

RESUME WRITING

Cover Letters & Reference Pages

A practical guide to the first steps in
the employment process



Introduction to Resume Writing

This workbook is subtitled “A Practical Guide to the First Steps in the Employment Process” for a reason. Your resume and cover letter are often the FIRST time that a potential employer sees your name. You NEVER get a second chance to make a first impression!

What is a Resume?

Your resume is a document distributed to employers which highlights your skill set, experiences, and accomplishments. It is a quick snapshot of who you are. Your resume is your personal marketing instrument. Since this is the document that will open the door to your future, you need to take the writing process seriously. A well written resume is thoughtfully crafted and has been thoroughly critiqued.

The 6 C's of Resume Writing

1. Concise

- * Your resume needs to be content filled. This is your opportunity to tell potential employers what you have been doing (jobs, coursework, internships, etc.) to prepare yourself to work for their company/agency/organization.
- * Use strategic terminology appropriate for your field. You learned field-appropriate language in class, now is the time to show it off!

2. Consistent

- * Your formatting should be consistent throughout your entire resume. Hiring Managers look at resumes all day long. Nothing is more annoying than inconsistent formatting. They take reviewing your resume seriously, this is often times your first introduction to their company. If you can overlook formatting issues on your resume, will you overlook important details on the job? Is the formatting of this “C” bothering you yet?

3. Clean

- * The piece of paper that your resume is written on should be clean! No Hiring Manager wants to read a resume stained with coffee, smudged with finger prints, or smelling like cigarette smoke.
- * Use resume paper! If you don't have any, stop in to the Career Center to borrow from our stash.

4. Correct

- * Don't lie or embellish your experiences and accomplishments. Lying about your qualifications is grounds for termination in most cases. No company wants to hire a liar, and you should think twice before working for an organization who employs liars.
- * Check Spelling! There cannot be any typographical errors on your resume. This is where having your resume professionally critiqued by the Career Center comes in handy. Spell check, while handy, can only catch words that are spelled incorrectly. Using the wrong form of a word (i.e. their and there) is unprofessional and should not happen on your personal marketing instrument (your resume).

5. Concrete

- * It is important that your resume incorporates actual, hard, tangible skills and facts. This is the "meat and potatoes" of your personal marketing instrument. Don't be that candidate with the beautiful looking resume at first glance and nothing of substance actually written. Go beyond the tasks and abilities that are assumed. For example, if you work at a coffee shop, it is assumed that you make coffee and use a cash register. *Boring!* Using concrete facts like "Train new employees" and "Contribute to a 30% increase in lunch-time sales" is much more effective.

6. Credit

- * Your resume is your personal marketing instrument, it is your brag sheet! Give yourself credit for what you have accomplished. You have worked hard to gather experiences relevant to your desired field, your resume is your opportunity to toot your own horn. If you don't brag about your accomplishments, how is the employer going to distinguish you from the hundreds or thousands of other candidates that have applied?

Getting Started!



- * Write down **everything** that you have done. It is easier to edit out information than to creatively stretch experiences to fill the space.
- * **Do NOT use a resume template.** Hiring managers can spot a template a mile away. Templates don't show that you have basic computer skills, and often times cannot be read by the applicant tracking software used by many companies.
- * Make sure that your email address is professional and appropriate. Don't have your own exclusive email address? Now is the time to get one!
- * Unless you have over 10 years of experience in your field, stick with a one page resume for now. As you gain experience, your resume may grow to two pages. In most fields, two pages is the maximum. Federal resumes are a different story. Make an appointment with a Career Coach in the Career Center for more information on Federal resumes.

HEADING

SUZY S. STUDENT

555 Study Ave., Hamburg, NY 14075
716-555-5555 • suzys.student@gmail.com
<http://www.linkedin.com/in/suzysstudent/>

- * Make your heading stand out!
- * Your name should be BIG and **BOLD**.
- * Include your address, phone number, and e-mail address. Remove the hyperlink from your e-mail address.
- * *Optional:* add your LinkedIn profile link, without the hyperlink.



EDUCATION

& Honors

EDUCATION & HONORS

Bachelor of Arts Degree in English

May 2015

Hilbert College, Hamburg, NY

GPA: 3.6/4.0, Minor: Human Services

Academic Honors List

Fall 2013, Spring 2014

Sigma Tau Delta Honor Society (*international English honor society*)

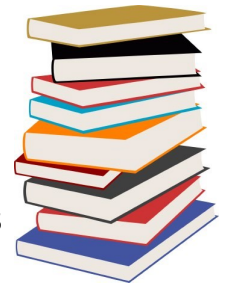
March 2013

- * List your Hilbert College degree and all previous degrees earned. Put the most recent degree first, followed by the previous degree earned.
- * There is no need to include where you went to high school. Only college experiences should be highlighted on your resume, unless your high school experience is uniquely relevant to the position.
- * Spell out the name of your degree, don't just write B.A. By simply writing B.A. applicant tracking software may not recognize that you have earned a Bachelor's degree.
- * Include your GPA only if it is above a 3.5. Write it as 3.7/4.0. It is important to include the scale.

COMMUNICATIONS COURSEWORK

Journalism, Professional and Technical Writing, Public Relations and Advertising, Media and Mass Media, Introduction to Communication Theory, Interactive Web Design, Public Speaking

TARGETED COURSEWORK (optional)



- * Write out the name of the course.
- * Only include courses that are relevant to the field/position that you want. Classes that cross disciplines such as Public Speaking and Business and Technical writing are great to include.
- * Don't list introductory courses. For example, if you are a Criminal Justice major, it is assumed that you took Intro to Criminal Justice.
- * Think about what you learned in each class listed. If you can't remember why it was such a great class and what you learned, don't include it. Check the college catalog for class descriptions.

EXPERIENCE



JOURNALISM EXPERIENCE

H-Files (*Hilbert College Student Newspaper*)

September 2011-May 2015

Editor Hamburg, NY

- Responsible for the publication of four issues each semester, reaching an audience of over 1,300 readers.
- Promoted from Contributor to Editor within the first year.
- * Tailor your section headings. Don't be too generic! Use headings to frame your experience. "Journalism Experience" or "Criminal Justice Experience" are specific, and help guide the reader.
- * Be consistent! Format each experience the same way! Include the name of the employer/organization, your position title, the location, and the dates of employment/involvement.
- * Create 2-5 accomplishment statements (bullet points) for each experience. Continue on to the Accomplishment Statement section for help on creating these bullets.
- * Past or present? If you are still doing the job, write in the present tense. Past positions should be written in the past tense.

OPTIONAL SECTIONS

- * Other sections that you may choose to include on your resume include Certifications, Computer Skills, Language Skills, Community Service, Professional Affiliations, etc.
- * Include dates, where appropriate. For certifications, list the date that you received the certification. Once a certification, license, etc. expires, remove it from your resume.

COMPUTER SKILLS

Proficient in Microsoft products: Word, PowerPoint, Outlook, and Excel

Working knowledge of Microsoft products: Access and Publisher; Photo Shop, and Dreamweaver

LANGUAGE SKILLS

Fluent in Spanish

Conversational knowledge of German

Writing Effective Accomplishment Statements

Action Verbs

- * Start each accomplishment statement with an action verb. The use of well-chosen action verbs is a highly effective resume technique. Incorporating action verbs into the description of your experience emphasizes the strengths and skills you possess. See the next page for examples of action verbs.

How/What?

- * Explain how you demonstrated your skills. What did you do? Who did you work with?

Why?

- * Explain why you used the skill. What was the result? What did you accomplish? What impact was made on the stakeholders?

ACTION VERB

Responsible for

HOW/WHAT?

the publication of four issues each semester

WHY?

reaching an audience of over 1,300 readers.

Now it is your turn!

Job Title _____

Name of Employer/Organization _____

Dates of Employment/Involvement _____

City, State _____

Write two to five Accomplishment Statements per experience:

ACTION VERB _____

HOW/WHAT? _____

WHY? _____

ACTION VERB _____

HOW/WHAT? _____

WHY? _____

ACTION VERB _____

HOW/WHAT? _____

WHY? _____

SAMPLE RESUME

SUZY S. STUDENT

555 Study Ave., Hamburg, NY 14075
716-555-5555 · suzys.student@gmail.com
<http://www.linkedin.com/in/suzysstudent/>

EDUCATION & HONORS

Bachelor of Arts Degree in English

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JOURNALISM EXPERIENCE

H-Files (*Hilbert College Student Newspaper*)

September 2011-May 2015

Editor, Hamburg, NY

- Responsible for the publication of four issues each semester, reaching an audience of over 1,300 readers.
- Assisted in the transition from a traditional printed newspaper to an online publication.
- Promoted from Contributor to Editor within the first year.
- Coordinated a trip to The Buffalo News offices where H-Files contributors conducted informational interviews with reporters, resulting in an internship opportunity.

The Buffalo News

September 2013-December 2013

Intern, Buffalo, NY

- Entered daily reports into a database using Microsoft Access.
- Participated in off-site trips to collect and research stories.
- Witnessed the production and process of the newspaper.
- Participated in professional development seminars on social media and sources.

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

Big Brothers Big Sisters

January 2011-Present

Mentor, Buffalo, NY

- Mentor a middle school student on a one-on-one basis regarding school work, friendships, and extra-curricular activities.
- Plan educational experiences such as museum and theater outings to increase cultural exposure and engagement.

Hilbert College Career Development Center

September 2012-May 2015

Work Study Office Assistant, Hamburg, NY

- Responsible for posting over 600 open job announcements on the office web site each semester.
- Coordinate all public relations for the office including social media accounts, bulletin boards, and flyer advertisements.
- Assist with the day-to-day activities of the office and computer resource lab.

Girl Scouts of America

May-August 2013 & 2014

Camp Counselor, Hamburg, NY

- Researched and created programs for 24 girls, ages 10-11, in order to promote a positive and respectful environment.
- Monitored three-day overnight camping trips for 50+ Girl Scouts to ensure a fun and safe experience for all campers.

COMPUTER SKILLS

- Proficient in Microsoft products: Word, PowerPoint, Outlook, and Excel
- Working knowledge of Microsoft products: Access and Publisher; Photo Shop, and Dreamweaver

LANGUAGE SKILLS

- Fluent in Spanish
- Conversational knowledge of German

Resume Rubric:

How the Career Development Center Evaluates Your Resume

What is a Resume Rubric?

- * A resume rubric is a tool that the Career Development Center uses to evaluate your resume. Being familiar with the criteria on the rubric while writing or updating your resume can help you write a quality resume that is polished, targeted, and best represents you.

What parts of my resume will be evaluated using the Resume Rubric?

- * The Resume Rubric used by the Hilbert College Career Development Center focuses on four key components: **Content, Phrasing, Format, and Visual Appeal & Accuracy.**

I think that my resume is awful! Please don't laugh at me!

- * Don't be discouraged! On the first resume critique most students achieve a 1 or a 2 in most categories. In our experience, most students need to rewrite their resume two (or three) times before their resume writing reaches the highest level (4) on the rubric in all components. Resume writing is a skill that develops with practice and feedback. Let us help you get there!

Resume Writing Skillshops are held regularly throughout the school year. Join us for one of these sessions for assistance in writing your resume or make an appointment with the Career Development staff for an individual consultation.

An Introduction to Cover Letters

What is a cover letter?

- * A cover letter is a document that enhances your application and proves that you are a good fit for the company/organization. You will need to write a new cover letter for every position that you apply for, personalizing each one for the specific job/position.

YIKES! I really have to write a cover letter?!

- * **Yes**, you do! Cover letters and resumes go together like peanut butter and jelly, love and marriage, or Bert and Ernie. You can't have one without the other!



THINK ABOUT...

What is something unique about this company and position that appeals to you?

Why are you an excellent candidate for the position?

What is a skill or aspect of your education that you want to highlight?
How have you demonstrated your skill set?

What are your professional accomplishments?

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

Heading (Ensure this matches the heading you use on your resume as it creates a personal brand.)

Date

Employer's Name (This can also be the name of the recruiter, or head of the search committee.)

Title

Organization Name

Street Address

City, State Zip Code

Dear Employer's Name:

(First paragraph) **Introduce yourself.** Tell the reader **why you are writing**, the specific position for which you are applying, and how you heard about the opening. Briefly express **why you are interested** in the position, or why you are applying to this company in particular. If you are inquiring about jobs in general, and if no specific opening exists, indicate your interest in career opportunities in your desired field. Make a claim as to **why you are an excellent candidate** for the position which will guide the reader through the rest of your document.

(Second paragraph) **Highlight your education or skills.** This could mean including information on your major, research projects, relevant coursework, study abroad, or other Hilbert experiences. Be sure to **connect these highlights to the position you are applying for**. Keep in mind, these do not have to be content matches but can **include skills** such as communication, writing, critical analysis, quantitative skills, or any other skills you think are relevant. If it makes more sense to highlight your professional accomplishments or other activities in this paragraph because they will make you a stronger candidate, then do so and write about your education and skills in the third paragraph.

(Third paragraph) **Highlight your professional accomplishments.** This includes paid positions, internships, volunteer work, extracurricular activities, athletics, or anything else that you think is relevant to the position. Look at your resume, and choose three or four achievements that demonstrate skills the employer is looking for. Look back at the job description for key terms, and ask yourself where you have demonstrated that qualification or skill.

(Fourth paragraph) **The closing.** Refer the reader to your enclosed or attached resume. **Request an interview** if appropriate and give a final reason or **summary statement about why the employer should consider you as a candidate**. You may include a statement saying you will follow up with the employer within a specific timeframe, unless they requested that you not contact them. Always **thank the employer** for considering you for the position.

Sincerely,

Sign your name

Type your name

Writing a Reference Page

References

- * Employers expect that you will provide a list of professional references during the job application process. Standard practice is to provide 3-5 references, unless an employer specifies how many they require. Some employers may request references along with a cover letter and resume while others will expect you to bring a reference page with you to the interview.
- * Appropriate references include professors, previous employers, co-workers, internship supervisors, or volunteer supervisors. Personal references are inappropriate in most fields.
- * Before listing someone as a reference, ask permission. If they agree to be your reference, be sure to get their current and correct contact information.
- * It is a good idea to let all of your references know what position(s) you are applying for and to send them the most recent version of your resume.
- * Be sure to thank each reference after your job search is over. They were a big part in your success!

Format

- * Your reference page should be a stand-alone document. Do not tag references onto the end of your resume or cover letter.
- * Use the same heading as you did on your resume and cover letter at the top of your reference page. Remember, this is your personal letterhead.
- * Under your heading, type the word "References".
- * Then list your references in order of relevance to the position. Think about who could give you the best reference for this position and list them first. References do not have to be alphabetical or chronological by how long you have known the person .

Who can you ask to be a professional reference?

Name	Job Title	Organization/ Company	Address	Phone Number	Email
1 -					
2 -					
3 -					
4 -					
5 -					

Now you are ready to apply!

Congratulations!

- * You have now completed the FIRST step in the employment process . . . *sort of*. Below are a few key items to remember on your road to success.
 - √ You need to revisit and revise your resume, cover letter, and reference page for EVERY position that you apply for. Tailoring your resume for each position is the best way to get noticed, and get hired!
 - √ When emailing your resume, cover letter, and reference page be sure to save/send them as separate files and convert them to PDF documents to avoid formatting issues when emailed.
 - √ If you are applying online and can upload a PDF document, do it! There are some programs that will not accept a PDF document. In these cases upload your documents as Word files.
 - √ When emailing your documents, be sure to write a professional message to the person who is receiving the email. There is no need to repeat your cover letter in the message, but a short statement introducing yourself, specifying the position you are applying for, and providing your contact information is expected and professional.
 - √ Be sure to check your emails and voicemails daily once you have applied. You don't want to get an interview offer and not know about it immediately. Delayed responses tell the employer that you are not a serious job seeker. Return all emails and phone calls within 24 hours.
 - √ Make sure that your voicemail has a professional greeting. For example, "Hello, you have reached Suzy Student. I am not available right now. Please leave a message and I will return your call as soon as possible. Thank you!". Do not use ring back tones.
 - √ When you land the interview, let us know! Stop by the Career Center for interviewing tips or to make an appointment for a Mock Interview.



CAREER DEVELOPMENT

career@hilbert.edu