

RÉSUMÉS AND COVER LETTERS

Marketing Yourself on Paper



**CAREER
DEVELOPMENT**

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Moody Bible Institute

820 N. LaSalle Blvd.

Chicago, IL 60610

312-329-4414

fax: 312-329-8976

e-mail: patrick.friedline@moody.edu

Website: www.moody.edu/careerdevelopment

You Need To Know This: Introduction to Résumés

WHAT IS A RÉSUMÉ?

A résumé is a professional "advertisement" about yourself that translates what you have done in the past into what you can do and intend to do in the future. It should speak clearly and convincingly about your qualifications and set you apart from others. Everything in it should answer the employer's question, "Why should I hire you?". Your résumé is a written document that lists your work experience, skills, and educational background. It is used as a marketing tool for job seekers.. **Both what you say and how you say it are important.** It is up to you as a responsible communicator to make sure the reader gets the intended message. The résumé and its cover letter should be examples of your best writing.

WHY WRITE A RÉSUMÉ?

The résumé is the **standard information piece to communicate your abilities to a potential employer.** It is a tool to be used in the job search process. Like any other tool, a résumé is used for a specific function.

A résumé can . . .

1. **Enable you to see yourself as you wish to be perceived by a prospective employer.**
2. **Create an interest in you as a potential employee and be a first step in obtaining an interview.**
3. **Help employers remember you after you have been interviewed.**
4. **Facilitate your ability to speak concisely and intelligently about you experiences and skills**

RÉSUMÉS ARE NOT BOASTFUL

We are to think realistically about ourselves. We are not to think of ourselves more highly or lowly than we are (Romans 12:3). But it is not wrong, "un-Christian" or "unspiritual" to put down only positive things on your résumé. As long as you are truthful, you should feel free to express your skills and other qualifications in as positive a light as you are able. The Apostle Paul was not afraid to recount what he had done or what God had accomplished through him. Your résumé paints a picture of who you are and what you have done as a gauge of what you are capable of doing in the future.

Remember, your résumé is a summary of your qualifications, not your life story. There will be plenty of opportunities in the interview, you hopefully get through your résumé, for you to be open and honest about your limitations. Even then you should be able to articulate your limitations in a positive light (i.e., in light of how you are attempting to address those areas in a way that would make you a more effective employee and showing personal growth).

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

We only have one opportunity in any situation to make a good first impression. Marketing yourself successfully means you stand out positively to a potential employer. A successful résumé is one that leads to interviews. Interviews lead directly to jobs. Writing your résumé is the first—and most important—step you can take toward obtaining a position. Your first piece of correspondence with most employers is a cover letter and a résumé.

Excellence in look, style, and delivery of your cover letter and résumé is the key to getting a personal interview. Using a quality bond paper and mailing the documents flat, in a large envelope can begin the process of making a good first impression. You want to communicate a concern for details and a desire to do things right the first time. You want to avoid being sloppy in anything you do. An important point to remember is **your résumé will not get you a job, but it may hopefully get you an interview.**

Building A Resume

PICKING A FORMAT

There are four basic approaches to organizing your résumé. These styles are:

1. Chronological
2. Functional
3. Chronological/Functional
4. Creative

Chronological

Presents work experience and education in reverse chronological order. It starts with the most recent information first. It lists achievements, accomplishments and responsibilities. This format:

- is the most widely used and accepted; professional interviewers are most familiar with it
- emphasizes recent jobs as most important and shows progression and/or experience and growth
- highlights significant features and is not just a “grocery list” of your life
- makes it difficult to spotlight areas of skills and accomplishments unless they are in your most recent jobs
- is better used when the position you are seeking is in the same occupational field as your experience

Functional

Emphasizes skills rather than chronological data. Lists work history and education in terms of skills and abilities gained and demonstrated. This format:

- draws attention to skills rather than experience
- stresses select areas of accomplishment most relevant to the job being sought
- does not indicate professional growth patterns
- is harder for an interviewer to follow
- is not widely appreciated by employers

Chronological/Functional

Emphasizes both skills and specific chronological data. Has the strengths of both formats above. This format:

- draws attention to skills and experience
- stresses select areas of accomplishment most relevant to the job being sought
- can indicate professional growth patterns
- is more widely appreciated by employers than simply a functional résumé
- is best used by recent college graduates and those changing career direction

Creative

Demonstrates your creative skills and can combine both functional and chronological formats. This format:

- gives a clear idea of your creative ability in the area of content, color, arrangement, graphics, etc
- stresses select areas of accomplishment and competence most relevant to the position
- does not necessarily indicate professional growth pattern
- should probably be used for creative arts, advertising, print design, and other positions in which a high degree of creativity is expected

It is best if you can use the Chronological approach, because it is the most widely recognised and accepted. But the Functional and Functional/Chronological are both valid, useful tools in the right situation. The Creative approach is best used with the creative design fields.

Design And Content

Résumés are looked at briefly—30 seconds max. Your résumé has to be **SHORT, CONCISE, AND EYE-CATCHING**. It has to be eye-pleasing and inviting. Come in and find a design style you like and duplicate the style with your own résumé.

DESIGN

A Note About Résumé “Wizards”...

A “Wizard” is a tool to help you quickly do something in a template format. The résumé wizard in most Word programs is pretty good and can help you when you’re in a hurry. That is the key. **If you needed a résumé “yesterday” than a wizard for a one-time use is great.** It will help you get a résumé done and out in no time. **Résumé Wizards are best for one-time use only.** Because they are a template, they are very hard to adjust or change. You cannot cut and paste easily in a wizard. So for long-term use, create your résumé in your own Word Document so it remains a flexible document. Then you will be able to tailor your résumé easily for each position you are seeking.

Page Set Up:

An adequate amount of space is desired in creating your résumé, so set **Margins at .75 or 1.0 inches** all the way around. Also set the **Tabs at .25 inches**, to have flexibility in placement of material. Using the features of Microsoft Word, you can create the design that looks good to you. Or you may imitate a design which you found and liked in one of the Résumé Books.

Font Type, Size and Style:

Select a font type and stay with it. Consistency in use of fonts is a key part of résumés. Choose a professional, easy-to-read font type. Do not use multiple font types, because that is hard on the eyes. Generally the size of the font should be 12 points, but if you have a lot of material to cover, then you may use 10 point font. You may use both **bold** and *italics*, but do not overuse them. Many people will **bold** the dates and *italicize* the job title. Or you see people use ALL CAPITALS for the section titles like “OBJECTIVE” and “EXPERIENCE” etc. **The point to remember is be consistent in your usage.**

When you choose a font, use a serif font for greater readability. Serif fonts have little lines extending from the top, bottom and end of a character. These fonts tend to be easier to read than sans serif (without serif) fonts, especially in low-light conditions. Compare the following font examples:

Serif

Bookman Old Style - minimum

Times New Roman - abilities

Sans Serif

Tahoma - minimum

Arial – abilities

CONTENT

Name and Contact Information

Your name should be 6 to 10 font points bigger than the rest of your résumé. This helps your name stand out and helps with easy retrieval when your résumé is in a pile. You need to provide the address where you will get mail while you are searching for employment. If you will be living somewhere temporarily, then maybe using your parents’ address and having them forward stuff to you would be the best. The address may be written all on one line if you desire to save space. The phone and email address would then go on the line under the address. Leave some space between the phone number and the email.

The Objective Statement

An objective statement can make or break your résumé. A poorly written objective statement can stop a potential employer from reading the rest of your résumé.

The objective statement should be the central focal point toward which all other elements in the résumé point. You should be able to state your objective or focus in one short statement.

4 steps to a good objective statement are:

1. Begin your resume objective statement with what you are seeking. For example, use phrases such as "To find employment in Pastoral ministry," "To secure employment as a waitress," or "To further my writing career."
2. Add what you will bring to the new position. For example, use phrases such as "in which I can utilize my exceptional organizational skills," "where my extensive background in customer service," or "where my ability to produce exceptional work and meet deadlines."
3. End with how you will help or improve the company. For example, use phrases such as "will improve company productivity," "will contribute to company culture," or "helps the company increase productivity scores."
4. Insert your resume objective statement at the top of your resume under your name and address.

Example:

What do I seek: Seeking a Youth Ministry position
What do I bring: to use 3 years of ministry experience to
What you intend to accomplish: effectively lead students to a closer walk with God.

In this case, your final objective statement would be:

Seeking a Youth Ministry position to use 3 years of experience to effectively lead students to a closer walk with God

Objective Statement Worksheet

What do I seek?

What do I bring?

What do I want to accomplish with my skills/education?

Final Statement:

Experience

This is a listing of your ministry and work experience—**paid and unpaid**. **Because of Practical Christian Ministry assignments here at Moody Bible Institute, you have three years of experiences to use in your résumé.** You have gained many marketable skills while fulfilling your graduation requirements of PCM and Internship. All of those experiences are what make up an incredibly strong résumé.

Experience is listed chronologically from the current experience going backwards in time. When possible, you want to have all of the experiences directly pertaining to your objective listed first. A strategy to accomplish this is to add an adjective to the heading “Experience” (i.e.: “Ministry Experience”). You then may list all of your ministry positions and experiences without the chronological interruption of other types of work. The other work would go in a second section titled “Related Experience.”

When listing your employment, include the following information:

- the dates of your employment (just years for long-term employment, months and years for short-term)
- your title (if necessary, invent an appropriate title to accurately convey the nature of your work)
- the organization name
- the city and state of the organization
- your responsibilities and accomplishments

To prepare a good résumé, you should have a clear understanding of your experiences in light of the position you are seeking. How do all of your experiences and the skills make you qualified for the type of ministry/job you are seeking?

List all of your experiences (including: paid or volunteer, PCM, and internships) chronologically, starting from your current or most recent experience and moving backward in your life. Briefly (1 to 2 lines worth) describe what you did, then use bullet points to highlight specific accomplishments and skills. Examples of accomplishments are, “developed my own curriculum for a Bible study” or “created a program and planned and ran a retreat.”

The work sheet below is to help you get information down on paper. Write down every experience you’ve have had in the worksheet, though you may not include everything on your résumé. There is an extra worksheet that you may photocopy so you have enough room for all of your entries. The information from the worksheets will be edited to go in your final résumé.

DATES JOB TITLE EMPLOYER/ORGANIZATION CITY, STATE

1- to 2-line description of what you did, with 2 or 3 bullet points emphasizing your accomplishments and skills.

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1- to 2-line description of what you did, with 2 or 3 bullet points emphasizing your accomplishments and skills.

Experience: Wording It For The Résumé

Experience and Your Objective Statement

The experiences which you list on your résumé prove why you are qualified to do what you said you wanted to do in your Objective Statement. Everything on a résumé under the Objective is like a large arrow which points to the Objective and says, "Because I have done all these things, I am ready to do this for a potential employer. Your résumé should paint a word picture of who you are in a potential employer's mind and hopefully you match the picture of what the organization is looking for. Therefore, details and specifics need to be included and you need to be descriptive in your wording. You also need to be concise.

Experience and Verb Phrases

Normal grammar does not apply to a résumé—there are no complete sentences; there are no personal pronouns; and all descriptions need to be written actively. Use ACTIVE VERBS to describe what you did. **A verb list is included on the next page** to assist you in describing your experiences and skills actively. Use many different synonyms of verbs to avoid repetition. An example of incorrect and correct usage of active verbs is:

Incorrect—"I was part of a committee running a recreation program for 30 Junior Highers."

Correct—"Developed and implemented a recreation program for 30 Junior Highers as part of a team of 5 leaders."

Accomplishments and Skills

In the above example, the correct version is an accomplishment. It showed you could work on a team and you took initiative. After a 1- to 2-line brief description of the youth program, you could use that example as a bullet point and then talk about a skill like "group management or group dynamics" as a second bullet point. Accomplishments are things you did that were above and beyond the normal day-to-day. Skills are the learned or natural abilities you have to accomplish duties. These are what you need to communicate on your résumé.

Here is an example of how to do two experience entries:

EXPERIENCE

20xx-present	<i>Position Title</i>	<i>Organization Name</i>	<i>City, State</i>
	A one to two-line overview of your essential role in this organization.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An accomplishment from this job, illustrating a skill needed in the new job.• An accomplishment from this job, illustrating a skill needed in the new job.		
19xx-20xx	<i>Position Title</i>	<i>Organization Name</i>	<i>City, State</i>
	A one to two-line overview of your essential role in this organization.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An accomplishment from this job, illustrating a skill needed in the new job.• Another accomplishment from this job, illustrating a skill needed in the new job.		

Education

Your education is listed **only for completed programs**. You do not include your High School Diploma, only college level degrees and above. You should list your highest degree first and then go backwards from there. You will list your Moody Bible Institute degree and give a date of May, 20??. You do not need to use words like "anticipated." Here are some examples:

EDUCATION

May 2006	PhD. in Youth Ministry	Moody Bible Institute	Chicago, IL
May 2000	Masters of Divinity	Moody Bible Institute	Chicago, IL
May 1998	Masters of Arts in Biblical Studies	Dallas Seminary	Dallas, TX
May 1996	B. A. in Youth Ministry	Moody Bible Institute	Chicago, IL

Résumés need to be written in an active voice, using ACTION VERBS. Here is a list of action verbs you may want to use.

VERB LIST

abstracted	contracted	familiarized	navigated	resolved
accelerated	controlled	filed	negotiated	responded
accomplished	converted	forecasted	obtained	restored
achieved	cooperated	formulated	operated	retrieved
acted	coordinated	founded	ordered	revised
adapted	copied	gardened	organized	routed
adjusted	corresponded	gathered	originated	saved
administered	counseled	generated	outlined	scanned
advised	created	governed	oversaw	scheduled
analyzed	created profits	guided	outlined	screened
answered	critiqued	handled	participated	searched
anticipated	cut	helped	perceived	selected
applied	decided	hired	performed	served
approached	decorated	identified	persuaded	sewed
approved	defined	illustrated	planned	simplified
arbitrated	delegated	implemented	preached	sold
arranged	delivered	improved	prepared	solved
assembled	demonstrated	increased	prescribed	spoke
assessed	designed	indexed	presented	staffed
assigned	detailed	influenced	presided	standardized
assisted	detected	informed	printed	stimulated
attained	determined	initiated	processed	strengthened
audited	developed	innovated	produced	studied
authored	devised	inspected	profited	succeeded
began	diagnosed	installed	programmed	summarized
bought	directed	instated	progressed	supervised
briefed	discipled	instituted	promoted	supplied
budgeted	disciplined	instructed	proofed	supported
built	discovered	integrated	proposed	surveyed
calculated	dispensed	interacted	protected	synthesized
campaigned	disproved	interpreted	provided	systematized
cared for	distributed	interviewed	publicized	tabulated
catalogued	doubled	invented	published	talked
categorized	drafted	investigated	purchased	taught
chaired	drew up	landscaped	re-designed	tested
charted	economized	launched	realized	trained
clarified	edited	learned	received	translated
classified	educated	lectured	recommended	transmitted
coached	effected	led	reconciled	traveled
coded	eliminated	listened	recorded	trimmed
collaborated	employed	located	recreated	tripled
collected	encouraged	logged	recruited	tutored
communicated	enforced	made decisions	rectified	typed
compared	enlarged	maintained	reduced	typeset
compiled	enlisted	managed	referred	uncovered
completed	established	marketed	registered	unified
composed	estimated	measured	regulated	united
compounded	evaluated	mediated	reinforced	unraveled
computed	evangelized	memorized	related	updated
conceived	examined	merchandised	rendered	used
conceptualized	exchanged	mobilized	renewed	utilized
conciliated	executed	moderated	reorganized	verified
conducted	exhibited	modified	repaired	widened
conserved	expanded	monitored	reported	won
consolidated	expedited	motivated	represented	wrote
constructed	explained	multiplied profit	requested	
contacted	facilitated	multiplied sales	researched	

Other Headings

The most important of these is “Other Training” and “Credentials.” These areas highlight specialized training that should help you stand out as a candidate. Son Life Basic and Advanced Training is an example of some other training. Or being “Licenced” or “Ordained” would be examples of credentials. If you have had specialized training, especially in the field you are going into, it needs to be on your résumé.

These other heading are not as important and should only be used if they have a specific link to your Objective.

Extracurricular Activities. Highlight any significant school offices held, special services you have performed, etc., and identify any responsibilities you had in connection with those activities.

Honors/Awards. List any significant ways in which you have been recognized for your achievements such as academic awards (dean's list, honors societies, graduated cum laude, etc.), community service awards, employer appreciation (i.e., employee of the month, letter of commendation, etc.), etc. Be judicious here. You want to draw attention to how others have acknowledged your accomplishments.

Personal Interests. List only those areas/interests you think are relevant to the position you are seeking. Some hobbies or personal interests, however, (sports, reading, and computers) are always good to list.

Personal Information (on Ministry Résumés only). You may include information concerning your conversion, family status, number of children, and age. Though no one is legally able to ask this, churches and ministries do appreciate the openness.

References

Usually you should not include these with your résumé. Rather, just a simply statement like "References available upon request" should be placed at the bottom of the last page. No “References” heading is required. You should get permission from 3-5 people, and you should include one or two who have seen you work or minister and will speak positively regarding that context. You also may include one personal friend. The key here is to have references who speak positively concerning how you work. You want 3-5 references. Make sure they will give you a positive reference.

Reference Etiquette

Stay in touch with your references. They cannot effectively help you if they do not know what you are doing now and what you want to do. Inform them of the type of position you are seeking. Also learn from them concerning how they want to be contacted—phone, letter, email, etc. And finally thank your references often for their help to you.

Reference Page

When you send your references, whether you do so with your résumé or later upon request, you should include them on a separate page that includes your name, address and phone number, with the name, address and phone number of each of your personal references, as well as the capacity in which each reference knows you. You can also include the length of time you have known each of them.

Note: The next few pages give you templates of what a Résumé could look like. They are presented as a guide.

CHRONOLOGICAL RÉSUMÉ TEMPLATE

JUDY/RUDY MOODY

820 N. LaSalle Blvd., Chicago, IL 60610
Phone number, Email Address

OBJECTIVE

The type of position you are seeking (Pastor, youth pastor, editor, secretary, or whatever)

EXPERIENCE *(Include relevant paid and unpaid experience [i.e., PCMs, internships, etc.]*

2010 - Present Pastoral Intern Valley View Baptist Church St. Charles, IL

Assisted the Pastor with all aspects of Church ministry for a congregation of 40-45 people

- Created and taught Bible studies to adults in a small group, including application discussions
- Prepared and preached to the whole church body in the absence of the Pastor or leading various parts of the service
- Co-lead the Wednesday night Bible Study and Prayer time, incorporating discussion facilitation

2009 *Sunday School Teacher* 1st Bapt. Church Downers Grove, IL

Taught a class of 14 fifth and sixth grade students in a weekly Sunday School setting

- Planned and created teaching materials and curriculum for the class each week
- Mentored and interacted with the students through the lesson time about current life issues
- Supported ADHD and Autistic children who were part of the class, helping them succeed in class

Fall '08 *Tutor/Mentor* World Relief Chicago, IL

Tutored and encouraged a refugee student one-on-one in an after-school program

- Taught basic concepts for multiple subjects, including marshalling resources and preparing learning exercises
- Established a relational bridge through sharing of similar cross-cultural experiences

Spring 2008 *Church Service Team Member* Emma Dryer Nursing Home Chicago, IL

Cooperated with a team of 5 to conduct weekly worship services for 30-40 residents

- Prepared and lead the music component of a full church service experience
- Planned the weekly theme and flow of the service with the team member doing the message that week
- Interacted with and encouraged the residents in one-on-one conversations after the service

2007 *Youth Leader* The Well Geneva, IL

- Planned and lead games and activities with a youth group of 15 teens
- Assisted the Youth Pastor with facilitating group discussion based on the weekly study.

2006-2007 *Ministry Intern* Naperville Pres. Church Naperville, IL

Assisted with the overall coordination and implementation of the Small Groups Ministry program

- Facilitated a small group of 7 people
- Prepared and taught Bible lessons for the full group of 90 people

EDUCATION *(List only those schools from which you received a degree)*

20xx Bachelor of Arts in... Moody Bible Institute Chicago, IL

OTHER TRAINING

Special courses or training you have received (i.e., Sonlife or Willow Creek training, Write to Publish Conference, etc.)

References available upon request

Adapted from résumé templates in Résumé Pro (Yana Parker from Ten Speed Press)

FUNCTIONAL RÉSUMÉ

YOUR NAME

**Street Address, City, State
Phone number, Email Address**

OBJECTIVE

The type of position you are seeking (Pastor, youth pastor, editor, secretary, or whatever)

RELEVANT SKILLS

ONE MAJOR SKILL (*Directly relevant to your stated objective above*)

- An accomplishment that illustrates this skill (including where this occurred).
 - A substatement that elaborates on one step in the process of the accomplishment above.
 - Another substatement elaborating on one step in the process of the accomplishment above.
- An accomplishment that illustrates this skill (including where this occurred).

ANOTHER MAJOR SKILL (*Directly relevant to your stated objective above*)

- An accomplishment that illustrates this skill (including where this occurred).
 - A substatement that elaborates on one step in the process of the accomplishment above.
 - Another substatement elaborating on one step in the process of the accomplishment above.
- An accomplishment that illustrates this skill (including where this occurred).

ANOTHER MAJOR SKILL (*Directly relevant to your stated objective above*)

- An accomplishment that illustrates this skill (including where this occurred).
- Another accomplishment that illustrates this skill (including where this occurred).

ANOTHER MAJOR SKILL (*Directly relevant to your stated objective above*)

- An accomplishment that illustrates this skill (including where this occurred).
- Another accomplishment that illustrates this skill (including where this occurred).

A SPECIAL AREA OF KNOWLEDGE (*Essential to your stated objective above*)

- An accomplishment that illustrates this skill (including where this occurred).
- A list of equipment or processes you're familiar with, consistent with expertise in this area.
- A list of courses or training you took that shows your expertise in this area.

WORK HISTORY

20xx-present	<i>Position Title</i>	Organization Name	City, ST
19xx-20xx	<i>Position Title</i>	Organization Name	City, ST
19xx-19xx	<i>Position Title</i>	Organization Name	City, ST
19xx-19xx	<i>Position Title</i>	Organization Name	City, ST

EDUCATION

(List only those schools from which you received a degree)

20xx	Degree (BA, MA, etc.) & Major	SCHOOL NAME	CITY, ST
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OTHER TRAINING

Special courses or training you have received (i.e., Sonlife or Willow Creek training, Write to Publish Conference, etc.)

References available upon request

Adapted from résumé templates in Résumé Pro (Yana Parker from Ten Speed Press)

FUNCTIONAL/CHRONOLOGICAL RÉSUMÉ

YOUR NAME

Street Address, City, State
Phone number, Email Address

OBJECTIVE

The type of position you are seeking (Pastor, youth pastor, editor, secretary, or whatever)

EXPERIENCE

(Include relevant paid and unpaid experience [i.e., PCMs, internships, etc.]

20xx-present

Position Title

Organization Name

City, ST

ONE SKILL *(A primary function of this position above and relevant to your objective)*

- An accomplishment from this position that illustrates or documents this skill.
A substatement that elaborates on one step in the process of the accomplishment above.
A substatement elaborating on another step in the process of the accomplishment above.

- Another accomplishment from this position that illustrates or documents this skill.

ANOTHER SKILL *(Another function of this position above and relevant to your objective)*

- An accomplishment from this position that illustrates or documents this skill.
- Another accomplishment from this position that illustrates or documents this skill.

19xx-20xx

Position Title

Organization Name

City, ST

ONE SKILL *(A primary function of this position above and relevant to your objective)*

- An accomplishment from this position that illustrates or documents this skill.
A substatement that elaborates on one step in the process of the accomplishment above.
A substatement elaborating on another step in the process of the accomplishment above.

- Another accomplishment from this position that illustrates or documents this skill.

ANOTHER SKILL *(Another function of this position above and relevant to your objective)*

- An accomplishment from this position that illustrates or documents this skill.
- Another accomplishment from this position that illustrates or documents this skill.

19xx-19xx

Position Title

Organization Name

City, ST

ONE SKILL *(A primary function of this position above and relevant to your objective)*

- An accomplishment from this position that illustrates or documents this skill.
A substatement that elaborates on one step in the process of the accomplishment above.
A substatement elaborating on another step in the process of the accomplishment above.

ANOTHER SKILL *(Another function of this position above and relevant to your objective)*

- An accomplishment from this position that illustrates or documents this skill.
- Another accomplishment from this position that illustrates or documents this skill.

EDUCATION *(List only those schools from which you received a degree.)*

20xx

Degree (BA, MA, etc.) & Major

School Name

City, ST

OTHER TRAINING

Special courses or training you have received (i.e., Sonlife or Willow Creek training, Write to Publish Conference, etc.)

References available upon request

Adapted from résumé templates in Résumé Pro (Yana Parker from Ten Speed Press)

Developing The Cover Letter

WHAT IS A COVER LETTER?

The cover letter is a ONE-PAGE business letter or essay presenting your preparation and qualifications for a position. **WHEN APPLYING FOR A JOB, YOU SHOULD ALWAYS INCLUDE A COVER LETTER WITH YOUR RÉSUMÉ.** It is an excellent tool to present yourself and generate interest from potential employers. It should be a unique expression of who you are and what you can do. This is something no one else can really do for you.

WHY WRITE A COVER LETTER?

Ideally, the cover letter should persuade the employer to read your résumé and grant you an interview. It, like your résumé (and perhaps more so), is a demonstration of your written communication skills.

The cover letter provides you with the opportunity to:

- demonstrate your knowledge of the organization by referring to the research you have conducted
- illustrate what you can do for the employer (as opposed to what he/she can do for you)
- identify and relate your skills to the requirements of the position by highlighting and interpreting accomplishments stated in your résumé
- ask specifically for an interview

Present yourself, your related skills, your talents, your abilities, and your other qualifications in an interesting way.

While your résumé may survive scrutiny for as long as 30 seconds, studies show that employers typically give 8 seconds to a cover letter. It is extremely important, therefore, that you be brief and well-organized. Above all, make sure your letter makes the connection between the requirements and expectations of the employer and the skills you can bring to the position.

HOW DO I WRITE A GOOD COVER LETTER?

Like the résumé, the cover letter can be a difficult piece to write. There is no right or wrong way to write this letter, but there are some helpful guidelines to follow:

Personalize your letter. Find out the name of the person who has the power to hire you and direct your letter to him/her personally. If you do not know who this person is, call the company/organization. In the case of churches, you should address your letter to the stated contact person or to the chairman of the search committee. Don't just send your letter to the "personnel office" (85% of companies don't even have one!).

Tailor your letter to a specific position. Don't just generate a form letter and change the names. Each organization wants to believe their organization and position is one that you have carefully identified and genuinely want.

Use simple and direct language. Don't try to impress people with your technical or spiritual (in the case of churches and parachurch organizations) vocabulary. Try to avoid sounding like Oswald Chambers, C.S. Lewis, or Francis Schaeffer unless you genuinely sound like them. Be concise. Try not to sound too aggressive, humorous, or informal.

Be positive. Let your accomplishments speak for themselves. If God has done something in your life, or you believe God can do something through you, express that.

Use a standard business letter format. Use 8 1/2" x 11" bond paper that matches the weight and color of your résumé paper. Margins should be one to 1 1/2 inches on all sides.

Edit your letter carefully. Your cover letter should be your best writing sample. Make sure you have absolutely no errors in your letter. If you make a mistake on a one page letter that is supposed to be your best effort, what will the employer think about entrusting a significant job to you? Is it interesting? Is it persuasive? Does it include a bit of your personality? Read it from the employer's perspective: "Why should I hire you?"

Remember to sign your letter!

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

Your Present Address
City, State, Zip Code
Phone Number (including area code)

Date of Writing

Mr. or Ms. [Name of Employer/Contact]
Title of Employer/Contact
Organization Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr. or Ms. [Name of Employer/Contact]:

First Paragraph: Explain why you are writing, usually to apply for a position. Identify the position, field, or general area about which you are asking. Tell how you heard of the opening or organization. If a current employee suggested that you inquire about this opening, include his or her name. If you heard of the opening through the newspaper, include the name of the publication and the date. If you heard of the opening through a friend or referral/placement agency, identify them by name as well.

Second and Third Paragraph: Mention why you are interested in the position, the organization, its products or services, its ministries, etc. Mention what you can do for the employer. If you are a recent graduate, explain how your academic training makes you a qualified candidate for the position. If you have had some practical work experience, point out some of the specific achievements or unique qualifications. Try not to repeat word-for-word the same information you have included in your résumé. Rather, highlight two or three items on the résumé and expand upon them.

Fourth Paragraph: If appropriate, state the information that was requested in the position advertisement. Refer the reader to the enclosed résumé and/or application blank, which summarizes your qualifications.

Final Paragraph: In closing, indicate your desire for a personal interview. Suggest a specific date and time you will call to set up an appointment. (**If you say you will call, remember to call!**) Thank the employer for his/her time and consideration and close your letter with a positive statement that makes a request for a specific action on the reader's part.

Sincerely,

(Your handwritten signature)

(Your typed name)

enclosure (i.e., your résumé)

PLEASE NOTE: YOUR OWN COVER LETTER MAY NOT HAVE 5 PARAGRAPHS, BUT THIS SAMPLE TELLS YOU THE CONTENT A COVER LETTER NEEDS TO HAVE.

Resources

200 Letters for Job Hunters. William S. Frank. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1993.
Cover Letters That Knock 'Em Dead. Martin Yate. Holbrook, MA: Bob Adams, 1994.
Damn Good Résumé Guide. Yana Parker. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1993.
Designing Creative Résumés. G. Berryman. Los Altos, CA: Crisp Publications, Inc., 1994.
Does Your Résumé Wear Blue Jeans? Edward Good. Charlottesville, VA: Blue Jeans Press, 1985.
Dynamic Cover Letters. K. Hansen. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1994.
Dynamite Cover Letters. Ronald Krannich. Manassas Park, VA: Impact Publications, 1994.
Dynamite Résumés. Ronald Krannich. Manassas Park, VA: Impact Publications, 1994.
Encyclopedia of Job Winning Résumés. Myra Fournier. Richfield, CT: Round Lake Publishing, 1991.
From College to Career. Donald Asher. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1992.
High Impact Résumés and Letters. Ronald Krannich. Manassas Park, VA: Impact Publications, 1994.
Just Résumés. Kim Marino. New York: Wiley, 1991.
Perfect Cover Letter. Richard Beatty. New York: Wiley, 1989.
Perfect Résumé. Tom Jackson. New York: Doubleday, 1990.
Résumé Catalog. Yana Parker. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1993.
Résumé Pro: The Professional's Guide. Yana Parker. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1993.
Résumé Writing Made Easy. Lola Coxford. Scottsdale, AZ: Gorsuch Scarisbrik, 1992.
Résumé Writing. Burdette Bostwisch. New York: Wiley, 1990.
Résumés That Knock 'Em Dead. Martin Yate. Holbrook, MA: Bob Adams, 1994.
Revising Your Résumé. Nancy Schuman and William Lewis. New York: Wiley, 1987.
Sure-Hire Résumés. Robbie Kaplan. New York: AMOCOM, 1990.
The Overnight Résumé. Donald Asher. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1993.
What Color Is Your Parachute? (1994 edit.) Richard Nelson Bolles. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1993.
Your First Résumé. Ronald Fry. Hawthorne, NJ: Career Press, 1989.

(NOTE: Each of these books is available in the Career Development Center Library)