FIU Honors College
Florida International University

RESUME & COVER LETTER

Resource Guide

RESUME GUIDELINES

What is a resume?

A resume is a professional summary of your education, skills, experiences, and accomplishments tailored to secure an interview. It is meant to be a strategic document that communicates to an employer the transferable qualities that make you the best fit for the position

Formatting

REVERSE CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

- Education, accomplishments, involvement, and experiences are typically listed starting with the most recent and ending with the earliest position.

LENGTH

- Resumes submitted to opportunities should not be longer than 1 page.

FONT & MARGINS

- The font should be simple, Times New Roman or Arial, with a size range of 10-12 pt.
- Margins should be ½ to 1 inch on all sides of the document.

DIGITAL FORMAT

- Before submitting to an employer, convert the document to a PDF to ensure no formatting changes occur.
- The document should be saved as: First_Last_JobTitle.

CONSISTENCY

- Dates should all be right aligned.
- Roles should be bolded, while companies and organizations worked for should be italicized.
- No abbreviations should be used when mentioning educational institutions, companies, dates, or student organizations.
- Differentiate sections by using double-spacing between them and having headliners be bold type as well as completely capitalized.
- Use verb tenses consistent with time periods. Use present tense for ongoing experiences and past tense for previous ones.

Resume Formatting Sample

- For a better understanding of correct formatting, you can refer to the following document:
  - Honors College Sample Resume

Required Components

HEADER

- Provides your first and last name, as well as contact information, to the employer.
- Contact information: email, phone number, and LinkedIn profile (if applicable).
- Don't include your full address for safety. A zip code, or city and state is sufficient.

EDUCATION

- Do not include high school unless you are a first-year student. Once you are a sophomore, all high school information should be removed. If attending university, it is assumed that you have a high school diploma.
- Include your institution name, location (city and state), degree (include minor as well if applicable), graduation date (month and year), and GPA.
- If you are an Honors College student, make sure to include "Honors College" as a bullet point in this section.

EXPERIENCE

- Include paid and unpaid experiences such as jobs or internships.
- Should be 2 to 3 bullets long per experience.
- List the employer, company, location (city and state, remote, or country if not within the U.S), job title, and dates of employment.

CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT

- If you are a first-year student, you may include clubs you participated in during high school. However, this should be removed by Sophomore year.
- Include the full name of the student organization or volunteer experience you participate in, the position (member, liaison, vice president, etc.), and the participation date range (month and year for start and end).
- If you have a leadership role in a student organization, you should include 2 to 3 bullets per role.

SKILLS

- DO NOT include soft skills. Soft skills are qualities such as: critical thinking, problem-solving, cooperation, etc. These will be shown through your bullet points.
- Include important hard skills. Hard skills can include experience with Microsoft Office, fluency in Python, knowledge of Canva, etc. These can also include fluency in languages (fluent, conversational, intermediate, or beginner); do not include English.

Optional Components

AWARDS & HONORS

- List any scholarships, special designations, or awards you have received.

RELEVANT COURSEWORK

- List any coursework that may be relevant, or a qualification, for the job you are applying for.

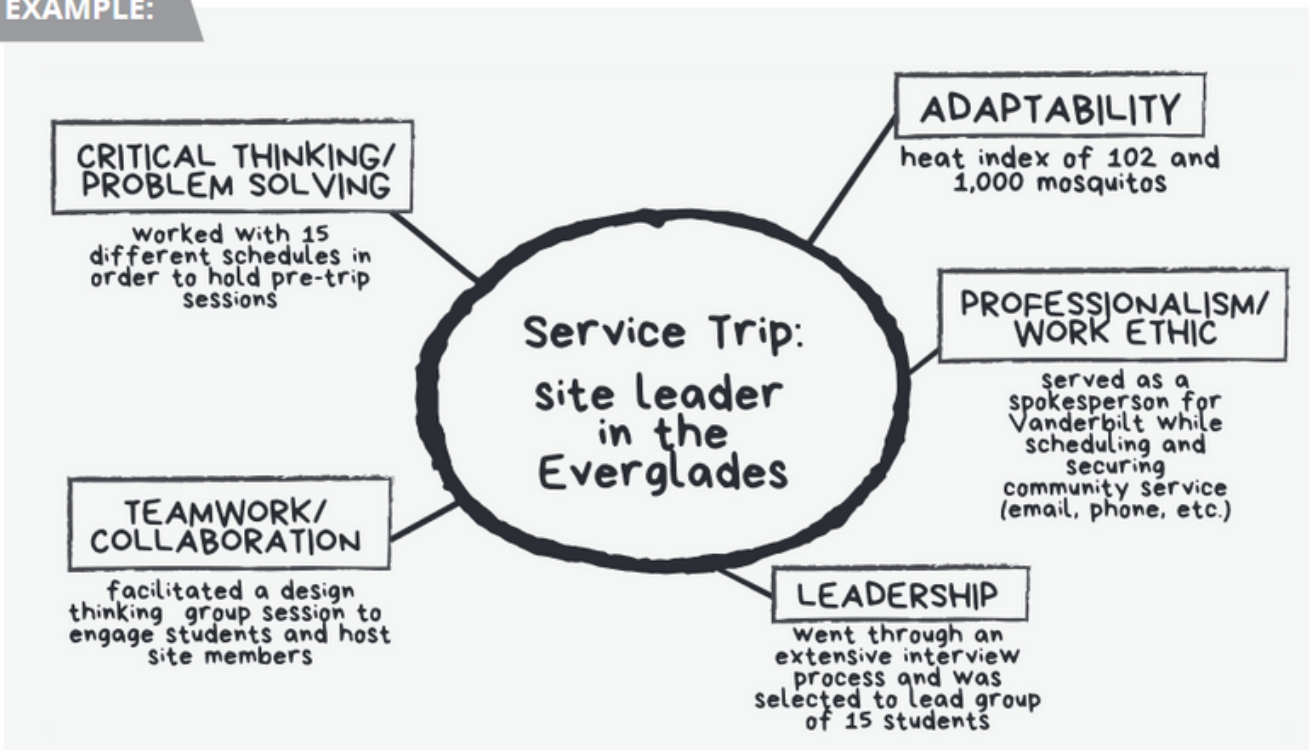
ACADEMIC PROJECTS

- List any projects, thesis paper, publications, or research that may be applicable to the job you are applying for.

Brainstorming

- Create the diagram pictured in the example, starting with just the circle in the center. In that circle, write an experience that you would normally put in a resume.
- In the space around the circle, start writing down key moments you remember from the experience that demonstrate how you spent your time. As you are making your experiences come to life, start thinking about how your actions translate into career competencies that we know employers are looking for.
- Next to each key moment, write down the core competency it represents like leadership, adaptability, critical thinking, and professionalism.
- Make 2 more circles with different experiences.

EXAMPLE:



Writing Effective Bullet Points

Bullets under each section should be formatted as: Action Verb + What you did + Additional info/results.

- A bullet should always start with a strong action verb, which will begin to describe the actions performed in the sentence.
- Refer to this document for examples of strong action verbs: Action Verbs
- Following the action verb will be what you did. This part of the bullet will describe the task at hand in detail, delving into the role you played.
- Finally, the bullet will end with additional information and results, using concrete evidence and quantifiable accomplishments to demonstrate that you have reached the goal of your actions (e.g., increase in sales percentage, how many customers serviced per day, etc.).
- **EXAMPLES:**
  - Manage a team of 8 employees on a weekly basis to meet organizational objectives.
  - Managed and oversaw afterschool program for 20 first graders to ensure strong educational and socializing opportunities.

Resume Checklist

- Individually tailor your resume to fit the job you are applying for.
- Double check for spelling, grammar, or punctuation mistakes.
- Make sure to use professional contact information (email, LinkedIn, etc.).
- Do not utilize personal pronouns such as I, my, or me.
- Do not include information that is too personal (address, social security number, etc.).
- Do not falsify information or use AI to craft your resume.
- Continue to update your resume as you gain more experience.
- Make sure that you use concise, professional, and easy-to-read language.

After your Application

Hopefully, you will hear back from the employer soon after your application. However, if you have not heard back 1-2 weeks after submitting your application, there is another option. If you are still interested in the position, then you can contact the employer directly to inquire if the position is still available.

- Phone or email contact is appropriate.
- Make sure to offer to resend your resume, especially if they have not received it.
- Use professional language and be respectful of the employer.
- Be persistent, yet not pushy.

Resources

If you need more assistance, there are various resources available.

- **VMOCK**
  - Florida International University partners with VMock SMART Career platform to help students create a strong profile and accelerate their career readiness journey. VMock leverages technologies like data science, machine learning, and natural language processing to provide instant personalized feedback based on criteria gathered from employers and global best practices – from anywhere, at any time of the day.
  - This platform provides students with 24/7 access to receive feedback on their resume, LinkedIn profile, elevator pitch, and interviewing skills.
  - To access this platform, please use the following links depending on your major:
    - Non-business students: https://www.vmock.com/fiucareer
    - Business students: www.vmock.com/fiucms

- **FIU CAREER & TALENT DEVELOPMENT**
  - The Career and Talent Development center at FIU offers numerous services, ranging from Hybrid Drop-In hours and Virtual Career Coaching.
  - Hybrid Drop-In: There are in-person and virtual sessions offered. This service offers career guidance, resume & cover letter critique, general job search strategies, answers about Handshake.
  - Virtual Career Coaching: Students can utilize Handshake to schedule a career coaching appointment when needed.
  - To access these services, you can visit FIU's Career & Talent Development site:
    - FIU Career & Talent Development

- **FIU HONORS COLLEGE CAREER CENTER**
  - FIU's Honors College also offers its own Career Center. It provides services ranging from a Resume Review Program to Interview Preparation guidelines.
  - Resume Review Drop-In: Drop in during program hours to get your resume critiqued.
  - For more information, you can access FIU's Honor College Career Center site here:
    - FIU Honors College Career Center

- **CAREER READINESS COMPETENCIES**
  - There are certain skills and qualities that employers look for in their applicants, which are: Career & Self Development, Communication, Leadership, Critical Thinking, Equity & Inclusion, Technology, and Teamwork.
  - All these career readiness competencies should be shown through your bullet points.
  - To learn more about this, you can access the following document:
    - NACE Career Readiness Competencies

- **EXTRA RESUME GUIDELINES**
  - If you want some extra resume guidelines to reference, please do not hesitate to refer to the following:
    - UM Resume Guide
    - Wellesley Resume Guide

COVER LETTER GUIDELINES

What is a cover letter?

A cover letter is meant to be a formal introduction from the applicant to the employer. This is not just a repetition of your resume. This document should elaborate on the experiences on your resume, getting to be more specific on how the skills you have acquired make you the best fit for the position.

Preparation

This is a document that should be tailored to fit the position you are applying for. Here are some steps you should take before you begin to draft your cover letter.

REVIEW THE JOB DESCRIPTION

- Look over the job description and take note of the skills, experiences, and qualifications that the employer is looking for.

REVIEW YOUR RESUME

- You should scan your resume and plan to elaborate on the experiences and skills that are important to the position you are applying for.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

- Before drafting your cover letter, ensure that you know enough information about the company and employer. Some examples of this would be to understand what their company mission is, be knowledgeable about their operations, etc.

Formatting

FONT & MARGINS

- The font should be simple, Times New Roman or Arial, with a size range of 10-12 pt.
- Margins should be ½ to 1 inch on all sides of the document.

LENGTH

- Cover Letters should not be longer than 1 page.

HEADER

- The header should include your name and contact information (email, LinkedIn, etc.).
- It should also include the date and address of the employer.

BODY PARAGRAPHS

- A cover letter should include: an introductory paragraph, 2-3 body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph.

SIGN-OFF

- After the final paragraph, the cover should end with “Sincerely, Your Name”.
- If possible, also include your actual signature.

DIGITAL FORMATTING

- Before submitting to an employer, convert the document to a PDF to ensure no formatting changes occur.
- The document should be saved as: First_Last_CoverLetter.

Cover Letter Sample

If you would like to view a sample, check out the following document:

- Cover Letter Sample

Paragraphs

INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

- This should include a brief introduction and a broad statement of why you are interested in the position.
- Mentions why you are a good fit for the role.

BODY PARAGRAPHS

- There should be 2-3 body paragraphs.
- Each paragraph should be used to describe the top skills you have learned, elaborating on their according experiences and demonstrating how they are applicable to the position.
- Throughout these body paragraphs, it is important to use active language and show enthusiasm for the position.

CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

- This paragraph should be brief, reiterating your interest in the position while summarizing skills that you bring to the job.
- Make sure to include a thank you and your contact details.

Cover Letter Checklist

- Is it consistent with the experiences in your resume?
- Double check for spelling, grammar, and punctuation mistakes.
- Make sure that it is not a copy-paste of the your resume, it should elaborate.
- It must convey your enthusiasm and interest in the position.
- Ensure that you are using concise, professional, and easy-to-read language.
- Attempt to include varied sentence structure.
- Does it go beyond what is in your resume?

Resources

If you need more assistance, there are various resources available:

- **FIU CAREER & TALENT DEVELOPMENT**
  - The Career and Talent Development center at FIU offers numerous services, ranging from Hybrid Drop-In hours and Virtual Career Coaching.
  - Hybrid Drop-In: There are in-person and virtual sessions offered. This service offers career guidance, resume & cover letter critique, general job search strategies, answers about Handshake.
  - Virtual Career Coaching: Students can utilize Handshake to schedule a career coaching appointment when needed.
  - To access these services, you can visit FIU's Career & Talent Development site:
    - FIU Career & Talent Development

- **EXTRA COVER LETTER GUIDELINES**
  - If you would like some extra cover letter guidelines, please do not hesitate to look at the following documents:
    - Wellesley Cover Letter Guidelines
    - NYU Cover Letter Guidelines