

Resume and Cover Letter Writing Guide



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I) Resume Guide

The resume is a self-marketing tool that highlights your education, experience, and accomplishments while profiling your ability to do the work for which an employer is hiring. It provides employers with a quick summary of your education and experience to capture their attention, given that on average, employers scan a resume for only 10-15 seconds. The formatting outlined in this guide is only an example, and individuals will have different preferences that add unique touches to their resume. The important information that should be in every resume, regardless of style, is outlined below.

i) General Tips on Resume Writing

Personal Data: Include

- Your name. It should appear first, and stand out the most. (Bold and enlarge it.)
- Indicate a phone number or where a message can be left.
- Include an e-mail address, check it regularly and ensure that your e-mail address is professional (NOT a nickname). It is one of the first things the employer will see.

Personal Data: Do **Not** Include

- Your age/date of birth, gender, relationship status, family information, ethnicity or pictures.

Resume Structure (One to two pages):

- Be concise and clear; space content so that it can be easily read.
- Do not use different font types. Stick to one that is easy to read, such as Arial.
- Use different font sizes and styles (i.e. italics and bold).
- Use action verbs to list duties and responsibilities (listed in Appendix E).
- Use a consistent format. If you bold a heading in one section, bold the headings for the other sections as well. This also applies to the placement of dates.
- Proof read for spelling errors and grammatical mistakes.
- Visit the Writing Centre (Science Building: SN – 2053) for further help with writing style and grammar.

Action Verbs

- Action verbs should be used throughout your resume to promote your skills and achievements, thereby enabling you to make a strong impression. For a list of action verbs, please see Appendix E.

References

- Listing references is optional; if you prefer not to include them, indicate that "References are available upon request" on the bottom of your last page
- If you include references, limit to three names and include current phone number and email.
- Ask for permission, notify your references and remember to have references on-hand during an interview.

ii) Three Types of Resume Formats

There are three common resumes formats: (1) Chronological, (2) Functional (3) Combined. The style of resume best suited to you will depend on the position for which you are applying, the skills you possess, and your work experience.

1) Chronological Resume:

See Appendix A (page 14) for a sample chronological resume.

The chronological resume is best suited for those who have had extensive work experience in their field. This resume provides employers with a quick summary of your education and experience to capture their attention in the first ten seconds. It then continues to illustrate the progressive development of skills and responsibilities that you have attained in the workforce.

Key elements:

- Dates of education and employment are listed in reverse chronological order;
- Names and locations of employers are identified;
- Duties and responsibilities gained from work experience are highlighted.

2) Functional Resume:

See Appendix B (page 17) for a sample functional resume.

The functional resume is appropriate when you would like to focus on the *skills* you possess. This type of resume is effective if there are gaps in employment or if you have limited (or no) work experience. The functional format allows you to present skills developed through volunteer, school and extracurricular experience.

Key elements:

- Skills and accomplishments are listed separately from work history;
- Skills are grouped under a heading and reference is made to how the skills identified were developed;
- Work experience is listed in reverse chronological order; however, no details of duties are listed.

3) Combined Resume:

See Appendix C (page 20) for a sample combined resume.

The combined resume is very versatile; however it is most effective if you are changing jobs within the same industry. It allows you to directly address the skills required for the position, while at the same time giving a detailed account of your experience.

Key elements:

- “Summary of Qualifications” section where skills are listed, followed by details of experience in bullet-form.
- Work experience is listed in reverse chronological order and includes any responsibilities or duties not included in “Summary of Qualifications”.

iii) Resume Content

Below are key sections to include in your resume. Note that some of these sections may or may not be applicable, depending on whether you choose a chronological, functional or combined format. For example, the functional resume can include a “Skills & Abilities” section; however, this would not be included in the chronological format.

Header (for all resume types):

- Place your name at the top of the resume. It should always appear first, and be emphasized. (Increase its font size and bold the letters).
- Include a phone number, and *professional* e-mail where you can be reached
- Include a mailing address at your discretion.

Sample:

<p style="text-align: center;">Jane Smith 123 Main Street St. John's, NL A1E 4E7 (709) 555-1234 / jane@resume.ca</p>

Objective (use when not attaching a cover letter):

- Target a specific position.

Sample:

<p>Objective: To obtain a position as a Research Assistant at Brown Industries.</p>

Highlights of Qualifications (for chronological and functional resumes only):

- Place directly below Name or Objective (if you include it).
- Highlight your most marketable skills.
- Address the qualifications demanded in the job for which you are applying.
- Include an “Experience in...” phrase.
- Be brief (4-5 bullets maximum)

Sample:

Highlights of Qualifications:

- Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and History
- Presentation and communication skills practiced continuously as a Teaching Assistant
- Interpersonal, organizational and leadership skills, honed as president of Sociology Society
- Research, analytical and problem solving skills gained through course work
- Five years experience in customer services industry, on the front lines of customer care

Summary of Qualifications (for combined resume only):

- Place directly below Header or Objective (if you include it).
- Highlight your most marketable skills using a heading, and the corresponding experience you have in bulleted points underneath each heading.
- Directly address the qualifications demanded in the job for which you are applying.
- Use a maximum of 5-7 phrases under each heading.

Sample:

Summary of Qualifications:

Communication Skills

- Presented course material to classes of more than 100 university students
- Responded to students' questions and concerns about course content
- Coordinated discussion between Sociology Director and students
- Recruited students to the Sociology Society through various mediums, including internet discussion boards and classroom presentations

Organization Skills

- Developed lesson plans for undergraduate sociology classes
- Planned Sociology Society events and delegated tasks
- Evaluated students' work and returned it promptly

Education (for all resume types):

- Begin with your most recent education.
- List diploma/degree/area of concentration with associated start and end dates and the institution where you received your education.
- Separate each degree or diploma received/ in progress, even if they were obtained at the same institute.
- Give thesis title or topic, if applicable.
- Grade Point Average (GPA) – indicate if you have an average comfortable advertising
- List programs that are completed or in progress.
- Programs not finished or completed can be referenced in other sections of your resume (i.e. additional training/education), should you wish to mention them.

Sample:

Education:

Bachelor of Arts (Major: Sociology; Minor: History)
Memorial University, St. John's, NL

Sept. 2010 – May 2014

Work Experience (for all resume types):

- Indicate dates of employment (the most recent job is listed first).
- Indicate title of position held, company name, and location.
- Describe duties for your job by beginning each phrase with an action verb.
- Duties should be listed in order of the most relevant to the position for which you are applying (for chronological and combined resumes only).
- Use past tenses for describing positions that have ended, and present tense for current positions.
- A functional resume does not include duties or responsibilities stated in point-form (see Appendix B).

Sample:

Work Experience:

Invigilator/Teaching Assistant

Department of Sociology, Memorial University, St. John's, NL

- Supervising 40 students for final examinations in Sociology 3000
- Correcting student assignments
- Recording marks and reporting to Professor

Sept. 2012 – Present

Skills/Abilities (for functional and combined resumes):

- Headings are used to group skills to elaborate on each.
- This section indicates to the employer your special skills and abilities.

Sample:

Skills and Abilities:

Interpersonal/Communication Skills

- Marketed the Opportunity Fund to Memorial University alumni
- Developed and presented city tours for groups of tourists
- Directed incoming calls and answered enquiries
- Provided quality customer service

Volunteer Experience (for all resume types):

- Employers in Canada value volunteer experience. If you have volunteered, in Canada or elsewhere be sure to indicate this on your resume.
- Structure this section the same as work experience.
- List title (if appropriate), organization name, and outline some duties and responsibilities you had while volunteering
- List club involvement and/or elected positions.

Sample:

Volunteer Experience:

President, Sociology Society

Sept. 2010 – April 2013

Memorial University, St. John's, NL

- Organized activities for students such as mixers and guest speakers
- Corresponded between the Director and students
- Represented student body at faculty meetings and other departmental events

Interests/Achievements/Awards (for all resume types):

- Use this section to note any achievements, awards or non-educational certifications that you would like to highlight.
- Interests that are relevant to the position can be listed here as well.
- Honours awards and scholarships are also listed here. (The most recent is listed first).

Sample:

Interests/Achievements:

- Graduated on Dean's List
- Memorial Entrance Scholarship

May 2014
Sept. 2010

References (for all resume types):

- Usually indicated by, "References Available upon Request."
- If references are listed, include: name, title, organization, address, phone number and email
- When listing references on a separate sheet, use the same heading as the first page of your resume.

Sample 1:

References: Available upon request

Sample 2:

Jane Smith
123 Main Street
St. John's, NL A1E 4E7
(709) 555-1234 / jane@resume.ca

References:

John White
Director of Biology
Memorial University
Phone: 555-1234
Email: jwhite@memorial.ca

iv) Resume Checklist

Format & Layout

- Is your resume one to two pages in length?
- Does your resume follow a format, i.e. chronological, functional, or combined?
- Is your resume easy to read and organized?
- Does your name stand out, i.e., in bold and enlarged font?
- Do important headings and sub-headings stand out?
- Did you use consistent formatting of fonts, italics, underline, dates, etc.?

Resume Content

- Have you listed all duties using action verbs? Are you consistent?
- Are there any points which still need improvement?
- Is the information presented relevant to the job for which you are applying?
- Is your resume current and up-to-date?

Spelling & Punctuation

- Have you used Spell Check?
- Is punctuation used consistently?
- Has someone proof read your resume?
- Have you visited the Writing Centre for additional help with writing style and grammar?

II) Cover Letter Guide

The purpose of a cover letter is to highlight your skills and your resume should always be accompanied by a cover letter. You should use a different cover letter for each position to highlight the skills that matter most to the employer. For example, if you are applying for a job as an accountant, you will want to emphasize your numerical skills and attention to detail. If you are applying for a Social Work position, you will want to highlight your interpersonal and problem-solving skills. *Please see Appendix D (page 23) for sample cover letter.*

i) General Tips on Cover Letter Writing

- Address the letter to the individual responsible for hiring. If the contact is not listed in the job posting, contact the organization to obtain this information, and to learn correct spelling of the contact's name. If you cannot find a name, Dear Sir or Madam
- Ensure that the company name and title of the position are correct throughout your letter.
- Your cover letter should be one page, visually appealing and easy to read.
- Include your telephone number and e-mail address in the last paragraph.
- Remember to sign your cover letter (sign & then scan it into an email, or use an app)
- Proof read your letter and use Spell Check.
- Visit the Writing Centre (Science Bldg: SN 2053) if you require help with writing style and grammar.

ii) Cover Letter Content and Structure

There are ten components to an effective cover letter. Please see below:

1) Return Address:

- Use your complete mailing address in the top left hand corner, at your discretion. If you do include a return address, include your street, city/town, province, and postal code.
- It is not necessary to include your name or phone number.

2) Date:

- Insert the current date two lines below your return address. Do not abbreviate the date.

3) Addressee:

- Place the mailing address of the company two lines below the date and address, by name, the specific individual who will process your application.

4) The Salutation (Greeting):

- The salutation should specify the employer's name followed by a colon ie: Dear Ms. Brown:
- If this is not possible, "Dear Hiring Committee:" or "Dear Sir or Madam:" is commonly used. This salutation is placed one line below addressee.

5) First Paragraph:

- Place one line below the Salutation. State your interest in the position, where and when you found out about it
- Describe the skills and qualifications you have for the position and give examples. Look at the job posting and try to respond to as many requirements as possible.

6) Second Paragraph:

- Describe your qualifications, both academic and professional, in relation to the skills you have acquired. Below are examples of skills that may be highlighted in this paragraph:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| – Goal-oriented | – Leadership skills |
| – Enthusiastic | – Ability to manage many tasks |
| – Adaptable | – Strong interpersonal skills |
| – Strong communication skills | – Research/analytical skills |

7) Third Paragraph:

- In today's market it is not enough to simply fit the job description - you must also fit the company image. Each organization subscribes to specific values, which differentiate from the competition.
- Conduct research to determine where the company's interests lie (e.g. environmental issues, business practices, etc.) and illustrate that you belong by referring to your own interests, experiences and goals.

8) Fourth Paragraph:

- The final paragraph allows you to close by requesting an interview. Describe why you are the right candidate for the job and how you will contribute to the organization.

9) The Closing:

- Use the standard business closing of "Sincerely," and place it two lines below body of letter, and align with left margin.

10) Signature:

- Type your full name (as it appears on your Resume), four lines beneath your closing and sign above your typed name in black ink. If you are sending your cover letter via email, insert a scanned copy of your signature.

The structure of a cover letter is outlined below:
(Please see Appendix D for a sample cover letter)

Return Address:

Street

Town

Postal code

Date

Addressee:

Contact name

Mailing address of company

Dear (use specific name, if possible):

First paragraph: *Why are you writing?* Catch the reader's attention and clearly state what job you are applying for and how you learned about it. (You may wish to mention personal contacts within the company, if you have any).

Second paragraph: *What you have to offer?* Provide specific information about the skills you possess and how your qualifications will benefit the company. Respond to every possible requirement that is mentioned in the job description.

Third Paragraph: *How do you fit the company image?* Research the organization that you are applying to. In this paragraph prove that your background, experience and values are parallel with those of the organization.

Fourth Paragraph: Closing. *Request an interview.* State where and when you can be reached. Thank the employer for his/her time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

(Typed name)

Appendices

Appendix A:
Example of a Chronological Resume

Jane Smith

123 Main Street
St. John's NL, A1E 4E7
(709) 555-1234
jane@resume.ca

Highlight of Qualifications

- Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and History
 - Presentation and communication skills, practiced continuously as a Teaching Assistant
 - Research, analytical and problem-solving skills gained through course work
 - Willingness to learn and meet the demands of new experiences, as evidenced by diverse work and volunteer experience
 - Three years experience as President of the Sociology Society, which sharpened my interpersonal, organizational, and leadership skills
-

Education

Bachelor of Arts (Major: Sociology; minor: History)
Memorial University, St. John's, NL

Sept. 2010 – May 2014

Work Experience

Invigilator/Teaching Assistant

Sept. 2011 – March 2014

Department of Sociology, Memorial University

- Supervised 40 students for final examinations in History 3000
- Corrected student assignments
- Recorded marks and reported to Professor

Tour Guide

April 2013 – Aug. 2013

City of St. John's, NL

- Developed and presented city tours for groups of tourists
- Led groups through historical sites
- Scheduled appointments for tours

Office Assistant

April 2012 – Aug. 2012

Accounts Division, Department of Finance, Government of Newfoundland

- Formatted documents using WordPerfect, Excel, and MS Word
- Directed incoming calls and answered general inquiries
- Processed data entry for attendance records and payroll direct deposit
- Created, maintained, and updated a filing database of 2,000 employees

- Research Assistant** Sept. 2011 – April 2012
Department of Sociology, Memorial University
- Conducted research via telephone surveys and interviews
 - Analyzed research findings and submitted report on conclusions
- Student Communicator** Sept. 2011 – Dec. 2011
Alumni Affairs, Memorial University
- Promoted Opportunity Fund to Memorial alumni and updated the alumni database
- Sales Associate** June 2009 – Aug. 2011
Wal-Mart, St. John's, NL
- Provided quality service to customers and recorded inventory of products
 - Worked cash register and balanced cash float
-

Volunteer Experience

- President, Sociology Society** Sept. 2012 – Apr. 2014
Memorial University
- Organized activities for students such as fundraisers, mixers and exam supports
 - Represented student body at meetings and during departmental events
- Group Leader, Fall Orientation** Sept. 2011
Memorial Student Affairs & Services
- Organized activities for first year students and their parents
 - Co-led a group of new students around campus for tours and events
-

Interests/Achievements

- Dean's List May 2014
 - Memorial University Entrance Scholarship Sept. 2010
-

References

Available upon request.

Appendix B:
Example of a Functional Resume

Jane Smith

123 Main Street
St. John's NL, A1E 4E7
(709) 555-1234
jane@resume.ca

Highlight of Qualifications

- Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and History
 - Presentation and communication skills, practiced continuously as a Teaching Assistant
 - Research, analytical and problem-solving skills gained through course work
 - Willingness to learn and meet the demands of new experiences, as evidenced by diverse work and volunteer experience
 - Three years experience as President of the Sociology Society, which sharpened my interpersonal, organizational, and leadership skills
-

Education

Bachelor of Arts (Major: Sociology; Minor: History)
Memorial University, St. John's, NL

Sept. 2010 - May 2014

Skills & Abilities

Interpersonal/Communication Skills

- Marketed the Opportunity Fund to Memorial University alumni
- Developed and presented city tours for groups of tourists
- Directed incoming calls and answered general enquiries
- Provided quality customer service

Research/Analytical Skills

- Conducted research on the Internet
- Compiled research and prepared reports on results of research
- Completed academic term papers using various sources of research
- Interpreted research collected and submitted report on conclusions

Teamwork/Leadership Skills

- Elected President of the Sociology Society
- Co-Led a group of new students for Fall Orientation
- Supervised 40 students for final examinations in History 3000

Administration/Computer Skills

- Formatted documents using WordPerfect, Excel and MS Word
 - Familiar with various Internet applications and HTML Programming
 - Processed data entry for attendance records and payroll direct deposit
 - Created, maintained, and updated a filing database of 2,000 employees
-

Work Experience

Invigilator/Teaching Assistant <i>Department of Sociology, Memorial University</i>	Sept. 2011 – March 2014
Tour Guide <i>City of St. John's</i>	April 2013 – Aug. 2013
Research Assistant <i>Department of Sociology, Memorial University</i>	April 2012 – Aug. 2012
Office Assistant: <i>Department of Finance, Memorial University</i>	Sept. 2011 – April 2012
Student Communicator <i>Alumni Affairs, Memorial University</i>	Sept. 2011 – Dec. 2011
Sales Associate <i>Wal-Mart</i>	June 2009 – Aug. 2011

Volunteer Experience

President <i>Sociology Society, Memorial University</i>	Sept. 2012 – Apr. 2014
Group Leader <i>New Student Orientation, Memorial University</i>	September 2011

Interests/Achievements

• Dean's List	May 2014
• MUN Entrance Scholarship	September 2010

References

Available upon request.

Appendix C:
Example of a Combined Resume

Jane Smith

123 Main Street
St. John's NL, A1E 4E7
(709) 555-1234
jane@resume.ca

Summary of Qualifications

Interpersonal/Communication Skills

- Marketed the Opportunity Fund to Memorial University Alumni
- Directed incoming calls and answered general enquiries
- Provided quality customer service

Research/Analytical Skills

- Conducted research on the Internet
- Compiled research and prepared reports on results of research
- Completed academic term papers using various sources of research
- Interpreted research collected and submitted report on conclusions

Teamwork/Leadership Skills

- Elected President of Sociology Society
 - Co-led a group of new students for Fall Orientation
 - Supervised forty students for final examinations in History 3000
-

Education

Bachelor of Arts (Major: Sociology; Minor: History)
Memorial University, St. John's, NL

May 2014

Relevant Work Experience

Invigilator/Teaching Assistant

Sept. 2011 – March 2014

Department of Sociology, Memorial University

- Supervised 40 students for final examinations in History 3000
- Corrected student assignments
- Recorded marks and reported to Professor

Office Assistant

April 2013 – Aug. 2013

Accounts Division, Department of Finance, Government of Newfoundland

- Formatted documents using WordPerfect, Excel and MS Word
- Processed data entry for attendance records and payroll direct deposit
- Created, maintained, and updated a filing database of 2,000 employees

Research Assistant Sept. 2012 – April 2013
Department of Sociology, Memorial University

- Conducted research via Internet and telephone surveys
- Interpreted research collected and submitted report on conclusions

Student Communicator Sept. 2012 – Dec. 2012
Alumni Affairs, Memorial University

- Promoted Opportunity Fund to Memorial University alumni
- Updated Alumni database

Volunteer Experience

President, Sociology Society Sept. 2011 – April 2014
Memorial University

- Organized activities for students such as fundraisers, mixers and exam supports
- Represented student body at meetings and during departmental events

Group Leader, Fall Orientation Sept. 2011
Memorial University Student Affairs & Services

- Co-led a group of new students
- Organized activities for first year students and their parents

Interests/Achievements

- Dean's List May 2014
 - MUN Entrance Scholarship Sept. 2011
-

References

Available upon request.

Appendix D:
Example of a Cover Letter

123 Main Street
St. John's NL, A1E 4E7

June 3, 2014

Mr. Noel Brown
New Industries Inc.
Point Drive, NL, A1B 2C3
(709) 555-5555

Dear Mr. Brown:

This letter is in application for the *Research Assistant* position with the New Industries, which was posted on your company's webpage on May 15th, 2014.

As a recent graduate of the Bachelor of Science program at Memorial University, I am a well-rounded individual with strong written and oral communication skills. Having completed a major in Biology, I am familiar with a wide array of environmentally-relevant subject matter, including pollution control and mitigation, global climate change and natural resource management. In addition, I am comfortable performing both primary and secondary research. While completing five courses during the academic semesters, I also worked part-time as a Teaching Assistant with the Department of Biology. This position allowed me to hone my time-management skills, and showcased my self-direction. During group projects, I surface as an enthusiastic and effective team member, who is task oriented and does not shy away from a leadership role. As evident in my resume, I am confident working with Microsoft Office, especially Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Access.

Upon researching your organization I was very excited to learn that New Industries is spearheading a project to assess and improve environmentally friendly projects worldwide. I have a keen interest in this area of studies as I have completed several research papers on the topic of ecofriendly practices and sustainable resources during my degree. It would be an honor to work in such a progressive environment where practical biological theories can be applied to benefit our planet.

I believe that I am a strong candidate for the *Research Assistant* position with New Industries, and I look forward to hearing from you to further discuss how I may contribute to your organization. Please feel free to contact me at (709) 555-4567 or via email at jane@hotmail.com.

Thank you,

(Sign name)

Jane Smith

Enclosure: Resume

Appendix E:
Skill Related Action Verbs

Management Skills

Administered
Analyzed
Assigned
Attained
Chaired
Consolidated
Contracted
Coordinated
Delegated
Developed
Evaluated
Executed
Improved
Increased
Organized
Oversaw
Planned
Prioritized
Produced
Recommended
Reviewed
Scheduled
Strengthened
Supervised

Communication Skills

Addressed
Arbitrated
Arranged
Authored
Collaborated
Convinced
Corresponded
Developed
Directed
Drafted
Edited
Enlisted
Formulated
Influenced
Interpreted
Mediated
Moderate

Negotiated
Persuaded
Promoted
Publicized
Reconciled
Recruited
Spoke
Translated
Wrote

Research Skills

Clarified
Collected
Critiqued
Diagnosed
Evaluated
Examined
Extracted
Identified
Inspected
Interpreted
Interviewed
Investigated
Organized
Reviewed
Summarized
Surveyed
Systematic

Technical Skills

Assembled
Built
Calculated
Computed
Designed
Devised
Engineered
Fabricated
Maintained
Operated
Overhauled
Programmed
Remodeled
Repaired
Solved
Upgraded

Teaching Skills

Adapted
Advised
Clarified
Coached
Communicated
Coordinated
Demystified
Developed
Enabled
Encouraged
Evaluated
Explained
Facilitated
Guided
Informed
Instructed
Persuaded
Set goals
Stimulated
Trained

Financial Skills

Administered
Allocated
Analyzed
Appraised
Audited
Balanced
Budgeted
Calculated
Computed
Developed
Forecasted
Managed
Marketed
Planned
Projected
Researched

Creative Skills

Acted
Conceptualized
Created
Customized
Designed

Developed
Directed
Established
Fashioned
Founded
Illustrated
Initiated
Instituted
Integrated
Introduced
Invented
Originated
Performed
Planned
Revitalized
Shaped

Helping Skills

Assessed
Assisted
Clarified
Coached
Counseled
Demonstrated
Diagnosed
Educated
Expedited
Facilitated
Familiarized
Guided
Motivated
Referred
Rehabilitated

Clerical or Detail Skills

Approved
Arranged
Catalogued
Classified
Collected
Compiled
Dispatched
Executed
Generated
Implemented

Inspected
Monitored
Operated
Organized
Prepared
Processed
Purchased
Recorded
Retrieved
Screened
Specified
Systematized
Tabulated
Validated

More Verbs for Accomplishments

Achieved
Expanded
Improved
Pioneered
Reduced (losses)
Resolved
(problems)
Restored
Spearheaded
Transformed