



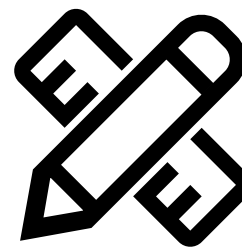
CAREER SERVICES
RESUME AND COVER LETTER
HANDBOOK

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RESUME CONSTRUCTION BASICS

- A resume is a marketing tool designed to get you a job interview.
- Its purpose is to highlight your strengths related to the desired job by providing a short, focused summary of your experience, education, and skills.



THINGS YOU NEED TO INCLUDE:

- Contact Information:
 - Full name, phone number and email address are mandatory. Ensure your phone number is accurate and your email address is professional. You can use your 'msvu.ca' email address for job search correspondence. Home address is optional; try to fit on one line to maximize space (see samples for reference).
 - You can also include a link to your LinkedIn profile. This will showcase a full list of your experiences and skills and will give employers a better idea of who you are before you potentially meet for an interview.
- Education:
 - Include your current program of study with start date, or your completed degree with graduation date. You may choose to note any scholarships or significant research projects in this section. High school information is usually omitted by the second or third year of your undergraduate degree.
- Work Experience:
 - Include your job title, name of company, location, and start/end dates of employment. Avoid simply listing a job description – use accomplishment statements to focus your points on **what you contributed and achieved** with past employers.

THINGS YOU MAY INCLUDE:

- Highlights:
 - The *Highlights* section is placed at the beginning of the resume and is a series of 3-6 comprehensive statements that sum up the information in the rest of the resume. This allows the hiring manager to form a mental picture of you as an employee while they read the rest of the resume.
 - **Examples of highlights:**
 - 10 years of experience in the healthcare industry with a focus on long-term care of seniors
 - Energetic and personable brand ambassador for multiple high-end retailers
 - Enjoys piloting new strategies to streamline product offerings and enhance client experience
- Memberships:
 - Only include accredited memberships that are relevant to the desired job
 - Examples of memberships:
 - International Association of Business Communicators (IABC)
 - Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS)
- Volunteer Involvement:
 - Volunteer pursuits should be listed in terms of accomplishment statements, in the same format as work experience
- Awards & Accomplishments:
 - Significant academic awards can be listed in the Education section; other accomplishments can be listed at the end of the resume. Describe the criteria for any awards listed (i.e. Tom Reeves Award – awarded to a graduating student for excellence in mathematics) and include the year you received that award.

DO NOT INCLUDE:

- Gender, Marital Status, Ethnicity
- Children, Age, Height, Weight
- Salary Expectations
- References (unless asked for upfront)



SELECTING A RESUME STYLE

In general, a reverse-chronological resume format is preferred. However, if you are applying for a job in a new field or based on experiences gained through unpaid experience, the functional or combined resume styles may be appropriate. You may wish to meet with a Career Assistant or an advisor in your department to determine an appropriate resume style for your field.

CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME:

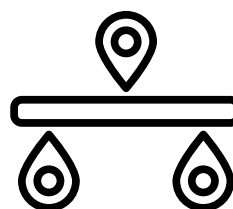
- Lists all education and experience in reverse-chronological order

PROS:

- Allows employers quick assessment of experience
- 80% of employers prefer this format
- Appropriate for those with consistent work history

CONS:

- Because most common, may not stand out
- Can reveal gaps in employment/educational history or frequent job changes
- Can limit effective marketing of relevant skills/abilities



FUNCTIONAL RESUME:

- Focuses on major skills and accomplishments from all areas – not limited to work history

PROS:

- Can highlight relevant skills acquired through a variety of experiences
- De-emphasizes unrelated positions and duties
- Downplays lengthy employment gaps
- Useful for individuals with few practical experiences in chosen field

CONS:

- Can be confusing for employers to assess quantifiable work background
- Not recommended for conservative employers (i.e. banks, government)

COMBINED RESUME:

- Highlights relevant skills and accomplishments while also outlining work history

PROS:

- Effective marketing of key job-related skills and accomplishments while maintaining a traditional resume structure
- Offers flexibility to emphasize skills drawn from a range of experiences (i.e. co-op, volunteers, cultural exchanges, or academic research projects)

CONS:

- Inclusion of chronological data can reveal gaps or inconsistencies in work history



ACCOMPLISHMENT STATEMENTS

Accomplishment statements show current or potential employers that you can bring value to the organization. Demonstrate this by describing your experiences in terms of accomplishments. Accomplishments are not restricted to paid work experiences!

WHAT IS AN ACCOMPLISHMENT?

Any action that you took that had a positive impact on your organization, customers or co-workers. Accomplishments can be qualitative (i.e. improved staff morale) or quantitative (i.e. increased event participation by 50%)

HOW DO I CREATE AN ACCOMPLISHMENT STATEMENT?

Examine each of your past experiences. Think about what you did particularly well in each of those experiences.

ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS:

- What did I create or build?
- What projects/assignments/presentations did I work on?
- What was unique about them?
- Did I receive awards or recommendations because of my work?



Link the accomplishment to an action (verb describing the behaviour) and an object or target (group, individual, company, project)

Example: Organized + a food drive + exceeding targets by 75%
(Action) + (target or object) + (accomplishment)

EXAMPLES OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- **Increased** return on investments
- **Improved** gross or net profits
- **Provided** quality service
- **Expanded** sales
- **Increased** market share
- **Reduced** turnover
- **Greeted** clients professionally
- **Improved** productivity
- **Lowered** costs
- **Improved** market penetration
- **Maintained** current knowledge
- **Decreased** new product launch time
- **Improved** cash availability
- **Generated** accurate reports
- **Streamlined** budget planning
- **Obtained** new financing
- **Reduced** operating expenses
- **Responded** quickly to inquiries
- **Arranged** moratorium with creditors
- **Negotiated** settlements
- **Planned** and executed location moves

ACTION VERBS

MANAGEMENT				
administered	analyzed	assigned	attained	chaired
completed	contracted	consolidated	consulted	coordinated
delegated	determined	developed	directed	evaluated
executed	improved	increased	managed	organized
oversaw	planned	presented	prioritized	produced
recommended	reviewed	scheduled	strengthened	supervised

COMMUNICATION				
addressed	arbitrated	arranged	authored	developed
directed	drafted	edited	enlisted	formulated
influenced	interpreted	lectured	mediated	moderated
motivated	negotiated	persuaded	promoted	publicized
reconciled	recruited	spoke	translated	wrote

RESEARCH				
amplified	applied	clarified	collected	critiqued
diagnosed	evaluated	examined	extracted	identified
inspected	interpreted	interviewed	investigated	obtained
organized	reviewed	summarized	surveyed	systematized

TECHNICAL				
assembled	built	calculated	computed	constructed
designed	devised	engineered	fabricated	installed
maintained	operated	overhauled	programmed	remodelled
repaired	revamped	solved	trained	upgraded

TEACHING				
adapted	advised	clarified	coached	coordinated
communicated	developed	enabled	encouraged	evaluated
explained	facilitated	guided	informed	initiated
instructed	persuaded	served	set goals	stimulated

FINANCIAL				
administered	allocated	analyzed	appraised	audited
balanced	budgeted	calculated	compounded	computed
controlled	developed	forecasted	managed	marketed
planned	projected	reported	researched	vended

ACTION VERBS

CREATIVE

acted	conceptualized	created	designed	developed
directed	established	fashioned	founded	illustrated
instituted	integrated	introduced	invented	originated
performed	planned	remodelled	revitalized	shaped

HELPING

assessed	assisted	clarified	coached	counselled
demonstrated	diagnosed	educated	expedited	facilitated
familiarized	guided	protected	referred	represented
rehabilitated	repaired	supported	streamlined	unified

OFFICE SUPPORT

approved	arranged	catalogued	classified	collected
compiled	dispatched	dispensed	distributed	executed
generated	implemented	inspected	monitored	operated
organized	prepared	processed	provided	purchased
received	recorded	retrieved	routed	screened
secured	specified	systematized	tabulated	validated

OTHER

accomplished	achieved	adapted	adhered	allocated
appraised	arbitrated	arranged	articulated	assured
augmented	collected	communicated	composed	conceptualized
conserved	contributed	coordinated	demonstrated	dispensed
evaluated	executed	facilitated	forecast	founded
governed	guided	illustrated	improved	increased
initiated	integrated	interpreted	invented	launched
led	navigated	optimized	organized	originated
overhauled	performed	prioritized	promoted	proposed
reconciled	rectified	remodelled	repaired	reshaped
retrieved	solved	stimulated	streamlined	strengthened

RESUME FORMATTING CHECKLIST

TAKE THE TIME TO GET IT RIGHT: Set aside a few hours with limited distractions. You will need to engage in meaningful reflection about yourself and your career, so you don't want to rush this process. Begin by making a list of all your past employment, community involvement, and education. Don't edit just yet. Think back to how you felt and what your priorities were when you engaged in each job and activity; record what you contributed and what you gained from each position. This brainstorming activity will help you craft accurate and varied accomplishment statements when you put together the finished document. Save this draft document for future use.

FOLLOW ALL JOB APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS: Read the job application closely. Ensure you are following all requirements even if they differ from the general directions in this handbook. Each employer is slightly different, and following instructions is an important part of the hiring process.

LENGTH: The resume should be 1-2 pages in length. Printed on one side only.

PAPER TYPE: Print on standard 8.5 x 11" white paper. Slightly thicker or tinted paper is acceptable but avoid using unusual sizes or colours.

FONT: Use a clean, legible font, size 11 or 12 pt. Text should be black only to avoid distraction and for ease of photocopying. Send online applications via PDF to ensure your font and layout are not corrupted

LAYOUT: Overall appearances should be attractive, professional, organized, and well-balanced on the page. Ensure bullets and right-justified dates are consistently formatted. You may choose to insert a horizontal line to emphasize section headings but use any other formatting sparingly. Avoid graphics and logos.

SECTION ARRANGEMENT: Section headings should be capitalized. Use boldface and italics consistently. If you decide to boldface the job title and italicize the company name, make sure you do this for each employer listed.

ACCOMPLISHMENT STATEMENTS: Use accomplishment statements to lay out work experience in brief, clear sentences. Do not simply paste in a job description. Emphasize what you did during your employment to benefit the company.

POWERFUL PHRASING: Remove unnecessary wordiness (i.e. 'Was responsible for' or 'Duties included'). Begin each bullet point with an action word. Do not use abbreviations or shorthand. Avoid negative language and ensure your portrayal of past employers is polite and positive. Be creative and find constructive ways to express any difficult situations you encountered (i.e. 'resolved customer concerns in a courteous and efficient manner' rather than 'dealt with annoying complaints').

SPELL CHECK: Don't rely on your computer or word processing software to do this! Have multiple people proofread your resume. There should be **NO** spelling, typographical, or grammatical errors – avoidable errors indicate carelessness and these resumes are often rejected.

THE COVER LETTER

WHY INCLUDE A COVER LETTER?

The cover letter is your first chance to make a great impression. It directs attention to the qualifications in your resume that are most relevant to your desired job. It also allows you to demonstrate knowledge about the company and explain how you are a good fit for the position requirements and the company's culture.

The cover letter is a personal advertising tool and an opportunity to showcase your writing ability. **Your objective is to motivate the hiring manager to offer you an interview.** The cover letter should be written in the first person (i.e., "I am applying for [...]") but avoid passive language (i.e., "I am a dedicated salesperson" not "I think I could be considered a fairly dedicated salesperson").

You can find thousands of sample cover letters on the Internet. Although this can be a good source of inspiration and will give you an idea of what goes in each paragraph, **avoid copying these letters verbatim!** Your potential employer will be far more impressed by a simple and honest letter detailing what is special about **YOU** and what benefits hiring you will bring to the company.

A common difficulty many students encounter when crafting a cover letter is listing many desirable career characteristics (i.e., leadership, time management, innovation, enthusiasm) without providing specific examples of these characteristics in action. Make a concrete connection between your personal attributes and how they will be an asset to the desired job. Without specific examples, these descriptors have little impact and seem insincere.

ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS:

- What position are you applying for?
 - "I am applying for the position of _____" is a simple and straightforward opening sentence.
- What can you contribute?
 - Tell the hiring manager what you will bring to the company if hired. The cover letter is not the place to tell the hiring manager what being hired will do for you – it is assumed you want the job to further your career, so overemphasizing the benefits to you will come across as selfish to employers.
- What are your qualifications?
 - Be sure to emphasize training you've received through your degree program (i.e. major research projects or presentations) that is relevant to the desired job. Read the job description or advertisement carefully and describe how you meet each qualification.
- What would past co-workers consider about you?
 - Attention to detail? Generous and welcoming attitude towards more junior employees? Ability to complete projects on time and on budget? Ability to solve customer concerns in a pleasant and professional manner? Willingness to take on additional assignments or projects to ensure the office ran smoothly?
 - Think carefully about your past employment opportunities and take notes of tasks you were especially good at. Do not include qualifications and buzzwords that do not describe you.

REFERENCE LIST

- Your references should only be on your resume if specifically asked for by the employer in the job description details, otherwise keep them in a separate document.
- In that separate document, ensure you use the same header as you've used for your resume and cover letter. Make sure you stay consistent!
- Ensure you stay in contact with your references and let them know when you are searching for jobs and taking part in interviews, so they can be ready to answer the phone. You never want your references to be surprised when employers are calling them.
- Adjust your references based on the job you are applying for. Use references that can speak to skills that the specific employer or job is looking for.
- Keep your reference list to three (3), unless otherwise requested by an employer. This is the standard number employers will ask for.
- Bring your reference page to the job interview and offer it at the end.

SAMPLE REFERENCES

Joe MacDonald
Regional Branch Manager, Scotiabank
902.456.1846
joe.macdonald@scotiabank.ca

Allie MacRae
Supervisor, Mount Saint Vincent University
902.457.1846
amacrae@msvu.ca

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CAREER PLANNING SERVICES WEBSITE: MSVU.CA/CAREERPLANNING

Exploring the CPS website is a great first step in your career decision or job search. Online you'll find:

- Job postings for on-campus, full-time, part-time, summer, contract and volunteer positions on Career Connects
- Upcoming events and career fairs
- Job search resources (including interview, networking, and resume tips)
- Career resources (including who's hiring in NS, potential growth industries, expected compensation scales, labour market trends and links to external job search sites)
- Career tips by degree (including education and skill requirements, potential career paths)
- Information about career counselling, resume critiques, and other in-person services

ON-CAMPUS EVENTS

Check out the Career Services Event schedule for the current term's roster of special events and workshops.

Events include:

- One-hour workshops on a variety of topics (choosing a major, resume/interview prep, finding a summer/part-time job) offered throughout the academic year free of charge
- Temporary displays ("Resume Roadshows") set up on campus by Career Assistants offering on-the-spot resume critiques and general information and CPS activities
- Annual events (Etiquette Brunch, Job-Finding Club) which provide more in-depth opportunities for skill acquisition and development. These events typically require pre-registration and occasionally a fee – check the Event Schedule or inquire at the office

CAREER COUNSELLING (BY APPOINTMENT)

Career counsellors are dedicated professionals who facilitate the career planning process by:

- Discussing your skills, interests, expectations and anxieties related to your career path
- Offering standardized testing to help you determine how your interests, work style, and personality might fit with various career options

CO-CURRICULAR RECORD (CCR)

Formally document all your non-academic, extra-curricular involvement in an official format called a Co-Curricular Record (CCR), a document that can be submitted to employers with your resume.

- Include things such as volunteer work, athletics, awards and other leadership activities. Your CCR will give you the edge that graduate schools and employers are looking for.
- Assemble your CCR online at careerconnects.msvu.ca

RESUME CRITIQUES (BY APPOINTMENT & DROP-IN)

Career Assistants are upper-year Mount students trained to help you with your resume and accessing CPS resources:

- Resume critiques are 30-min appointments with a Career Assistant to review your resume, offer advice on content and formatting, and provide preliminary proofreading.
- Career Assistants can also help you locate resources online and job search

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

Jane Morriseau
78-A Pine Street East
Halifax, Nova Scotia

902.555.1212 / jane.morriseau@msvu.ca
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/janemorriseau>

June 15, 2019

Ms. Jane Smith
Manager
Clothing Store
25 Main Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2D4

RE: Application for Salesperson – Competition #J274-799

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am interested in applying for the position of Salesperson at Clothing Store as advertised on MSVU's Career Connects job site.

As a second-year Business & Tourism student, I understand how business operates through my specialization in economics and accounting and have developed persuasive sales skills and cash handling experience as Fundraising Chair of the Business & Tourism Society. I have acquired organizational skills and the ability to multitask through my involvement as a timekeeper at varsity basketball games and as coach of a junior soccer team. I have included my resume with further details.

I was impressed to see Clothing Store listed as one of Canada's Top 100 employers would love the opportunity to be a part of your company. I am available for an interview at your convenience. You can contact me at 902.555.1212 or via email at jane.morriseau@msvu.ca. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

(signature)

Jane Morriseau

SAMPLE CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME

Susan Thompson

17 University Ave., Halifax, NS, B3S 1K2 / 902.234.5526 / susan.thompson@msvu.ca
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/susanthompson>

HIGHLIGHTS

- 6 years experience in administrative roles – efficient and accurate worker
- Ability to forge connections with a wide range of people (including children & youth)

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts, History
Mount Saint Vincent University

2017 – Present
Halifax, NS

WORK EXPERIENCE

Career Assistant
Mount Saint Vincent University, Career Services

2017 – Present
Halifax, NS

- Reviewed resumes and provided peer counselling to students, tailored to program of study
- Represented MSVU at various outreach events in collaboration with Career Services team
- Publicized workshops and recommended resource material to students in person & online

Administrative Assistant
Babcock & Wilcox Canada Ltd.

Summers 2013 - 2018
Halifax, NS

- Mentored inventory recording and coordinated daily updates to inventory lists
- Performed general office duties including filing, photocopying, answering calls and emails
- Proficient in Microsoft Excel computer software and Oracle procurement system

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Tutor
Queen Anne High School

2017 – 2019
Halifax, NS

- Mentored Grade 9-12 students, assisting with assignments and test preparation

Music Volunteer, Moms and Tots Programme
Queen Anne High School

2011 – 2012
Halifax, NS

- Led sing-alongs and instrument activities with preschoolers ages 2-4

SAMPLE COMBINATION RESUME 1

Julie House

42 Preston Ave., Apt. 203, Halifax, NS, B3S 1K2

902.455.2553 / julie.house@msvu.ca

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/juliehouse>

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Public Relations

Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, NS (Expected graduation, May 2020)

Certificate in French for Non-francophones

Universite de Quebec a Trois-Rivieres, Trois-Rivieres, QC (April 2016)

PUBLIC RELATIONS EXPERIENCE

Communications Student

Department of Fisheries and Oceans, St. John's, NL (May – Aug. 2019)

- Conducted media relations for public consultations
- Wrote analytical report on public consultation process for proposed initiative
- Reviewed and edited articles for regional & national employee newsletters
- Drafted copy and design layout for brochure and regional fact book
- Planned special events for Oceans Day and Kids Day

Communications Student

Privy Council Office, Ottawa, ON (Jan. – Apr. 2018)

- Prepared media relations plan for 2017 Federal Budget in conjunction with Prime Minister's office
- Assisted with the production of Federal Consultation Overview and supported development of data-based calendar for Internet site
- Managed coordination and distribution of questionnaire for federal communications employees
- Assisted senior communications advisors in providing support to federal government departments
- Wrote articles and interviewed employees for the quarterly newsletter

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

Legislative Assembly

House of Assembly, St. John's, NL (Feb. – Sept. 2017)

Historic Site Interpreter (Bilingual)

Parks Canada, St. John's, NL (Summer 2015 & 2016)

SAMPLE COMBINATION RESUME 2

Sam Lone

22 Lacewood Dr., Halifax, NS, B3S 1K3
902.425.6568 / samuel.lone@msvu.ca
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/samuellone>

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Tourism & Hospitality Management **2019**
Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, NS

- Dean's Honour List, 2016 - 2019

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Youth for Understanding (Frankfurt, Germany) **2018**

- Won a Canada Youth Scholarship to participate in student cultural exchange program in Europe
- Lived with a German family, communicating in French, English, and German
- Learned to adapt to a different culture

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXPERIENCE

Murphy's on the Water (Halifax, NS) **Summer 2019**

- Provided guided tours of Halifax to visitors, ensuring safety and comfort of guests
- Communicated effectively in French and English with patrons from around the world

Black's Photography (Halifax, NS) **2016 - 2018**

- Sold cameras priced up to \$3,000 on commission, regularly exceeded sales quota
- Learned to deal effectively with the public and resolve client concerns with diplomacy

Marketing Research Group (Halifax, NS) **2015**

- Researched and developed a comprehensive marketing plan for a business course
- Presented and defended proposal to a committee of professional academics and peers; received positive feedback on depth of research and strength of argument

Lifeguard Trainer (Halifax, NS) **2014**

- Taught lifesaving techniques, aquatic skills, and other water sports to youth 14-20
- Earned Leader's Assistant Instructors Award for outstanding teaching skill

PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Public Speaking Award, Mount Saint Vincent University, 2016

SAMPLE FUNCTIONAL RESUME

Jenny Miller

16 Rosedale Dr., Halifax, NS

902.455.6765 / jenny.miller@msvu.ca

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/jennymiller>

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Business Administration (with distinction) **2017 - Present**
 Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, NS

- Concentration in Accounting/Marketing

Tourism & Transportation Diploma **2015**
 Sir Sanford Fleming College, Peterborough, ON

ACCOUNTING

- Reviewed and processed accounts payable, ensuring early payment terms and due dates were met
- Collected accounts receivable in a timely manner
- Created annual sales budget and developed monthly action plan to achieve goals
- Utilized company-specific accounting software application
- Processed bank deposits, reconciliations, and petty cash

ADMINISTRATION

- Oversaw the start-up and promotion of branch office, resulting in reaching the sales goals of profitability with the two-year mandate
- Hired, trained, supervised, and motivated staff to reach sales goals
- Researched new product development, worked with suppliers and negotiated contracts
- Redesigned and streamlined paper flow for tie and cost efficiency; set up templates/mail merges and created spreadsheets for customer invoices
- Offered a high standard of customer service, through strong product knowledge and identification of client needs
- Good working knowledge of MS Word, Excel, Access, and PowerPoint

MARKETING & PROMOTIONS

- Coordinated and conducted educational and promotional seminars/trade shows
- Wrote sales proposals and participated in sales presentations to current and potential clients, business executives, and managers/owners
- Organized two non-profit events, from planning/soliciting donations/recruiting volunteers to on-site coordination on event day
- Negotiated co-op advertising to minimize promotional expenses while increasing product knowledge awareness

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

Administrator Nova Tours (Atlantic Tours Ltd.), Halifax, NS	Summer 2018
Travel Counsellor Maritime Marlin Travel, Halifax, NS	2018
District Sales Manager Club Med Sales Inc., Montreal, QC	2017
Administrator Green Window Realty, Sherbrooke, NS	2015 - 2016
Corporate Travel Counsellor Carlson Wagonlit Harvey's Travel, Dartmouth, NS	2014

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Team Captain – Abilities Foundation 24-Hour Relay	Summer 2018
Halifax Chamber of Commerce – Membership Retention	2015 – Present
Volunteer – Labatt Briar Curling Championship	2014
Plasma Donor – Canadian Blood Services	2013 – Present