

Preparing the Résumé

Whitworth University
Career Services
HUB Second Floor
509.777.3272
Fax: 509.777.3731
careerservices@whitworth.edu

CAREER SERVICES
at Whitworth



Why the Résumé Matters

A great résumé can play a central role in launching your career. It can help you to get a quality internship, to secure a great job after university, or to be admitted into a competitive graduate program.

Some Guidelines for Résumé Writing

Here are the guidelines for good résumé writing.

- Take the time.
- Tell the truth.
- Market yourself assertively.
- Write to your audience.
- Submit an error-free document.

Take the time. The time it takes to write a good résumé is time well spent. This is an important life skill to master. Being able to catalog your accomplishments relevant to an employer's needs will give you a continuing career advantage.

Tell the truth. That's not negotiable. It is simply unethical to invent any part of your background. Employers find it very easy to verify the basic facts on any résumé. Most employers will dismiss an employee, even *years* later, if the employer discovers that s/he has included false information in the résumé.

Market yourself assertively. A résumé is no place for modesty. Employers will expect you to scour your entire background and let them know the skills, abilities, talents and experiences you have that meet their needs. Most students have much more to offer than they realize. Don't think about *employment*; think about *experience*.

Write to your audience. A good résumé is written to your audience and focused toward your future. Your résumé should be designed to keep your potential employer interested. It should be succinct. It should be customized to the needs of each application, and it should answer the question, "Why should I hire you?" Customize your résumé every time you use it.

Submit an error-free document. *Employers make no exceptions for sloppy proofreading.* Make certain your résumé is free of errors in spelling, grammar, and syntax. No typos!

STEP 1

Imagining Your Future Vocation

What kind of future does a résumé help you create? Is it supposed to help you get into a corporate sales position where you think you'll wear a suit every day? Or is it supposed to help you land a position with a nonprofit organization that provides services directly to people in an underserved urban setting? These situations would require distinctly different résumés.

Perhaps you haven't thought much about your future. Many students prepare résumés to meet class requirements without knowing what they want or what they have to offer. Following are some strategies to assist you in identifying employment sectors that match your vocational goals:

1) Research Potential Careers, Functions, Industries, and Job Titles

- Ignoring the “realities of the marketplace,” identify 10 careers in which you've always been interested.
- What are you really good at? Have people always commented on some skill or talent that you possess? List at least five things at which you excel.
- What interests you? What do you really like to do? What really gets you excited? What meets your needs? Make a list of five things you like to do and match them to jobs that might fulfill your needs.
- Utilize SIGI-3 (www.whitworth.edu/careerservices/Students/ExploreMajorsCareer.htm) or the Occupational Outlook Handbook (www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm) or What Can I Do with a Major In...(www.whitworth.edu/Administration/StudentLife/CareerServices/Students/ExploreMajorsCareer/WhatCanIDo.htm).

2) Identify Your Values

What really matters to you? What is important for you to do, or not do, in your life? Values are at the root of almost any aspect of a job that is strongly attractive or repulsive to you. In a career setting, values need to be considered both positively and negatively.

- Consider which values you need to express on the job in order to feel fulfilled, to find meaning, to serve others and to enjoy feelings of accomplishment. What values do you need to express on the job in order to be happy with that job?
- Consider job activities you need to avoid in order to stay true to your values. Would a job that harmed the environment make you miserable? Consider what you would not do or not give up in order to obtain employment.
- Consider these issues carefully, because the biggest cause of career unhappiness is dissonance between the values of the employee and the values of the employer.



3) See Yourself at Your Workplace

You should now be able to imagine yourself at work in the future. Here are some important questions:

- Do you see yourself in a new or an old organization?
Is it large or small?
- What kinds of benefits does your employer provide for you?
- What knowledge, skills and abilities are critical to performing in this position?
- What kind of person or personality would thrive in this situation?
- What skills would be critical for continued advancement?
- If you were hiring someone for this position, what would be most important to you?

STEP 2

Considering What You Have to Offer

After you have considered the employer's needs, your next task is to survey your background to see if your experience matches the employer's job description. Consider your summer employment, part-time work, internships (paid or unpaid), student activities, community service, sports, travel, and academic research & presentations.

Writing tips:

- List all positions/experiences (even if you consider them mundane); you can edit later.
- Gather and check job descriptions for past experience.
- Use an exact figure whenever you can. Tell exactly how many people, dollars, departments were involved. Never write "Organized SummerFest" when you can write "Organized SummerFest, an event with a total budget of \$23,600 and an all-volunteer staff of 35, which drew 1,000 students to participate in 17 alcohol-free activities."
- Be accurate in reporting your skills. Report the computer programs you have mastered, but also report the ones you have "some exposure to." With foreign languages, report your skill in categories such as "fluent," "proficient," and "basic."

STEP 3

Constructing Your Résumé

Now that you have some idea of what your reader is looking for and what you have to offer, you can construct a basic business résumé. This handout is designed to develop a standard résumé quickly.

Set your margins for one inch all around, and set the default font size at 12, 11, or, at the smallest, 10. Choose a common font, such as Arial or Times New Roman.

1) The Heading

- **Place your name** in the middle of the page, in size 14-16 point bold type. Use your legal name:

Catherine Ann Johnson

If everyone you know calls you by a nickname, then:

Theobald Harrison "Wally" Wallace

- **Place your mailing address**, phone number and e-mail as demonstrated below. Many students will choose to list more than one address. If you are about to graduate, you will want to list a permanent address. Finally, the answering machine or voicemail at any phone number you use during a job search should have a professional message.

George F. Whitworth

gwhitworth@whitworth.edu

(509) 555-5555

West Coast Address
Student Mail
Whitworth University
Spokane, WA 99251
509.555.5555

Permanent Address
44 West Broadway, Apt. R-12
New York, NY 10014
212.555.3018

2) The Education Listing

On student résumés, education is usually listed before experience. You can spell out your degree or use the standard abbreviations: B.A. for bachelor of arts; B.S. for bachelor of science. List your cumulative GPA (you may also select to list your GPA in your major).

You can report honors, awards, activities, and coursework relevant to your intended reader. With honors, awards, and activities, your goal is to demonstrate leadership, teamwork skills, community service and similar traits/accomplishments valued by the employer.

With coursework, your goal is to identify which classes – *or what specific work within your classes* – may be of particular interest to your targeted reader.

Remember that you are listing relevant education – education of interest to your potential employer.

B.S., Computer Science, Minor in Mathematics **Whitworth University** **May 2008**

GPA: Computer Science, 3.82; Mathematics, 4.0; Cumulative GPA 3.35

Areas of Academic Emphasis:

- artificial intelligence
- fuzzy logic
- neural networks
- theoretical physics
- game theory
- epistemology
- brain physiology
- cognitive psychology
- history of science

B.A., Political Science **Whitworth University** **May 2008**

Coursework Included:

- Microeconomics
- Macroeconomics
- Research Methodologies in the Social Sciences
- Issues in International Trade

Activities:

- Co-wrote the revised ASWC election procedures, adopted 2008
- Served as teaching assistant in Professor R. Taylor's class Introduction to the Political Sciences.

3) The Experience Listing

The most important thing to remember about the experience listing is that you can list any relevant experience that makes it clear that you have the background the employer is seeking. Consider your full-time paid experiences, of course, but also remember to consider your part-time and unpaid experiences of all types, as well.

Experience listings are placed in reverse chronological order, most recent experience listed first. If you want to put your best material forward in the résumé, you may choose to divide your experience listing into sections, such as “Related Experience” and “Additional Experience,” or “Professional Experience” and “Student Employment.”

- **Put the information in its order of interest to your targeted reader.** Anything that establishes that you have the knowledge, skills, abilities, and/or personality traits that an employer is seeking should be featured.
- **Write the résumé in the first person,** but omit first-person pronouns such as “I” or “we.” Begin with “action verbs.”
- **Use the active voice:** Avoid such constructions as “duties included” or “was responsible for.” Instead, begin your sentences with action verbs such as “created,” or “launched” (see list below).
- **Verb tenses should be accurate.** If you are reporting something that you continue to do, use the present tense; if you are discussing an accomplishment or task that has been completed, use the past tense.
- **Start the listings with the names of the position and your employer,** as well as the dates of your employment. (Use consistent format with all dates!) If your title doesn't tell much about your job, you can add a functional title in parentheses after you've listed your official title, like this:

Student Worker II (Assistant Manager of the Undergraduate Chemistry Lab)

Communication Experience

Slam Poet and Promoter

Whitworth University English Department

Fall 2006-present

- Featured poet at six student poetry readings, including a rare solo reading in spring 2003.
- Promoted slam poetry as a performance-art form. Tripled attendance at poetry events and created campus-wide buzz about this exciting form of live composition.

Office Assistant (Advertising Assistant)

Watkins Realty

Summer 2006

- Drafted all advertisements for houses for sale, initiating a shift away from abbreviations and acronyms indecipherable to all but real estate professionals in favor of mood ads, such as “Hard working professional? Pour a glass of wine and sit in front of your own fireplace.” These ads had double the response rates of traditional ads.
- Provided general administrative and office assistance.

Office Intern (Constituency Correspondent)

Senator Maria Cantwell

Summer 2005

- Drafted letters in response to constituency queries and appeals. Wrote memos and queries to government agencies on behalf of constituency concerns.
- Special honor: selected to conduct original research and draft white papers on topics of concern to the senator.
- Monitored legislation to ensure timely and accurate communication of status of in-process legislation.

4) Objective Statement

When you know exactly which job you want, an objective can convey that cleanly. Objectives go at the top of your résumé, directly under your heading. Here is an example:

Option #1: Objective Statement

A copy-writing position with Altruistic Advertising utilizing my editing, layout and media writing skills.

This technique lets the reader know that you have prepared this résumé specifically for her or him. Avoid overstated objectives like the following:

OBJECTIVE

A challenging and rewarding position with opportunity to continue to advance and develop my skills with a progressive and nurturing organization dedicated to eliminating poverty while preserving our precious natural environment.

Option #2: Strengths Summary

Strengths go at the top of your résumé, directly under your heading. Here is an example:



STRENGTHS

Copy-Writing and Editing

- Can quickly generate a large volume of ideas.
- Have business-writing experience in a variety of styles (informative, persuasive, humorous).
- Have expertise in standard American business English; knowledge of *AP Stylebook*, *Chicago Manual of Style*, *MLA Handbook*, *Fowler's*, and the other standard-usage guidebooks.

Option #3: Or, you can combine the objective and strengths formats:

OBJECTIVE

A copy-writing position with Altruistic Advertising, offering an opportunity to apply my education, skills, and abilities.

Strengths:

- Fully committed to the Altruistic Advertising business model: “We do it for free!”
- Can quickly generate a large volume of ideas.
- Have business-writing experience in a variety of styles (informative, persuasive, humorous).
- Have expertise in standard American business English; knowledge of *AP Stylebook*, *Chicago Manual of Style*, *MLA Handbook*, *Fowler’s*, and the other standard usage guidebooks.
- Bilingual, English-Spanish. Can write advertising in English or Spanish.
- Trained professional writer; able to function on a creative team.

Objectives and strengths are important when a résumé has to compete with dozens, or even hundreds, of other résumés. They tell the reader what’s coming in the résumé to follow, and they keep recent graduates, whose relevant experience may not be immediately apparent, from being screened out of the interview pool.

Additional Information/Skills

“Additional” sections on a student’s résumé generally fall at the bottom, after the experience listing, and may contain any information that’s pertinent to the reader, but not important enough to have been featured in the objective, education, or experience listings above. “Additional” sections can be grab-bags of information, including references to additional paid employment, sports, hobbies, activities, honors, awards, foreign-language skills, and/or countries to which the student has traveled. If a student has only one type of information in an “Additional” listing, such as sports or travel or hobbies, then the additional section should probably just be named “Sports,” or “Travel,” or “Hobbies.”

Remember, you are presenting information that is intended to persuade the reader to interview you for a job or consider you for a graduate or other academic opportunity. So, if your additional information does not contribute to that goal, leave it out!

How is your résumé?



**Don't you wish you
were better prepared?**



George F. Whitworth

gwhitworth@whitworth.edu

(509) 555-5555

West Coast Address
Student Mail
Whitworth University
Spokane, WA 99251
509.555.5555

Permanent Address
44 West Broadway, Apt. R-12
New York, NY 10014
212.555.3018

OBJECTIVE

A copy-writing position with Altruistic Advertising, offering an opportunity to apply my education, skills, and abilities.

Strengths:

- Business-writing experience in a variety of styles (informative, persuasive, humorous)
- Bilingual, English-Spanish. Can write advertising in English or Spanish
- Experience as a trained professional writer; able to function on a creative team

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts, Business Management

Whitworth University

May 2008

Areas of Interest:

International Business / International Trade

Special Projects:

- Conducted research into the relationship between global trade patterns and shared languages, resulting in a predictive formula for the cash value of the bias for a trading partner with a shared language
- Prepared a five-year pro forma financial forecast for a restaurant chain involving various scenarios for expansion

EXPERIENCE

Capital Fund Representative (Alumni Outreach)

Institutional Advancement

Summer 2007

- Represented the university's new capital-fund drive to alumni nationwide. Provided a range of appeals, including sophisticated financial presentations, to justify increased giving. Learned to deal with a wide range of individuals in a sales role.
- Was selected to train other student fund-raisers on calling techniques, including best methods to handle different types of responses.
- Ranked no. 1 on the student team. Was offered a permanent position with the institutional-advancement office upon graduation from Whitworth, due to consistently outstanding performance.

Group Host

Disneyworld Florida

Summer 2006

- Served as a park guide for groups, about 20 percent business, church, and incentive groups from all over the U.S. and about 80 percent foreign business and leisure travelers. Used Spanish- and Japanese-language abilities on the job.
- Attended Betty Forrester's "Global Relations Training Program for Sales & Service," a three-day intensive course on social and business protocol in cultures all over the world.

Research Assistant

Whitworth Psychology Department

Spring 2006

- Conducted field research into consumer behavior by both direct observation and by direct survey. This was an outside consulting assignment managed by Profs. Cook and Stevens of the Whitworth Department of Psychology.
- Trained in objective interviewing techniques. Only field research assistant invited to review the first draft of the study for comment.

