

# RESUMES AND COVER LETTERS



**Tips and techniques**



# RESUME WRITING

## *What is a Resume?*

A resume is an account of your qualities, accomplishments and skills that suit you for a position or task. Your resume should:

- ***Focus on the needs of the Employer***  
(Listing a specific objective)
- ***Show abilities rather than just job duties***  
(Transferable Skills)
- ***Show your personality and character***
- ***Focus on specific skills and abilities***  
(Related to the specific job)
- ***Create a favorable impression***  
(Relating interest in the job)
- ***Be brief, concise and complete***  
(Accurate)



## Deliver a perfect e-Resume

How do you create an e-mail resume that will win interviews and influence others? To get started, follow these rules:

### **Use ASCII Format**

ASCII is the lowest common denominator for electronic text; every Web browser or e-mail program can read it. To create an ASCII resume, save it as a text file in a word-processing program. Copy it into the body of an e-mail when you apply for a job. Otherwise, you risk having your resume come out jumbled and unreadable.

### **Generally speaking, do not submit a resume as an attachment**

Although it's easy to attach your resume, many experts recommend including the text of the resume in the body of your e-mail instead.

Recruiters often don't open attachments because they can be infected with a nasty virus. It's a risk they don't want to take - so attaching a resume instead of including it in the body of the e-mail is a risk you don't want to take.

One exception - if you are applying for a job online and the company offers the functionality to upload a hard copy of your resume to your application, and then go for it.

### **Limit each line in your resume to 72 characters**

Most e-mail programs wrap text around at 72 characters. That means any line longer than 72 characters is going to be cut off and dropped down to the next line, making your resume look like it was hit by a chainsaw. Avoiding that 73<sup>rd</sup> character will help format the document so it stays organized and easy to read.

### **Showcase your strong points first**

Newspaper articles include the most important information at the front of the article; the best parts of your resume should be up front, too. Don't make the recruiter scroll down through loads of information before getting to the good stuff.

### **Run the spell check**

Errors in any type of written correspondence can get you dinged. Don't let the seeming informality of the electronic resume allow you to omit this key step.

But don't let your faith in technology make you complacent, either; spell checkers give all sorts of mistakes the green light. After you do the spell check, proofread it the old-fashioned way several times. Then get a friend or two to do it again.

### **Take your e-resume out for a test drive**

E-mail your resume to yourself, because you'd much rather it be you who catches technical problems and errors and not the recruiter. Make sure the text looks right on the screen and prints out correctly.

You might also try e-mailing yourself at different accounts. E-mail accounts have different ways of reading things, and you don't want to take any chances that when it reaches the recruiter's account it will look messy.

### **Include a cover letter**

It sounds like a no-brainer, but many applicants don't include letters with their resumes. Cover letters that accompany e-resumes should be brief and concise.

Keep in mind that recruiters want you to introduce yourself, they want to see how you write, and they want to see you make a case for why the position they need to fill is the one you're right for. Be sure to indicate which position you're applying for, what your qualifications are, and what you can contribute to the company.

### **Make a backup**

Save a copy of your resume on a disk and on your hard drive so you don't lose it. Also make hard copies on good paper stock. You want to make sure that if your resume gets lost, you can reproduce it quickly. You also want to be sure that when you're called in to interview, you've got a paper copy that looks good to bring with you. Recruiters love to misplace paper once they've called candidates in to interview, and if you show up prepared with some back-ups, that's a detail that will count in your favor when it comes to decision-making time.

### **SOURCE:**

Jake Jamieson  
WetFeet.com

# RESUME WRITING

## ***Starting your Resume*** *Developing Skills Check List*



The first step to a successful resume is identifying your skills and matching them to the needs of the employer as described in the job description. To develop these check lists use power phrases (see the next page for power words list) to identify your skills. Here are some examples:

Employer	7-11	Job Title	Cashier
<b>Skills:</b> Prepared daily sales reports; Operated cash register, handled money and made change: Greeted customers and responded to their questions and inquiries: Took inventory, maintained stock on hand and ordered new stock: Marked and priced merchandise, made price changes: Designed and set up store displays: Unloaded merchandise from trucks: Supervised retail sales staff: Prepared deli food items for sale: Responsible for opening and closing store: Provide quality customer service: Cleaned store, performed basic maintenance and floor care work.			
<b>Equipment Used:</b> Cash register, Credit card machine: Check guard machine, Broaster, Pallet jack, Gas console, Buffer/waxer machines, Industrial chemicals.			
<b>Training:</b> Check guard machine training, Identifying counterfeit money, Handling Cleaning Chemicals, and Hazardous Materials Disposal. 7-11 Daily Sales Reports			

(Note: This shows one of many possible resume formats.)

## RESUME WORKSHEET

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NAME: (centered)

Address:

City State Zip:

Home/Business Phones:

Email or Cell #:

**OBJECTIVE :**

↑ Job title or position you are seeking

**QUALIFICATIONS,  
SKILLS & ABILITIES:**

▶ \_\_\_\_\_ ▶ \_\_\_\_\_ ▶ \_\_\_\_\_  
▶ \_\_\_\_\_ ▶ \_\_\_\_\_ ▶ \_\_\_\_\_

List your best attributes or specific skills & qualifications. Use bullets to highlight the items in this list perhaps use two or three columns.

**WORK EXPERIENCE:**  
(Last 8 to 10 years)

Your Specific Job Title  
Last or Present Employer

Dates: From-to  
City, State

↑ Itemize job duties. Show as much responsibility as you can. Use the Resume packet in the Career Computer Center to make your resume more effective.

Your Specific Job Title  
Next To Last Employer

Dates: From-to  
City, State

↑ Itemize job duties.

Continue listing previous employers as above. Use other side if you wish.

**EDUCATION:**

Name of School  
Degree achieved or Course Title

City, State  
Date of Completion

**LICENSES:**

List any licenses or certifications that my apply

**MILITARY  
EXPERIENCE:**

(If none, leave this category out.)

Branch of Service & Dates; Duties if appropriate

## THE CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME

- This style clearly identifies your past work experience starting with your most recent job.
- It is an excellent style for persons who have shown advancement within a career area.
- Employers are most familiar with the chronological resume. In fact, in large personnel departments, the chronological format tends to receive more attention than other styles.

***However***, this may not be the best style for persons who are changing careers or returning to the work force after a long absence because it tends to expose gaps in your work history, and may call attention to a job or jobs that you prefer not to emphasize.

- See an example of the chronological resume on the following page.

“Success is not so much what we have as it is what we are.”



**STEWART FROST**  
22628 East 49<sup>th</sup> Street  
Spokane, WA 99602  
(509) 226-8700

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**OBJECTIVE:** A position as beginning *Draftsman* with a diversified architectural firm.

**EXPERIENCE:** Grounds Supervisor Heritage Library Welda, OK  
6/97 to 03/98  
Directed a crew of four ground personnel in maintenance operations. Participated in design, planning and building of demonstration farm facilities. Assisted carpenters in building of health complex and various mechanical equipment buildings. Helped in design and construction of a large sprinkler system and landscaping of library property.

Carpenter's Assistant Mountain Greenhouses Sedro Wooley, WA  
6/96 to 6/97  
Assisted carpenter in construction of a 60' x 100' hydroponic greenhouse. Surveyed sight and set forms for the foundation. Poured and finished concrete. Framed, welded and installed glass panels. Established initial plantings in the greenhouse and did all the ventilation, transplants and disease control.

Draftsman Falls Church CC Falls Church, WA  
9/94 to 5/96  
Drafted floor plans of existing school buildings, sprinkler systems and various underground utility line systems. Measured current buildings to update plans, including any new additions to the campuses.

Summer Work  
Carpenters Assistant between school years. Participated in building of family home during high school.

**EDUCATION:** Falls Church Community College Falls Church, WA  
Associate Degree Architecture 1991

**INTERESTS:** Design furniture, woodworking, auto repair

**EXAMPLE: CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME**



## THE FUNCTIONAL RESUME

- This style plays down dates, places of employment and job functions.
- It is useful if you are entering or re-entering the work force, changing careers, or seeking a job change after a long and varied work history.
- Writing a functional resume enables you to headline those specific skills and accomplishments that relate to your job objective.
- This format requires a careful analysis of skills and may be more difficult to organize and edit than the chronological style.
- Employers are less familiar with this format and sometimes feel more comfortable if you document your education, past work experience and dates of employment at the end of the resume.
- See example of the functional resume on the following page.

**“An age is called Dark, not because the light fails to shine, but because people refuse to see it.”**



Robert J. Smith  
8218 65<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Sedro Wooley, WA 92760  
(208) 638-2710

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### OBJECTIVE

To secure a position in Mortgage Banking

### AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE

- ▶ Real Estate
- ▶ Home Improvement
- ▶ Assumptions
- ▶ Second Mortgage Lending
- ▶ Management Training Program
- ▶ Installment & Commercial Lending
- ▶ Escrow Background
- ▶ Bank Security
- ▶ Staff Production Management
- ▶ Operations & Customer Services

### EMPLOYER

First Interstate Trust      Sedro Wooley, WA

Interviewed prospective loan customers utilizing FNME loan application. Took loan applications and financial statements for real estate, home improvement, assumptions, and second mortgage loans. Calculated and compared debt ratios with lending guidelines; determined if loan requests met prescribed lending criteria. Prepared all documentation related to loans which include:

- ▶ Verified financial statement and income tax return information
- ▶ Ordered credit reports, property appraisals, title policies, and homeowners' insurance documents.
- ▶ Prepared Notification, Right of Rescission, Non-Rescission letters, Flood Control statements, Purchaser's Assignment of Real Estate Contract notices, and Deed of Trust documents
- ▶ Calculated total costs and fees of loans
- ▶ Completed Note and Disclosure statements, Assumption Agreements and transfer of Equity documents
- ▶ Explained total annual Percentage Rate to customers
- ▶ Disbursed funds to customers
- ▶ Maintained real estate and escrow areas according to audit requirements
- ▶ Organized daily work flow to meet priority deadlines
- ▶ Controlled insurance and tax reserves accounts of real estate contracts; paid homeowners' taxes and insurance premiums when done
- ▶ Entered new real estate and escrow contracts into control records
- ▶ Released deeds and documents to customers when contracts were satisfied

### EDUCATION

Washington State University`      BA in Business Administration      1970-1973

Numerous In-Service Classes and Seminars which included:

- ▶ Analyzing Financial Statements
- ▶ Economics
- ▶ Installment Credit
- ▶ Basis Statistics

## THE COMBINATION RESUME

- You may wish to combine a chronological format with a functional resume.
- Do not rely on a “resume recipe” to sell yourself on paper.
- Adapt the examples and use the ideas that best fit you and your special situation. Your goal is to convince an employer to give you an interview.

Your resume is usually the first impression on a prospective employer will have of you and your skills. Take some time to do a “first class” job and you may wind up with the job you’ve always wanted.

- See an example of the combination resumes on the following pages.

“If you can’t have the best of everything, make the best of everything you have.”



# HOOVER MACINTASH

PO Box 11720

Newberg Lake, WA 99010

(509) 762-9026

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**OBJECTIVE:** To secure a position in purchasing and/or warehousing where my computer/electronic background can be fully utilized.

**SKILLS:**

- *Detail Oriented*
- *Calculations*
- *Read Blueprints*
- *Budgeting*
- *Operate Business Machines*
- *Vendor Relations*
- *Problem Solving*
- *Purchasing Systems & Procedures*
- *Teaching*
- *Computer Programming*

**MATERIALS** Light & Heavy Equipment

Clothing

**PURCHASED:** Motors/Generators

Electronic Equipment

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Kept records pertaining to items purchased, costs, delivery, production performance and invoices.
- Authorized payment of invoices.
- Designed and implemented plat book procedures that saved the company over 50% on production and labor costs.
- Developed and executed an inventory control system.
- Studied shipping notices, bills of lading, invoices, orders, and other records to determine shipping priorities, work assignments and shipping methods required to meet shipping and receiving schedules, utilizing knowledge of shipping procedures, routes, and rates.
- Supervised and coordinated contacts with vendors and shipping to ensure that merchandise, supplies and equipment were forwarded on specified shipping dates.
- Purchased material and supplies for 50 four-person crews during construction of Alyeska pipe line.

**EMPLOYERS:** Catweel Enterprises Newman Lake, WA 4/92 to 11/92  
**Drafter**  
Self-Employed Newman Lake, WA 11/89 to 4/92  
**Maintenance Mechanic**  
Loones and Associates Anchorage, AK 4/79 to 10/89  
**Purchasing Coordinator/Expediter**

**EDUCATION:** Newberg Lake Junior College Newberg Lake, WA 1972  
Completed computer programming, business management courses.

Kant State College Kant, NB 1974  
General education classes, various in-service training classes.

# LARRY KLOOPER

10001 Star Street  
Six Mile Dam, WA 86240  
(509) 452-8603

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**OCCUPATION:** Certified Welder  
Journeyman Carpenter and Ironworker (union withdrawal)

**SKILLED AT:**

- Welding
- Rough Carpentry
- Hydraulics
- Iron Work
- Read and Draw Blueprints
- Electrical Repairs
- General Building Maintenance
- Light Mechanic-General Equipment

**EQUIPMENT:**

- Backhoe
- Grader
- Forklift
- D-6 to D-9 Cats
- Farm Equipment
- Half-ton to ton Diesel Trucks

**EMPLOYER:** Well Drillers Six Mile Dam, WA May 91 to Oct 92  
*Welder-Mechanic*

Self-Employed Six Mile Dam, WA Jan 81 to Oct 89  
*General Maintenance-Carpenter*

Excellent Builder Six Mile Dam, WA Mar 80 to Oct 80  
*Welder-Carpenter*

Weeder Feeders Six Mile Dam, WA Mar 77 to Nov 79  
*Welder—Mechanic—Carpenter*

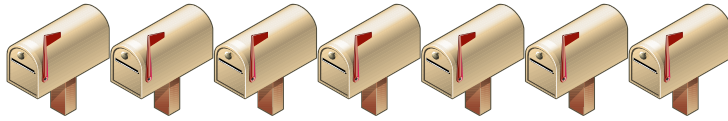
**EDUCATION:** Six Mile Dam Community College 1980  
Carpenter Apprentice and Welding Classes

**LICENSES:** Washington Driver's License (Excellent Record)  
Explosive Device Operator's License  
FCC/Government Vehicle Radio Operator's License

# REFERENCES

- Choose people who will give you the best references:
  - Former employers
  - Former co-workers
  - Associates in Civic or Social Organizations
  - Well-regarded people in your community
- Choose people who will be enthusiastic about you and your career, who will:
  - Show genuine interest in his/her told of voice
  - Give specific examples rather than general comments
- Choose people who will give straight direct answers, who will:
  - Respond quickly
  - Respond positively in a business manner
- Help your references by:
  - **Asking their permission** and giving them advance notice.
  - **Briefing them on your background** and bringing them up to date
  - **Giving them a copy of your resume** if you think it will help them
  - **Keeping in touch with them**—check back from time to time and you may get some valuable pointers for job interviews
  - **Thanking them**—let them know when you're hired and express your appreciation for their help
- Questions people you list as references could be asked:
  1. How long did he/she work for you (or with you)?
  2. What was the quality of his/her work?
  3. How much responsibility did he/she have?
  4. How well did he/she get along with people?
  5. Did he/she require close supervision?
  6. Was he/she prompt in getting to work and completing tasks on time?
  7. Why did he/she leave?
  8. Is there anything about the applicant that would disqualify him/her for the job we are offering?
  9. Do you know anyone else I could speak to about him/her?
  10. Is there anything I should know about him/her that I have not asked?

## TIPS FROM EMPLOYERS ABOUT



# COVER LETTERS

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A cover letter is an introduction to you and your resume. A well-written cover letter can make all the difference between you and another candidate who has approximately equal qualifications.

This letter is the place for showing your specific intentions and some of your individuality. If the hiring professional is not impressed by this first communication, there may not be another!

- Always send a cover letter with your resume.
- Address your letter to a specific person if possible. Use the employer or business directories to get this information. In some large organizations it may be inappropriate to use a specific person's name, so address your letter to "Hiring Professional".
- The first twenty words are important, and should focus the reader's attention.
- Make your letter relevant to the position that you are applying for.
- Show that you are knowledgeable about the organization and its products or services.
- Describe yourself in terms of the contribution you can make to the employer.
- Indicate why you are the best choice for this position (even though your qualifications are similar to or the same as others'!
- Use simple direct language in your own (not borrowed) words, and be brief.
- Eliminate all spelling and grammatical errors.
- Individualize each cover letter (unless you are "shot-gunning" your resume to many employers!)
- Use good white/cream bond paper, and a good quality matching business envelope.
- Use business format. Find examples if you do not know what it looks like.
- Sign your letter! (Many people forget.)

## COVER LETTER INFORMATION

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Despite the perfection, clarity, and strong self-presentation of your resume, it is in fact a printed form—a fairly high level one, but a printed form none the less. It remains for the reader to interpret and project from the resume the things that he or she feels to be of value to that person's organization.

Sometimes this is done successfully, sometimes not; employment managers are just as fallible as anyone else. Obviously, with the well-thought-out resume just created, you have greatly improved your chances of getting the interview you want. But now we want to remove as much of the remaining doubt as we possible can from the employment equation.

The individual cover letters that accompany your resume when you mail them to employers can be as helpful to your job campaign as a personal introduction to your potential employer would be.

The purpose of the cover letter is to communicate to the employer a specific personalized message about your potential value to that organization. It generates interest in you from the person who counts. It is not difficult to write, and it adds a powerful element to your resume. Here are five important points to keep in mind.

### ▣ ADDRESS YOUR COVER LETTER TO A PARTICULAR PERSON BY NAME. ▣

Send your letter to the person who can make the hiring decision. -by name. Personal letters get read far ahead of form letters. Think of your own experience when you open the mail: The letters addressed to you personally get read first. The form letters to "sir" or "madam" or "occupant" may not be read at all.

Call the firm with which you wish to interview and find out the name (correct spelling, please) and title of the individual in charge of the department you would like to work in (possibly the Human Resource Manager or Personnel Manager). Don't worry if it takes three or four calls. Do not say you are looking for a job. Say that you have some information to send and want to make sure it gets in the hands of the right person.

With a little practice, you will find there is not much problem in retrieving the names and titles you want. After all, organizations need to maintain contact with their public. Do not make the mistake of aiming too high. Corporate presidents and board chairmen get lots of resumes because their names are so visible. Even with a good cover letter these are usually intercepted. Find a person at the department or division level--ideally, the person you would work for if you got the job.



## COMMUNICATE SOMETHING PERSONAL

People who get a lot of mail are wary of form letters and have developed personal techniques to skim quickly before reading to see if, in fact, the letter has a message for them.

In your opening line, write something that is uniquely associated with the person, division, or organization and that will signal to the reader that you invested the time to communicate personally.

The likelihood of a personal response to your letter is directly related to the degree of personal attention you put into it in the first place. You get what you give.

Some typical “personal” opening lines are:

- ❑ “I see that you have opened a new shopping mall on the west side of town.”
- ❑ “Dr. Foster in the economics department said that she had talked with you about your expansion plans.”
- ❑ “I understand that you have just received a new study grant from ACS.”

Some basic research is called for in preparing this opening line. Do not overlook the internet as a means of gathering information.

## ANSWER THE QUESTION “WHY SHOULD I SEE YOU?”

The work-world operates on value, not need. You are of interest to a potential employer to the degree that they experience you as being valuable to them, not for what you are looking for from them.

In the body of your cover letter, communicate some special way that your skills can be valuable to the potential employer. Create interest in yourself. This will require some basic understanding or research in your target field, not a major research project, but mostly an expanded familiarity with the interests of the potential employer, and a willingness to show how you can make a contribution. Common sense helps as the following examples indicate:

- ❑ “I feel that my organizational skills could help you in setting up your new customer service department. As you can see from my resume I have experience in handling service calls in a related field, and could help you train your people.”
- ❑ “My several years of work in the Old Salem restoration project could be valuable in your community. My work in this area at school, plus my knowledge of the community will assist you to get the exposure you want.”
- ❑ “I know that you are aware of the need for publicity and communication with your local community. My previous work in this area and my knowledge of the local community will help you get the exposure you want.”

(continued on next page)

## COVER LETTER INFORMATION (continued)

Do not be afraid to take a few risks in describing what you feel you could do for the employer. If you are not directly on target, even the fact that you are talking in terms of value to the company will create interest.

Be careful not to set the letter in a negative tone and criticize or put down what the company has done. Communicate your ability to assist and support.

### ■ USE THEIR LANGUAGE ■

Every field has its own jargon and technology. Use the right terms to indicate your ability and expertise. An excellent way to improve your knowledge of the nomenclature of the field is to read back issues of trade journals and articles by professionals in that particular field—see your librarian or get on the internet. Watch out for overkill.

### ■ ASK FOR THE INTERVIEW ■

Salespeople call this the “close”—the time when you ask for the business. In this case the “business” is a personal meeting (a more subtle word than interview). Ask for it. You can even suggest a date and time. Here are some examples of closing statements:

- “I am planning to take interviews at the end of school next month, and if possible, would like to meet with you during the first week of May. I will call you to set up a possible date.”
- “I will be in your area on other business on the 13<sup>th</sup> of this month and would like to see you then if it is convenient.”
- “Could we get together next week sometime to see if there is a mutual interest? I’ll call your secretary to find out.”

Notice that closing your cover letter this way makes it easy and natural for you to follow up with a phone call.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

### **Your Name**

Mailing address

City, State, Zip Code

Area Code & Telephone Number

### **DATE**

### **John Smith**

Office manager

XYZ Entertainment Company

1234 ABC Street

Any town, WA Zip

Dear Mr. Smith:

1<sup>st</sup> paragraph: Tell why you are writing. List the position or title, or a description of the job you are applying for. Tell how you heard of the opening and/or the organization. Mention who referred you, if applicable.

2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph: Mention one or two of your best and most appropriate qualifications for this particular position. Tell what you know about the company based on research you have done. Let the employer know if you have read about future expansion or a particular place in his/her company that you feel would be a perfect fit for you. Describe any information that is directly related to the position you want.

3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph: Refer to the enclosed application or resume. Let the employer know that you are available for an interview and that you appreciate his/her time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Telephone Number

## SAMPLE COVER LETTER

**Your Name**

Mailing Address

City, State, Zip Code

Area Code & Telephone Number

**DATE**

**Personnel Officer**

U.S. Bank

325 Any Street

Any town, WA Zip

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am enclosing my resume for your consideration for an entry level banking position. Although my prior experience has been in the pharmaceutical field, many of my skills such as customer service, cashiering, and attention to detail, would be very valuable in the banking industry.

Customer satisfaction is important to me, and my computer data entry experience would be helpful as well. I am eager to learn banking, and an opportunity to work for U.S. Bank would provide an exciting challenge.

If you have an opening in any department in the near future, I would be glad to meet with you for an interview at your convenience. Your consideration of my resume is appreciated. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Area Code & Telephone Number