dates before completing an application form
- Be neat
- Follow instructions. Read the app through before completing so you know what it's asking for
- Never lie
- Use pen
- Print
- Have names of supervisors, telephone numbers and other contact information for references available to you
- Never say "see resume"
- Under salary: "open" or "negotiable"

## **Finding Job Leads; Securing Interviews**

Although some folks will identify their next job via the classified ads or through employment agencies/recruiters, most people will find their next employer by personal networking (sometimes known as the "hidden" job market). *General trends indicate that the lower your salary, the more likely you are to find a job through the paper. The higher your salary, the more likely you are to secure a job through a referral.* The more technical and specialized you are, the more likely you are to be successful with recruiters and employment agencies.

The truth is that *you should pursue every avenue possible* to identifying job leads and securing interviews. Remember, however, to spend a proportionate amount of time on these activities to match their anticipated effectiveness!

**OTHER SOURCES OF JOBS: YOU MUST KNOW YOUR INDUSTRY'S MARKET!**

- Professional Associations
- Professional Journals
- Industry ListServes
- Local Chambers of Commerce

## JOB SEARCH CHECKLIST

The purpose of this checklist is to identify the categories in an effective job search and help you determine where improvement or more effort is needed.

- Can you clearly state your career goals?
- Can you describe your greatest strengths?
- Can you describe your weakness in a positive fashion?
- Do you have a theme statement that "sells your sizzle"?
- Can you list 5 of your accomplishments in a quantifiable way?
- Can you describe your actual job skills?
- Have you determined the salary range for the position you are seeking?
- Can you list 5 employers who might have an interest in people with your background and training?
- Have you located 3-4 resources to help you answer the above 2 questions?
- Do you look for a job in places other than the newspaper?
- Have you prepared a resume that you are satisfied with?
- Have you solicited feedback on your resume from people in your field?
- Have you practiced interviewing?