

# Resume & Cover Letter Writing

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## **Know yourself: Know your skills**

### **Basic Information**

- Your name as you want to be referred to professionally (Jon Baker, Jonathon Baker, Jon E. Baker).
- Current address and phone number with area code (where you can be reached now!).
- Permanent address and phone number with area code (if you will be in different locations during your search, an address of someone who will always know how to reach you. This could be a family address).
- If you use e-mail, include your address.

### **Objective**

A clear objective is critical to resume development because it helps focus and select information. Although you may wish to make your objective broad, do not make it so broad that it says nothing. If you are pursuing employment in more than one field, simply create different objectives for each field.

Your career objective should answer this question, "What do I want to do?" Is it for graduate school, a part time job, an internship, a professional position after graduation, a scholarship? Make sure your objective makes this clear.

### **Some sample objectives are:**

1. Research position in biochemical laboratory
2. Position teaching science or social studies at the secondary school level
3. Editorial or research assistant in a public affairs organization
4. Acceptance to College Student Personnel Administration graduate program
5. Internship position to explore career options in the health field
6. Summer job in the field of physical therapy

### **Educational Background** (for each degree-conferring institution)

- Institution
- City, State
- Graduation date
- Degree or certification obtained
- Major/Minor/ emphasis area
- Any areas of Concentration
- GPA (if proud of it)
- Additional certification or licensure
- Relevant coursework
- Specialized instruction

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## **Experience**

This part of your resume may include several sections such as work experience, volunteer experience (internships, community service, student teaching), campus leadership, and any area in which you may have significant experience, such as publications/ presentations or knowledge. You may divide this between Career Related Experience and Other Work Experience.

### **Briefly describe for each position:**

- 1) Job title, dates, organization name, location
- 2) List your responsibilities for each position using a variety of ACTION WORDS to describe situations and achievements
- 3) Unless necessary, avoid little words in description such as "a", "an", "the."
- 4) Include scope of responsibility such as: Trained eight student workers
- 5) Concretely outline any outstanding results such as: Developed new computerized customer listing using MS Access software to improve output by ten percent

## **Honors/Activities/Leadership/Special Skills**

Front load these with those most important or most pertinent to your objective (career goal). You may want to use specific headings such as professional organizations, computer skills, and leadership positions. Include any honors, scholarships or recognition awards that you have received. If you were actively involved in any clubs, teams or committees while in college, those may be included also. The key to this section is keeping it brief. If you feel you need more detail, use the guidelines for Experience and make it a complete section.

## **Interests**

The trend is to keep away from any extraneous information that does not clearly connect to your career goal. However, if you are applying for a position in which you have experience through a hobby or leisure activity, you may want to consider adding it to your resume. For example, if you are applying for a forest ranger position and you enjoy hiking in the wilderness, include it by stating: Skilled in all-terrain hiking, camping and navigating. What you need to ask yourself is, "Will this information help the potential employer learn more about how well I can do the job?" If your answer is yes, then be sure to include the information.

## **Polishing It Up**

After you get all your information down on paper, go through and decide which experiences are directly related to your objective, which are definitely not related, and which are questionable. The questionable information can be used only if there is room. Otherwise stick with the directly related experiences.

## **Cover Letters**

The key to a successful job or graduate school search is to communicate with the person who has the ability to hire or admit. Therefore, your cover letter is extremely important. Effective cover letters convey a sense of purpose, project enthusiasm for the position or program, and demonstrate your knowledge of the employer or graduate program's goals and needs.

Many times individuals will spend hours writing a "perfect" resume and very little time writing a quality cover letter. Remember that your cover letter not only accompanies your resume, it is usually on top of your resume when the envelope is opened. A positive first impression requires that your cover letter be neat and concise, containing no errors in spelling or grammar. Each cover letter should be customized to fit the position for which you are applying.

You will want to customize your cover letter depending on its purpose. Some reasons for sending a cover letter may be:

- ~ A result of a direct search
- ~ A response to an advertisement
- ~ A follow up on a contact made through networking

No matter what your reason for sending a cover letter, be sure it contains the following information:

- ~ Return address with the date
- ~ Name, title, organization, and address of the person you are writing

### **First Paragraph**

- ~ State purpose of letter
- ~ Catch attention
- ~ Indicate your interest in the position or company
- ~ Flatter your audience by using company/ program information found through research

### **Second Paragraph**

- ~ Explain how your background makes you a qualified candidate
- ~ Give an example, talk about a specific project, accomplishment, or service
- ~ Highlight information found in the resume

### **Third Paragraph**

- ~ Refer the reader to your enclosures (resume, reference, examples of work)

### **Final Paragraph**

- ~ Indicate your intentions for follow-up
- ~ Repeat a number where you may be reached

### **Closing**

- ~ Salutation
- ~ Signature