

Career Planning: Resume and Cover Letter Writing

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UW SSW Writing Center

Adapted from a presentation by Makeeba Greene, UW Social Work Faculty



Agenda

- Welcome
- Icebreaker
- Job Application Process
- Resumes
- Breakout Activity: Building The Bullets
- Questions
- Resources

With any remaining time:

- Cover Letters



Icebreaker

Chat Storm:

**What is the most interesting job you
have ever had?**



Job Application Process

Treat this process like a part time job, or a major project

- Questions to ask yourself:
 - What **skills** do I want to learn in my next job?
 - What **mission** do I want to be in service to?
 - What type of **environment** do I want to work in?
 - What networks and **relationships** do I hope to grow?



LinkedIn

- Recruiters use LinkedIn all day, every day
- Networking tool to identify how your contacts may be connected to one another
- Source for job postings
- helps keep boundary between professional and social life (can refer facebook requests to LinkedIn)

** There are also reasons not to get LinkedIn. Your choice.



LinkedIn Profile

- **Take the time to make your LinkedIn page great**
- **Photo:** Choose something “professional” that is high quality
- **Highlight your accomplishments**
 - Be sure to quantify them!
- **Personality!**
 - This is more personal than a resume or cover letter, let your personality shine!

- **More tips:**

<https://www.themuse.com/advice/the-31-best-linkedin-profile-tips-for-job-seekers>



Resumes



Contact Information

- Name
- Email
- Telephone
- LinkedIn personalized link
 - www.linkedin.com/in/firstlastname
 - Only include if your LinkedIn is looking good!
 - Increasingly important
- Home address is less relevant these days
- No need to offer references or include reference names unless the employer asks

Resume Basics

- **Style matters AS much as content**
 - Writing a resume is similar to writing a memo
 - be strategic about bold/italicized text
 - be clear and concise
- **QUANTIFY and clarify whenever possible**
- **Put the strongest content at the top**
- **Consider adding a summary instead of an objective**
- **be consistent with verb tense**
- **Limit distractions**
 - **proofread!**
- **Cater each resume to the specific job**
 - **Keep an original and make copies for each job**

Body of Resume

- **Reverse Chronology is typically best**

Typical Sections:

- 1. Summary**
- 2. Education**
- 3. Professional Experience**
- 4. Skills**
- 5. Volunteer Experience**

**** The more space allocated to a section, the more attention it will get from employer**

Optional Information for a Resume

- Statement of purpose
- Summary
- Languages
- Skills
- Interests
- Volunteer experience
- Leadership/Awards
- Publications
- Presentations
- Certifications

Body of Resume

- **Education**

- Institutions attended and associated dates (month, year),
- Degrees/certificates awarded,
- Concentrations or minors,
- GPA (if applying to something academic)
- If not graduated, can say “Expected [Month] [Year]”

Education

University of Washington, Seattle, WA

Master of Social Work, Health Practice concentration, June 2020

James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA

Bachelor of Social Work, minors in Family Studies and Medical Spanish, May 2019

Body of Resume

Order of information for each position:

- Associated Employer
- Title of Position
- Dates of Employment
- Highlight duties and accomplishments with **relevance** to the position you're applying for in **3-4** bullet points

Employers look at:

1. Where you worked
 2. What your title was
- Get creative with your Practicum
 - Ask your Supervisor what title they would give you for that work, but still be clear about role as an intern in bullets

Resume Example

SARAH SMITH

Permanent Address
123 Elm Avenue
Roanoke, Virginia 24002

sss4@virginia.edu
(555) 555-1234

Current Address
4567 Maple Avenue
Charlottesville, Virginia 22903

EDUCATION

University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia
Bachelor of Arts, Political Science, Minor in Biology GPA 3.65

Expected May 2017

Relevant courses: Cell Biology, Biochemistry, Microbiology

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

University of Virginia Hospital, Charlottesville, Virginia

Volunteer, Renal Dialysis Center

September 2015-Present

- Provide comfort and support for patients receiving renal dialysis
- Engage in conversation with patients
- Work with medical staff to keep pod units fully stocked and running smoothly

Madison House, Charlottesville, Virginia

Volunteer, Adopt-a-Grandparent Program

September 2013-May 2015

- Developed relationship with senior citizen through conversations once a week
- Participated in various activities at nursing home facility including exercise classes and game nights

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia

Research Assistant, Department of Biology

May 2015-August 2015

- Created single amino acid mutations in an enzyme involved in sulfur metabolism, sulfite reductase
- Cleaned and organized lab equipment
- Ordered and maintained office and lab supplies

Research Assistant, Cellular, Molecular and Developmental Biology

May 2014-August 2014

- Studied cell responses to a mutant yeast protein in a protein trafficking laboratory
- Performed site-directed mutagenesis through PCR to create specific mutants and transformed them into yeast
- Observed protein stability and ubiquitination by immunoblotting and localization by immunofluorescence

SHADOWING EXPERIENCE

Lakeview Clinic, Roanoke, Virginia

Shadowing

December 2014-January 2015

- Shadowed Dr. Susan Johnson a general practitioner for 60 hours
- Viewed Dr. Johnson's interactions with patients, during examination, and throughout explanations of diagnosis
- Gained a greater understanding of the strong communication skills needed to be a physician

University of Virginia Hospital, Charlottesville, Virginia

Shadowing

October 2014

- Shadowed various Emergency Room doctors during two eight hour shifts
- Observed the unpredictability and variety of cases seen in an emergency room setting
- Gained a better understanding of the flexibility, and quick thinking needed to work as a physician in this environment

PUBLICATIONS

Damon GQ, Johnson HC, Smith S. Methods of endocytosis. Annu Rev Biochem 2014, 78:843-916.

The Bullets

Generally, you want to highlight what your role was, what your influence was, and the scope of your work

Each bullet should include the following components:

1. What did you do?
2. How can you quantify that?
 - a. make best guesses
 - b. leave data point out if it weakens your case
3. How did you do it?
4. What was the impact?

The Bullets

- Quantify your work- It paints a picture for the employer
 - Ex. Outputs: # of clients served; % increased, etc.
 - Ex. Frequency: Weekly; Monthly; etc.
 - More examples:
 - Unquantified: Responsible for a large caseload.
 - Quantified: Responsible for a caseload of 60+ clients, of which 75% had a mental health diagnosis.
- Use keywords that employers are using in their job descriptions--computers may filter you!

A Strong Bullet

Adverb Verb Subject How Quantity Impact

- Independently created and modified guidelines of care for patient programming, to ensure safety and continuity of care
- Developed over 25 crisis safety plans in collaboration with mental health evaluators to support safe discharge of patients and families
- Effectively tutored over twenty students per month, measurably improving their test scores

A Strong Bullet

Adverb

Verb

Subject

Quantify

Impact

- Facilitated over 50 Integrated Treatment Plan meetings with youth clients, their families, and treating clinicians, to promote person-centered care
- Facilitated 3 weekly DBT skills groups, with 12 successful client completions of the program.

Drawing Connections Between Jobs

- First, develop your narrative
- What thread can you tie through all your experiences?
 - Ex.What does case management and therapy have in common?
 - Ex.What do teaching assistants, paraprofessionals, and group facilitators all have in common?
- How can you frame your work experience in a new way that fits the current job description?
- It helps to talk to a peer! Sometimes it's hard to see for ourselves
 - Imposter syndrome can get in the way!

Self Revision: Checklist

- Pick one position on your resume, and consider:
 - Does my description highlight relevant skills or activities to my desired position?
 - Did I use language that is consistent with the job posting?
 - Have I quantified my work?
 - Are the results of my work clear?
 - Did I use action-oriented verbs?

Activity

Workshop your resumes in pairs

- Focus on bullets
- Together, can you craft a good bullet point?
- Use the Social Work Action Verb handout

Cover Letters



What is a Cover Letter?

- Persuasive, **1 page** letter through which you can express your voice, enthusiasm for the opportunity, and perspective on why *you* are a great fit for the position
- Focus on including 1 or 2 strong anecdotes or professional experiences that highlight your skills relevant to the job position

First Thing's First

Before you begin writing:

- > **Do your homework** on the organization. Who works there? What has the organization accomplished (look at annual reports), Who do they serve? Identify the mission and key programs
- > **Deconstruct the job description.** Reflect the language in the job description BACK to the employer
- > **What do you think the employer thinks is most important?** Write about that.
- > **be memorable, but not over the top**

Sample Cover Letter Structure

paragraph 1: Brief Introduction

- > Address the Hiring Manager by name (first, and last)
- > share how you heard about the position
- > bring some enthusiasm

Paragraph (s) 2-3: Professional/academic background

- > connect back to job description key skills and requirements

Paragraph 4: Synthesis/ Conclusion:

- > Summarize, compliment their work, align your values, Thank them for their consideration
- > Sign the letter with a handwritten signature. Have a Jpeg of your signature stored on your laptop.

Cover Letters: To Keep In Mind

- Should not repeat your resume, but compliment it
- Make them want to meet and hire *you*
- Tell meaningful anecdotes that tie your skills to concrete problem-solving activities or tangible results you've worked on in your career
- If you've worked several kinds of positions, you can highlight a common "thread" or path if desired

Avoid generic references to your abilities

- Examples:
 - Too vague: “My skills would be a great fit for your organization.”
 - More specific: “In my role as an intake specialist, I am frequently required to field calls from persons in crisis. I provide exceptional service in routine and extraordinary situations. Providing support and resources to clients is a point of personal and professional pride for me, and this is a skill I am eager to continue developing.”
 - Too vague: “I’m a proactive team player.”
 - More specific: “In my current position, I proactively jumped in to develop and launch a case tracking system to identify the number and types of issues that intake specialists were addressing. Together, our team, was able to streamline the intake to first client session for those in greatest need.”



Overall Tips



When Writing a Cover Letter/Resume

- Highlight what you're excited to learn, not just what you know
- Be aware of boundaries and how much personal information to share
- Tailor to the job description; look for keywords
- No need to include references. They'll ask if they want them.
- Show you've done your research! Why are you specifically wanting to work for this organization?
- Some employers may ask for a writing sample



Questions?



Resources

- **Odegard Writing Center**
 - <http://guides.lib.uw.edu/c.php?g=342041&p=6489719>
- **Career and Internship Center at UW**
 - <https://careers.uw.edu/>
- **Jobs and Careers Webpage in UW Library**
 - <http://guides.lib.uw.edu/c.php?g=341885&p=2299963>
- **Owl Purdue**
 - https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/job_search_writing/resumes_and_vitas/index.html

