

GUIDE TO WRITING exceptional resumes



ONLINE INTERACTIVE BOOK 



Denver

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what is a resume?

A resume is the most common document asked for as part of a job application. It is a summary of your **relevant experience, skills, and education** presented in a **clear, concise, and compelling** way to demonstrate to an employer that you are the best candidate for the job.

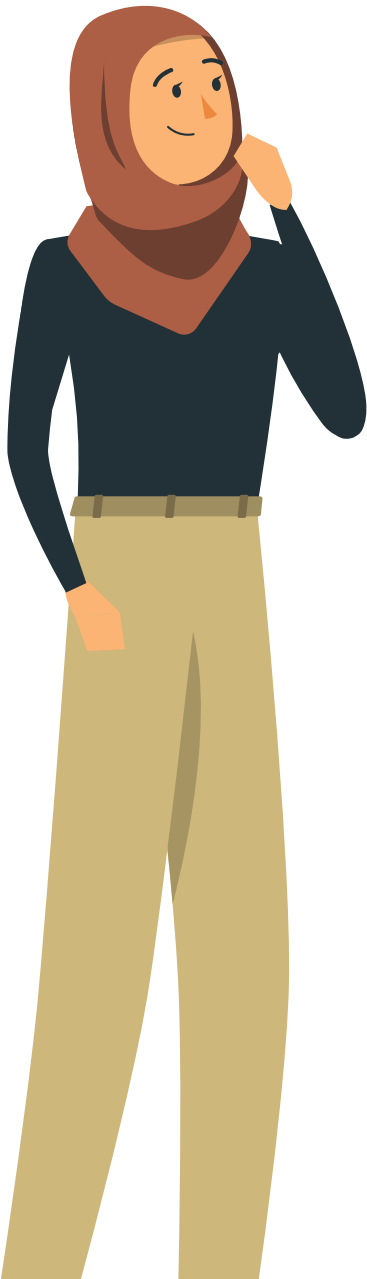


myth

***“I just need to work on my resume.
Then I can apply for jobs.”***

What if you are applying for different types of jobs?

Would you send the same resume for every job?



truth

**Finding job descriptions first
enables you to write a tailored
and relevant resume.**

A note on those "bots"

Many companies use Applicant Tracking Systems, or ATS, to scan your materials for key words as a first check of qualifications.

This is another key reason to make sure you look for, and include, the skills and experiences the employer needs.

Can't I just use AI?

You can, but:

- AI can't tailor your resume as effectively as you can.
- AI makes mistakes.
- Companies have started using systems to screen out AI resumes.

By learning these techniques, you can write better resumes yourself.

This guide provides useful tips and exercises as part of a broad overview. Use these guidelines to start or improve your resume, then come to the Career Center for personalized advice.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

Asking for help with your resume without a job or internship in mind is a little like asking someone for directions without giving them your destination. Start with a job or internship description and you will know what the employer is asking for and what you need to demonstrate in your resume. You will know where you're going! Let's try it.

Find a job or internship you want to apply for. Try common websites such as Handshake, LinkedIn Jobs, or Indeed. *(If you're not applying now, pick a job you might apply to in the future.)*

Create a Skills Survey: Start a simple two-column table on a piece of paper, in Google Docs, Word, Excel, or other tool. Title the left-hand column "Have" and the right-hand column "Need."

SKILLS SURVEY

HAVE	NEED

Use your Skills Survey to keep your resume focused throughout the writing and editing process.

HOW TO BREAK DOWN A JOB DESCRIPTION

Now go through your job description and note in your skills survey anything the employer wants that you have, and what they want that you need. Search the job description and duties sections in addition to the requirements and preferred qualifications. **Look for education, skills, tools, and experience.**

Here is a typical listing for an on-campus front desk assistant.
Which skills, tools, and experiences can you claim?

Responsibilities:

- Provide front line support for students regarding questions about the College of Engineering, Design and Computing programs. This includes answering and directing phone calls, managing the email inbox, and acting as a spokesperson when greeting students, staff, faculty, and other visitors.
- Instruct students on college procedures and processes.
- Schedule advising and other appointments with faculty and advising staff.
- Maintain confidentiality and integrity of student information in compliance with FERPA regulations.
- Manage email correspondence and general engineering inbox.
- General clerical duties-copying, filing, scanning
- Inventory office supplies and front desk supplies
- Maintain a clean and efficient front desk environment
- Assist with department events throughout the semester
- Data entry and other projects as needed

Minimum Requirements:

- Ability to learn quickly and work independently.
- Demonstrated proficiency using Microsoft Office Suite.
- Attention to detail, reliability, and ability to work on projects with limited supervision.
- Excellent organizational skills; ability to handle a great deal of details and manage multiple tasks
- Ability to demonstrate the following professionalism, strong work ethic, customer service and communication skills, a positive, can-do attitude,

Have you provided student support or customer service in another role?

Put that in your Have column

What else do you have?:

— instructed fellow students on something related to school work or procedures?

— helped organize school, team, or club events?

— had to learn a tool or procedure quickly?

— used Microsoft Word or Excel on a report or project?

— organizational skills as a student athlete or working student?

— learned customer service, professionalism, and communication skills during any job or volunteer position?

TYING YOUR SKILLS TO EXPERIENCES

Your completed skills survey may look something like this:

HAVE	NEED
Provided student support	Scheduling
Helped new students understand HS procedures	Inventory
Helped organize 3 school events	Data entry
Learned new software	
Wrote and tracked assignments in Word/Excel	
Highly organized	
Customer service	
Professionalism	
Communication	
Reliability	

Note: You don't need to see every skill the employer wants in the Have side to apply, but you will want many of the key skills.

Next, consider when and where you used or learned those skills:

EX: As a club officer, I helped students learn about school schedules and procedures.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Now that you have identified what the employer wants, and where and how you performed those skills, you are ready to write a resume that is **relevant** to the job! (and give the "bots" what they're looking for)

What do I do with the "Need" side?

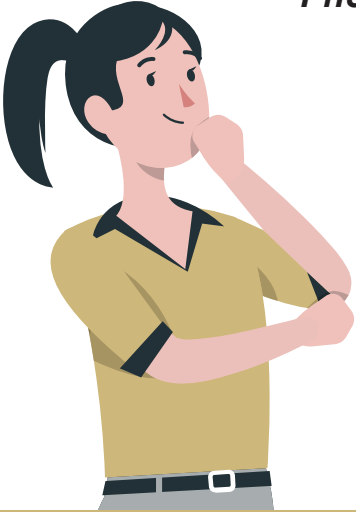
Adding these skills will make you a stronger candidate in the future.

Could you help with scheduling and inventory at your job? Add data entry to a class project? Gain skills using LinkedIn Learning or Coursera?

STEP 1: RELEVANCY

myth

"I need to list everything I have done on my resume."



truth

Consider your most relevant experiences and make those stand out.

Employers will pick up in a matter of seconds if your resume is not relevant to their needs.

Imagine you are hiring for the job description below:

JOB DESCRIPTION

Summer Intern - Music & Soundtracks, Studio

Exciting opportunity for a student passionate about learning the intersection of film and music. You will work from script development through soundtrack release, researching public domains, updating contact/music databases, read scripts and perform music spotting.

Basic Qualifications:

- Passion for music and film; familiarity with music terminology
- Detail oriented, positive and dynamic self-starter who loves solving technical and creative problems
- Experience with Filemaker Pro, Pro Tools, MS Office
- Basic understanding of production processes (both audio, video and film post)
- Currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Music, Film or related

NOW, LET'S WRITE A RESUME THAT SHOWS WE HAVE THE SKILLS THIS EMPLOYER NEEDS
(SAMPLE ON FOLLOWING PAGE)

1

Start with a summary of your **relevant** skills to show you have what the employer needs. Notice how Isabella addressed specific qualifications in each bullet point.

2

The programs and software listed on the job description are first in this list.

3

Notice how Isabella chose projects directly related to the internship – research, audio, and film. They may have done other projects, but these are the most relevant.

4

Your academic classwork counts! List relevant classes to demonstrate learning in key areas.

ISABELLA'S RESUME

Isabella Martinez

lmartinez@gmail.com 303-556-2250 Denver, CO 80208
www.BellMartinezfilms.com

Summary of Qualifications

- Created several 10-20 minute films, including script development, shooting, and post production.
- Solved technical and creative problems related to music and film production.
- 12+ years of classical training in piano and voice, with a strong knowledge of music terminology.

Technical Skills: Pro Tools, Filemaker Pro, Final Cut Pro, Avid, Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator

Education

University of Colorado Denver, Denver, CO

Anticipated 05/20xx

Bachelor of Fine Arts, Music, Recording Arts

GPA 3.75/4.0

Minor: Film & Television Production

Audio and Film Project Experience

Film and Editing

01/20xx-05/20xx

- Filmed and edited a 6-part series of 10-minute comedies enhancing knowledge of production process, including scouting locations, casting, script writing, directing, and post-production via Final Cut Pro.

Audio Production

08/20xx-12/20xx

- Completed a team project with 4 other students on recording soundboards, basic maintenance of recording equipment, and other electronic music equipment.
- Presented recordings to professor and 20 students utilizing public speaking and communication skills.

Sony Research

06/20xx-08/20xx

- Researched Sony Music Studios' environments to enhance artists experience and client creativity.
- Composed report on utilization of professional outboard gear and large format consoles.

Audio & Film Courses

- Film Post Production
- Video Production
- Audio Production
- Music Law
- Film & Video Business
- Digital Graphics

Relevant Experience

Street Team Representative, Nitro Records, Centennial, CO

01/20xx-Present

- Proposed upcoming concerts/events and new releases for Denver Metro area to Vice President and Assistant Vice President of Nitro Records.
- Compiled spreadsheets and inventory logs of weekly concert revenue using Filemaker Pro.

Student Office Staff, CU Denver College of Arts & Media, Denver, CO

08/20xx-12/20xx

- Assisted with general office duties in a fast-paced environment, including customer service in person and on phone, photocopying, filing and project management using Microsoft Office.
- Maintained and managed arts & media equipment, including cameras, camcorders, and recording devices to ensure the safety of up to 200 pieces of professional equipment.

Additional Work Experience

P.F. Chang's, Denver, CO

Wait Staff

05/20xx-Present

Macy's, Broomfield, CO

Sales Associate

03/20xx-04/20xx

Professional Organizations

American Society of Audio Engineers

Member

08/20xx-Present

What did Isabella do to show how their experience is **relevant**?

What are some ideas you can take from Isabella?

When considering an experience, award, or project, ask yourself:

Is this experience relevant to the job I'm applying for?

If the answer is **NO**

- you don't *have* to put it on your resume
- OR it could go closer to the bottom of the page

If the answer is **YES**

- HOW relevant is it to your job?
- This gives you an idea where on the page it could go (**top 1/3** = most relevant!)

5

By placing their related academic projects and courses above her experience, Isabella made the top of her resume more relevant to the internship. Stronger professional experience could have gone above their education and projects.

Note how Isabella grouped job experiences. You are not always locked into a chronological list. Overall, Isabella's more relevant work was interspersed with their restaurant and retail work. By separating media-related jobs and grouping them together, Isabella brings more focus to these more relevant experiences.

6

Isabella didn't add bullet points to these jobs since they aren't as relevant, and to keep length to one page. But, they still help since they quickly show customer service experience.

STEP 2: SCANNABILITY

myth

“Employers will spend time reading through my resume.”



truth

Employers may spend 10 SECONDS when first looking through your resume.

This is why it's so important for your relevant skills to be easy to see during a quick first look or scan.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Research Assistant in Data Analysis for On-campus Pharmacogenomics Project

Student will work in a small research group; search databases for genomic markers that explain adverse drug reactions. The student will gain knowledge of pharmacogenomics, database management, protein active site modeling, and drug design concepts. The student will improve their skills of literature searching, organizing and presenting data, and oral communication skills.

Minimum Qualifications:

- Self-motivated and ability to work independently
- General Chemistry coursework (high school ok)
- Programming experience a plus
- Available 10-20 hours/week

1

You don't need an objective if submitting a cover letter. If you use one, keep it brief. Write something specific about **your** interests and strengths. Avoid broad, generic statements anyone could make.

2

A bulleted skills summary starts your resume with a quick synopsis of your qualifications by addressing key elements of the job description.

3

Placing date ranges to the right makes them easier to see while scanning. For education, put the month and year you received, or anticipate receiving, your degree.

FRANK'S RESUME

Now, set a 10-second timer and scan this resume:

FRANK GO

FrancisGo@gmail.com | 303-556-2250 | Denver, CO 80002

OBJECTIVE

Chemistry student with lab, research, and database experience seeking research assistant position to advance my skills and explore my interest in drug design and how genetics affect drug effectiveness.

SKILLS SUMMARY

- Strengthening skills in research methodology through class research projects.
- Track, organize, and interpret data sets in science and computer courses.
- Familiar with laboratory set-up and safety practices.
- Self-motivated with ability to work independently. Self-taught a variety of programming languages.

EDUCATION

University of Colorado, Denver

Bachelor's of Science in Chemistry

Anti. Grad.: May 20xx

Relevant Coursework: Chem Lab I, General Chemistry I & II, Biology I & II, Biology Lab, Calculus I & II

Chatfield High School, Littleton, CO

May 20xx

LAB EXPERIENCE

Biology and Chemistry Labs, University of Colorado, Denver

Sept. 20xx – Present

- Learning safe and proper usage of laboratory glassware and safe handling of chemicals.
- Displaying proper use of lab instruments including: pH-meter, TBA, Spectrometer, and others.
- Collaborating with other students solve scientific problems in team setting.
- Referencing SDS sheet to determine chemical hazards.
- Researching and wrote scientific laboratory reports.
- Creating and co-presenting presentation to effectively explain scientific concepts to lay people.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Server/Trainer, Macaroni Grill, Denver, CO

Sept. 20xx – Present

- Communicate with server/host team of 6 to best serve customers in an efficient way
- Deliver exceptional customer service in a fast-paced dining establishment, serving about 70 customers per shift

Lead Instructor (Seasonal), Slack Rocket, Thornton, CO

June 20xx

- Taught programming and coding to class of 12 kids, aged 10-12 for a 4-week session
- Organized lesson plans and presented hour long, hands-on lessons to class, improving oral communication skills

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

President, DECA

April 20xx

- Received 1st Place in Regional Marketing Competition

Vice-President, Student Council

Nov. 20xx

- Re-drafted Student Handbook in MS Word consisting of 130 pages

HONORS & AWARDS

Boettcher Scholarship Recipient

Aug. 20xx – May 20xx

Scan your own resume for 10 seconds.

Did your eye get stuck anywhere?

Did you read words and phrases that were relevant to the job description?

If NOT

What changes can you make?

4

Relevant courses give employers an idea of what you are learning and add credibility to the skills you claim.

5

Generally, remove high school information after your first year of college.

6

Though not specified in the job description, these lab skills reinforce Frank's science knowledge and back up his claim about lab set-up and safety practices.

7

Include where and how you used tools, especially when needed for the job.

STEP 3: BULLET POINTS

myth

“I need to list all of the duties I had at previous jobs.”



truth

Focusing on the skills you identified in your skills survey and adding results or purpose to your actions, will be more effective.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Child and Youth Specialist

Work directly with children and families to ensure appropriate services are provided to children amidst transition out of short-term housing into permanent housing. You will provide direct services to children and youth and collaborate with school systems, mental health agencies, and community partners to ensure the needs are met.

Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree in any field and 1-2 years of experience with homeless services programs or human services.
- Ability to work effectively in collaboration with diverse groups of people; bilingual proficiency beneficial.
- Demonstrate empathy when responding to participants needs and requests.
- Use practices including trauma informed care, and de-escalation, conflict resolution techniques.
- Experience with Microsoft Word and Excel.

1

Bullet points under a summary or profile section are easier to scan than a paragraph. Note that Linh pulled relevant verbs from the job description.

2

Linh originally wanted to go into the medical field and thought she had to study biology. As she learned about the medical field, she realized the way she wanted to impact people was different. Still wanting to keep her Biology major, she supplemented her education with internship, work, and volunteer experience focused on how she was interested in impacting people. Through these hands-on experiences, she learned a lot about herself, helping her be more specific as she searched for full-time jobs.

LINH'S RESUME

LINH NGUYEN

303-555-2250 | Linh.Nguyen@ucdenver.edu | Denver, CO | www.Linkedin.com/NguyenL

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Child & Youth Specialist leveraging 2+ years of experience working in homeless shelters, crisis hotlines and mentoring youth, developing sense of empathy and experience in trauma-informed care
- Effective communicator and collaborator with diverse groups of people; bilingual in English and Spanish
- Detail-oriented with excellent analytical, communication, and organizational skills
- Technical skills include Microsoft Excel, Word, PowerPoint

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER, Denver, CO
Bachelor of Science, Biology, GPA: 3.76

Expected May 20xx

Research Experience

Trauma Research Project

Jan. 20xx-May 20xx

- Researched effects of childhood trauma on brain development and biological stress systems
- Presented findings at campus wide undergraduate research symposium; received People's Choice Award

Safe House Research

June 20xx-Aug. 20xx

- Conducted 5 informational interviews with local safe houses, learning difficulties of navigating system
- Developed and wrote proposal of streamlining system based on informational interviews

EXPERIENCE

Education Support Intern, GROWHAUS, Denver, CO

Sept. 20xx-Dec. 20xx

- Collaborated with 6 local schools to provide food education during weekly school visits and presentations
- Promoted, planned, executed, and evaluated age-appropriate, bilingual curricula to create impactful experiences for participants experiencing food insecurities; participants ranged from children to adults
- Maintained care of plants and animals to aid continual vegetable growth

Bilingual Crisis Advocate, LATINA SAFEHOUSE, INC, Denver, CO

Jan. 20xx-Aug. 20xx

- Provided trauma-informed, survivor-centered, bilingual advocacy to immigrant women, creating a safe space while ensuring needs were met
- Connected with caseload of 15 families through rapport-building, empathy and listening, linking them to appropriate services and emergency support
- Completed 40-hour community based domestic violence program, increasing advocacy skills

Barista, Starbucks, Inc., Denver, CO

June 20xx-Dec. 20xx

- Maintained accuracy and professionalism while serving up to 50 customers per hour
- Recognized as Employee of the Month 4 times citing customer service remarks and teamwork

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Mentoring Volunteer, HOPE HOUSE

May 20xx

Living Skills Class Volunteer, SACRED HEART HOUSE OF DENVER

Aug. 20xx

Volunteer, DENVER RESCUE MISSION

Aug. 20xx

flip back to page 6 where you tied relevant skills to experiences Use those stories and this formula to write active bullet points:

ACTION VERB



SUBJECT



RESULT

QUANTIFIED

(Action Verb)

(Subject)

(Result, How or Why)

Can any of the above be quantified? If yes, go ahead and add that in.

3

Breaking down a sample bullet point from this resume using the formula:

ACTION VERB: Promoted, planned, executed, and evaluated

SUBJECT: age-appropriate, bilingual curricula

RESULT: to create impactful experiences for participants...

**Think about adding the 'how' or 'why' to make bullets stronger. In this example, "to create impactful experiences for participants" tells why the applicant created age-appropriate, bilingual curricula.*

STEP 4: STRONGER BULLET POINTS

Now that you know what to focus on, and how to organize your resume, stronger bullet points will make your resume more memorable. Move beyond merely listing duties.

Include **how** or **why** you did these things. **Quantify** the scope. Show **results**. If you stop to ask yourself, "**What did I accomplish?**" you may come up with more compelling bullet points.

Remember
to always
refer to your
Skills
Survey

Basic and vague

The manager's recognition adds validity to your claim.

Shows an accomplishment, timeline, and the "why", with more skills.

Follows formula but sounds like it came straight from a job description.

"Streamlined" indicates positive impact. "\$2,000,000" shows size of budget.

Leads with quantifiable accomplishment, and adds the 'how' (...without cutting...).

A simple duty without "how", "why", or result.

Adds tools used along with "why".

Sometimes, including tools, how or why, numbers, and results can result in a long bullet that loses focus. It can help to break these into two bullets to give each it's own impact.

Shows tools and includes why.

Leads with result for more pop, then tells how.

OK:

Demonstrated customer service skills.

Better:

Recognized by manager during monthly check-ins for excellent customer service.

Accomplishment:

Promoted to Team Lead after 9 months in recognition of excellent customer service, dependability, and teamwork.

OK:

Responsible for budget for office of 20 professionals

Better:

Streamlined \$2,000,000 budget for three teams with 20 professionals.

Accomplishment:

Identified and implemented savings of \$100,000 for a budget of \$2,000,000 without cutting personnel or services

OK:

Developed backend services for the Order-Track system

Better:

Developed backend services for Order-Track using Node.js, Express, and PostgreSQL to manage orders and inventory across teams

Accomplishment:

Developed Order-Track backend with Node.js, Express, and PostgreSQL to manage orders and inventory across teams

Reduced API response times by 50% by implementing query indexing and caching

GENERAL FORMATTING GUIDELINES

VISUAL STYLE

- Resume should be 1-2 pages. Generally, go to two pages only when the job description is so detailed that there is a lot for you to address and you have the skills and experience to meet those requirements.
- Do not use templates or table to create your resume. Many templates and tables are not read correctly by applicant tracking systems (ATS).
- Set margins to .50"–1".
- Use only one font throughout the body except in the case of the header.
- Use a simple font such as Arial, Calibri, Times New Roman, or Cambria.
- Use a 11–12 point font size except for your name, which can be 18-24
- Choose from bold, enlarged font, ALL CAPS or Small Caps to make the headings stand out.
- Generally, use black text only; be strategic in your use of colored fonts.
- Date formats should be consistent: 5/27 or 05/27 or May 2027; August, April, or Aug., Apr.
- Be consistent with placement and alignment of dates.

WRITING STYLE

- Be consistent with elements such as periods at the ends of lines.
- Use numerals (1, 2, 3) instead of writing out numbers.
- Be consistent with the format and alignment of bullets.
- Do not use first person pronouns (I, me, my). Lead with those good action verbs.

HEADER

- Place your name at the top of the resume in a font size larger than the body text.
- Provide phone number and email address; City and State are optional.
- Add LinkedIn, other portfolio link or URL if updated and relevant.
- Phone numbers and email address don't need to be titled "email" or "phone."

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Do not list references on the resume. You don't even need "references available on request."
Create a separate document that lists references and their contact information.

Many of these guidelines do not apply to Federal Resumes. For help with Federal Resumes, schedule an appointment with the Career Center.



congrats!

YOU'VE MADE SOME GREAT PROGRESS ON YOUR RESUME

At LynxConnect, we're here to support you throughout the employment process!
Schedule an appointment in **Handshake** to talk with a professional about your resume.

Have some quick questions or would like faster assistance from a peer instead?
Choose "**LynxConnect - Peer Career Advisor**" in Handshake for appointment options.

need more help?

CHECK OUT THESE RESOURCES:

CU Denver Career Center

Tivoli Annex | 303-315-4000 | ucdenver.edu/lynxconnect/career-center

CU Denver Writing Center

Corner of 12th St. & Larimer St. (CU Denver) First Floor

(303) 315-7355 | writing.center@ucdenver.edu | <https://clas.ucdenver.edu/writing-center/>