

# Resumes & Cover Letters

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Professional Edge Series

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# TIP SHEET FOR RESUMES

- 1) **Create a Master Resume**
- 2) **Choose a Format**
- 3) **Consider Content**
- 4) **Find Your Style**
- 5) **Construct Sections**
- 6) **Use Active Verbs**
- 7) **Deliver the Documents**



# TIP 1: CREATE a MASTER RESUME



## 1) **What is it? (NOT to be shared with employers – this is for YOU!)**

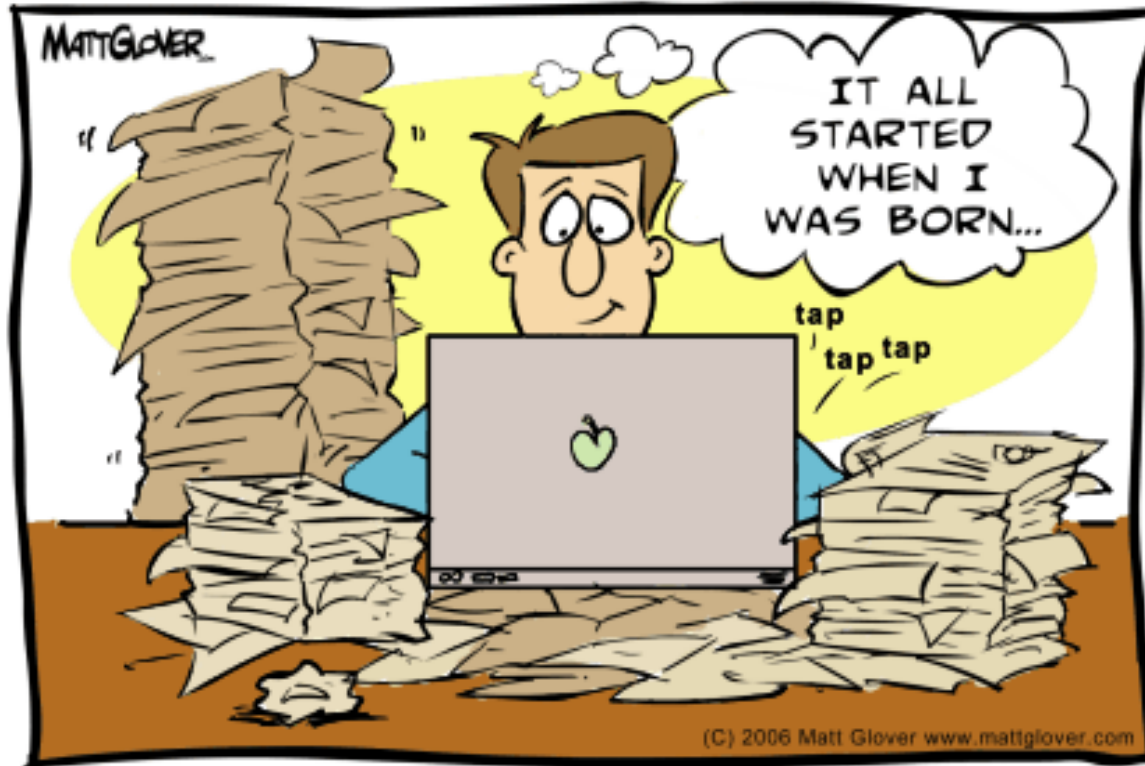
- **A comprehensive list** of everything you have ever done, do, and will do – whatever is of consequence to future potential employers.
- **A convenient clearinghouse** of your information to easily retrieve when you want to present your case in a resume to a potential employer about a particular position. It will contain all of your past involvements, efforts, training, and contributions, your current strengths and skills sets, and proof of your future potential.

## 2) **What does it include?**

- **A full record** of your education, sports, clubs, organizations, leadership experience, employment, volunteerism, awards and accolades, grants and scholarships, workshops, conferences and conventions, travel, language skills, technical skills, non-technical (or soft) skills, publications, personal accomplishments, community involvement, professional development, and more.
  - **Relevant information** for your career goals and educational and occupational path.
- ❖ **Perks to having a Master Resume:**
- **Retrieve your information** at a moment's notice without taxing your memory.
  - If you gather the information and present it well (folder, binder, album), it also makes a **nice coffee table book** to share with friends and family over the years!



# TIP 1a: Now use your info wisely!



Resume not Autobiography

**“Your resume must show that you have the core knowledge and skills needed to do the job.” – Louise M. Kursmark in *Best Resumes for College Students and New Grads***

# TIP 2: CHOOSE A FORMAT



## 1) Chronological

- List experience in **reverse** chronological order.
- The rule-of-thumb is to go back 5-7 years, unless you possess relevant employment that will support your cause with the targeted employer.
- List education first for the first few years until you have solid experience.

## 2) Functional

- Skill clusters / Dates and places of employment are left out.
- Re-entry people and recent graduates may find this style effective.
- Special section(s) written instead of listing employment experience.
- Usually 3-4 areas emphasized, showing results and accomplishments.



# TIP 2: CHOOSE A FORMAT (cont.)



## 3) **Combination**

- Combines the reverse chronological employment listing with the skills and achievement section from the functional format
- Advantages
  - Opportunity to highlight skills, while showing evidence of employment
  - Emphasizes most relevant skills and abilities.
  - Can be changed to market yourself in the best possible light.
  - Good tool for almost anyone; however, re-entry people, recent college graduates, and career changers find it particularly useful.
- Disadvantages
  - Employers can lose interest unless it is very well-written and attractively laid out - **FORMAT MATTERS!**





# TIP 3: CONSIDER CONTENT

- Tailor it! It should be **employer-oriented**. (No pronouns – when an employer is reading your resume, all pronouns belong to the him/her. Start phrases action verbs!)

- Less is more – but don't leave off salient points!

- Sell your strengths, skills and past contributions that match what the employer is looking for.

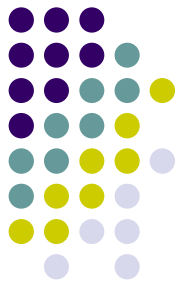
Employers often form their first impressions and make decisions in the first 10-20 seconds of looking at your document! Make it count!

- Everything you place on your resume should support **your objective of showing the employer you have the competence and potential to do the job for which you are asking an interview**. When you look at the points on your resume, consider whether or not that piece of information enhances or detracts from your argument. Is it employer-oriented? If it doesn't support what you are selling to that employer – which is your potential to do that job – take it off. This is not a life history, **it is a document marketing your future – your potential!** Only use info that pertains to that employer's needs, interests and investments.



# TIP 4: FIND YOUR STYLE

Note: Scanned resumes are much more simplified!



- Error-Free!
- Font Style, Size, Color
- Bolding, Underlining, Italics
- Bulleting, Indenting
- Boxes, Separation Lines
- White Space
- Margins

Perfection is good

Serif (TNR) / 10+ / Black

Judiciously / No Italics

Yes, Yes, Yes (not for scanned)

Sparingly, but Yes

Infuse into document

White frame not required / Think outside the box

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# TIP 4: FIND YOUR STYLE (cont.)



## HOW LONG SHOULD IT BE?

1-2 pages is fine, but be sure to have full pages and put your name, email address, phone number, and the page number on the second page!

- All Caps
  - Borders
  - Pictures / Images / Graphics
  - High Register Word Choices
  - Consistency in Features
  - Neatness
  - Other
- Best only with Headers
- Sparingly, with taste
- No (Maybe Mktg/Adv/Art)
- Use Words that Sing
- Make Sections Match
- Required = Visual Peace
- Sell to the employer and the position! / Highlight Your Potential!



# TIP 5: CONSTRUCT SECTIONS



## ● Main Headings

- Name & Contact Info
  - Your “Company Letterhead” info (use with resume, cover letter, references, follow up).
  - Your name should be the biggest and boldest on the page (20 pt font TNR & bold).
- Professional Profile or Objective (does **not** have to be labeled – can center on page)
  - Give some clue to the employer about what **position** you are seeking.
- Summary, Qualifications, Skills
  - VITAL AREA! Hard and soft skills, technical and non-technical – be sure to show a balance – this is where you shine! Add unique strengths and skills.
- Education
  - Know your school, degree, **and** major name, & your GPA (3.0 or higher in **either** overall or major GPA is minimum to list – if you use your major GPA, be sure to label it as such)! List relevant courses and projects if you don’t have targeted employment experience. Put at top until you gain solid field experience.
  - Bullet any awards, honors, scholarships, student organizations, etc.
- Gainful Employment Experience
  - Highlight Relevance – Qualify and Quantify! (This is **not** a job description. This is where you tell the employer what skills you used to do the activities of your position, and what contributions you made that enhanced the business or the employer’s reputation.)





# TIP 5: CONSTRUCT SECTIONS (cont.)

- Main Headings (cont.)
  - Volunteer or Internship/Co-op Experience
    - Get this hands-on, real-world experience before you graduate!
  - Professional Affiliations, Memberships
    - Join, Join, Join / Join as a student ... stayed joined as a professional
  - Certifications, Licenses, Credentials, Titles
  - Leadership and Special Projects
    - School or Independent
  - Travel Experience and Linguistic Skills
  - Endorsements (Quotes from people who would recommend you.)
    - ❖ Tailor your sections to your sales pitch!  
(Avoid personal, family, and hobby information. No photos!)



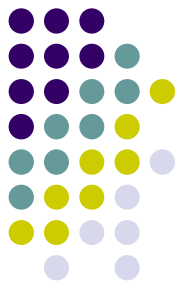


## TIP 6: USE ACTIVE VERBS

- Use verbs that show **action**, contribution, responsibility, growth, and your future potential; use verbs such as the following examples:
  - Achieved
  - Administered
  - Analyzed
  - Coordinated
  - Designed
  - Developed
  - Directed
  - Established
  - Implemented
  - Increased
  - Initiated
  - Negotiated
  - Organized
  - Planned
  - Promoted
  - Solved
  - Supervised
  - Trained

Also, watch tenses – use past tense for past experiences and present tense for current experiences.





# TIP 7: DELIVER THE DOCUMENT

- MS Word, RTF, PDF, ASCII, Text Only, Other
- **Scanning** (or to be scanned)
- Online Forms, Websites
- Emailing

- Paper & Envelope
- Folds, Staples, Clips
- Jackets & Folders
- Hand-Delivery
- USPS (“Snail Mail”)

MS Word to write / PDF to send

**Get rid of all fancy formatting**

Use buzz words and key phrases

Send both ‘pretty’ and scannable

Cotton or Linen / Off-White or Ivory

Do not fold or bind pages

Considered unnecessary today

Expect an on-the-spot Interview

Send directly to hiring manager





# RESUME

Now – get  
started  
creating and  
tweaking  
YOUR  
document!

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# RESUME BUILDING TIME



- **Bring your resume up** on the computer in front of you, if you haven't already.
- **Create or tweak your resume based on the information presented in the Format, Style, and Content sections of this presentation material.**
  - Create your 'company letterhead' with accurate information.
  - Label your tailored headings for each section you will use.
  - Add your pertinent information under each heading.
  - Don't forget to proofread, proofread, proofread!
- **Later, prepare a 'master resume'** using the guidelines we covered during the workshop. (Don't worry about length or format; just type up all pieces of information you can think of so you have everything in one place. **Remember**, you **won't** share this with employers, rather use it as a **resource** for creating future dynamic and relevant resumes each time you want to apply for a position.)



# DON'T FORGET ACCURACY



Put the correct **degree** (Bachelor of \_\_\_\_ or Master of \_\_\_\_ ) and **major** (Degree in \_\_\_\_):

- Bachelor of Science in Accounting
- Bachelor of Business Administration in Economics
- Bachelor of Business Administration in Finance
- Bachelor of Business Administration in International Business
- Bachelor of Business Administration in Management
- Bachelor of Business Administration in Management Information Systems
- Bachelor of Business Administration in Marketing
- Bachelor of Business Administration in Advertising/Public Relations
- Executive Master of Business Administration
- Master of Business Administration
- Master of Accountancy
- Master of Science in Taxation
- Master of Science in Management Information Systems

Also, check your Certificate's name!

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# ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR RESUMES



- Always put a professional-looking email address on your resume (using first and last name is best).
- Call your own phone to see what a caller would hear in your voice message. If it isn't calm and professional, change it immediately with no background noises. Do not use distracting ringtones.
- Write in first person, but **omit** the subject. Do **not** use pronouns on a resume.
- Write concisely (in phrases) and omit articles (such as a, an, the), if possible.
- Read your resume backwards, word-for-word, to catch errors that your brain would otherwise overlook, and then still have at least two other people proofread your resume for you. Do **not** depend on spell-check – use your eyes and those of others.
- **Keep a log** of the resumes given out, sent, and posted online, including the date provided, the recipient company's name, the contact person's name, the contact phone number, the email address, and any response from the organization.
- Keep track of your follow-up efforts so you are consistent.
- Provide a copy of all distributed resumes to your reference contacts so they can expect employers to call and know what the employers know about you. This prepares your contacts to be a good, solid reference for you.
- Always take 4-5 nice hard-copies to interviews to share with interviewers.



# TIPS FOR COVER LETTERS



- Key components to a cover letter:
  - **Your Banner/Letterhead**
    - Use what you used for your resume – consistency is important.
  - **Company Contact Information**
    - Include company name, contact person’s name and title, address, phone number, and email address (this is for **your** convenience later when you follow up).
  - **Date**
    - Be sure to send your letter on the date you put on it.
    - Keep a copy for yourself so you can follow up in a timely manner (keeping record of your efforts is invaluable to the success of your job search).
  - **Salutation**
    - Address the letter to a **specific** person. If you don’t know who, call the company and find out. If you ultimately can’t find out who the individual is, do **not** put a salutation line (e.g. “To Whom it May Concern” or “Dear Sir”) – just leave the line off completely and begin with your first paragraph under the recipient company contact information and date lines.



# TIPS FOR COVER LETTERS (cont.)



- Key components to a cover letter (cont.):
  - **Paragraph 1:** Tell them what position you seek and how you learned about it. This makes your letter employer-oriented, as they can gauge when their marketing dollars are having success. This is where you will also want to use the name of any network contacts or professionals you know may be important to the employer (yes, this is called “name-dropping”). If the employer knows someone who knows you, you have a much greater chance at being asked in for an interview than just the average ‘man-off-the-street’ applicant.
  - **Paragraph 2:** Tell them what unique background, skills, and strengths you have that qualify you for the position. This becomes your “This is why you should hire me” section. Don’t just repeat what is on your resume – reword key points and be succinct. This can be broken into two shorter paragraphs, a bulleted list or a chart comparing what they are looking for versus what you have to contribute that matches their needs.
  - **Paragraph 3:** Tell them you want an interview. Ask for one and be positive. This is the ‘ask,’ the ‘big sell,’ the ‘close.’ You must motivate them to act on your information. Tell them you will contact them by such-and-such a date if you don’t hear from them before then. Then do it.



# TIPS FOR COVER LETTERS (cont.)



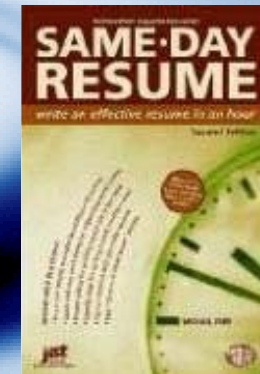
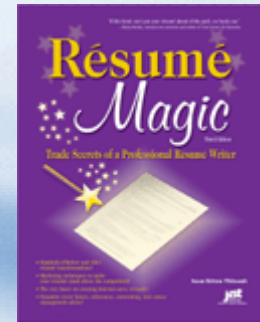
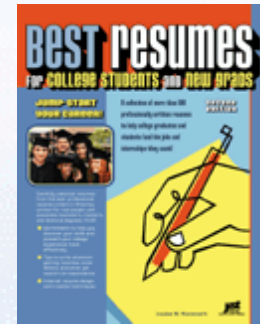
- Key components to a cover letter (cont.):
  - **Your Closing:** Use “Sincerely” or some other professional closing, leave a space for your signature, and put your name and credentials at the bottom. Sign letters in **blue ink**, if possible. It makes a nice contrast to the black text of the document, and makes it more obvious it is not just a copy.
- As with your resume, use quality cotton or linen resume paper (off-white or ivory) to present a professional impression. Use the same paper for both documents. Use envelopes that match or complement your paper. (It is best **not** to fold your resume!)
- When attaching a cover letter for an electronic submission (email or websites), place the cover letter before the resume. When sending or providing in person, put the cover letter on top of the resume, but do **not** attach with staples or clips. Each document should be able to stand on its own in content and appearance. (The same applies to your references page – same heading, same paper.)
- Your cover letter should highlight your best strengths, but not just repeat the resume. Use different wording. Never put info only in your cover letter. It might not get read.



# Suggested Resources

- ❑ Best Resumes for College Students and New Grads by Louise M. Kursmark / JIST Works
- ❑ Resume Magic by Susan Britton Whitcomb / JIST Works
- ❑ Same Day Resume by Michael Farr / JIST Works

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SEARCH!**

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**Need personal help?**

Please call the UALR  
**College of Business  
Student Services**  
at **501-569-3358** to make  
an appointment; OR call  
**UALR's Counseling &  
Career Planning Services**  
at **501-569-3185** to speak  
to a Career Counselor for  
assistance.

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