# **Resume and Cover Letter Tips**

#### Name and Education

- Your name should be clearly visible and probably two points bigger than the rest of the text.
- Use only one address; two may be confusing to the employer.
- E-mail should not be hyperlinked if sending hardcopy; e-mail address should be professional and based on your name.
- Consider adding a relevant web address or link to your LinkedIn profile.
- UMass is a nickname; write out "University of Massachusetts Amherst" every time (no "at," "-," or "," in the name).
- Include GPA if 3.0 or higher. If below a 3.0, do not include put the focus on your skills and experience instead.

#### **Formatting Basics**

- Resumes must be clean, concise and consistent with no typos or errors of any kind.
- One page in length (unless you have enough relevant experience to fill more than half of a second page).
- Use a single, commonly-used font such as Calibri, Tahoma, Arial; size should range between 10 and 14.
- Dates are in reverse chronological order using the end of each date range (8/2015-5/2016 comes before 1/2016-4/2016).
- Margins should be 1 inch on all sides. If you cheat the margins, do not go below a ½ inch.
- Italics, columns, parentheses and underlines can be problematic for scanners; bold and all-caps read fine.
- When emailing, attach as a PDF that is titled with your name.
- Allow for white space. Too much black type on a page looks busy; not enough looks unqualified. Make sure there is a good balance. The best resumes aim for 50% white space as an ideal.

#### **Content Basics**

- Every entry in the "Experience" sections needs a title, company, location and dates. The order is a strategic decision that then must be consistent under each heading.
- Use descriptive titles (i.e. Intern = Software Design Intern). Major titles are capitalized (e.g., lifeguard = Lifeguard).
- Start descriptions with active verbs, preferably the verbs from the job description. Describe your accomplishments and skills as they relate to the desired position; don't just list "job duties".
- No articles or pronouns (a, an, I, them, their, etc.). The goal is to save space, not to fulfill grammar "rules".
- Use as many numbers as possible (Supervised group of 13 children, Managed budget of \$15,000).
- If currently holding a position, use present tense (i.e. "collaborate," not "collaborating"). Otherwise use past tense.
- Well known abbreviations only (e.g., "CPR," not "ASB"). If in doubt, spell it out.

#### **Possible Section Headings**

- Relevant Experience
- Additional Experience
- Languages
- Community Service
- Honors and Awards
- Leadership

- (Make strategic choices based on your audience and the job description.)
- Teaching Experience
- Independent Projects
- Laboratory Skills
- International Experience
- Certifications
- Campus Activities

- Relevant Courses
- Software Skills
- Field Skills
- Research
- Technical Skills
- Presentations

#### **Other Important Resume Concerns**

**An Objective...** is not mandatory. It is the shorthand version of a cover letter, so if you are using a cover letter, the objective is redundant and takes up space. No-cover-letter situations such as career fairs, networking, conferences or posting your resume online are GOOD times to use it as it can briefly highlight the kind of position you are looking for.

**Profiles and Summaries of Qualifications...** are not mandatory. A Profile Summary acts as a headline to attract your reader. However, when displaying your skills, it is more effective to "show it" than to "say it." Consider that many employers just skip down to the first experience section. Depending on your skills and the job description, it may be better to leave out the summary and spend your limited time and space detailing how you can solve their problems in your experience sections.

#### Degree or University Name First?

In most cases, highlighting "University of Massachusetts Amherst" gives you a starting advantage that other applicants may not have. However, if you are applying for a position that is open to a range of majors, you may want to highlight your major as a way of distinguishing yourself from other applicants. Ask yourself which one has better market value for your situation.

#### **Relevant Skills**

Think of including coursework, lab techniques, class projects and large research papers as ways to demonstrate your relevant skills. Focus on courses relevant to employer (do not use basic courses or course numbers).

**Awards and Honors...**may not mean what you hope they will to an employer. For example, "Awarded the Mary Jane Scholarship freshman year 2016." Why did you receive this award? What is your message to the employer by having this on your resume? How are you demonstrating value, skills or abilities by including this?

**Dates...**belong toward the right-hand side of the page because the left-hand side is where people scan first and dates are never more important than your experiences.

#### **Proper Names in Resumes**

Leave names of supervisors out of the body of a resume, unless the employer knows the person. However, if you are putting research experience on your resume, include your Principal Investigator's name and a brief description (or bulleted list) that first describes the project, and then explains **your** role and accomplishments within the project. Focus on achievements, not just duties, and always show results, including measures of success whenever possible.

#### CV vs. Resume

A Curriculum Vitae is used in academia, and often includes section like Publications, Research Experience, and Teaching Experience. Most undergrads will not need a CV until they apply for graduate school. In theory a CV would include all jobs you have ever had. A resume represents only experiences that are relevant to the position for which you are applying. Science CVs should also only include relevant experiences on them.

#### **Hobbies/Activities**

Is there a connection between you mentioning skiing and membership on the Quidditch team to the skills and accomplishments you say you have acquired on your resume? If so, what is it? You have to tell the reader why the activity or hobby is on the resume. If it is not connected, why have it on there?

#### **References Available Upon Request**

Use this only if you have nothing else more important to say, and you want to finish your formatting or you have extra space.

#### **Going Beyond the Paper Resume**

<u>http://about.me/</u> Make a simple and visually elegant landing page that points visitors to your content from around the web. <u>http://www.wordpress.org/</u> offers free web software you can use to create a website or blog. <u>http://www.onlineidcalculator.com/result.php</u> Google yourself using "Your Name" surrounded by quotation marks. This online calculator will determine what your online identity is and how to change it if it is not what you want it to be.

#### **Privacy Tips for Online Applications**

For comprehensive advice turn to Privacy Rights Clearinghouse at <u>http://www.privacyrights.org/</u> to learn about what information to/not post online, consumer protection, identity theft, and safeguarding your financial data.

The **purpose** of your cover letter is to:

- ✓ Clearly route your resume to the right contact person for the job opening.
- ✓ Show how your skills/experiences **MATCH** the job description.
- ✓ Show you can communicate professionally in writing.
- ✓ Reflect your positive attitude, personality, motivation and enthusiasm.

Whenever you send a resume or application to a potential employer, you must include a cover letter if the employer requests it. Providing a customized cover letter is always a good idea to do it even if not required (Unless they state otherwise). The cover letter is your chance to advocate for why you are right for the position, which can really help get you to the interview stage. If you can only upload one item, consider making your cover letter an additional page of your resume document, then upload that single document (resume-and-cover-letter combined) to the employer.

It is crucial that for **EVERY** position for to which you apply, you create a newly customized resume and newly written cover letter, consciously tailored to the requirements of that specific internship or job. To do this, you must analyze the wording of the posted description, read the company website in full, research the company online, and make some educated guesses to determine exactly what the employer wants. **Translate your experience into their language, even using the exact words in the job description.** Present yourself in their terms. It is the ONLY way an employer will recognize you as the best fit for the position.

## The 4 Steps of Cover Letter Writing

**Step 1**: Print and read the job description carefully and look for key words/phrases throughout all parts of the job description. Confirm that you have at least some of the desired or preferred skills, and that you fulfill most of the requirements listed such as class year or years of experience. Take a moment to visualize yourself in this job.

**Step 2**: Highlight all key words or phrases. You will use these to construct your sentences, using the exact wording chosen by the employer. **The CNS Career Center (Morrill III, Room 215) has worksheets that can help you** to analyze the position description, fine tune your resume, and build a customized cover letter that truly addresses the employer's needs in the best way possible. **Stop by our resource library during business hours, or make an appointment for one-on-one help with this process.** 

**Step 3**: Take each key word/phrase from the description, and come up with your best evidence that you have a matching skill or relevant experience. If they are looking for someone with good communication skills, think about a specific example you can give from your own work/personal experiences to show (not just tell) the employer you have developed "good communication skills." Create sentences which showcase your match for every key word/phrase that you have chosen. (e.g. "My ability to communicate clearly, both verbally and in writing, was developed during my time as a customer service assistant at Barnes & Noble. I also received an A grade in my Public Speaking course.")

**Step 4**: Starting with your strongest matches, arrange these sentences into paragraphs. Prioritize your paragraphs according to your most relevant experiences, and how they match what the employer has said are their most important needs. Separate paragraphs with a line return. See "The Structure of the Cover Letter" for important formatting details.

#### Proofread! Proofread! Proofread!

The number one reason employers throw away application materials is spelling errors and typos! Avoid relying on spellcheck. Instead, read backwards from the end. If a word looks wrong, then it probably is.

	The Formatting:
My Address	_
Today's Date	Left-hand justified with margins set 1 inch
loudy o Date	uniformly or business-style (left-hand justified
Company Name	at 1.25 inches).
Company Address	
Company Address	
Dear (insert the corr	rect contact person's name here, or if not available, use "Dear Search Committee, Hiring
Manager, Internship	
First Paragraph—Mu	ust-Haves:
	Identify the position you are applying for or the purpose of the letter if it is a cold
	contact/internship opportunity.
	State where you saw the job/internship advertised.
	Introduce yourself by your major(s), university, and your future year of graduation.
	Demonstrate your knowledge of the company by including a reference to the
	organization, and how their mission overlaps with your major and your interests. Relay your passion and enthusiasm for the job. The best workers are the ones who
	can show that they most want the job!
	Describe how you meet the specific needs of the employer by providing evidence of your related skills and experiences. Give specific examples of how your <b>strongest</b> qualifications match the position requirements. Elaborate further on the most important qualifications presented in resume. Use short narrative examples and showcase how your skills and experience are an excellent match for the position. Demonstrate your strong writing skills as well as your ability to read the job description closely and carefully with attention to detail.
Closing Paragraph—	-Must-Haves:
✓	Distinguish yourself from other candidates by summarizing the main advantages you bring to <b>this</b> employer if bired for <b>this</b> position
	bring to <b>this</b> employer if hired for <b>this</b> position.
	I hank the employer for the time and consideration given to your application
√ √	Thank the employer for the time and consideration given to your application. Suggest a plan of action (invite questions and the opportunity to talk further about <b>what you can do for them</b> ; indicate how you will follow up in a specific timeframe).
✓ ✓	Suggest a plan of action (invite questions and the opportunity to talk further about
√ √	Suggest a plan of action (invite questions and the opportunity to talk further about <b>what you can do for them</b> ; indicate how you will follow up in a specific timeframe).
✓ ✓	Suggest a plan of action (invite questions and the opportunity to talk further about

### Sample First Year Resume and Cover Letter Customized to the Specifics in the Opportunity Description

### Sample Volunteer Description

Massachusetts Community Water Watch

- Students will **collect**, **identify**, **and analyze samples**. During the field days, students will gather and split into teams to collect samples, do **shoreline surveys**, and learn about the issues.
- A smaller group of students will further **catalog** and analyze the samples taken from the river. Students will **interpret data** and **present it in graphs**, with the ultimate goal of **creating a map of species populations overlaying** an aerial map, with photos of species samples and habitat. This information will be published on a website and in a report that will be delivered to media, as well as turned into an **educational curriculum for schools.**
- Students will **work with local nurseries** and the campus to **gather plant materials and supplies** for a planting event on Earth Day. Students will **coordinate volunteers, visibility, and media for the event**.
- River Monitoring Workshop Students will **organize field days** in which students will learn why and how to perform water quality testing and shoreline surveys. Days will include expert speakers and education on water quality issues.

### Sample Cover Letter

627 N. Pleasant St. Amherst, MA 01003

September 5, 2019

Volunteer Coordinator Massachusetts Community Water Watch 44 Winter Street Boston, MA 02108

Dear Volunteer Coordinator:

Lacking a key skill? Don't ignore it and hope they won't notice, Explain what you've done that's related, and express an eagerness to learn that skill on the job. Want some quick feedback on your resume & cover letter? Visit Campus Career Services Walk-In Hours at Goodell Monday-Friday, 1-4pm

This letter is to apply for work as a volunteer with Massachusetts Community Water Watch, an opportunity I found through the Office of Civic Engagement and Service-Learning at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. I am a first year student with interests in biology and environmental conservation.

In my lab classes, I regularly practice **collecting** pond water **samples**, and **analyzing them** to **identify organisms**. As a member of the Computer Science Club I learned how to use Excel to **catalog findings** and **create graphs**. While I have not yet **created a map showing species population** distribution, my final project for a nature conservation course is giving me the chance to **read map overlays** as I summarize a case study of the Quabbin Reservoir.

With my experience as a camp counselor, I am comfortable creating and running fun outdoor **group activities**. When I was assigned by my supervisor to serve in the role of Head Counselor I was able to **coordinate** and collaborate with other counselors to **organize** an all-day hike.

After 3 years on the debate team, I feel confident when **presenting educational topics** to a young audience. As **team** President I organized a successful marketing campaign to increase the **visibility** of our team activites, including an interview with local **media**.

In addition to furthering my interest in biology through this internship, I look forward to using my organizational and leadership skills to assist the environment. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Claire Lakes

Example Resume Font: Microsoft Tai Le; Size 11

Relevant Courses: Intro to Nature Conservation, Intro to Biology Lab Chadborne High School, Webster, MA **High School Diploma** 

WORK EXPERIENCE

#### Timberlake Camp, Brown, MA

**Camp Counselor** 

- Facilitated daily arts and crafts projects for group of 13 elementary school aged campers
- Coordinated with team of fellow counselors in organizing campers and major camp events

#### **ACTIVITIES**

#### **University of Massachusetts Amherst**

**Computer Science Club Member** 

- Gain information about different careers that use technology
- Learn computer skills and work on independent projects

#### Chadborne High School Debate Team, Webster, MA

Team Member

- Designed pamphlets and posters in order to promote club events such as guest speakers
- Presented to eight classrooms on effective speaking techniques
- Elected team President for senior academic year

#### COMPUTER SKILLS

- Proficient in Microsoft Excel, Word, PowerPoint and internet research •
- Introductory proficiency with Gimp (photo editing software)

#### LANGUAGE SKILLS

Basic Spanish

**Claire Lakes** 

**University of Massachusetts Amherst** 

Exploratory Track; intended major Biology

May 2021

GPA 3.25

June 2017

Campus Career Services Walk-In Hours at Goodell Monday-Friday, 1-4pm

June – Aug. 2017

Sept. 2014 – June 2017

Jan. 2017 – Present

Want some quick feedback on your resume & cover letter?

### EDUCATION

Bachelor of Science

#### **Science Resume Action Verbs -- By Category**

Use exact verbs from the job ad first, then supplement from this list. Avoid using the same verb twice. Use present tense only for current positions.

#### **Communication Skills** Corresponded Influenced Counseled Informed Addressed Critiqued Inquired Advertised Defended Interacted (with) Advocated Demonstrated Interfaced (with) Answered Described Interviewed Authored Detailed Introduced Briefed Discussed Involved Built (relationships) Displayed Listened Canvassed Disseminated Marketed Characterized Drafted Mediated Clarified Edited Memorized Co-authored Elicited Motivated Collaborated Negotiated Engaged Communicated Enlisted Networked Composed Exhibited Notified Connected Explained Oriented Consulted Outlined Expressed Contacted Formulated Persuaded Contrasted Fostered (relationship) Presented Conversed (with) Furnished Promoted Conveved Incorporated Proposed Coordinated Directed Inaugurated (program) Leadership Skills Enacted Initiated Adapted Established Instituted Began Fabricated Integrated Combined Fashioned Introduced Composed Forged Invented Conceptualized Formed Launched Conducted Formulated Mobilized Crafted Founded Opened Created Fundraised Originated Customized Generated Piloted Designed Grew Planned Developed Illustrated Pioneered Devised Implemented Proposed Balanced Determined **Quantitative Skills** Estimated Budgeted Accounted (for) Calculated

Capitalized (on)

Computed

Converted

Corrected

Decreased

Depreciated

Ascertained Adjusted Allocated Analyzed Appraised Assessed Audited Estimated Extrapolated Forecasted Gauged Increased Interpolated Measured Netted Publicized Quantified Questioned Reached (out) Recommended Reported Represented Responded (to) Solicited Spoke Suggested Summarized Synthesized Transcribed Translated Transmitted Urged Voiced Wrote

Pursued Revised Set (up) Shaped Solved Spearheaded Started Undertook

Prepared Programmed Projected Quantified Reconciled Reduced Tabulated

#### **Helping Skills**

Accelerated Accommodated Adapted Advanced (goal) Aided Alleviated Arranged Assessed Assured Bolstered Cared (for) Coached Collaborated Comforted Conferred Contributed Cooperated

#### **Managing Skills**

Acquired Adhered Adjusted Administered Analyzed Anticipated Applied Appointed Approved Assigned Authorized Balanced Chaired Contracted Controlled Coordinated Cut (budget, time) Decided

#### **Organizational Skills**

Accumulated Aligned Arranged Augmented Automated Balanced Bridged Broadened Cataloged Categorized Centralized Charted Classified Counseled Delivered Demonstrated Diagnosed Educated Employed (skills) Enabled Encouraged Enhanced Ensured Expedited Facilitated Familiarized Fulfilled Furthered Guided Helped Incorporated

Decreased Delegated Deployed Developed Directed Drove (results) Elected Eliminated Enforced Enlisted Executed Focused (on) Galvanized Generated Handled Headed Hired Hosted Implemented Increased

Coded Collected Compared Compiled Confirmed Consolidated Coordinated Corrected Customized Decentralized Diagrammed Displayed Distributed Documented

Intervened Monitored Nurtured Offered Partnered Performed Prepared Prevented Problem-solved Provided Referred Rehabilitated Reinforced Represented Resolved Retrieved Safeguarded Searched

Led Leveraged Managed Met (requirements) Motivated Navigated Obtained Orchestrated Organized Overhauled Oversaw Planned Presided (over) Prioritized Produced Ran Recommended Recruited Reorganized Restored

Excluded Expedited Filed Finalized Formalized Generated (data) Grouped Implemented Included Indexed Input (data) Integrated Inspected Integrated Secured Served Simplified Stabilized Staffed Strengthened Suggested Supplemented Supplied Supported Teamed (with) Transported Treated Volunteered

Reviewed Satisfied (reg's) Scheduled Secured Selected Set (goals) Shaped Solved Strategized Streamlined Strengthened Supervised Trained Transformed Upheld (regulations) Utilized

Inventoried Juggled Linked Maintained Maximized Mentored Merged Minimized Monitored Navigated Obtained Optimized Ordered Organized

# Organizational Skills (continued)

Outlined Planned Prepared Prioritized Processed Proofread Provided Purchased Qualified

#### **Teaching Skills**

Adapted Advised Assessed Coached Communicated Conducted Coordinated

#### **Research Skills**

Adapted Analyzed Assessed Benchmarked Checked Coded Collected Compared Conducted Confirmed Considered Controlled (for) Correlated Corroborated Critiqued Decoded Deduced Defined Delivered Designed Detected Determined Devised Diagnosed

Queried (database) Ranked Recorded Referenced Refined Registered Replaced Resolved Restored Restored Reviewed Revised Routed

Corrected

Critiqued

Educated

Evaluated

Explained

Facilitated

Discovered

Evaluated

Examined

Explored

Focused

Formalized

Formulated

Hypothesized

Gathered

Identified

Inspected

Interpolated

Interpreted

Intervened

Located

Logged

Investigated

Kept (records)

Manipulated

Measured

Modeled

Inferred

Experimented

Extrapolated

Documented

Drew (conclusions)

Focused

Graded

Developed

Scheduled Screened Searched Selected Set (goals) Sorted Streamlined Structured Submitted Standardized Synthesized Systemized

Guided Illustrated Individualized Informed Instilled Instructed Mentored Motivated Persuaded

Modified Observed Performed (procedure) Pinpointed Predicted Prescreened Proposed Proved Published Qualified Quantified Ranked Recorded Refined (process) Replicated Reported Reproduced Researched Resolved Restructured Revealed Reviewed Revised Sampled Scored Screened

Tailored Targeted Tracked Transcribed Unified Updated Upgraded Verified

Taught Tested Trained Transmitted Tutored

Searched Simulated Simplified Solved Standardized Studied Submitted Substantiated Substituted Summarized Surveyed Synthesized Systematized Targeted Tested Theorized Traced Tracked Troubleshot Uncovered Validated Verified

#### **Technical Skills**

Activated Actuated Adjusted Altered Amplified Approximated Articulated Assembled Augmented Automated Benchmarked Blended Blocked Built Calibrated Captured Checked Circulated Classified Cleaned Collected Combined Concentrated Condensed Conserved Constructed Converted Corrected Crvstallized Coded Cultivated

#### Accomplishment

Verbs Accelerated Accomplished Acquired Achieved Adapted Advanced Appointed Attained Awarded Boosted Broadened Built Challenged Completed Convinced

Debugged Decoded Defined Designed Detected Determined Developed Differentiated Dispensed Dissected Dissembled Distributed Duplicated Eliminated Engineered Enriched Evaporated Exchanged Extracted Fabricated Fine-tuned Fixed Gasified Gauged Generated Identified Illuminated Immobilized Implemented Induced Inspected Installed

Introduced

Decreased (costs, time) Discovered Doubled, Tripled Entrusted (with, to) Exceeded Expedited Honed (skills) Increased Improved Initiated Innovated Introduced Launched Led Leveraged Managed Mastered Maximized

Isolated Labelled Liquefied Manufactured Mapped Matched Measured Modeled Modified Mounted Neutralized Operated Overhauled Performed (procedure) Permeated Photographed Plotted (data) Prepared Preserved Probed Processed Programmed Purified Rated Recognized Recorded Rectified Refined (solution) Regulated Remediated Remodeled Removed Repaired

Minimized Modernized Nullified Optimized Organized Overcame Oversaw Perfected Persuaded Pioneered Planned Raised Recognized (for) Redesigned Reduced (time, costs) Rejuvenated Revitalized Selected

Restored Reversed Scanned Scraped Segmented Separated Simulated Solidified Specialized Specified Stablized Standardized Stimulated Studied Suppressed Surveyed Suspended Synchronized Tallied Tied Tightened Transferred Translated Transmitted Trimmed Troubleshot Upgraded Utilized Weighed

Shortened Solved Streamlined Strengthened Succeeded Surpassed Topped Transformed Transitioned Trusted (to) Upgraded Won Yielded