

Resumes & Cover Letters

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The purpose of a resume

- To get an interview with an employer
 - Convey a clear, concise picture of yourself and how you fit the employer's needs
 - One page, 30 second scan
 - Avoid being “weeded out” (spelling errors, etc)
 - Targeted to a specific position / employer.

- *MnCIS: Develop a Resume: Overview*

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A 3-step task

Three pieces of paper:

1. Research the position
 - What technical skills, transferable skills, personal characteristics does the position require?
 - What do you know about the company / organization?
 - As specific as possible. Keyword: research!
2. Research yourself
 - “Brainstorm” skills (education, paid experience, not-for-pay experience, what you like/do well, personal characteristics, etc.)
 - Stress accomplishment vs. stale job description
3. Match your skills and experience to the employer’s needs
 - Relate “you” specifically to the position

MnCIS Develop: Identify Skills to Highlight (including “Related Info”)

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Resume formats

- No “right” way
- Always targeted vs. generic
- Most common formats:
 - Chronological
 - Functional
 - Combination
 - Electronic

Chronological format

- Heading
 - Must be current contact information
 - Voice mail message
- Objective
 - State what you want, have to offer
 - A thesis statement, resume supports

Objective

- Targeted to a **specific position**
- Organization / industry you want to work in
- Skills you bring to the position
- Best = all three of these

- “Profile” or “Summary Statement” may be an alternative

Lead with your strengths!

- Education
 - Relevant coursework
 - School(s), degree(s)
 - Honors, certifications, memberships
 - High school?
- Experience
 - Employer, City, State... dates... title...
 - Reverse chronological order
 - Action verbs
 - Emphasize relevant skills, not just p.d.
 - Choose what you highlight and how

MnCIS: Develop: Writing skills statements

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Resume headings, cont'd

- Activities
 - Honors, awards, “extras”
 - “Financed 100% of education...”
- Alternative Headings
 - Not written in stone...
 - What highlights you best?
- Avoid
 - Any references to religion and politics
 - Personal information (age, picture, etc.)
 - Hobbies (unless relevant)
 - “References available on request”

Tips for Electronic Resumes

- 1. Save the resume as a “text” document and title the document with the author’s name
- 2. Re-open the “text” file. (all formatting will be gone)
- 3. Go through the document line-by-line and align text so that it is flush to the left-hand margin
- 4. Remove all: centering, right hand margin, and justification alignments
- 5. Remove any and all graphics, artwork, and special character formatting
- 6. Remove all tab characters
- 7. Remove all columns
- 8. Replace bullets with asterisks
- 9. and carefully check spelling

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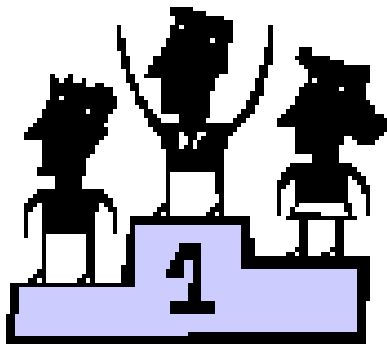
Cont'd

- Use 12-14 pt. font
- Use standard fonts. Such as Times or Cousier
- Use terms and Jargon specific to your field (use the keywords in the position description posted by the company)

Cover Letters

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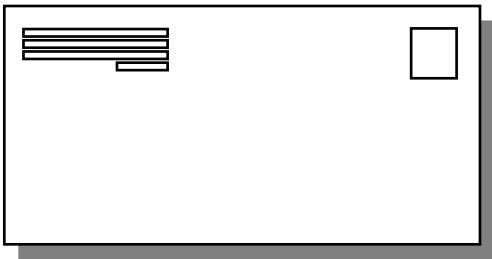
- A way of introducing yourself to the employer
- A chance to tell the employer who you are and why you, specifically, are qualified to do the job
- A forum for you to offer additional information that is pertinent to the job
- A place to “make your case” as to why you should be chosen for the position.



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Rules of Thumb when writing a Cover Letter

- If you send your application by mail or route it through human relations, include a cover letter
- If you ask the employer in person for an interview and have a chance to introduce yourself, you may choose to skip a cover letter
- If you are unsure, include a cover letter



What a Cover Letter should look like

- Keep your letter to one page
- Avoid turning your letter into an autobiography-- this is not the purpose of a cover letter (*when I was four I dreamed of...*)
- Keep your letter simple
 - The employer is probably reviewing many applications
 - For this reason, they may only glance at the letter or look for key words



Regarding the Structure of Your Letter

- Include: Your name, phone, address and e-mail at the top, left
- Include the date of the letter next
- Include the contact name, organization, phone, address, and email at the left below the date
- Spaces...don't forget about spaces...

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Opening Paragraph

- Begin with a greeting by using formal titles (Dear Mrs. Anderson, Dear Dr. Adams)
- Avoid using “sir” or “ma’am”
- Indicate why you are writing (another words, identify the position you are applying for)
- Also indicate how you found out about the position

The Body...

- Explain why you are interested in the position and also what relevant work/educational experience you have that was not specified in your resume

e.g. “Following an initial assignment as Director of Sales for the Chemicals Division, I was promoted to division General Manager, taking P & L responsibility for several key businesses in the course of a year”

- High Impact Cover Letters, Beatty

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Conclusion

- Thank the person who will be interviewing you for taking the time to review your application
- Refer to the enclosed information (resume, transcripts, test scores etc.)
- Indicate your plan for follow-up
 - ◉ e.g. Who will call whom? If you intend to call in a few days to ensure the arrival of your application, indicate that in the cover letter.
- Include a salutation (Sincerely, Very Best, etc. and Sign using the name you want the employer to refer to you as

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Additional Points on Cover Letters

- Use 12 pt. Times New Roman Font
- The letter should be SINGLE spaced
- Print your letter on 8.5 x 11 sheet of white paper
 - ◉ Avoid using frilly paper, colors, and textures!
- And please, please, don't forget to

PROOF READ!!!

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- Your name
- Address
- Phone
- Email

- Date
- Name
- Title
- Organization
- Address
- City, State, Zip Code

- Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

- I am interested in the assistant position advertised in XXX. I am currently employed as Legislative Director for Assemblywoman XXXX, Chairperson of the NYS Assembly XXX. I accepted this position because of the emphasis on the writing and research skills which are applicable to your requirements for an author's assistant. My experience in the NYS Assembly has afforded me the opportunity to become familiar with the consolidated and unconsolidated laws of the State of New York. I also have extensive experience in legal and policy research.
- In my position as Legislative Director for Ms. XXX, I prepare her personal legislation which deals with issues relative to her position as Senior Member of the NYS Assembly Standing Committee on XXXX. In as much as she is Chairperson of the XXX Committee I am, of course, heavily involved in the current welfare and medicaid reform movement.
- In response to your search for a part-time assistant, I believe my experience in the Legislature, and my research and writing skills qualify me for consideration. If you would like, I can provide with current samples with my work.
- To further acquaint you with the specifics of my background I am enclosing my resume. I hope you will consider me for this position. I look forward to meeting with you and discussing my qualifications in more detail.
- Sincerely,
- Your Signature
- Your Typed Name

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Remember

- Address your letter to a particular individual
- **1st paragraph:** state the position you're looking for and where you found the opening listed.
- **2nd paragraph:** sell yourself. Highlight experience and skills relevant to the position. State what you can do for them... not what you want!
- **The close:**
 - Active
 - Passive

Questions



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