

Resume, Cover Letter, & References Checklist

Career & Internship Services

CCE • CDes • CFANS

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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RESUME:

Header:

- Name stands out (uses larger font, **bold** and/or CAPS)
- Includes professional email address and phone number. Optional: address or personalized link to LinkedIn
- Include both current and permanent addresses only if necessary; include dates (“After May, 2017...”)

Objective (optional):

- Objective clearly and concisely states the type of job and organization/industry being sought
- Objective focuses on the employer’s needs, not what job seeker will gain

Education:

- Education section includes: University, Degree, Major(s)/Minor(s), (expected) Graduation Date. GPA is optional (if above a ~3.0. Include scale, to two decimal points: X.XX/4.00)
- High School Education has been removed if more than approx. 2 years old
- Words are spelled out rather than abbreviated, i.e., Master of Science
- Related courses and class projects are listed if education is the most relevant information on resume

Experience:

- When applying for specific position, language from the position description is used to help target the resume
- All relevant experience is listed under “Relevant Experience” (or similar) heading. Other experience is listed later, under “Additional Experience” (or similar heading)
- Each experience includes job title, organization name, division or department, location (city, state), and dates of employment (include months if less than ten)
- Street address, supervisor name and phone number have been removed
- Details and results are included about the position to demonstrate skills and accomplishments relevant to goals of the resume (“bullets” or “skill statements”)
- Bullet points all have parallel content; one is not a subset of another
- Each statement begins with a strong and descriptive action verb, in appropriate tense
- Information in skill statements (“bullet points”) is quantified where possible
- Dates are included on the right margin so as to not detract from position title or employer information
- Accomplishments and results or impact are included wherever possible

Other Categories:

- Other sections (memberships, honors, volunteering) demonstrate transferable skills
- Role, skills, accomplishments, affiliation (such as University of Minnesota, for school club participation) and dates of memberships have been included

Overall Appearance:

- The headings stand out from the rest of the text, making categories easy to find
- There is a balance of text and white space when holding the page at arm’s length
- Margins (approx. 1 “) are appropriately adjusted to make content fit well on the page. Eliminate the wasted space of one- or two-word lines by writing concisely
- Bold, underline and italics are used sparingly to make important items stand out, but not distract
- The font style is easy to read and the font is not too small (or so large as to look unprofessional)
- Indentation and tabs and formatting within sections are consistent throughout

Details:

- One-page limit for undergrads, two pages for graduate students. Government applications require more detail, so they may be 2-4 pages. Name & page number (only) are included on page 2

- First person (personal pronouns such as I, me, my, myself) has been omitted
- Remove any private family information (Nanny, Jones Family)
- Punctuation and font size are consistent throughout
- Sections are listed in order of importance or relevance to the position
- Unfamiliar acronyms and abbreviations are written out or described
- All experience (including education) is listed in reverse chronological order within each section
- References are NOT on the resume, but rather on a “references” page
- The resume is tailored to the position and has been proofread for errors
- Headings, font and format of resume, references and cover letter are consistent with each other
- Submit as a pdf to a human, as a .doc to application tracking systems, assuring user-appropriate arrival
- Inclusion and description of controversial content has been thoroughly thought through

COVER LETTER:

Introductory Paragraph:

- States the position you are applying for
- Describes how you became aware of the position (especially if by a notable referral)
- Does not include “My name is ...” rather, open with an interesting sentence that shows your interest or connection to the position and organization
- Includes why you are interested in the position and the organization, such as: a connection to their company/product, people you’ve talked to at the company, how it’s a good fit with your values or unique skills

1-2 Body Paragraph(s):

- Describes and provides examples of several (2-3) skills that match the requirements on the job descriptions
- Explains how they are relevant to the employer’s needs
- Uses key words from the job description or industry
- Include notable/relevant accomplishments

Closing Paragraph:

- Summarizes qualifications
- Indicates interest for an interview or requests a future conversation
- Enthusiasm and appreciation of their consideration
- Gives times you are easily reached and telephone number or email address
- Indicates if/when you will follow up (only if you have contact info to do so)
- Shows enthusiasm and appreciation of their consideration

Overall:

- Cover letter is clearly tailored to the specific position and organization
- Letter is addressed to a specific person whenever possible
- Highlights a few key skills (does not restate entire resume) and their relation to the position
- Is written engagingly; sentences do not all start with “I”
- Uses correct grammar and syntax (have someone proofread your letter)
- Uses assertive phrases like “I will” instead of “I hope”
- Tells employer what you will do for them, not what they will do for you
- Letter has been edited to remove vague, general or inessential language that does not add to your message

Format:

- One page
- Exact heading of your resume (same style, font, size) or use standard business letter format
- Cover Letter is typed, has same font, paper, and letterhead as resume
- Signed or electronic signature if applying online

REFERENCES:

- Heading, font, format and paper of resume, references and cover letter are consistent (they are a matched set)
- Font size on references page is no more than one size larger than on resume (white space is expected)
- Content for each reference is consistent with the others

Name, title, employer (and division or department if relevant), phone number and email are required