

APPLY WITH CONFIDENCE



UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
TOPPEL CAREER CENTER

A Guide to Stronger Resumes and Cover Letters



A resume is a professional representation of your education, experience, and skills. It is one of the primary marketing tools you will use to obtain internships, jobs, and entry into graduate and professional programs. Most often, the goal of your resume is to obtain an interview.

RESUME FORMAT

There is not one correct way to design a resume. The format is based on your professional and educational experiences and should be unique to you.

Chronological

Resumes typically list education, experiences, and accomplishments in reverse chronological order. Start with your current or most recent experience and end with your earliest position.

Length

Resumes are typically one page for current students and for early career professionals; however, this varies by field. Avoid only filling half a page. Resumes for graduate and professional programs (sometimes called CVs) may be longer.

Digital Format

Ensure your resume is both computer and printer friendly. Convert the document into a PDF to ensure that formatting does not change once it reaches the employer.

Consistency

The content of the resume should be single-spaced; use double-spacing between sections and headings. Maintain consistent formatting throughout, including the use of bold, italics, or underlines. Do not over-design the resume.

Design

The resume should not be too text heavy, nor should it have too much white space. Strive for a balance that is appealing to the eye. Avoid using columns.

Font

Choose easily readable font styles within the 10-12 size range. Headings and your name can be slightly larger.

NOTE: Resumes for more creative fields offer additional flexibility and may not always follow the included formats. For more in-depth information and to have your creative resume reviewed, meet with a career coach at the Toppel Career Center.

REQUIRED COMPONENTS

CONTACT INFORMATION

Include your most current contact information at the top of the resume. It is important to provide accurate information so employers can easily reach you.

- Write your full name (font size should be a bit larger so that it stands out)
- List a professional email address and telephone number with area code (make sure to have an appropriate voicemail message)
- Consider adding your location (city, state) if you live near the job site
- Adding a LinkedIn URL could help the employer more easily learn about you

EDUCATION

Academic credentials are important, particularly if you are relatively new to the job market or pursuing a job that requires specific training.

- Only list your current institution or those from which you have received a degree
- Avoid listing high school education after your first year of college
- Include study abroad experience
- Write out the institution's name, city and state (UM is in Coral Gables, FL), full degree title (e.g., Bachelor of Science), and graduation date (month, year)
- OPTIONAL: including GPA is recommended if it is 3.5 or above
- Include honors within this section such as Dean's List or scholarships
- Relevant courses may be included here or in a separate section, if desired

Samples:

University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL

Bachelor of Science in Communication, May 2028

Majors in Broadcast Journalism and English

Bachelor of Business Administration, University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL

Major in International Finance and Marketing 3.67 GPA, December 2029

Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia

Study Abroad, Summer 2026

EXPERIENCE

This is the most important section of your resume because it highlights accomplishments and skills you have acquired. This section can include, but is not limited to, paid or unpaid internships, leadership experiences, service, research, and part-time and full-time jobs.

Accomplishment Statements

It is important to create accomplishment statements that:

- Emphasize transferable skills you have developed
- Highlight positive outcomes and impact
- Provide specific details. Tell a brief, descriptive story using relevant keywords for your field

This is the section where you should articulate essential skills you possess (e.g., Communication, Critical Thinking, Leadership, Teamwork, and Technology).

To Help Get You Started, Follow These Steps:

1. List experience in reverse chronological order (most recent first).
2. Indicate the company/organization name, city, state, title, and dates of employment (month and year).
3. Begin every bullet point with a powerful action verb.
4. If referring to organizations by abbreviations, write out the full name the first time you use it.
5. Develop bulleted accomplishment statements using the formula below to highlight key responsibilities and skills:

[Action Verb] + What I Did/Skills I Used = Specific Results I Achieved

What I Did: Describe the tasks at hand and the role you played in that experience.

Skills I Used: Examples include oral/written communication, research, and proficiency with technical skills.

Results I Achieved: An effective result is concrete, measurable, and describes the goal of your actions. (e.g., an increase in sales, improved experience for patients, etc.)

Samples:

- Provided guidance and mentorship to 30 freshman engineering students, assisting them in navigating the challenges of transitioning to college both academically and socially
- Researched potential sponsors for clients and sent corresponding ad pitches, generating over \$10k in revenue

Use the following brainstorming questions to help identify accomplishments to share:

1. *What issues did you tackle or problems did you solve for the organization?*
2. *In what ways did you make impact on the organization and its services/products/clients?*
3. *Were you recognized for your efforts in a particular area or exceed any goals?*

SKILLS

List specific technical, field-relevant, and language skills.

- Consider listing your proficiency level with a skill (e.g., advanced, fluent, beginner) to provide additional transparency to employers.

Samples:

Proficient in Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop
Intermediate Microsoft Excel
Fluent in Spanish

For resume templates and samples, visit [HireACane.com](https://www.hireacane.com) and click on guides and handouts.

OPTIONAL COMPONENTS

HONORS/AWARDS

- List any academic honors bestowed on you by the University or an outside organization
- Include scholarships/ honor societies (do not include dollar amounts for scholarships)
- Do not abbreviate

ACTIVITIES/LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

- List activities you are involved in at the University or through outside organizations
- Indicate positions held (e.g., board member, treasurer, or president)
- You may choose to list some of your interests and significant hobbies as a possible talking point. If you do so, remember to only list a few specific ones. For example, list Ice Hockey rather than Sports.

RELEVANT COURSES

This section can be extremely helpful to those who are pursuing careers in fields that do not directly align with their major or experience. List 3-5 relevant courses that highlight exposure to the desired field/industry. Remember this section is meant to set you apart, not to restate your transcript.

- Only list upper level courses in a specialized area
- Do not list course numbers; simply include the course title

PROJECTS

Consider adding relevant academic projects that showcase accomplishments and skills if you have yet to have professional experience in your desired field.

LICENSURE/CERTIFICATION

If you currently hold a license relevant to your field, include this information. For example, Accountants, Financial Planners and Teachers require licensing.

WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA

Include a link to any relevant social media platforms you utilize such as LinkedIn. You can include X if it's professional. Instagram or TikTok are appropriate if you're applying to social media or creative positions. Include links to professional websites or portfolios if relevant for your field.

ACTION VERBS

LEADERSHIP

Coordinated • Delegated • Directed • Established • Executed • Implemented • Launched • Led • Managed • Motivated • Oversaw • Prioritized • Supervised • Trained

COMMUNICATION

Addressed • Authored • Collaborated • Clarified • Communicated • Consulted • Edited • Explained • Informed • Interviewed • Persuaded • Presented • Promoted • Reported • Summarized • Translated • Wrote

RESEARCH

Applied • Collected • Compared • Conducted • Compiled • Defined • Discovered • Evaluated • Explored • Gathered • Investigated • Measured • Observed • Recorded • Researched • Surveyed • Validated

TECHNICAL

Assembled • Built • Constructed • Inspected • Maintained • Monitored • Operated • Programmed • Repaired • Solved • Upgraded

CREATIVE

Conceptualized • Created • Customized • Designed • Developed • Drafted • Illustrated • Integrated • Invented • Performed • Produced • Proposed • Published • Revamped • Visualized

ADMINISTRATIVE

Approved • Arranged • Classified • Distributed • Documented • Organized • Planned • Prepared • Processed • Responded • Reviewed • Scheduled • Streamlined

ANALYTICAL/FINANCIAL

Analyzed • Assessed • Calculated • Evaluated • Examined • Generated • Identified • Improved • Increased • Initiated • Maximized • Minimized • Negotiated • Reduced • Resolved • Transformed

TEACHING/HELPING

Adapted • Advised • Advocated • Assisted • Coached • Counseled • Educated • Encouraged • Facilitated • Guided • Helped • Instructed • Mentored • Presented • Provided • Supported • Taught • Tutored

RESUME CHECKLIST

- Start with a master resume that contains all your experiences that you can draw from when applying for specific opportunities
- Individually tailor your resume to fit a specific job by incorporating relevant keywords from the job description
- Double check content for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors
- Use a professional email address
- Do not use personal pronouns such as I, me, or my
- Be honest; don't exaggerate or falsify information, especially when using AI
- Do not list personal information, including age, social security number, or photo
- Keep your resume current by updating it often
- Have numerous people review your resume before you send it
- Use bullets to make the resume easier to follow
- Resumes should be concise and include easy-to-read language

HAVEN'T HEARD BACK?

Wait 1-2 weeks after submitting your resume and then contact the employer to see if the position is still open.

- Phone or email is appropriate
- Be polite
- Offer to send your resume again if they did not receive it
- Be persistent, not pushy

REFERENCES

References should be listed on a separate page from the resume and provided **only upon request** by the employer. It is a waste of space to indicate "References available upon request" on the resume; this is implied.

Samples:

Dr. Sebastian Ibis
President, University of Miami
Former Professor
305-284-5155
presidentsebastian@miami.edu



Cover Letters

The purpose of a cover letter is to introduce yourself to an organization and to elaborate on your most significant and relevant experiences. It differs from your resume because it provides you with the opportunity to express your motivation for applying for the role. It also allows you to be more future-forward as you share your goals and how you can assist the organization in tackling their challenges. Your cover letter should demonstrate a fit between the skills and strengths you possess and those required to fulfill the position you are seeking. Avoid simply repeating items from your resume.

PREPARATION

Individually tailor your resume to fit a specific job by incorporating relevant keywords from the job description. For this reason, it is important to conduct company research before drafting your letter.

- Scan your resume for experiences that can be elaborated on to best demonstrate key skills
- Review the job description and company website to identify relevant skills and strengths you should highlight in your cover letter
- Use Cane2Cane or LinkedIn to schedule an informational meeting with someone from the organization

IDENTIFYING A CONTACT

Most job and internship listings do not provide a contact name. However, it may be helpful to address your letter to the specific hiring manager within the organization. Taking this extra step to personalize your letter can make a difference in setting yourself apart as a candidate. Below are some tips for acquiring a contact name.

- Search the company website for a listing of employee names to locate the hiring manager
- Reach out to individuals in your personal and professional network who could assist you in locating the right contact
- Call the company and politely ask for the name of the hiring manager in charge of the position you are seeking
- If you are unable to confirm the name of the hiring manager, address your letter to “Dear Hiring Manager” or “Dear Search Committee” as some examples. It is much better to use one of these general greetings than to guess a name incorrectly.

COVER LETTER TEMPLATE

With all the emphasis on resume writing, the cover letter is often overlooked. Many employers, however, request a cover letter along with a resume. A cover letter reflects your ability to communicate, provides an opportunity to establish a unique connection with an employer, and convinces an employer to take the next step - an interview. This worksheet will help organize the content of a cover letter. Note that this is a general format. Actual content and layout will vary.

Your Name

Phone

Email

Date (Month Day Year)

Recipient's Name

Recipient's Title

Recipient's Organization

Dear _____

Paragraph One

1. State your objective in writing the cover letter. What are you applying for?
2. Articulate your motivation for applying to the role and make a connection to the organization.

**Optional: Mention any referral source(s) you received information from regarding this organization/opportunity or if you met any recruiters at a recent hiring event.*

Paragraph Two

1. Describe how your past experiences have allowed you to develop certain key skills required for the role; use the job description to identify what these skills are.
2. Cite any practical experience you may have obtained outside the classroom.
3. Summarize your personal attributes and illustrate how they would allow you to contribute to this organization and/or optimally perform in the workplace.

Paragraph Three

1. Conclude your letter reaffirming your genuine interest in the opportunity.
2. Thank the recipient for their consideration of you as an applicant.

Sincerely,

Your Name

COVER LETTER EXAMPLE

Sebastian Ibis
305-123-4567
sebibis@miami.edu

November 4, 2025

Ms. Coral Gables
Talent Acquisition Specialist
Miami Magazine

Dear Ms. Gables:

In exploring career opportunities in publishing and digital marketing, I was especially drawn to Miami Magazine because of its innovative approach to web-based marketing and audience engagement. With my strong interest in digital media and brand strategy, I am excited to apply for the Summer Marketing Intern position advertised on your website.

Currently, I am a sophomore Marketing major at the University of Miami, where I have developed a strong foundation in consumer behavior, branding, and digital marketing strategy. Recently, I completed an independent research project analyzing the effectiveness and cost efficiency of internet advertising compared to traditional marketing methods. I presented my findings at the annual University of Miami Research, Creativity, and Innovation Forum, an experience that strengthened both my analytical and presentation skills.

Beyond academics, I have gained valuable leadership experience through my involvement in student organizations on campus. As an active member of the University of Miami Marketing Club, I helped organize networking events and guest speaker sessions for students interested in careers in business and media. In this role, I collaborated with other student leaders to coordinate event logistics, manage event promotion through social media, and communicate with professionals and attendees to ensure each event ran smoothly. These experiences strengthened my ability to multitask, stay organized under deadlines, and work effectively with both teams and external partners, skills that I believe would directly support the responsibilities of the Marketing Intern role.

I am confident that my strong communication skills, leadership experience, and passion for marketing would allow me to make a meaningful contribution to Miami Magazine. I would welcome the opportunity to further discuss how my background and enthusiasm align with the needs of your team. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,
Sebastian Ibis

DO:

1. Get to the Point.

State the purpose of your letter in the first paragraph. Small talk is generally a waste of space.

2. Tailor Your Letter to the Reader and Opportunity.

Focus on the needs of the specific organization, not on your own requirements as a job seeker. Visit your potential employer's website or read the company's annual report to learn more about it, then use your cover letter to demonstrate how your skills and experience can benefit the organization.

3. Highlight Your Biggest Successes.

Highlight the achievements in your career that most relate to the position for which you are applying.

4. Use Strong Words.

Use strong action words to share your experiences and showcase your qualifications. Be sure to tailor the cover letter to the job description. Use the cover letter to sell yourself.

DON'T:

1. Provide salary information when it is not requested.

2. Use outdated greetings such as To Whom It May Concern

3. Write a generic letter that looks like it was created with AI.

4. Make spelling errors and typos.

5. Include irrelevant personal information or job experience.

OTHER TYPES OF LETTERS



In addition to cover letters, it is important to consider additional types of letters that you might utilize in your job search to showcase professionalism. Some of these may include:

- **Letter of Inquiry:** used to obtain information about available opportunities at a specific company.
- **Networking Letter:** used to request an informational meeting with a professional in order to explore a career or organization.
- **Thank You Letter:** used to show gratitude to someone who has assisted you in your career path (interview, informational meeting, or reference).
- **Job Offer Acceptance Letter:** used to formally accept a position and to reiterate the terms of your employment.
- **Job Offer Rejection Letter:** used to formally reject a position while maintaining a level of professionalism and leaving a positive impression.

Tip: All of these types of letters can be sent through email. Remember that emails to a potential employer should follow the same guidelines outlined in this guide and maintain a high level of professionalism.

SUGGESTIONS FOR USING AI TO CREATE AND EDIT YOUR RESUME & COVER LETTER

You may wonder whether it is appropriate to use generative AI tools such as ChatGPT or AI-powered career platforms to build and refine your resume and cover letter. The Toppel Career Center encourages you to tell your authentic story when applying for opportunities, while using AI strategically to strengthen your message and maximize impact.

AI PROMPT GUIDE

- Brainstorm content ideas based on your experience, skills, and target role
- Align application materials with job descriptions by incorporating relevant keywords—helpful for Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS)
- Improve grammar and writing style to present your best self and emphasize accomplishments
- Identify organizational insights that support more personalized materials

THINGS TO NOTE

- Recruiters say it is acceptable to use AI, but not to include false or exaggerated information
- AI tools may generate inaccurate details—always fact-check before submitting
- Be mindful of sharing personal information to protect your privacy

SAMPLE PROMPT

I already have a drafted resume. Improve and tailor it for a role in [target industry or job title].

Here is my resume:

[Paste your full resume]

Here is the job description (or typical responsibilities in this field): [Paste job posting or describe role]

Instructions:

- Rewrite bullet points to be more results-driven and impactful
- Align experience with the target industry using relevant keywords
- Optimize for ATS (Applicant Tracking Systems)
- Strengthen action verbs and remove weak language
- Highlight transferable skills where needed
- Keep it concise, professional, and one page if possible
- Do not invent experience; only enhance what is provided

For additional prompt ideas, review the AI Prompt Guide or meet with a career coach at the Toppel Career Center.

DROP-IN CAREER COACHING

For assistance with resumes and cover letters, come to the Toppel Career Center virtually or in-person for drop-in career coaching.

Drop-in Career Coaching Hours: Monday - Friday

No Appointment Needed

APPLYING FOR JOBS & INTERNSHIPS WITH YOUR NEW RESUME?

Upload your resume to Handshake to apply for jobs and internships. Please allow 3-5 business days for approval.

Toppel Career Center

5225 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Coral Gables, FL 33146

HireACane.com | toppel@miami.edu | 305-284-5451

