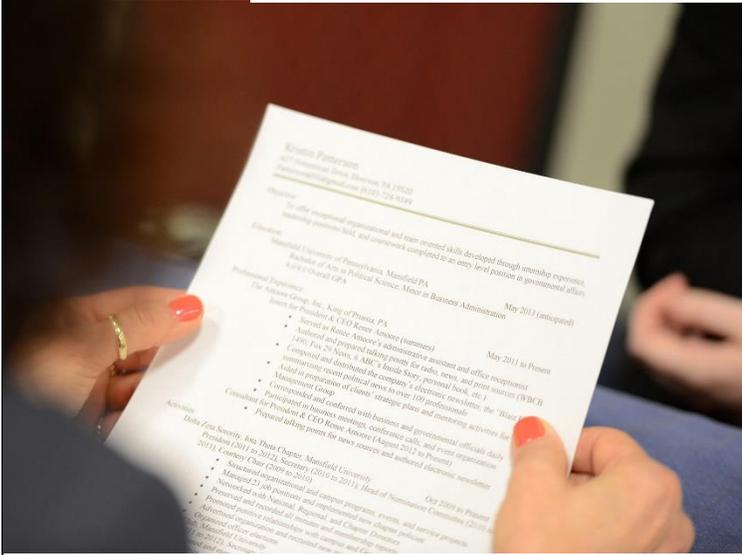




MANSFIELD UNIVERSITY



Career Center



STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

A HANDBOOK FOR RESUMES AND COVER LETTERS

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A HANDBOOK FOR RESUMES AND COVER LETTERS

The Step-by-Step Guide is designed to help you get a start on your resume and cover letters. It's not exhaustive, and it isn't the only way to do things, but it will help you get started on the basics of resume and cover letter creation.

The Career Center is your partner as you begin your career. We are a "one stop shop" to help you with...

- Career exploration and planning (using FOCUS software)
- Resume writing workshops and one-to-one sessions by appointment
- Special events (i.e. featured speaker, discussion panels)
- Contacts to PA's State System of Higher Education and other colleges' job fairs
- Job postings and internship announcements via Handshake (career.mansfield.edu)
- Mock interviews (virtual via  biginterview and in-person)
- Information on graduate schools
- Resource library and computer work area
- Professional Clothes Closet – free professional clothing for current students

**HAVE
QUESTIONS?
WE CAN HELP!**

Schedule an
appointment via
Handshake at:
career.mansfield.edu

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Creating a Strong Resume

A resume details your professional preparation and background as they relate to your current career objective. It should be easy to read and a potential employer should be able to quickly identify your strengths and abilities. No resume lands you the job, but a good resume convinces an employer you are worth the time to interview.

There is no one right way to prepare a resume; but there are **general principles**:

- ✓ One to two pages is acceptable for a new college graduate. However, one page is *strongly* preferred.
- ✓ Must be error free. This is non-negotiable.
- ✓ Use lists. A resume is not a letter; don't use paragraphs or full sentences.
- ✓ Balance text with white space and use graphic elements carefully.

Talk with a Career Center staff member about your particular needs. You may email your resume to us for an online critique at careers@mansfield.edu (attach your resume as Word document). **For more help:** Make an appointment with us to review your resume to make sure it's the best it can be!

***Your resume is the first impression an employer has about you;
first impressions last.***

The Most Common Way to Organize your Resume

There are many different ways to organize your resume, but for the purposes of this guide we will focus on the Chronological format. Whatever style you choose, the essential information should remain the same. The difference is in how you organize your information and what you choose to emphasize.

Chronological resumes are commonly the first resume written by college students. Chronological resumes are easy to prepare. The information categories (education, experience, achievements, activities) are listed in a time order, from the most recent to the least recent (backwards). The employment section details your work experience, responsibilities, accomplishments, and transferable skills.

Major Categories (usually) included on a Resume

1. Contact Information: Name, Address, Phone, Email

- Your name should be listed at the top and be displayed prominently in some way (bigger font size; bold it). Use your full name, do not include nicknames. If your resume is more than one page, your name should be at the top of each successive page (like a header on a term paper).
- Be sure that the phone number you are using will be answered in a professional manner and that you have a professional voicemail set up. Now is not the time for silly outgoing messages.
- Include a professional email address. Remember everything on your resume gives the employer an impression of the type of employee you will be. Even your email address can create a negative impression. For example, “partybrat@...” isn’t a strong start.
- *Optional:* Include a link to your digital portfolio, LinkedIn profile, or personal website.
- *A Note About Security:* If you are sharing your resume on a public site such as Handshake, Indeed, or LinkedIn, you may want to keep your address off and include only city and state. This is for privacy and security reasons.

2. Candidate Summary Statement (also known as Profile, Summary of Qualifications, etc)

- A Summary is simply that: a condensed (two sentences max) statement of your key abilities and skills relevant to the specific job for which you are applying.
- Write your summary so it communicates what you can offer the employer; not what you want from the employer. Express what skills and knowledge you bring.
- Be specific. Review the job descriptions thoroughly. Offer yourself as a solution to the reader’s problem: “exceptional organization skills developed through various leadership positions held through college career”
- If you are applying for more than one type of job, prepare a different resume for each, with its own slant for that particular job.

3. Education Credentials

- Colleges and Universities should be listed in reverse chronological order (most recent first). Do not include high school information.
- Don’t use abbreviations for your degree. Bachelor of Science (not B.S.) is correct.
- Our official name is Mansfield University of Pennsylvania. Use it.
- Include your anticipated graduation date.
- Major courses can be listed as a subheading of education. Listing key coursework helps the reader know what you’ve learned. But be selective. Include special projects or research if it is relevant.
- Academic honors and awards can also be listed as a subheading, if there are two or more.
- You should also include industry-related certifications and licenses in a separate section usually titled “Certifications/Licenses”.

4. Skills

- Consider your experiences and break them up into relevant categories. For example, “Computer,” “Project Management,” “Teaching/Coaching,” “Leadership,” “Marketing,” “Communication,” “Organization,” “Customer Service,” “Performance” might be categories to use.
- For teachers, you might include a brief list of courses you are prepared to deliver.
- Use industry related “keywords,” abbreviations, lingo, buzzwords, etc., whatever is accepted within the field.

5. Employment/Relevant Experience (may be placed before or after skills)

- Listed from the most recent experience and work backwards.
- Include dates of employment (August 2020 to December 2021, not 08/2020-12/21), the correct name of the company/organization (“The American Red Cross”), and an accurate job title, (“Volunteer Coordinator”).
- Be Specific! Include specific job duties, accomplishments and achievements. Use percentages, numbers or statistics to demonstrate the quality of your work. Bullets or lists are often used to set apart each responsibility.
- Sometimes you may want to create a “Relevant Experience” section, which lists those jobs most pertinent to the one you’re going for, and another section, “Additional Experience” which shows the rest of your work history.
- Include full-time, part-time, summer and volunteer work, on-campus work and internships. If you have several under one category you can separate by type of work.
- Don’t include pay rates or supervisor names unless the job application instructions require you to do so (such as with federal resumes).

6. Activities, Interests, Affiliations, Honors

- List only those that relate best to your career. Include any that demonstrate leadership.
- Include leadership positions such as Captain, President, etc.
- Only include interests if they are directly related to your career objective or if you have limited work experience.
- Do not include interests or affiliations that would be considered controversial or unimpressive to the employer. Religious, political or social activism groups may be interpreted negatively.
- Use a brief explanation if the reader might be unfamiliar with the purpose of a specific award or title.

7. References

- Create a separate reference sheet. Including your professional references helps the reader move forward in the hiring process. By offering needed information up front, the employer doesn’t have to chase you down to ask you for it.
- Use 3-5 references. Include name, title, place of work, phone number, and email.
- At least one reference should be a faculty member, and at least one reference should be work-related. Do not include personal/family members. They really can’t speak objectively about your credentials as a potential employee.
- *If you are posting your resume publicly online to websites such as Handshake and LinkedIn, do not include references’ information. It is inappropriate for you to “post” someone else’s contact information publicly.

Truths about Resumes

- Your resume will only receive about 10 seconds for the first reading by an employer to decide if you are “interview worthy”.
- The top 1/3 of the resume (after the contact info) is considered the “selling zone”. Put your most impressive information here.
- There should be no misspellings or typing errors. Using spell check is not enough: you might be spelling the word correctly, but using the wrong word. Four human checkers are recommended.
- Do not use the word “I;” do not use the first person. A resume is not a letter.
- Avoid paragraph structure. Use lists, bullets and “easy to spot” layout.
- Highlight, bold, underline the points that you want the reader to see first, but be selective. Don’t overdo the graphics.
- Use action verbs such as examined, detailed, prepared, improved, searched, compiled, tutored.
- Stick with one format and make sure that everything lines up. Inconsistent margins and spaces create a messy look.
- Do not mention why you left a position. Do not mention salary, unless specifically asked to do so.
- Do not include information unless you are able to discuss it or prove your ability.
- Don’t use templates. They do not allow you to change their set format. This is your resume; make your own template. Template-generated resumes mark you as someone who unable to create your own document.

Today, many resumes are only accepted online through a company’s website. Resumes collected this way go into a database, which is then queried by recruiters to find skill sets they need to fill positions within the organization. Thus, it’s very important that your resume is “scan-able”, which means a clean font, not too many bullets, and includes keywords, acronyms and buzzwords that will be found during a search. If you fail to name the key skills that are relevant to your major, then your resume won’t be retrieved when a recruiter goes looking for a particular skill set.

If nothing else, remember this: Your resume should be written for the reader, not for you. Give the reader a reason to be interested in you. Help the reader like you. You have, on average, only 10 seconds to get the reader’s attention.

Sample Chronological Resume

Ima Mountie

31 S. Academy Street · Mansfield, PA 16933
570-662-4133 · careers@mansfield.edu

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

Results-oriented manager with fluency in Spanish. Extensive experience in the retail industry with a 3-year track record of success. Effective leader skilled in developing a productive team with customer-focused training and support. Exceptional ability to build rapport with customers and direct-reports to create customer and employee loyalty.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Mansfield University of Pennsylvania, Mansfield, PA May 20XX (anticipated)
Bachelor of Science in Organizational Communication, Minor in Spanish
• GPA: 3.5/4.0

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Green Clothiers of Mansfield, Mansfield, PA May 20XX-Present
Customer Service Manager
• Manage a range of key operational functions in support of eco-friendly clothing retailer with two locations and \$55M in annual revenue.
• Recruit, train and manage 15-member team, ensuring continuous delivery of outstanding customer service generating over \$23M in annual revenue.
• Redesigned, developed and implemented employee training program which increased sales revenues by 22% for the first year and 30% for each successive year.
• Awarded Employee of the Month for a total of 12 quarters for outstanding customer service, problem resolution and customer-focused orientation.

Fine Sports Wear International, Williamsport, PA March 20XX-May 20XX
Customer Service Manager (April 20XX – May 20XX)
• Operated 5 locations across the state and produced \$120M in annual revenue.
• Supervised 35-member team, ensuring continuous delivery of outstanding customer service generating over \$20M in annual revenue.
• Awarded Manager of the Year for 3 consecutive years of exemplary staff management and team member motivation.

Customer Service Representative (March 20XX – April 20XX)
• Provided top-notch customer service in support of sportswear retailer with 3 locations in the area.
• Aided customers with women's and children's sportswear consistently generating additional revenues with thorough product knowledge and friendly sales techniques.
• Achieved lowest returns percentage for a total of three years.

LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

Organizational Communication Club, Mansfield University Fall 20XX-Present
• President (20XX-20XX)

Student Government Association (SGA), Mansfield University Fall 20XX-Present
• Secretary (20XX-20XX)

Remember: If you're posting to an online public site (such as Handshake or LinkedIn), do NOT include your references.

Ima Mountie

31 S. Academy Street · Mansfield, PA 16933
570-662-4133 · careers@mansfield.edu

REFERENCES

Dr. Mary Telly, Chair and Associate Professor (Academic Advisor)

Dept. of Communication
Mansfield University
221 Allen Hall
Mansfield, PA 16933
570-662-XXXX
mtelly@mansfield.edu

Ms. Sandra Clothes, Regional Manager (Current Supervisor)

Green Clothiers of Mansfield
232 Main Street
Mansfield, PA 16933
570-662-XXXX
sclothes@greenclothiers.com

Mr. Mark Sporty, District Manager (Former Supervisor)

Fine Sportswear International
123 Main Street
Williamsport, PA 17701
570-587-XXXX
msporty@finesports.com

Ms. Linda Help, Customer Service Manager (Former Supervisor)

Fine Sportswear International
123 Main Street
Williamsport, PA 17701
570-587-XXXX
lhelp@finesports.com

Powerful Resume Language

How you express yourself verbally – orally and in writing – has tremendous impact on the impression you create. If you use language imprecisely, incorrectly, or immaturely, those same adjectives may be applied to you.

A few pointers for resume language:

- ✓ Don't write in full, complete sentences. Phrases, key words, and bullets are preferred.
- ✓ Eliminate personal pronouns (I, me, mine).
- ✓ Use buzzwords, technical jargon, and correct names.
- ✓ Use action verbs to describe your achievements and experiences.
- ✓ If an action verb is used once, try not to use it again. This keeps your resume from sounding redundant.

Communication/People Skill

Advertised	Corresponded	Incorporated	Mediated	Reconciled
Announced	Debated	Influenced	Moderated	Recruited
Arbitrated	Developed	Interacted	Negotiated	Referred
Articulated	Directed	Interrogated	Observed	Reinforced
Collaborated	Discussed	Interpreted	Outlined	Reported
Communicated	Drafted	Interviewed	Participated	Responded
Composed	Edited	Involved	Persuaded	Solicited
Conferred	Elicited	Joined	Presented	Specified
Consulted	Enlisted	Judged	Promoted	Summarized
Contacted	Expressed	Lectured	Proposed	Synthesized
Conveyed	Formulated	Listened	Publicized	Translated
Convinced	Furnished	Marketed	Published	

Creative Skills

Acted	Customized	Fashioned	Initiated	Modified
Adapted	Designed	Formulated	Innovated	Performed
Authored	Displayed	Illustrated	Integrated	Photographed
Composed	Entertained	Imagined	Invented	Revitalized
Conceptualized	Established	Implemented	Launched	Shaped
Condensed	Exhibited	Improvised	Modeled	Sketched

Data/Financial Skills

Accounted for	Budgeted	Forecasted	Prepared	Reduced
Adjusted	Calculated	Formulated	Programmed	Retrieved
Administered	Computed	Generated	Projected	Tabulated
Allocated	Conserved	Logged	Qualified	Tracked
Analyzed	Documented	Marketed	Quoted	Transacted
Appraised	Equated	Measured	Reconciled	Transferred
Audited	Estimated	Netted	Recorded	
Balanced	Figured	Planned	Reported	

Helping Skills

Accommodated	Arranged	Educated	Furthered	Rehabilitated
Adapted	Collaborated	Enabled	Guided	Resolved
Advocated	Contributed	Encouraged	Insured	Simplified
Aided	Counseled	Ensured	Intervened	Supplied
Alleviated	Demonstrated	Expedited	Motivated	Supported
Answered	Diagnosed	Fostered	Referred	Volunteered

Management/Leadership Skills

Administered	Delegated	Hired	Navigated	Reviewed
Analyzed	Developed	Hosted	Overhauled	Secured
Approved	Directed	Improved	Oversaw	Selected
Attained	Diversified	Incorporated	Planned	Strengthened
Authorized	Employed	Increased	Presided	Suggested
Chaired	Enforced	Initiated	Produced	Supervised
Conceptualized	Established	Inspected	Recognized	
Consolidated	Expanded	Instituted	Recommended	
Contracted	Governed	Managed	Reorganized	
Converted	Handled	Merged	Replaced	
Decided	Headed	Motivated	Restored	

Organizational Skills

Approved	Coordinated	Obtained	Registered	Supplied
Arranged	Corrected	Operated	Reserved	Standardized
Catalogued	Corresponded	Ordered	Responded	Streamlined
Categorized	Distributed	Organized	Restructured	Systematized
Charted	Incorporated	Prioritized	Reviewed	Updated
Classified	Inspected	Processed	Routed	Validated
Coded	Logged	Provided	Scheduled	Verified
Collected	Maintained	Purchased	Screened	
Compiled	Monitored	Recorded	Submitted	

Research Skills

Analyzed	Detected	Examined	Inspected	Searched
Collected	Determined	Experimented	Interviewed	Summarized
Compared	Diagnosed	Explored	Investigated	Surveyed
Concluded	Discovered	Extracted	Located	Synthesized
Conducted	Documented	Formulated	Observed	Systematized
Correlated	Evaluated	Gathered	Predicted	Tested
Critiqued	Equated	Identified	Reviewed	Theorized

Teaching Skills

Adapted	Corrected	Enforced	Instilled	Simulated
Advised	Critiqued	Evaluated	Instructed	Stimulated
Assessed	Developed	Facilitated	Lectured	Taught
Assigned	Disciplined	Guided	Motivated	Tested
Clarified	Enabled	Individualized	Persuaded	Trained
Coached	Encouraged	Inspired	Rewarded	Tutored

Technical Skills

Adapted	Computed	Engineered	Overhauled	Standardized
Applied	Conserved	Executed	Programmed	Transmitted
Assembled	Constructed	Fabricated	Regulated	Trouble-shot
Automated	Converted	Fortified	Remodeled	Upgraded
Built	Designed	Graphed	Repaired	Utilized
Calculated	Determined	Installed	Restored	
Calibrated	Devised	Operated	Specialized	

Creating a Strong Cover Letter

They are useful for these reasons:

- Specifies the job to which you're applying.
- Provides a quick introduction to the skills you have that meet the employer's needs.
- Demonstrates you have done some research into the organization and know something about the company and the position available.
- Expresses a sense of your personality and writing style, which can't be done with just a resume.

For these reasons, cover letters are a valuable tool. On the other hand, some cover letters never get read because they are just one more piece of paper that a busy recruiter or hiring manager doesn't have time to read.

Pay close attention to the language of the job announcement/posting. Mirror that language in your cover letter (but don't parrot it). Remember: the reader is looking for a "fit" into the existing team and company culture.

Some job announcements will require a cover letter (also sometimes called an inquiry, interest or introduction letter). If it's required, send one. If it's not required, the choice is entirely up to you.

The samples provided here are very standard and they should be used only as starting point for you to begin writing your own. Cover letters need to be in your voice, balanced with a professional tone.

Sample Cover Letter Format

“Letterhead contact information from top of resume”

“Date of Writing”

“Full Name of Individual, Title” [try to avoid ‘To Whom It May Concern’ at all costs!]

“Organization”

“Street Address”

“City, State, ZIP”

RE: “Position Title” [can be used in place of “Dear...” if a name is not available]

Dear Ms., Mr. or Dr. [Name indicated on job description]:

Opening Paragraph: This is your chance to introduce yourself and explain your interest in the position. You may also mention how you heard about the position and briefly outline your strengths that fit with what the position requires, as well as what you know about the company.

Main/Selling/Strengths Paragraphs: The objective for the body of your letter is to develop the reader’s interest in you, leading the employer to look at you more closely through an interview. Here you will highlight your specific qualities, skills, or experiences that match you up with the position. The key here is learning to narrate what appears in condensed form on your resume. Somewhere, whether at the beginning or near the end of this section, it is a good idea to explain what it is about the job that attracts you, commenting not only on how you are qualified, but also what you can do to further the mission or bottom line of the organization.

It may help to think about the strength paragraph in terms of categories or competencies. If you gather from the job description and your research that the employer wants someone who is organized, has good teamwork skills, why not make these the focus of your paragraphs? Cite specific examples in your experience to illustrate your qualifications. It’s not enough to just say ‘I have good teamwork skills’ – you’ll want to say ‘I have good teamwork skills and that’s important for this job because...’ or ‘that will benefit me in the role because...’. Always try to connect what you’re highlighting back to why it matters to the employer.

If you have no directly related experience, use this section to point out your skills and explain how these apply to the job requirements. If you can show you understand the nature of the position and can do the work, you may offset your lack of experience.

Closing Paragraph(s): Reiterate your interest in the position and state who will take the next action. Tell them that you look forward to hearing from them or that you will call on a specific date. Reassert your confidence in your ability to meet the demands of the position. Finally, indicate that you would be interested in speaking with them further about the position and that you will provide more materials (tapes, work samples, letters of recommendation, etc.) upon request.

Sincerely,

(Your Signature – if printing)

Your name, typed



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