NCWC Resume Writing Guide

This guide has been prepared to assist NCWC students and alumni with preparing and critiquing their resume. While it is important to be aware that resume writing is an extremely personal process (which means that what may be effective for one person and his/her goals may not be effective for someone else… or even for that same person when later approaching a different goal/career objective), there are some universal points to be considered. Those have been provided in the sections that follow.

In addition to the following guidance, it is also important to remember that each time you prepare to send your resume out, you should review and "tweak" to add as much matching language from the opportunity/job description you are applying to as a replacement for language you may have that is similar but not an exact match. This helps employers most easily see you as a fit for their position when doing their own quick visual scan and can be critical if an electronic screening process is utilized (resumes are evaluated through a computer program and are only sent ahead for human review if a minimum number of matching words are identified.)

FORMATTING ELEMENTS:

A resume should be visually pleasing, easy to read and reflect you have strong attention to detail by remaining consistent in how you list/format items. Here are some general guidelines to consider:

- **Layout** – Information should be organized in an easy-to-follow manner that makes good use of space. This is best achieved by first getting all of your content listed and then choosing a layout to best organize it. After a first draft, look at the full page and identify places where large chunks of white space exist. Consider how a different layout may help balance that white space out so it is less obvious. Also ensure the organizational approach you have taken allows your most relevant information to be listed before items that may not be as directly related.

- **1 page** – It is extremely rare that a college student (or even an individual who has been in a full-time career for 2-3 years) has enough resume-appropriate information to go beyond 1 page. Remember, "resume appropriate" means only the items (experiences, education, skills, knowledge) that are most closely related to your current career objective (which is the type of opportunity you are hoping to obtain an interview for as a result of sending this resume). If you are not clear on your current objective and, as a result, are planning to use the same resume for all kids of opportunities, you may need to first spend time on career exploration and planning before writing a resume.

- **Consistency** – Resume elements of should be formatted and aligned the same throughout Examples: if you place one of your job titles in bold they should all be in bold; if you use 4 digits for the year in one area (2020 instead of '20) that is what you should do everywhere when you refer to a date, if your job locations (city/state) are aligned on the right margin for one position that is how it should be for all others.

CONTENT SECTIONS:

Name
- This should be the most prominent piece of information on your resume. Most use a font size 6-8 pt. sizes larger than everything else while also adding bold or other elements.

Contact Information:
- Address: List your current mailing address (if you live on campus that is the address of the college). While still enrolled in college many students choose to also list a permanent address so

employers can possibly infer where you may plan to be during breaks and after graduation.
When uploading a resume in a public database for employers to view on their own (like Indeed.com, etc.) it is wise to only list only your city and state rather than full street address in order to maintain privacy until you are in more direct contact with an employer and have verified their legitimacy.

- <u>Phone Number:</u> List only 1 number (with area code) where you know you will be in full control of how the phone is answered and can be confident of receiving all messages. Ensure your phone is set up to allow voice messages to be left and that you have recorded a personal greeting giving your name so that callers know they did have the correct phone number in the event that you are not able to answer. (Make sure to check messages regularly as mailboxes can quickly fill up and it is very frustrating for the employer to not be able to leave a message.)
- <u>Email Address</u>: List the address of an account you will monitor daily. Make sure this does not include nicknames or other personal interests. It should simply include your name, initials or numbers. (Ex: JohnDoe12@gmail.com NOT JPlaysHoops@gmail.com)

Objective

- Concisely describe the type of opportunity you are hoping to obtain. Just state the position by title/description or lead into this by stating "To obtain….". You can also add a couple of your most related skills/knowledge areas if you have room to do so. Examples:
  - *Internship or volunteer opportunity in the field of IT support services.*
  - *Full-time position in the mental health field where I can apply my skills in __ and __.*
- Note that stating your objective on the resume is optional and should be the first thing to remove if you are having a hard time getting to 1 page and have already addressed unnecessary whitespace with a good layout. (The reason this is optional is that you should always be sending a cover letter along with your resume and that should explain what you are hoping to obtain.)

Education

- List institutions from which you have graduated or expect to graduate with the most recent first. (This can include completed certificate programs but do not list schools you attended only to transfer credits. High school should not be listed.)
- For each institution, include the following:
  - Degree/Cert. Name (Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science – can abbreviate: BA, BS)
  - Month and year of expected completion (do not list when you started)
  - Major, minor, and concentrations
  - Cumulative GPA (if over 3.0)
  - Relevant Course Work: This is optional but can be a good idea if you do not have many other related experience items to list on your resume. (Classes and the projects within them can be some of the most relevant experience for many college students.)
  - Academic honors, study abroad, and other activities/accomplishments directly related to the educational institution may be included here or in separate sections for "honors", "activities", etc. further down the resume.

Skills

- List any skills you have that are directly related to the types of opportunities you are looking for.
- These can include technical skills (computer software, equipment), languages spoken, as well as a few of the most relevant transferrable/soft skills.

Experience

Items listed here should be the things you have done that are most related to the types of things you would do in the position you are hoping to obtain. When choosing what to include, do not be concerned with whether or not you were paid for the experience – <u>anything can be listed</u>. For each item you choose to include, list the following details (ordered from most recent to oldest):

- Organization Name, City, State
- Your Title (if you didn't have one, create something that accurately describes your role)
- Dates - mo & yr started – mo & yr ended (or present if ongoing)
- Bulleted Action Verb Statements – These fragments should demonstrate what you did within each experience and include numbers/specific stats when possible. Tips:
    o To write these fragments pretend there is an invisible "I" in front. This will force you to begin with a verb – present tense for ongoing experiences, past tense for those that have ended.
    o For help with wording, consider reading through descriptions of experiences you have had maybe from materials you still have on hand (like the posting your originally applied to) or even by looking up general descriptions through resources like www.onetonline.org/.

Work History
- If the items in your experience section were not paid but you do have paid work experience, it is important to have a separate section briefly listing that information. This is important because, even when the functions you performed in your work history don't relate to the job you hope to get in the future, they can reflect important traits like reliability, ability to understand expectations in a work setting, etc. When listing employment history, do this in the same way you laid out your experience section but do not list as many bullet points describing the work (you may not need any at all if the title makes it clear what you did – "cashier", for example – and you already have a pretty full 1-page resume).

Activities
- List your most notable extra-curricular activities.
- While it is great if some of the organizations you are involved with show a direct connection to your career objective, it is still important to list a few activities even if they are not related.
- This section can allow the employer to get to know a bit about your personal interests (how you spend your free time) in an appropriate manner. This may allow them to also infer some soft skills and other personal factors that may help them see you as a "fit" in their environment.

Honors:
- If you have received awards or other honors that are not already listed in the previous sections make sure to include those here.

Things NOT to Include:
- Typos and mistakes of any form. Proofread VERY closely! (This is your 1st impression!)
- Filler information provided by a template you may have used to get started.
- Street addresses or contact information for anyone other than yourself (employers will ask later if they need that level of detail for past supervisors, would like a list of references, etc.)
- Personal data like date of birth, driver's license number, social security number, etc.
- A photo or any physically descriptive information like height, weight, etc. (exceptions only for those entering fields like acting/modeling)
- A list of personal interests/hobbies. (These can be reflected through an activities section that shows formal involvement with related organizations.)
- Graphics/images/clipart (exceptions only for those entering graphic design or other fields where a great deal of creativity is required)
- Dated information, especially if unrelated to your current goal. (Limited high school activities/honors can be included while still in college until you have enough newer information to provide.)