UMassAmherst
College of Natural Sciences
Career and Professional
Development Center

Morrill II, Room 321

www.cns.umass.edu/careers

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 (Make strategic choices based on your audience and the job description.)

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

- 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
https://about.me/ Make a simple and visually elegant landing page that points visitors to your content from around the web.
http://www.wordpress.org/ offers free web software you can use to create a website or blog.
http://www.onlineidcalculator.com/result.php 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 http://www.privacyrights.org/ to learn about what information to/not post online, consumer protection, identity theft, and safeguarding your financial data.

Successful Cover Letter

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 Structure of the Cover Letter

My Address
My Address

Today's Date

Company Name
Company Address
Company Address

The Formatting:

Left-hand justified with margins set 1 inch uniformly or business-style (left-hand justified at 1.25 inches).

Dear (insert the correct contact person's name here, or if not available, use "Dear Search Committee, Hiring Manager, Internship Coordinator" etc.):

First Paragraph—Must-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!

Second Paragraph Should: (You may have more paragraphs depending on the content.)

- ✓ 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 **strongest** 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 **this** employer if hired for **this** position.
- ✓ 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 **what you can do for them**; indicate how you will follow up in a specific timeframe).

Sincerely,

Your name signed in pen here if hard copy. If emailed, eliminate the extra space. TIP: Your neatly written signature, scanned once to a JPG file, can be added to your Word document, and used on all future cover letters.

My Name (typed)

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

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

Dear Volunteer Coordinator:

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

Note: *Bold is used here to demonstrate how to address the specifics of a job description.*
You do not need to bold key skills in your actual cover letter.

Claire Lakes

413-555-6121, clakes@umass.edu
511 Goodell Drive Amherst, MA 01003

EDUCATION

University of Massachusetts Amherst   May 2021
Bachelor of Science
Exploratory Track; intended major Biology   GPA 3.25
Relevant Courses: Intro to Nature Conservation, Intro to Biology Lab

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Chadborne High School, Webster, MA   June 2017
High School Diploma

WORK EXPERIENCE

Timberlake Camp, Brown, MA   June – Aug. 2017
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   Jan. 2017 – Present
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   Sept. 2014 – June 2017
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

Example Resume Font: Microsoft Tai Le; Size 11

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

Addressed	Corresponded	Influenced	Publicized
Advertised	Counseled	Informed	Quantified
Advocated	Critiqued	Inquired	Questioned
Answered	Defended	Interacted (with)	Reached (out)
Authored	Demonstrated	Interfaced (with)	Recommended
Briefed	Described	Interviewed	Reported
Built (relationships)	Detailed	Introduced	Represented
Canvassed	Discussed	Involved	Responded (to)
Characterized	Displayed	Listened	Solicited
Clarified	Disseminated	Marketed	Spoke
Co-authored	Drafted	Mediated	Suggested
Collaborated	Edited	Memorized	Summarized
Communicated	Elicited	Motivated	Synthesized
Composed	Engaged	Negotiated	Transcribed
Connected	Enlisted	Networked	Translated
Consulted	Exhibited	Notified	Transmitted
Contacted	Explained	Oriented	Urged
Contrasted	Expressed	Outlined	Voiced
Conversed (with)	Formulated	Persuaded	Wrote
Conveyed	Fostered (relationship)	Presented	
Coordinated	Furnished	Promoted	
	Incorporated	Proposed	

Leadership Skills

Adapted	Directed	Inaugurated (program)	Pursued
Began	Enacted	Initiated	Revised
Combined	Established	Instituted	Set (up)
Composed	Fabricated	Integrated	Shaped
Conceptualized	Fashioned	Introduced	Solved
Conducted	Forged	Invented	Spearheaded
Crafted	Formed	Launched	Started
Created	Formulated	Mobilized	Undertook
Customized	Founded	Opened	
Designed	Fundraised	Originated	
Developed	Generated	Piloted	
Devised	Grew	Planned	
	Illustrated	Pioneered	
	Implemented	Proposed	

Quantitative Skills

Accounted (for)	Balanced	Determined	Prepared
Ascertained	Budgeted	Estimated	Programmed
Adjusted	Calculated	Extrapolated	Projected
Allocated	Capitalized (on)	Forecasted	Quantified
Analyzed	Computed	Gauged	Reconciled
Appraised	Converted	Increased	Reduced
Assessed	Corrected	Interpolated	Tabulated
Audited	Decreased	Measured	
	Depreciated	Netted	

Helping Skills

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

Counseled
Delivered
Demonstrated
Diagnosed
Educated
Employed (skills)
Enabled
Encouraged
Enhanced
Ensured
Expedited
Facilitated
Familiarized
Fulfilled
Furthered
Guided
Helped
Incorporated

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

Secured
Served
Simplified
Stabilized
Staffed
Strengthened
Suggested
Supplemented
Supplied
Supported
Teamed (with)
Transported
Treated
Volunteered

Managing Skills

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

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

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

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

Organizational Skills

Accumulated
Aligned
Arranged
Augmented
Automated
Balanced
Bridged
Broadened
Cataloged
Categorized
Centralized
Charted
Classified

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

Excluded
Expedited
Filed
Finalized
Formalized
Generated (data)
Grouped
Implemented
Included
Indexed
Input (data)
Integrated
Inspected
Integrated

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

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

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

Tailored
Targeted
Tracked
Transcribed
Unified
Updated
Upgraded
Verified

Teaching Skills

Adapted
Advised
Assessed
Coached
Communicated
Conducted
Coordinated

Corrected
Critiqued
Developed
Educated
Evaluated
Explained
Facilitated
Focused
Graded

Guided
Illustrated
Individualized
Informed
Instilled
Instructed
Mentored
Motivated
Persuaded

Taught
Tested
Trained
Transmitted
Tutored

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

Discovered
Documented
Drew (conclusions)
Evaluated
Examined
Experimented
Explored
Extrapolated
Focused
Formalized
Formulated
Gathered
Hypothesized
Identified
Inferred
Inspected
Interpolated
Interpreted
Intervened
Investigated
Kept (records)
Located
Logged
Manipulated
Measured
Modeled

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

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
Crystallized
Coded
Cultivated

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

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

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

Accomplishment Verbs

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

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

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

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