

# Provost's Scholars Program: Resume & Cover Letter Writing

Robin Hedges  
Associate Director, Career Education  
Career Center

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# What is a resume?

- It's a writing project.
- It's your **marketing** document.
- The purpose is to get an interview!
- The audience could include application portal, hiring manager/supervisor, other peers & colleagues.
- It explains how you've added value to an organization via your skills, experience, and personal qualities relevant to your goal.
- It expresses what differentiates you from other (qualified) candidates.

# Resume sections

## REQUIRED

- Contact information
- Education
- Experience

## OPTIONAL

- Work experience
- Volunteerism or community service
- Leadership
- Activities
- Skills
- Languages
- Honors & awards

# Contact information

## Include

- Name
- Telephone number (with appropriate voicemail)
- Email address (professional and regularly checked)

## Optional

- Your street address
- LinkedIn profile address

## Exclude

- Photo
- Gender, race, age, citizenship, or other personal/sensitive information

# Contact information section examples

## IMA SPARTAN

1596 East 115<sup>th</sup> Street #317, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; (216) 555-1212  
Ima.Spartan@case.edu; [www.linkedin.com/in/imaspartan/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/imaspartan/)

OR

## IMA SPARTAN

(216) 555-1212; Ima.Spartan@case.edu

# Education

- Typically listed at the top for current students and recent grads
- Listed in reverse chronological order
- Includes institution and city, state, usually on one line
- Includes credential and graduation date, usually on another line
- May include special designation such as *cum laude* or GPA
- May have bullets re: unique coursework, study abroad, honors or awards

# Education section example

## EDUCATION

Shaw High School, East Cleveland, OH

*High School Diploma*, May 2018

- GPA: 3.8/4.0
- Provost's Scholar at Case Western Reserve University, a selective college preparatory program, 2017-18
- Relevant coursework: Three years of college-prep math, Biology, Chemistry, and Advanced Biology labs

# Experience

- Typically listed after education for students and recent grads
- Usually listed in reverse chronological order
- Includes organization and city, state, usually on one line
- Includes position or role and dates, usually on another line
- Includes bulleted statements that begin with strong action verbs that describe what you did in the role and how you added value!
- Use a thesaurus to vary your words.
- No job is too big or too small! It could be paid or unpaid, full-time or part-time, summer or academic year.



# Common high school students jobs

1. Babysitter/child care provider
2. Tutor
3. Restaurant wait staff
4. Fast food worker
5. Arts & crafts production
6. Animal care
7. Landscaper/lawn care
8. Lifeguard
9. Retail employee – cashier, stock
10. Warehouse/distribution/package handler
11. Car wash/auto repair
12. Lab assistant
13. Receptionist
14. Web content developer
15. Coach

# Strategies for avoiding the duties trap!

- Start with a statement that provides a broad overview of your responsibilities and the type of organization.
  - Example: Provide high-quality, entertaining care including supervision and activities for two kids, ages 18 months and 3 years
- Be specific. Quantify where possible.
  - Example: Take drive-through orders with goal of completing each in 60 seconds.
- Explain why or how. Qualify. Use adjectives and adverbs.
  - Example: Maintain healthy, green lawns for customers by providing regular and attentive mowing and trimming services.

# Experience section example

McDonald's, Cleveland, OH

*Cashier, Summers 2016, 2017*

- Provide fast and friendly customer service at one of the world's largest fast food restaurants
- Assist customers in using new touch screen ordering technology to help speed up their orders
- Address customer complaints in a pleasant, professional manner when mistakes occur
- Accurately process cash and credit transactions
- Train new employees in using register and basic operating procedures
- Promoted to store opener/closer due to responsible and consistently high job performance

# Optional sections

Ask yourself: “What is most interesting, distinguishable, that I could add that would portray me as a top candidate?”

- Work experience
- Volunteerism or Community Service
- Leadership
- Activities
- Skills
- Languages
- Honors & awards

# Examples for optional sections

## LEADERSHIP & ACTIVITIES

National Honor Society, Member, May 2016 – present

Debate Team, Co-captain: 2017-present; Member: 2014-17

## HONORS & AWARDS

Scholar-Athlete Award: earned by 3 / 28 team captains with highest GPA, June 2017

## VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Cleveland Animal Protective League, Dog Walker, Fall 2017

# More examples for optional sections

Skills : Could be technical, language, or other relevant skills. Where possible, be specific. For example:

**Computer Skills:** MS Word, PowerPoint: proficient; MS Excel: novice

Avoid listing “soft skills” in a skills section. You are better served to write about those things in the course of your experience. So, for example, instead of listing “leadership” as a skill you could write a bullet for one of your experiences that says:

- Led 8-person horn section to performance excellence at 10 weekly football games and 4 pep rallies, and 2 regional band competitions.

# Should I have an “Objective”?

- Optional
- Often used by entry-level candidates
- The very best objectives go beyond telling the reader the obvious; they include job function (position) desired, organization type, and knowledge, experience, or skills offered
- Tailored to each position to which you apply
- Serves as a topic statement for your resume

Example:

To obtain a summer 2018 accounting internship where I can contribute my strong math skills and commitment to performing accurate work, while gaining early exposure to my future profession.

# Resume formatting guidelines

**LENGTH:** For HS & undergraduate college students, keep it to one page

**SET-UP:** Avoid templates. Use Word and format it yourself

**SPELLING & GRAMMAR:** Should be perfect! Proofread and have a trusted friend, relative, or teacher do it. Plus, spell check misses correctly spelled words that are used incorrectly

**NUMBERS, SYMBOLS, & ABBREVIATIONS:** Numbers and symbols are OK – they draw the eye! Commonly understood abbreviations are ok

**MARGINS:** Evenly spaced, 0.5" – 1.5", depending on need

**FONT:** Pick one. Use black. Body: > 10, < 12. Name: > 16, bold. Good fonts include Times New Roman, Arial, Verdana, Garamond, Calibri, Cambria, Helvetica



# Resume formatting guidelines (cont.)

**BOLD & ITALICS:** Use, but don't overuse. Be consistent

**ALIGNMENT:** Make sure that things that should line up, do

**PRINTING:** If printing, use white or ivory paper. Resume quality is nice but not necessary

**SAVING:** Save early and often. When done, save in Word, text (.txt) and pdf, if possible

## OTHER

- Sentence fragments are acceptable and encouraged
- Use first-person, present or past tense verbs, but not the narrative (Drop the "I")
- Be accurate and consistent with use of punctuation such as periods, semicolons, dashes
- Avoid over-capitalization

# Cover Letters

## CORRESPONDENCE OVERVIEW

- Show off your writing skills and make the connections between what you have to offer and what an organization is looking for.
- Choose lively words, but remember to write like you speak so that the image you present in writing matches who you are in person. Remember the 3 Be's:

Be interesting

Be authentic

Be brief

## COVER LETTERS

- Include the position you are applying for, with the specific company, and how you learned about the position (especially if someone from the company or the field recommended that you apply).
- Highlight your qualifications that relate to the position and request an interview.
- Addressed to a specific individual whenever possible. This may require some research, time, and work, but it's worth it. If you cannot find a contact person, use "Dear Hiring Manager" or something similar.