

Resume & Cover Letter Guide



CENTER FOR CAREERS AND TRANSFER

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The State University
of New York

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WHAT IS A RESUME?

A resume is your professional advertisement. As its purpose is to convince employers that you have the skills and qualifications they seek, it is an essential part in securing an interview. A resume summarizes your education, experience, skills and credentials as they relate to your employment goals. Did you know that...

- The average time spent by recruiters analyzing a resume is 5 to 7 seconds.
- Unprofessional email addresses are the reason for rejection of 76% of resumes.
- When you put a photo on a resume the chances of it being discarded are up to 88%.
- Poor grammar/spelling issues are one of the top reasons resumes are rejected.

Use this guide for basic instructions on how to develop a resume. Then, set up an appointment with a counselor in the Center for Careers and Transfer to edit and refine your resume.

RESUME FORMATS

Most resumes follow one of the formats listed below. Resumes for new graduates, or those seeking to transition to a new field, are usually one page. Job seekers with extensive experience may need two pages.

Chronological: Most preferred by employers. A chronological resume presents education and work experience in reverse chronological order (most recent first). See page 11 for example.

Functional: A functional resume focuses on skills, specifically your skills that relate to the job you are applying for. This format is most commonly used by those changing fields or seeking a promotion. See page 13 for example.

Combination: For some, a combination of chronological and functional works best. This format features significant skills and achievements while highlighting employment history – in reverse chronological order.

Hiring managers spend only seconds viewing resumes – it is important to make your resume easy to follow and pleasing to the eye.

BASIC RESUME TIPS

Make sure to...

- Use an easy-to-read font such as Arial, Times New Roman, or Calibri. Font size should be 10-13.
- Set margins to 1 inch on all sides. Reduce margins if you need extra space, but no smaller than ½-inch (margins that are too small make your resume look too busy).
- Check your resume for grammar, spelling, and accuracy.
- Use a combination of Bold or Italics to help your information stand out.
- Use the TAB key instead of the space bar to line up information.
- Use bullet points instead of paragraphs to present your information.
- Save your file as a PDF - use a filename that includes your name (you may only have one file with “resume” in the title but hiring managers will have many).

Make sure NOT to...

- Use more than one font
- List social security number, age, marital status, gender or other personal information
- Use abbreviations (write out Avenue instead of Ave)
- Use colored ink, clip art, photos, graphics, or borders
- Use extra words (“a”, “the”) and pronouns (“I”, “we”)

RESUME CATEGORIES (SECTIONS)

EDUCATION

(include honors and GPA if above 3.0)

EMPLOYMENT/EXPERIENCE

(use subcategories of Relevant Experience or Other Experience as needed)

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

COMPUTER SKILLS

FORMAL TRAINING/CERTIFICATIONS

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

CLUBS and ACTIVITIES

SKILLS or QUALIFICATIONS

HEADING (your contact information)

The resume heading provides information that employers need to contact you. It contains your name, address, phone number, and email address. You may choose to center it or have it at the left margin but make sure it stands out by using a font a point or two larger than the rest of your resume. For example:

John Doe
80 Vandenburg Avenue
Troy, New York 12180
518-629-7326
John.Doe@gmail.com

EDUCATION

List the name of the college, city, and state (no street address or zip code), and complete name of your degree program. This is also where you list academic honors and accomplishments. Only list a GPA above 3.0.

Still in college? Include your degree, major and month/year of anticipated graduation

Associate in Arts, Individual Studies Expected May 2021
Hudson Valley Community College – Troy, NY

Already graduated? Include your degree, major and month/year of graduation

Associate in Applied Science, Human Services May 2019
Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, New York GPA 3.7
Honors: President’s List and Dean’s List Fall 2018 and Spring 2019

Multiple degrees? Include your degrees and majors starting with the most recent first

Bachelor of Science, Biology Anticipated Graduation May 2021
University at Albany, State University of New York, Albany, New York

Associate in Science, Biological Sciences May 2019
Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, New York GPA 3.7

If you have been out of high school three or more years – it’s not necessary to include on your resume *unless relevant to the position you are applying for.*

Summary of Skills/ Qualifications

In this section, you provide an overview of your skills and/or experience using bullet points. A skill is an ability you possess, and you demonstrate your skills through your accomplishments. Skills can be divided into the following three areas:

1) Functional or Transferable Skills - skills that you acquire during your education or work experience that you bring with you (transfer) to different employment settings.

Examples include:

Communication and Interpersonal Skills	Organizing
Managing, Supervising, or Leadership	Computer Literacy
Customer Service	Creativity
Counseling, teaching, or training	Critical Thinking

2) Self-Management Skills – skills that allow you to regulate and control actions and feelings; (how you relate to others or a work environment).

Examples include:

Managing deadlines	Ability to follow through on a task
Punctuality and reliability	(diligence)
Adaptability	Attention to detail
Loyalty	Trustworthiness

3) Content-Specific/Hard Skills – skills that require specific training.

Examples include:

Proficiency in Computer Programs	Fluency in a foreign language
Accounting ability	Administering medication
Teaching a specific subject area	Carpentry

Take some time to think through and list a combination of your skills and list with bullets on your resume as follows.

SKILLS:

- Organization
- Attention to detail
- Time Management
- Adaptability

Employment (or Experience)

In this section, list employment with the most recent job first (reverse chronological order). List the name of the organization where you work(ed), city and state, job title and dates employed. Then, list the duties you performed.

Target, Rensselaer, New York

Sales Associate

April 2019 – Present

- Greet customers, respond to questions.
- Operate cash registers, manage financial transactions, balance drawers.
- Maintain orderly appearance on the sales floor

When the most recent job is **NOT** related experience, but less recent jobs **are** related, consider using two categories – “related experience” and “other work experience.”

Other Names for Work Experience:

Related Experience

Employment Experience

Professional Experience

Work History

NOTE: You can use a category called “Experience” which can include internships and volunteer experience in addition to “work” experience.

Additional Tips:

- It is no longer necessary to say “references available upon request.”
- Removing dates from employment and education may raise red flags with employers. You can explain gaps in employment in a cover letter.

Additional Writing and Phrasing Guidelines

- Use bullet points. This makes your resume clear, concise, inviting, and convenient for the reader.
- Prioritize your bullets. Employers have time to read one or two points. List bullets by importance, not what you spent most of your time doing.
- Use verbs relevant to your industry. For example “design” or “create” for the fashion industry or “calculate” or “audit” for the accounting field.
- Highlight accomplishments and results: Use bullet points to list accomplishments or achievements, i.e. “Worked with manager to streamline (word choice) ordering process.”
- Target your resume: Create one master resume and use it to refine it for different positions. Use industry keywords and refer to the job description for vocabulary choices.
- Look at other resumes: One of the best ways to write an effective resume is to study examples - several are included in this packet (see pages 10 -14).

Resumes for online applications

Many job applications will be completed online through an employer’s website or through a job board (Indeed, Monster, etc). Carefully follow the directions for uploading application materials.

You may be asked to upload a PDF or copy and paste your resume into the online profile.

Electronic Scanning

Many employers load your submission materials into an applicant tracking database. This allows a recruiter, or even a computer, to scan for keywords that match those used in job postings.

Make sure your resume matches the keywords in the job description

Employers spend seconds viewing resumes - why are some discarded right away?

- A silly email address. Create a professional email address for your job search.
- Spelling and grammar errors. Errors indicate carelessness and lack of attention to detail.
- Too many fonts, colors, or other graphics.
- Not using keywords. The resume doesn't match the position you are applying for. Customize your resume for the position you are applying to and include keywords from the job description. (scan-friendly resume)
- Omitting dates. Dates are important for indicating the length of experience.
- Writing too much. Recruiters want short, bulleted points. They won't read paragraphs.
- Your resume wasn't uploaded as directed.

Other reasons resumes may not lead to an interview:

- The candidate doesn't meet minimum criteria.
- Wording is too general and not relevant to the position.
- Contact information doesn't work (voice mailbox not set-up, mailbox full, unprofessional voicemail greeting).

COVER LETTERS

Cover letters are business letters that are sent with a resume. If employers request a cover letter, it should be a typed business letter. If employers do not request a letter, it is still best practice to include one. Letters may also be written as the body of an email if the resume is being sent this way.

Cover letter guidelines (Example on page 16)

This letter includes the name, date and contact information of the person you are sending the letter to, salutation (greeting), letter body, and signature. The body format is as follows:

Paragraph 1 State the Job you are applying for - include the job title. One sentence about why you are qualified for the position.

Paragraph 2 This paragraph should have three to five sentences about how you are qualified for the position. Use good writing skills (sentences must flow, don't start every sentence with "I," and use accurate spelling and punctuation).

Express enthusiasm/interest in the position to make sure your letter sounds more personal and not like a form letter. Write a new letter for each job you apply for (only minor changes may be needed for similar positions).

This paragraph may also be used to address employment gaps.

Paragraph 3 Use this paragraph to thank the employer for their time and provide your contact information for follow-up.

ANALYSIS: Analyzed, Studied, Determined, Discovered, Forecasted, Evaluated, Conducted, Identified, Interpreted, Investigated, Planned, Researched, Revised, Selected, Solved, Ascertained, Clarified, Integrated, Appraised, Assessed

LEADERSHIP/SUPERVISION: Explained, Governed, Guided, Presided, Scheduled, Trained, Recruited, Supervised, Managed, Administered, Appointed, Directed

COORDINATION: Coordinated, Directed, Maintained, Presided, Systematized, Shaped, Steered, Arranged, Assembled, Activated, Scheduled, Facilitated

COMMUNICATION: Negotiated, Explained, Clarified, Interacted, Persuaded, Motivated, Petitioned, Presented, Promoted, Wrote, Recommended, Consulted, Interpreted, Debated, Synthesized, Counseled, Translated, Addressed, Authored, Collaborated, Communicated, Composed, Contracted, Corresponded, Published. Moderated, Reported

TRAINING: Trained, Coached, Advised, Instructed, Educated, Oriented, Enhanced, Taught, Instilled, Briefed, Enlightened, Guided, Motivated, Counseled

ORGANIZATION: Organized, Collected, Arranged, Collated, Catalogued, Indexed, Revised, Scheduled, Systematized, Classified, Itemized, Specified

SALES: Sold, Marketed, Distributed, Obtained, Promoted, Generated, Recruited, Energized

MANAGEMENT: Planned, Administered, Fostered, Promoted, Consulted, Organized, Directed, Conferred, Discussed, Formulated, Contracted, Facilitated, Supervised, Trained, Prepared, Arranged, Coordinated, Marketed, Maintained, Analyzed, Recommended, Reviewed, Handled, Prescribed, Participated, Accomplished, Determined, Approved, Contributed, Established

CREATION: Animated, Created, Initiated, Originated, Authored, Wrote, Designed, Composed, Conceived, Conceptualized, Formulated, Pioneered, Developed, Defined, Invented, Engineered, Fashioned, Founded, Illustrated, Mapped, Reproduced, Visualized

GROWTH: Gained, Increased, Augmented, Amplified, Accumulated, Advanced, Heightened, Intensified, Strengthened, Maximized, Enhanced, Enlarged, Expanded, Broadened, Doubled, Reinforced, Concentrated, Condensed, Consolidated, Saved

REDUCTION: Decreased, Diminished, Reduced, Lowered, Minimized, Alleviated, Declined, Divided, Simplified

DEVELOPMENT: Developed, Converted, Designed, Devised, Refined, Established, Improved, Improvised, Installed, Planned, Cultivated, Evaluated, Engineered, Explored, Examined, Researched, Analyzed, Upgraded, Updated

EFFICIENCY: Streamlined, Facilitated, Expedited, Simplified, Combined, Converted, Eased, Mobilized, Remodeled, Reorganized, Repaired, Reshaped, Restored, Revitalized

SUPPORT: Assisted, Participated, Augmented, Relieved, Boosted, Strengthened, Represented

ACHIEVEMENT: Achieved, Awarded, Elected, Earned, Mastered, Maintained, Performed, Saved, Salvaged, Solved, Started, Succeeded, Utilized, and Volunteered

Jason King
123 Main Street
Troy, NY 12180
518-555-2546 – j-king53@hvcc.edu

EDUCATION

Associate in Arts, Individual Studies
Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, NY

Expected Graduation May 2022

Albany High School, Albany, NY
Regents Diploma

June 2020

STUDENT ACTIVITIES AND LEADERSHIP

Albany High School Football Team Player (2008 - 2012) Captain (2011 - 2012)

- Helped lead team to place second in the division
- Named to All-Stars
- Assisted cheerleaders in the annual car wash

Student Community Service Club Member (2009-2012) Vice President (2010-2012)

- Encouraged students to join the community service club, including getting the involvement of others and talking to the coaches to help get players on other teams to help
- Arranged transportation for students to volunteer at the regional food bank
- Helped make posters advertising the club to students
- Set up community service at the regional food bank, a street cleanup, and painted the entrance to a local soup kitchen

Awarded the Maria Smith Scholarship for Community Service

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

New England Baptist Ministry Youth Leader 2015 - Present

- Assist in teaching bible study to children ages 5–12 by helping them read stories, sing, and create craft projects.

Albany Senior Center 2015 -Present

- Help serve meals to senior citizens twice a month

Sarah Jane Smith
301 2nd Street, Troy, NY 12180
518-555-2566 sarahjsmith@hvcc.edu

Education and Training

Associate in Applied Science, Computer Information Systems
Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, NY GPA: 3.47

May 2020

HONORS:

President's List: Fall 2018, Spring 2019 Dean's List: Fall 2019

Technical Skills

Operating Systems: Linux, Microsoft Windows 10
Software: Oracle Database System, Microsoft Office: Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint
Programming Languages: JAVA, HTML, SQL, C/C++, PHP, Python

Related Experience

Intern, Jazz Business Solutions, Menands, NY

Spring 2019

- Updated company website, including reformatting layout, uploading photographs, and writing content advertising new services.
- Assisted in development of a database for a client. Observed meetings with clients and helped prepare client proposals.
- Attended a Chamber of Commerce meeting and networked with local business leaders in technology.

Summer Student Worker, Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, NY

Summer 2019

- Retrieved and swapped out PCs in campus classrooms and offices with new computers and other hardware; made sure computers were installed correctly and booted up.

Work Experience

Shift Leader, McDonalds, Troy, NY

January 2017 – Present

- Promoted to shift leader after nine months
- Supervise and train new employees
- Operate a cash register, cash out registers, and assist with customer service

Work-Study Position, Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, NY

Fall 2019

- Answered phones, greeted office visitors
- Filed and photocopied
- Created flyers and updated display boards

John Smith

422 Hamilton Street, Averill Park, NY 12018
Home Phone: (518)-256-3977 · Cell Phone: (518)-495-9991
Email: j-smith@hvcc.edu

EDUCATION/TRAINING

A.O.S. Electrical Construction and Maintenance Anticipated Graduation May 2021
Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, NY

G.P.A: 3.71, Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society
President, ECM Club
American Red Cross CPR Certified, 1/20

AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE:

Direct Current Theory	Alternating Current Theory	Commercial Wiring
Series and Parallel Circuits	Residential Wiring	Blue Print Reading/Estimating
OSHA Safety	Three/Four Way Switches	Estimating
Fitting/Bending Conduit	Transformers – Delta/Wye	Box Fill Calculations
Voltage Drop Calculations	National Electric Code	Three Phase Power

WORK EXPERIENCE:

Dick's Sporting Goods Latham, NY November 2018 - present

Sales Representative in Team Sports/ Footwear

- Provide customer service, assisting customers with questions and locating merchandise
- Arrange department resets for seasonal sports and build displays on sales floor
- Restock merchandize and assist with product inventory

Dunkin Donuts, Schodack, New York January 2016 – November 2018

Crew Member

- Operated cash register to process transactions
- Prepared food per customer orders
- Cleaned and organized eating, cooking and service areas

VOLUNTEER WORK:

Averill Park Volunteer Fire Department, 2016 - Present
The Albany Police Athletic League, Lights in the Park, Winter 2019
Volunteered with other students to wire weatherproof outlets

Roberta Davies

89 River Drive • East Greenbush, NY 12061 • Phone: (518) 555-9494

E-mail: DaviesR@hvcc.edu

OBJECTIVE: To obtain a full-time position as a Registered Nurse utilizing my experience and skills in providing quality care and treatment for patients.

EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATION:

Associate in Applied Science, Nursing

May 2020

Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, NY

CPR Certification, American Heart Association, September 2019

First Aid Certification, American Red Cross, January 2020

Licensure: Preparing to take New York State Licensing Exam for Registered Nurses
Summer 2021

CLINICAL ROTATION EXPERIENCE

Fall 2019 – Spring 2020

Medical/Surgical Nursing *Albany Medical Center, St. Peter's Hospital, Memorial Hospital*

- Provided condition-specific care to each patient.
- Performed patient assessments, medication administration, wound care, and provided patient education.

The Family: Labor and Delivery, Pediatrics, Postpartum *Bellevue Women's Hospital*

- Provided patients with individualized nursing care, assisted children with care tailored to developmental stage.
- Performed care during labor, delivery, and postpartum. Educated families and explained medical terminology.

Psychiatric *Ellis Hospital*

- Shadowed registered nurses on duty in psychiatric wing.
- Interviewed patients, observed various manifestations of mental health diseases, assisted with patient education.

Intensive Care *Albany Medical Center*

- Assisted patients requiring extensive life support.

RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE

Residential Assistant

Center for Disability Services, Clifton Park, NY

July 2018 – Present

- Provide a caring, nurturing environment to assist individuals with disabilities in a residential care facility.
- Administer varying levels of care to clients, including assistance with daily living activities such as bathing, dressing, and feeding.

Jennifer Richards

8 Partridge Road – Clifton Park, NY 12065
518-555-7586 - JenniferRichards@nycap.rr.com

Associates degree in Human Services with extensive experience in customer service; skilled at active listening and helping provide solutions to inquiries.

Coursework in psychology, social services systems, and diversity.

Participated in the National Coalition Building Institute Understanding Diversity and Three Day Train the Trainer workshops.

Experienced in writing reports, filing, adhering to office policies, and working with attention to detail and organization.

Internships

The ARC of Rensselaer County, Troy, NY Spring 2018

- Provided a positive environment for individuals with disabilities by exhibiting good listening skills, patience, and empathy.
- Mentored high school students who are preparing to graduate.
- Planned a job search workshop for students by inviting Human Services professionals to present on a panel and provide mock interview practice.

St. Catherine's Center for Children, Albany, NY Fall 2017

- Helped with intake of families into the shelter by assisting them with paperwork.
- Observed counselors as they work with families to help them feel comfortable in the shelter environment.

Work Experience

Administrative Assistant

New York State Office for the Aging – Albany, NY 2002 – 2010

- Provided administrative support, including managing filing systems, copying, and writing correspondence.
- Answered phones and directed callers to appropriate departments and services, often having to listen carefully to the caller's needs, and being patient when speaking with individuals who did not speak English as a first language.
- Conducted data entry and maintained a database of service providers, including following up with them by telephone to verify accuracy of information.
- Managed bulk mailings sent to hundreds of service providers in New York State.

Education and Training

Associate in Science, Human Services May 2013

Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, NY GPA: 3.6

Certificate, Microsoft Office Essentials June 1999

Albany Office Training Professionals, Albany, NY

CPR and First Aid Certified April 2013

American Red Cross, Albany, NY

Jennifer Richards

8 Partridge Road – Clifton Park, NY 12065
518-555-7586 - RichardsM@nycap.rr.com

Use a business letter format, the same font as your resume, and copy and paste the header from your resume at the top

March 10, 2020

Ms. Frances Jones
Director of Human Resources
Albany Center for Autism
80 Wolf Road
Albany, NY 12203

It is best to address the letter to the hiring manager by name if possible.

Dear Ms. Jones,

In this paragraph, use one or two sentences to tell the employer the job you are applying for. You may also mention where you found the job (the name of the website, for example).

This paragraph should address your qualifications for the position. Include that you are a graduate (or student) at Hudson Valley Community College. You may list classes that you have taken that are relevant. Read the job advertisement carefully and make sure that you are addressing the requirements for the position. For example, if the job requires Microsoft Office, be sure to detail your computer skills. It is important to tell the employer why you are interested in this specific job/company. DO NOT use a form letter - write the letter for each job so that it is personal to the specific employer/position. For higher level positions, it is acceptable to use two paragraphs. Good grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, and sentence flow are crucial.

This last paragraph is very short and should give the employer your contact information in addition to thanking them for their time.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Richards

Jennifer Richards

8 Partridge Road – Clifton Park, NY 12065
518-555-7586 - JenniferRichards@nycap.rr.com

REFERENCES

NAME
Title
Name of Organization
Address
City, State Zip
Phone:
E-mail:

References Format



JENNIFER CONNELLY
Manager
Old Navy
155 Crossgates Mall
Albany, NY 12218
Phone: 518-555-1234
E-mail: connellyj@gmail.com

Sample References



ROBERT JONES
Associate Professor of Business
Hudson Valley Community College
80 Vandenberg Avenue
Troy, NY 12180
Phone: 518-629-5555
E-mail: jonesrobert@hvcc.edu

- The Header on your reference page should be the same as the one on top of your resume.
- Use the same font as your resume
- You should have at least three professional references
- References may be supervisors, college professors, co-workers
- Try to avoid family members (especially immediately family) as references

*Make sure that the person you list as a reference is **willing** to provide a positive recommendation by calling or emailing them to ask if they'd be comfortable with this. Tell them a little about the jobs you are applying to so they can speak to your qualifications.

This resume and cover letter guide is intended to be used as a starting point and general overview. HVCC students and alumni are invited to receive a resume review from the Center for Careers & transfer.

HVCC hosts and maintains an online job bank, Symplicity, for student and alumni use.

1) <https://hvcc-csm.symplicity.com>

- Click Student/Alum
- Click the blue “Sign Up” button on the right-hand side of the page
- Complete required fields indicated with a **red ***

2) Submit your username and prove you are not a robot. Check your email inbox for a message from HVCC with the subject line that reads “Email Verification.” That email will include a link for you to set your password.

3) Sign back into Symplicity and take a look around. There are some neat features including career exploration resources. You’ll be able to see announcements from the Center for Careers & Transfer about upcoming job fairs and other resources in addition to job postings.

If you have any questions about how to use Symplicity, contact the Center for Careers & Transfer.

The Center for Careers and Transfer

Siek Campus Center, Suite 290

Phone: (518) 629-7326

Email: cce@hvcc.edu

Web Site: www.hvcc.edu/career-transfer/

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