Resumes, References, and Cover Letters

A HELPFUL GUIDE FOR ENTERING THE JOB MARKET





Resume Tips and Instructions

Brainstorm

Employment trends indicate workers will change not just jobs, but careers, several times in a lifetime. For this reason resume writing is a skill you will use throughout your life.

Before beginning your resume, put together a list of experiences and accomplishments from work, volunteer projects, school, extracurricular activities, and international work or study. Keep this information on file and add to it throughout your career for future resume writing.

Write everything down and do not limit yourself!

Action verbs from the list on page 8 may help you remember things you have done and give you ideas for new ways to describe those activities. Friends or family familiar with your work and work style can be good sources of assistance as well.

Gather documents related to your experiences, such as performance reviews, letters of appreciation, job descriptions, documents, or presentations you wrote or prepared. This can be helpful now with your brainstorming, and later to review, check, and confirm details. Categories to generate ideas and organize your information include:

- Education (universities attended, classes related to your career goal, certifications, special training)
- Experience (paid/unpaid, part/full-time, internships, military, class projects)
- Volunteer experience (church, civic groups, tutoring)
- Activities and honors (student organizations, professional associations, scholarships, academic achievements, sororities or fraternities)
- Important career-related skills (computer proficiency, foreign languages, activities that illustrate problem solving, critical thinking, communication abilities)
- Personal achievements (financing your education, overcoming obstacles)



POSSIBLE SECTION HEADINGS

Education
Relevant Experience
Internships
Employment History
Professional Experience
Research Experience
Volunteer Experience
Study Abroad
Experience
International Experience
Computer Skills
Computer Software
Certification
Licensure

Professional Memberships Specialized Training Languages Awards and Recognition Honors Honors and Awards Activities Leadership Additional Experience Additional Information Work Authorization Objective Summary of Qualifications Profile

STEP **2**

Organize Initial Draft

Name & Contact Information (Required)

- Include your name, phone number, address (optional), and email. Including a physical address is a matter of personal preference. You may consider including your local address if it serves a purpose, such applying for positions in that town. If posting online, you may choose to omit the address altogether or include only a city and state for personal safety reasons.
- If you use your cell phone as your contact phone number, be prepared to handle a professional conversation wherever you may answer your calls. Only use a work phone if it is appropriate for you to receive calls at work.
- Your phone number should be listed using one of these formats:

- Your phone number should be listed using one of these formats: 785-987-6543, (316) 123-4567, 785.555.5555
- Your email address should be professional (DO NOT USE partyhound@ku.edu). If you are a graduating senior, use a non-KU email address.
- Your name is generally bold and a few points larger in font size than the rest of the resume.
- Be consistent with the name you use across all of your materials including resume, cover letter, references, and online application.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Students who go by a name different than their legal name or those who've changed their name may be confused when it comes to deciding what to use when applying for a job. It's best to be consistent across all job-related materials. Remember that employers will need to match up your resume, cover letter, online application materials, calls to references, and background checks.

Below are some tips for addressing this issue in your professional documents:

- Using your middle name is optional.
- If you go by your middle name, include your legal first name as well, i.e. James (Dave) Phillips.
- If you go by a name other than your legal name, include your legal name along with your preferred name; for example, Wenfei (Cathy) Zhou or John "Jack" Smith, Jr.
- If you have hyphenated or multiple last names, you may want to use your middle initial, instead of your middle name, to signal to the employer where your last name begins, i.e. Mary J. Kelly Gregory.
- If your last name has changed, for example, you may include your former last name such as Sarah (Williams) Hanson. It's also important to let your references know that your name has changed before an employer calls them for a reference check. They may not realize that Sarah Hanson is the same Sarah Williams they knew at one time.
- It's a good idea to send a copy of your resume (including both names) to all of your references prior to the reference check—it will give them a better idea of your professional activities and serve as a reminder that your name has changed.



John "Jack" Anderson IV

1415 Louisiana Street Lawrence, KS 66045 785-123-4567 jack.andersonIV@ku.edu

Objective (Optional)

In general, objectives are no longer commonly used. An objective may be useful if you need to clarify the position for which you are applying. For example, if a job posting lists several positions, an objective allows you to identify your preferred area.

Examples of objectives:

- To obtain an entry-level sales position in the consumer products industry.
- Seeking a summer internship in investment banking with XYZ Company.

Summary of Qualifications/Profile (Optional)

Typically used by job seekers with more professional or varied experience, this summary should focus on the big picture and help the employer understand how your experiences fit together. Summary information briefly communicates your experience, training, and personal abilities as they relate to the specific job you seek. Information of this type may be included in a cover letter, eliminating the need to include it in the resume. Details of your experiences belong in other sections of the resume.

Examples:

- Two years of experience in a medical environment; familiar with confidentiality issues and medical terminology.
- Strong analytical skills developed through lab experience in chemistry and biology.
- Proven communication skills as demonstrated through club leadership, debate competition at state level, and writing for the university student newspaper.

Education (Required)

This section can include your higher education degrees and certificates as well as noncredit learning. Your information should include:

- Degree (i.e., Bachelor of Science, Master of Arts)
- Major(s)
- Minors, concentrations or certificates
- University name, city, and state
- Month and year of graduation
- GPA(s) (typically if above 3.0)—If you list anything other than your overall GPA, be sure to specify which GPA you are using.

EDUCATION

The University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas

- Bachelor of General Studies in Geography, May 2026 • Minor in Geology
 - Leadership Engagement Certificate
 - Overall GPA 3.65

Independently financed 75% of college education through scholarships and employment.

List your most recent degree first (Ph.D., Master, Bachelor). You don't need to list every college or university at which you have taken classes. Once you are in college, high school is not typically included on a resume unless you are a freshman or you have a good reason why you want an employer to know where you went to high school.

Including academic awards or scholarships can show academic breadth and intellectual accomplishment. Sometimes it may be beneficial to include courses relevant to the position for which you are applying.

If applicable, it can be a good idea to include a statement about a significant contribution toward financing your education.

Experience (Required)

The experience section should communicate what you accomplished in past paid or unpaid work experiences.

- Include the position title, employer/organization name, location (city, state), and dates with months and years.
- Typically your experience is listed in reverse chronological order with your most recent experience first.
- Highlight transferable skills and abilities when describing work duties and responsibilities. Think about the types of things you did in your job or activities that relate to the types of things you will be doing in your future professional positions.
- Do not use full sentences to describe your experience; use short phrases beginning with an action verb. Vary your verbs, limiting words like "worked" and "responsible for".

For example, "Interviewed, hired, and trained new team members" or, "Led closing of store by assigning roles at the appropriate time, balancing the cash registers, securing all cash, and setting the alarm."

- Describe your experience in a result-oriented fashion. Employers know the best predictor of future performance is past performance.
- Whenever possible, use concrete information to qualify

and/or quantify your experience. For example, "Increased sales by 25% over a three-month period," or, "Taught a class of 300 students."

DESCRIPTIONS OF EXPERIENCE				
NOT GOOD	BETTER	BEST		
Responsible for publicity.	• Interacted successfully with public affairs representatives and local media.	 Increased community awareness of agency through interaction with public affairs representatives and local media. 		
 Duties included handling customer complaints. 	 Resolved service and billing problems. 	 Resolved service and billing problems. Consistently recognized for promptness and professionalism. 		
 Responsibilities included adhering to safety policies and ensuring other lifeguards knew policies. 	 Carried out safety precautions and instructed staff in the proper use of equipment. 	• Carried out safety precautions and instructed staff in the proper use of equipment, resulting in a 50% reduction of injury accidents over the summer.		
• Dealt with delinquent youth.	• Explained team strategies and instructed youth on how to execute strategies.	• Explained team strategies and instructed youth on how to execute them. Development of enthusiasm and skills led to winning the city competition.		



- Consider the type of position for which you are applying. You may want to use the words listed in the position description when describing your experience. Highlight the skills that are most relevant to the position for which you are applying.
- Generally new college graduates will not include experiences from high school or earlier. However, if you have relevant experience (i.e., you owned your own business) or if you are a freshman or sophomore, it may be appropriate to include experiences from high school.
- Include two to five bullets to describe each experience.
- Use present tense when describing current positions and past tense when describing past experiences.

ACTIVITIES

- University of Kansas Student Ambassador
- Association of Collegiate Entrepreneurs
- Alpha Chi Omega Sorority
- Scholarship Coordinator
- Chairperson of Recruitment Committee
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters Volunteer

Activities & Organizations (Optional)

This section can include membership in campus or community activities, professional organizations, volunteer activities, or relevant interests. You may choose to format this section as a list, or you may choose to set it up with the same format as your jobs with descriptions of the leadership roles you performed in these organizations.

Activities might:

- Demonstrate a well-rounded person with more dimensions than just work.
- Point out skills that have been demonstrated in your nonprofessional life.
- Account for gaps in employment.

When you choose to include activities and interests, be aware of "hot buttons." A hot button is an activity or interest such as religious or political affiliations, to which some employers may have a strong positive or negative reaction. When you have an activity or interest that is a "hot button" you have options. Make an informed and reflective choice.

Options:

- Include this information on your resume. Many applicants feel the employer should know who they are inside and outside of the workplace, and they may not want to work for an employer who cannot accept them as a whole individual.
- Omit this information. You may want the opportunity to present yourself as a candidate rather than be prematurely discounted due to the employer's bias.
- Generalize these activities/interests. Present them in a generic format (i.e., "Choir Director") without specifying religion or denomination.

Interests are unstructured individual pursuits and can be included if relevant. When considering if you want to include an interest, think about how the employer would view the activity as well as the space available on your resume.

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Golden Key National Honor Society
- Dean's List, six semesters
- Leadership Scholarship

Honors & Awards (Optional)

This section can include scholarships, honor roll, dean's list, competitive awards, juried shows, etc.

- You may want to provide some information on the context of the award if it is not evident. For instance, "One of ten students selected nationwide for the Fulbright Scholarship."
- Do not include dollar amounts for scholarships.
- Your honors and awards may be listed as a separate section or may be included with your education or activities section if there are only a few items on your list.

Skills (Optional)

This section is included to highlight particular abilities. Technical skills, laboratory skills, and proficiency or fluency in a foreign language are typically found in this section. Skills should relate to the positions for which you are applying. The placement of this section on your resume may vary depending on the relevancy to the employer. Soft skills such as "great communicator", "team player", and "strong leader" should be reflected in your bullet points and your cover letter, not in your skills section.

Work Authorization (Optional)

You can include this section if it is important for you to share your work authorization status. International students would not generally include their work status on their resume unless specifically requested by an employer.

WORK AUTHORIZATION

United States Permanent Resident – fully authorized to work in the U.S.

References (Required but separate from the resume)

The statement "References Available upon Request" is not needed, as this is a given in the job search process. Reference names and information are generally listed on a separate page (see References section in this handout). Usually references are provided to an employer once they are requested or at an interview.

REMEMBER...

- Resumes do not get jobs; they get interviews.
- Resumes should convey your unique skills and abilities as they relate to the position for which you are applying.
- Some items may be appropriate under various headings. For example, scholarships could be listed under Education, Honors and Awards, or Study Abroad sections. Use your best judgement to determine which section makes the most sense for your resume.
- Resumes should not include every detail about you. They should highlight the specifics that make you a qualified candidate for the position you seek.
- Resumes should not be so short or so vague that an employer has no idea what your skills are or what you did in your last job.
- Human resources professionals know that the best predictor of future performance is past performance. In your resume, highlight the results of your experiences.

STEP 3 Format It

Resumes will vary by profession and will change based on your experience level. It is your resume, so be sure to create a document that reflects who you are while also targeting the employer's needs.

Pass the 15-second glance test. Employers see hundreds of resumes, and they skim first. If this first test is passed, they may look at your resume more thoroughly.

- When ordering information and sections in your resume, prioritize according to the needs of the employer. Put the most important information toward the top and to the left.
- Choose a format and heading that effectively communicate the combination of skills and abilities that highlight your qualifications for the position and provide insight into you as a unique person. Refer to Possible Section Headings box on page 1 for ideas.
- Length of resume varies according to field of interest and level of experience. Generally, undergraduates will have a one-page resume. Experienced workers and some graduate students, along with students in certain disciplines, may have two pages. See your career services office for help in determining the appropriate length.

FORMATTING AND WRITING TIPS

- Make the resume easy to skim: bullets, short declarative phrases, easy-to-read font – 10 to 12 points – no abbreviations.
- Use one font style throughout the resume; avoid script fonts. Arial, Calibri and Times New Roman, are good choices.
- Do not use graphics, shadowing, clip art, or decorative bullets (use •).
- · Use bold or underlining appropriately but sparingly.
- Put key information on the left and near the top of the page whenever possible (for example, job title rather than employment dates listed at the far left).
- Arrange your headings, sections, and bullet points in order of importance and relevance to the employer/position.
- Begin phrases with action verbs (See page 8).
- Avoid generalities and focus on specifics about experience, projects, and products.
- Quantify experience when possible (Employee of the Month, Received customer service ratings of 9.8/10, Managed a budget of \$2,000).
- · Be consistent in the format, layout, and spacing.

Resume Styles

Reverse Chronological Resume:

The traditional resume style lists everything in reverse chronological order, starting with the most recent experience and working backward. Most resumes for new college graduates are written in this format, and employers are accustomed to seeing this style of resume. Reverse chronological resumes are particularly effective when:

- You are or will be a new college graduate.
- You have experience in the field of interest.
- You can demonstrate measurable results from work activities

("Marketed events, resulting in 50% increase in attendance").

- You have held impressive job titles and/or have worked for big-name employers.
- You can demonstrate promotions and increased responsibilities.

Functional Resume:

The functional resume summarizes your professional "functions" or experience and minimizes employment history. Functional resumes are often useful for:

- Experienced workers and those returning to the workforce because it minimizes dates.
- Career changers because it outlines transferable work skills.
- Emphasizing knowledge and skills that have not been used in recent work.

Elements of both reverse chronological and functional styles can be combined if needed to show your experience.

Applicant Tracking Systems:

Applicant tracking systems (ATS) are a type of software application used by most large companies, as well as many small and mid-sized companies to sort through resumes and organize applicant information. Typically, a company will use their ATS to determine which resumes will be reviewed by a recruiter. Companies use different systems, so be sure to read through the instructions when applying. For example, some systems may require you to post your resume as a .pdf while others may not be able to read a .pdf.

ATS's will typically search for key words and try to find

candidates with the greatest match to the company's posting. It is important for you to look closely at the position description and try to use the same key words as the company whenever possible.

There are several websites that allow a job seeker to input their resume and a position description to be analyzed for the percentage of match. Use key words in a way that makes sense because eventually a human will review your resume.



It's a good idea to avoid templates—ATS's often see these as a virus and will not read them. It's also important to keep section headings simple, use consistent formatting for text and dates, avoid tables or text boxes, avoid shading or graphics, and use a .docx or .pdf file format (depending on instructions listed on the website). Some of the older systems may not be able to discriminate tense (e.g., "Manage" vs. "Managed") so you may want to match the key words exactly. You may be able to search which ATS the company you are applying to is using, which can give you an idea of what that system can read. Some systems can't read serif type fonts, such as Times New Roman, that add lines to the letters (for example, "F") so you may want to stick to a sans serif font such as Calibri or Arial (for example, "F").

RESUME FORMATTING TIPS FOR APPLICANT TRACKING SYSTEMS

- Remove any stylized formatting (i.e. bullets, bolding, italics) for easy pasting into online forms.
- Use a hyphen (-) or asterisk (*) instead of bullets or other special characters.
- Use ALL CAPITAL LETTERS for section headers (warning: spell check won't catch mistakes!).
- Indent lines using the space bar.
- Avoid serif fonts like Times New Roman; sans serif fonts such as Calibri or Arial work best.
- Save your document as a text file (.txt).



STEP 4

Proofread and Edit

Many human resource directors see the resume as a reflection of the applicant. Spelling errors, poor grammar, misalignment, poor organization, wordiness, or vagueness will produce negative impressions.

- Contact your career services office to have a professional career advisor look over your resume.
- Ask a reference, family member, friend, or roommate to review your resume. They are often great at catching typos.

CHECKLIST FOR PROOFREADING YOUR RESUME

- Spell check your resume, but be aware that it will not pick up on all errors. Spell check will not pick up errors written in all capitals.
- Is the resume pleasing to the eye?
- Does it fit comfortably within the page? Is there an appropriate amount of white space?
- Is the resume on cotton bond paper?
- Is the print clear and large enough to read even when photocopied?
- Did you use too much bold, italic, or underlining? Does content support your objective?
- Could you be more concise?
- Is it too short? Does it look as though you struggled to fill a page?
- Has extraneous material been eliminated?
- Does the format present your qualifications in the most effective manner?
- Is all important information included and easy to find? Is the format uniform throughout?
- Does the resume market your abilities and paint a picture that makes an employer want to know more about you?

STEP 5 Prepare Different Versions

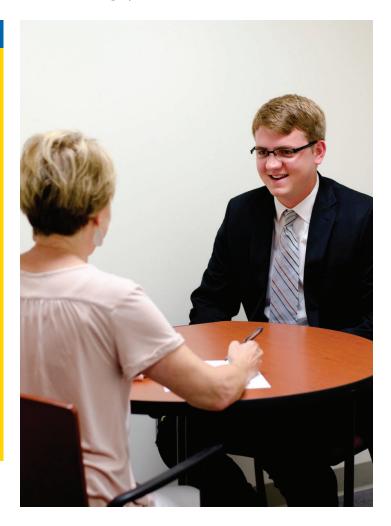
Paper Versions are highly designed with bullets, underlining, and other highlights. For the finished paper resume, use good quality paper (at least 24 lb., 20% cotton bond) in white, ivory, or a very pale gray. Avoid patterns that would give a "dirty" appearance when copied. Typically, you would bring paper copies of your resume to a career fair or an interview.

Electronic Versions look the same as your paper version when emailed or pasted into a company resume database. Print a copy to check margins, formatting, and overall appearance. Send it as a PDF file to preserve formatting. Saving your resume as a Google document may affect the format negatively.

Online Resumes

Before posting your resume on the Internet, consider whether you want your resume to be public. There are security issues inherent in posting personal contact information online. Check the confidentiality of the database or service where you are posting your resume. Never use your Social Security number, date of birth, or other information that might make you vulnerable to identity theft.

Consider creating a non-KU email to use only for job-search purposes with the possibility that you will stop using the email account once employment has been secured.



Action Verb List

Accomplishments achieved awarded benchmarked completed delivered expanded exceeded improved pioneered reduced (losses) resolved (issues) restored reversed spearheaded succeeded surpassed transformed won

Analytical

& Research analyzed assessed calibrated collected compared conducted critiqued delivered detected determined diagnosed evaluated examined experimented explored extracted formulated gathered identified inspected interpreted interviewed invented investigated located measured observed organized proved researched reviewed searched screened solved specified summarized surveyed tested validated

Communication & Persuasion

addressed advertised arbitrated arranged

articulated authored clarified collaborated communicated composed condensed conferred consulted contacted conveyed convinced corresponded debated defined demonstrated described developed directed discussed dissuaded documented drafted edited educated elicited enlisted established explained expressed formulated furnished illustrated incorporated influenced informed interacted interpreted interviewed involved joined judged lectured marketed mediated moderated negotiated observed outlined participated persuaded , presented promoted proposed publicized , published reconciled recruited referred reinforced reported resolved responded solicited specified spoke suggested summarized synthesized translated wrote Creative acted adapted began

designed devised developed directed displayed drew entertained established fashioned formulated founded illustrated initiated instituted integrated introduced invented modeled modified originated performed photographed planned revised revitalized shaped solved Financial & Data administered adjusted allocated

analvzed appraised assessed audited balanced budgeted calculated computed conserved controlled corrected cut decreased determined developed estimated managed marketed measured planned , prepared programmed projected purchased quantified reconciled reduced researched retrieved tabulated trimmed tracked Helping

ad

combined

composed

condensed

customized

created

conceptualized

adapted advocated aided answered arranged assessed assisted cared for coached contributed cooperated counseled demonstrated diagnosed educated encouraged ensured expedited facilitated guided helbed intervened motivated prevented provided referred rehabilitated represented resolved simplified supplied supported volunteered

Interpersonal & Teamwork

advised collaborated cultivated enabled focused fostered initiated interacted involved listened mediated mentored moderated navigated negotiated partnered teamed unified

Leadership & Management

accomplished acted administered advanced advised analyzed anticipated appointed approved assigned attained authorized chaired completed considered consolidated contracted controlled converted coordinated counseled decided decreased delegated determined developed directed

dispatched disseminated diversified eliminated emphasized enforced enhanced enlisted ensured established examined executed explained founded generated governed guided headed hired hosted improved incorporated increased influenced initiated inspected inspired instigated instituted instructed integrated introduced launched led lowered managed merged modified motivated organized originated overhauled oversaw pioneered , planned presided prioritized produced proposed recommended recruited reorganized replaced represented restored reviewed saved scheduled secured selected shaped solidified stimulated streamlined strengthened supervised terminated trimmed verified

Organization & Detail

approved arranged catalogued categorized charted classified coded collected compiled contained coordinated corrected corresponded distributed executed expedited filed generated implemented incorporated inspected logged maintained monitored obtained operated ordered organized planned prepared processed provided purchased recorded registered reserved responded restructured reviewed routed scheduled screened set up standardized streamlined submitted supplied updated used validated verified Teaching & Training adapted advised appraised clarified coached conducted coordinated critiqued developed educated

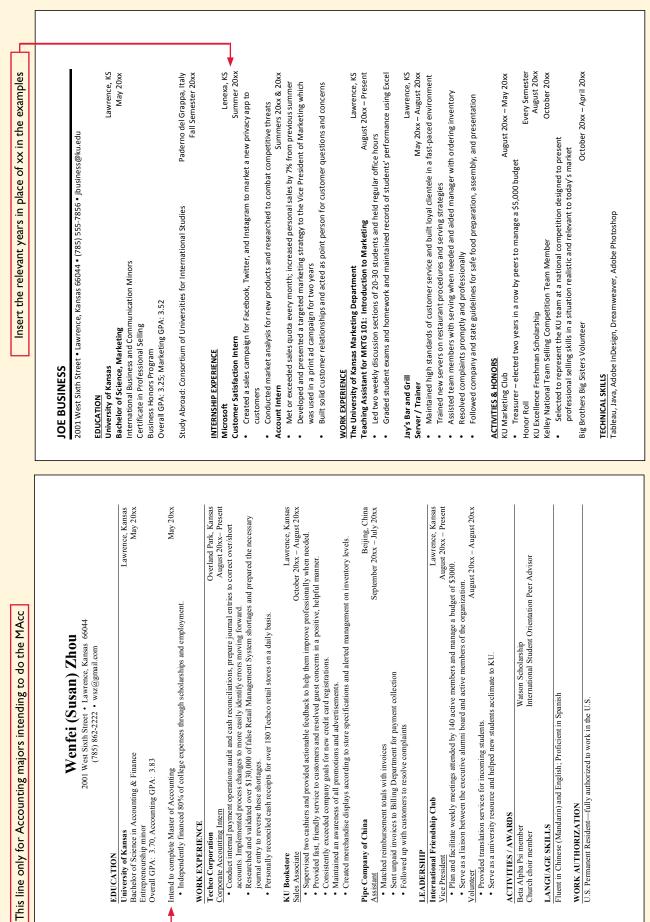
advised appraised clarified coached communicated conducted coordinated demonstrated demonstrated developed educated encouraged evaluated explained facilitated focused guided informed instilled instructed

motivated persuaded set simulated stimulated taught tested trained transmitted tutored

Technical

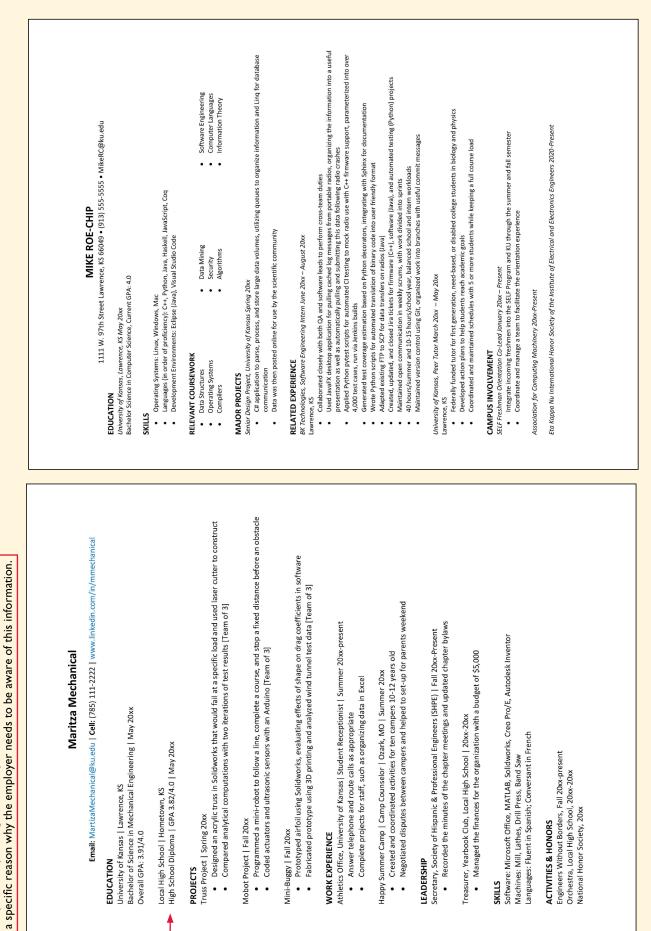
adapted advised analyzed applied assembled automated built calculated coded computed computerized conserved constructed controlled converted debugged designed determined developed diagnosed drafted engineered fabricated fortified identified implemented inspected installed located maintained monitored networked operated overhauled prevented , brinted programmed proposed recorded rectified regulated remodelled repaired replaced restored retrieved solved specialized specified standardized studied supported trained troubleshot upgraded

Business Resume Examples



Computing/Engineering Resume Examples

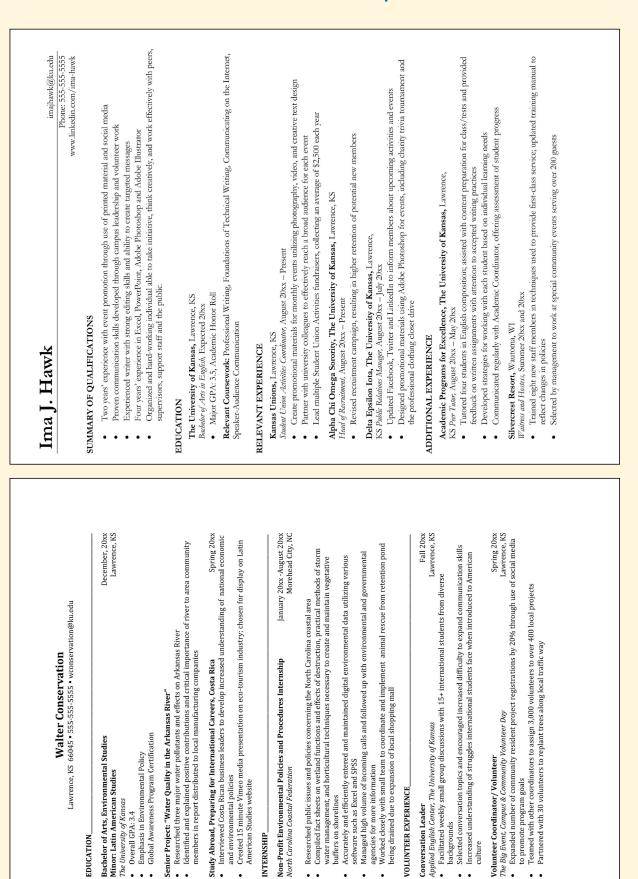
Only include your high school if you are a freshman or there is



Journalism/Creative Resume Examples

	KATIE CRIMSON 816-555-5555 . PRAIRIE VILLAGE, KS. KATIECRIMSON@GMAIL.COM	EDUCATION UNCREATY oF KANSA. LAWRENCE. NS UNCREATY OF KANSA. LAWRENCE. NS Galdenion My 2023; GAN: 33 Galdenion My 2023; GAN: 38 Manualization and Allone from Allone post for 12 representation of 5 with cickeling pfilling and event phanning and dolor from methods and mole from the inductivi. Manualization Manualization Manuality Canadian Allone from the inductivi.	
Applicants for jobs in creative fields may choose to use additional design elements in their resume; however, be aware these elements may not go through an applicant tracking system successfully.	JAYHAWK JOURNALIST	CATACT Contract (a) States in a state a	

Liberal Arts and Sciences Resume Examples



VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Conversation Leader

backgrounds

culture

. .

buffers on shorelines

INTERNSHIP

The University of Kansas

EDUCATION

Overall GPA: 3.4

References



Resumes and cover letters win interviews; excellent references can win job offers.

If you are being considered for a job, it is likely the potential employer will speak with your references following the final interview.

You must be certain your references will provide a good recommendation. A less-than-enthusiastic reference decreases your chance of being hired, so select your references carefully.

Who

To identify as many potential references as possible, consider current and former bosses, professors, advisors, volunteer coordinators, co-workers, and subordinates who have firsthand knowledge of your work and abilities.

Be sure to find references who know you well enough to speak on your behalf and represent different facets of your experience (i.e. a professor, internship supervisor, etc.) Your references may change based on the position for which you are applying, or as your career progresses. Roommates, friends, and family members do not make good professional references.

What

Contact the people on your list and explain that you are in a job search. Ask whether they would be willing to act as a reference for you. You might say something like: "Dr. Thomas, I will be graduating in May and will be seeking a full-time position. Because you were my instructor for several courses and can speak to my work ethic, I was wondering if you would be comfortable serving as a reference?" The answer will usually be positive. Be prepared to provide a brief idea of what you have been doing recently and the type of position you seek. With past co-workers or supervisors, you may want to state why you left that job, because they are likely to be asked by the potential employer. Deliver a current copy of your resume to your references so they will be familiar with your experiences and what you have highlighted for employers. You may also want to provide a copy of the job description.

How Many

You will generally be asked to provide at least three references. It is a good idea to have a backup on the list in case one or more of your references is unavailable.

Where

Do not include references on your resume. Names and contact information for references take up a lot of space and usually have little meaning to a potential employer at the resume stage. Make a separate reference page. Be sure to include your name and contact information at the top. Use the same fonts and formatting as your resume and cover letter. It is a good idea to print all three on the same high-quality bond paper.

Include each reference's name, current title, agency, or organization with which they are currently affiliated, city and state, preferred phone number(s), and email address. In some cases, you may also want to note your relationship to the individual, such as a former supervisor at KU Library, particularly if your reference has moved to a new organization. Be certain everything is correct!

When

Provide your reference list to a potential employer only when requested.

Be sure to thank your references at the completion of your job search.

HELPFUL TIPS

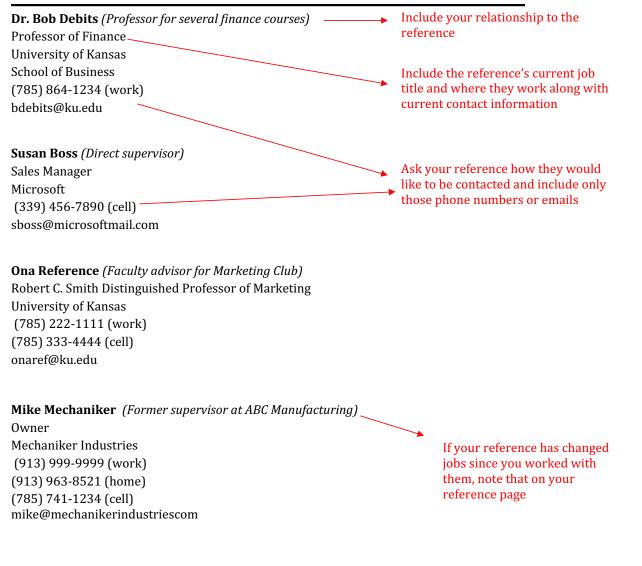
- Alert your references that potential employers may be calling and provide them with your most recent resume.
- Notify your references if your name has changed since they knew you.

Sample Reference Page

SUZY SCHOLAR

2201 West Seventh • Lawrence, Kansas 66044 • (785) 555-9876 • sscholar@ku.edu

PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES



Cover Letters

The Purpose of Cover Letters

The purpose of the cover letter and resume package is to motivate the employer to take action and invite you for an interview. When delivered together, the two documents should be complementary and work together to accomplish your purpose. The appearance of your resume/cover letter package will be enhanced if both documents are printed on the same high-quality bond paper.

Employers report that an impressive cover letter is often more important than the resume when deciding whether to interview a candidate, so it can be a mistake to focus too much attention on the resume and ignore the potential value of a well-written letter. Like the resume, the cover letter is not intended to get you the job—it is intended to get you an interview.

When to use a Cover Letter

Many employers will require a cover letter as part of your application. Include a cover letter with your resume when specifically requested or when emailing. Remember, whatever you write in the body of your email IS your cover letter.

A COVER LETTER SHOULD:

- Catch the reader's attention (opening paragraph)
- Communicate skills and experience (middle paragraph)
- Support your statements with specifics (middle paragraph)
- Compel the reader to act (final paragraph)

What to Include in your Cover Letter

The most important aspect of a cover letter is employer focus. Present the employer with indications of your personality and style along with your skills and abilities. Highlight your qualifications for the specific position you seek, clearly stating your interests and qualifications relative to the employer's needs. Use the job description as an outline for writing your cover letter.

A cover letter can also help explain special circumstances, such as a gap in schooling or employment, qualifications for a position outside your exact major (i.e. a chemical engineer seeking employment with an environmental engineering firm) or a drop in GPA.



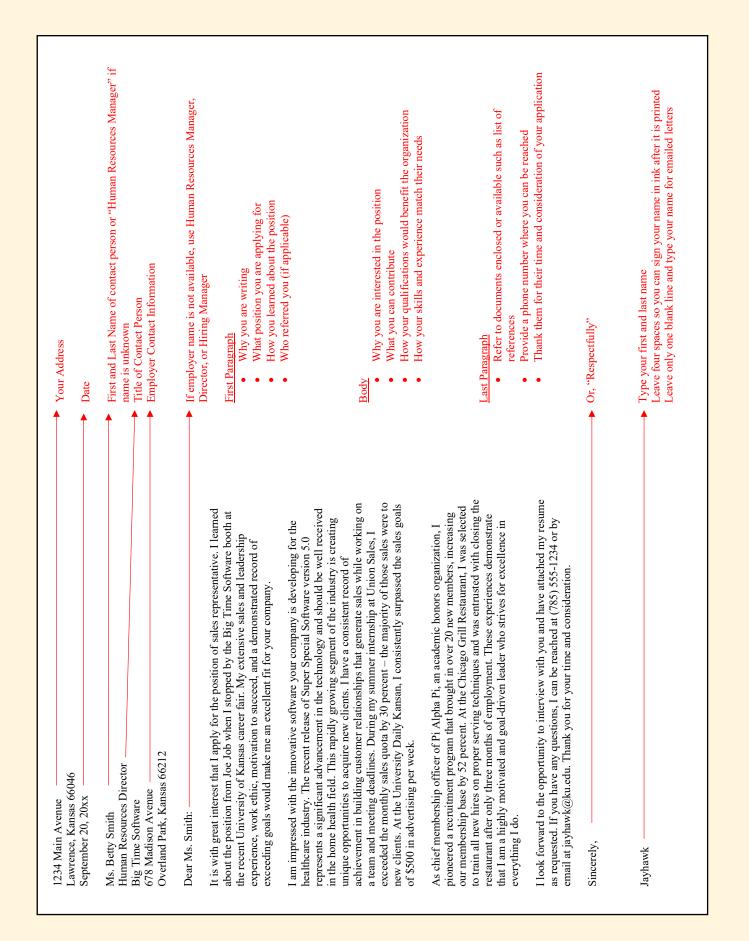
Always customize your cover letter! Include the position title and the organization's name. Sending out a general cover letter and resume to hundreds of employers is rarely successful. It can create a perception on the employer's part that you are not a serious and thoughtful person, that you are desperate for a job, or that you don't really care enough about their organization to learn about them.

Your letter should be just a few paragraphs and only one page in length. While there is no perfect formula regarding length and what to include, keep it relevant and relatively brief.

THINGS TO AVOID IN COVER LETTERS

- Starting every sentence with "I" or "my"
- Extraneous words and wordy phrases, such as "in order to" and "for the purpose of"
- Confusing and complex language and sentence structure (HINT: Read your letter aloud to identify awkwardness, then correct it.)
- Long sentences and paragraphs
- Overused words
- Font sizes smaller than 10 point and larger than 12 point
- Nondescript phrases such as "I was a computer lab assistant." Instead, say, "I provided technical assistance," or, "I conducted research activities using observation and data analysis skills while..." instead of "I worked as a research assistant".

Sample Cover Letter



Professional Communication

Whether you are submitting an application for a position or developing a networking contact online, all of your communication needs to be professional. Employers are evaluating your communication skills with every piece of correspondence, so be sure they get a good impression.

Many of your connections with professionals will be online. In online correspondence it is important to follow the same basic guidelines as you would in any other formal style of communication. Below are some examples.

Networking Through Email

Subject: Request to Connect from a KU Student

Dear Ms. Ellsworth:

Dr. Studia, professor of sociology at the University of Kansas, suggested that I contact you. As a fellow Jayhawk, she felt you might be willing to visit with me about my career path.

I am a junior at KU, majoring in sociology, and am currently exploring career options. Your background in human rights work and your leadership in non- profit organizations are both very interesting to me. I would like to learn more about what it's like to work for a nonprofit, and was hoping you might be willing to give me advice on how to prepare myself for this career path.

Would you be willing to visit with me briefly about your experiences? I'm available between December 5 and January 10 and would be happy to connect through email, on the phone, or in person.

Sincerely,

Jay Hawk jhawk@ku.edu 555-555-5555



Informational Interview Request Through Email

Subject: Informational Interview Request from Jay Hawk

Dear Mr. Budig:

I am currently a junior finance student at the University of Kansas and am interested in learning more about careers in the finance industry. After a class discussion and personal research, one particular career that has sparked my interest is financial advising..

Would you be willing to take 20 to 30 minutes out of your day to provide me with advice and expertise based on your experiences in this field? I am available on Monday and Friday afternoons through the next four weeks. If this is a possibility, please email me back or contact me at 555-555-5555. Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,

Jay Hawk jhawk@ku.edu 555-555-5555

Job Prospecting Through Email

Subject: Positions in Software Development

Dear Mr. Haworth:

After reading a description of your company on LinkedIn, I would like to know about possible job opportunities in your software development department. I am a senior in Computer Science, and will earn my bachelor's degree in May.

Last summer, I had the opportunity to do an internship for the XYZ Solutions Firm where I worked closely with a team to develop business technology programs. My training also included testing existing systems. This experience confirmed my interest in a career in software development, and I believe your company would be an excellent match for my skills.

My resume is attached for your consideration. I realize that you have many demands on your time, but I would appreciate an opportunity to discuss employment possibilities with your company. Would you be available the week of January 10 to meet briefly? If you would prefer to contact me by phone, my number is 555-555-5555.

Thank you very much for considering my request. I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

Jay Hawk Jayhawk@ku.edu 555-555-5555

Networking Introduction Through Social Media Messaging

Dear Ms. Fraser:

I am currently a psychology major at the University of Kansas exploring career options. While researching higher education professionals who live in Chicago, I found your profile. I will be in Chicago during the week of March 18-22. Would you be willing to take 20-30 minutes of your time to talk to me about your experiences in this field? If you would rather connect by email, I can be reached at jhawk@ku.edu.

Sincerely,

Jay Hawk jayhawk@ku.edu 555-555-5555

KU Mentoring/LinkedIn Invitation to Connect Message

(Someone you've never met)

Dear Mr. Sabatini:

I am a photo media major at the University of Kansas exploring career options. I joined the Photo Marketing group, and enjoy reading the discussions there. Would you be willing to connect with me so I can learn more about your work?

Sincerely,

Jay Hawk jayhawk@ku.edu 555-555-5555

KU Mentoring/LinkedIn Invitation to Connect Message

(Someone already known to you)

Dear Ms. Higuchi:

I enjoyed the time I spent working for you at ABC Company. The help you offered me during my internship was invaluable. I hope you will connect with me on LinkedIn so we can stay in touch in the future!

Sincerely,

Jay Hawk jayhawk@ku.edu 555-555-5555

TIPS FOR ONLINE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

DO

- Spell check ALL written communication.
- Proofread electronic messages just as thoroughly as you would printed documents.
- Use a subject line in ALL emails such as "Application for Marketing Internship".
- Be respectful of the person you are contacting; don't ask for something they can't provide.
- Use formal greetings and closings when possible.
- Create an email "signature" that includes all of your contact information.

DON'T

- Use informal text shortcuts such as "ur" for "you are".
- Use emoticons in any of your communication.
- Use an informal tone in your writing.
- Attach a resume in a request to connect, or in a request for an informational interview.



The "Resumes, References, and Cover Letters" guide is part of a series. Get a copy of the "Preparing for Job Interviews" and "Strategies for a Successful Job Search" guides at your career services office.

Business Career Services 1130 Capitol Federal Hall Phone: 785-864-5591 Email: kubuscareer@ku.edu business.ku.edu/kubuscareer

Engineering Career Center 1410 LEEP2 Phone: 785-864-3891 Email: ecc@ku.edu

ecc.ku.edu

Journalism Career Center

120 Stauffer Flint Hall Phone: 785-864-7630 Email: steve_rottinghaus@ku.edu journalism.ku.edu

University Career Center

206 Summerfield Hall Phone: 785-864-3624 Email: ucc@ku.edu career.ku.edu