

Resume and Cover Letter Writing Guide

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I) Resume

A resume is a self-marketing tool that highlights your education, experience, and accomplishments while profiling your ability to do the work for which an employer is hiring. It provides employers with a quick summary of your education and experience to capture their attention, given that on average, employers scan a resume for only 10-15 seconds. The formatting outlined in this guide is only an example, and individuals will have different preferences that add unique touches to their resume. However, students and alumni might find that the chronological resume is the best format to highlight their career progression and academic background while at the same time showcasing their skills. The important information that should be included in every resume is outlined in this section.

i) General Tips on Resume Writing

Personal Data to Include

- Your name. It should appear first, and stand out the most. (Bold and enlarge it).
- Indicate a phone number or where a message can be left.
- Include an e-mail address, check it regularly and ensure that your e-mail address is professional (NOT a nickname).

Personal Data NOT to Include

- Your age/date of birth, gender, relationship status, family information, Social Insurance Number, health or medical information, religion, political affiliation, ethnicity, or pictures.

Resume Structure and Style

- Be concise and clear; space content so that it can be easily read.
- Do not use different font types. Stick to one that is easy to read (e.g. Arial).
- Use different font sizes and styles (e.g. italics and bold).
- Use a consistent format. If you bold a heading in one section, bold the headings for the other sections as well. This also applies to the placement of dates.
- Proofread for spelling errors and grammatical mistakes.
- Visit the Writing Centre (Science Building: SN – 2053) for further help with writing style and grammar.

Action Verbs

- Use action verbs to list duties and responsibilities (see Appendix D).
- Action verbs should be used throughout your resume to promote your skills and achievements, thereby enabling you to make a strong impression.

References

Listing references is optional. If you decide to include your references, you may:

- Include the sentence “References are available upon request.” at the bottom of the last page of your resume.
- List 2-3 references on a separate sheet. Include their name, position, organization, phone number, and email address.
- Ask your references for permission, notify them about your application/interview, and have a list of your references on-hand during an interview.

ii) Resume Format

The (1) Chronological and the (2) Combined are two types of resumes that are commonly used in Canada. The style of resume best suited to you will depend on the position for which you are applying, the skills you possess, and your work experience. As students or alumni, you may prefer to use the chronological resume format, as it allows to highlight your career progression and academic background and at the same time include relevant details about your skills and competencies.

Resume Format	Key elements
(1) Chronological Resume <i>See Appendix A for a sample.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lists experiences in reverse chronological order (from the most to the least recent position).• Concentrates on highlighting career progression.
(2) Combined Resume <i>See Appendix B for a sample.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concentrates on highlighting skills.

The **structure of a resume** is outlined below.
(Please see Appendix A and B for sample resumes)

Name Mailing address Phone E-mail	
<hr/>	
Highlights of Qualifications <i>[See above for details on the structure of this section]</i>	
<hr/>	
Education	
Name of degree (Major: xxx; Minor: yyy) <i>Institution, Location</i>	Date – Date
<hr/>	
Work Experience	
Title of Position <i>Company name, Location</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Duty A• Duty B	Date – Date
<hr/>	
Volunteer Experience	
Title of Position, Organization Name <i>Location</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Duty A• Duty B	Date – Date
<hr/>	
Interests/Achievements/Awards	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interest• Achievement	Date Date
<hr/>	
References Available upon request.	

iii) Resume Content and Structure

The key sections of a resume include:

1. Header
2. Highlights of Qualifications
3. Education
4. Work Experience
5. Volunteer Experience
6. Interests/Achievements/Awards
7. References

Header

- Place your name at the top of the resume. Emphasize it by increasing its font size and using bold.
- Include a phone number, a professional e-mail address, and (at your discretion) a mailing address.

Sample:

Jane Smith
123 Main Street
St. John's, NL A1E 4E7
(709) 555-1234
jane@resume.ca

Highlights of Qualifications

- Place directly below the header.
- Highlight the skills and qualifications you possess that are relevant to the position you are applying for.
- Include an “Experience in...” phrase.
- Be brief (4-5 bullets maximum).
- For Chronological Resume: use *bullets* to list your skills and qualifications
- For Combined Resume: use *headings* to identify your key skills, and elaborate on each skills by providing a few bullets to explain how you developed those skills.

Sample (Chronological Resume):

Highlights of Qualifications

- Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and History
- Presentation and communication skills practiced continuously as a Teaching Assistant
- Interpersonal, organizational, and leadership skills honed as President of the Sociology Society
- Research, analytical and problem solving skills gained through course work
- 5 years' experience in the customer services industry

Sample (Combined Resume):

Highlights of Qualifications

Interpersonal/Communication Skills

- Marketed the Opportunity Fund to Memorial University alumni
- Developed and presented city tours for groups of tourists
- Directed incoming calls and answered inquiries
- Provided quality customer service

Communication Skills

- Presented course material to classes of 100+ university students
- Responded to students' questions and concerns about course content
- Coordinated discussion between the Sociology Director and students
- Recruited students to the Sociology Society through various mediums, including internet discussion boards and classroom presentations

Organizational Skills

- Developed lesson plans for undergraduate Sociology classes
- Planned the Sociology Society events and delegated tasks
- Evaluated students' work and returned it promptly

Education

- Begin with your most recent education.
- List degree/diploma/certificate, areas of concentration (if applicable), associated start and end dates, and the institution where you received your education.
- Separate each degree or diploma received/in progress, even if they were obtained at the same institute.
- Provide thesis title or topic (if applicable) if relevant to the job for which you are applying.
- You may list your Grade Point Average (GPA).
- List only programs that are completed and/or in-progress.

Sample:

Education
Bachelor of Arts (Major: Sociology; Minor: History) Sept. 2014 – May 2018 <i>Memorial University, St. John's, NL</i>

Work Experience

- Indicate dates of employment (start with the most recent job).
- Indicate title of position held, company name, and location.
- Describe your duties/tasks by beginning each phrase with an action verb.
- List duties starting with the most relevant to the position you are applying for.
- Use past tense to describe past positions, and present tense for current positions.

Sample:

Work Experience
Invigilator / Teaching Assistant Sept. 2016 – Present <i>Department of Sociology, Memorial University, St. John's, NL</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supervises 40 students for final examinations in Sociology 3000• Corrects student assignments• Records marks and reports to Professor

Volunteer Experience

- Employers in Canada value volunteer experience. If you have volunteered, in Canada or elsewhere, be sure to indicate it on your resume.
- The Volunteer Experience section should look similar (in style and formatting) to the Work Experience section.
- List the title of the volunteer position (if applicable), the associated start and end dates, and the organization name.
- Outline your duties and responsibilities.
- You may include in this section your involvement with student societies and/or elected positions.

Sample:

Volunteer Experience

President, Sociology Society

Sept. 2014 – April 2017

Memorial University, St. John's, NL

- Organized activities for students (e.g. mixers, guest speaker events)
- Corresponded between the Director and students
- Represented the student body at faculty meetings and other departmental events

Interests/Achievements/Awards

- Note any achievements, awards, and scholarships you received that you would like to highlight.
- You may list any interests that are relevant to the position.

Sample:

Interests / Achievements

- Graduated on Dean's List May 2018
- Memorial Entrance Scholarship Sept. 2014

References

- List your references on a separate sheet, or include the sentence "References Available upon Request." at the bottom of the last page of your resume.
- If you list your references, include: name of referee in bold, title/role, organization, phone number, and email address.
- When listing references on a separate sheet, use the same heading as the first page of your resume.

Sample 1:

References

Available upon request.

Sample 2:

Jane Smith
123 Main Street
St. John's, NL A1E 4E7
(709) 555-1234
jane@resume.ca

References

John White
Director of Biology
Memorial University
Phone: (709) 555-1234
Email: jwhite@memorial.ca

Additional Sections

- Depending on the position for which you are applying, you may want to include additional sections to your resume, (e.g. Professional Development, Professional Affiliations, Additional Training, etc.).

iv) Resume Checklist

Format & Layout

- Is your resume 1 to 2 pages in length?
- Is your resume easy to read and well organized?
- Does your name stand out (i.e. in bold and an enlarged font)?
- Do important headings and sub-headings stand out?
- Did you use consistent formatting of fonts, italics, dates, etc.?

Resume Content

- Have you listed all duties using action verbs?
- Are there any points which still need improvement?
- Is the information presented relevant to the job you are applying for?
- Is your resume current and up-to-date?

Spelling & Punctuation

- Have you used Spell Check?
- Is punctuation used consistently?
- Have you used the proper verb tense for past and/or current duties?
- Has someone proofread your resume?
- Have you visited the Writing Centre for additional help with writing style and grammar?

II) Cover Letter

The purpose of a cover letter is to highlight your skills and explain why you are a good candidate for the position you are applying for. For this reason, it is a good idea to enclose a cover letter in addition to a resume when applying for a job. You should use a different cover letter for each position you are applying for, and highlight any skills relevant to that specific position. For example, if you are applying for a job as an accountant, you will want to emphasize your numerical skills and attention to detail. If you are applying for a Social Work position, you will want to highlight your interpersonal and problem-solving skills. *Please see Appendix C for a sample cover letter.*

i) General Tips on Cover Letter Writing

- Address the letter to the individual responsible for hiring. If the contact is not listed in the job posting, you may contact the organization to obtain this information. Make sure you spell the contact's name correctly. If you cannot find a name, you may address your letter "Dear Sir or Madam:".
- Ensure that the company name and title of the position are correct throughout your letter.
- Your letter should be one page long, visually appealing, and easy to read.
- Include your telephone number and e-mail address in the last paragraph.
- Remember to sign your cover letter (you can use an electronic signature if you are submitting your letter electronically).
- Proofread your letter and use Spell Check.
- Visit Memorial University's Writing Centre (Science Building: SN 2053; The Commons, QEII Library) if you require help with writing style and grammar.

The **structure of a cover letter** is outlined below.
(Please see Appendix C for a sample cover letter)

Return Address:

Street
City/Town
Postal code

Date

Addressee:

Contact name
Mailing address of company

Dear (use specific name, if possible):

First paragraph: *Why are you writing?* Catch the reader's attention and clearly state what job you are applying for and how you learned about it. (You may wish to mention personal contacts within the company, if you have any).

Second paragraph: *What do you have to offer?* Provide specific information about the skills you possess and how your qualifications will benefit the company. Respond to the requirements mentioned in the job description.

Third Paragraph: *How do you fit the company's image?* Research the organization you are submitting your application to. Prove that your background, experience, and values align with those of the organization.

Fourth Paragraph: *Request an interview.* State where and when you can be reached at. Thank the employer for his/her time and consideration.

Closing

(Signature – written or electronic)
(Typed name)

ii) Cover Letter Content and Structure

Below are the components to an effective cover letter:

1) Return Address

- At your discretion, you may include your complete mailing address (street, city/town, province, and postal code) in the top left hand corner.
- It is not necessary to include your name or phone number as part of the return address, because you will be signing your letter at the bottom and providing your phone number in the last paragraph of your letter.

2) Date

- Insert the current date two lines below your return address. Do not abbreviate the date.

3) Addressee

- Include the name of the person who will process your application (e.g. hiring manager) followed by the mailing address of the company two lines below the date.

4) Salutation

- The salutation is placed one line below the addressee, and should specify the employer's name followed by a colon (e.g. "Dear Ms. Brown:").
- If you do not know the name of the person you are writing to, use "Dear Hiring Committee:" or "Dear Sir or Madam:" or "To Whom It May Concern:"

5) First Paragraph: Why are you writing?

- Place the first paragraph one line below the Salutation.
- State your interest in the position, and where/when you found out about it.

6) Second Paragraph: What do you have to offer?

- Describe your qualifications and background (both academic and professional) in relation to the skills you have acquired. Provide clear examples to support why you are qualified for the position. Look at the job posting and try to respond to as many requirements as possible.

7) Third Paragraph: How do you fit the company's image?

- Each organization subscribes to specific values, which differentiate it from its competition. In today's job market not only you need to fit the job description, but also the company's image.
- Conduct research to determine where the company's interests lie (e.g. environmental issues, business practices, etc.) and illustrate that you belong by referring to your own interests, experiences, and goals.

8) Fourth Paragraph: Request an interview

- The final paragraph allows you to close by requesting an interview. Describe why you are the right candidate for the job and how you will contribute to the organization.

9) Closing

- Use the standard business closing “Sincerely,” and place it two lines below the body of the letter.

10) Signature

- Type your full name (as it appears on your resume) four lines below the closing, and sign above your typed name in black ink. If you are sending your cover letter via email, insert an electronic signature.

Appendices

Appendix A: Sample of a Chronological Resume

Jane Smith

123 Main Street
St. John's NL, A1E 4E7
(709) 555-1234
jane@resume.ca

Highlights of Qualifications

- Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and History
 - Presentation and communication skills, practiced continuously as a Teaching Assistant
 - Research, analytical and problem solving skills gained through course work
 - Interpersonal, organizational, and leadership skills sharpened by 3 years' experience as the President of the Sociology Society
-

Education

Bachelor of Arts (Major: Sociology; minor: History) Sept. 2014 – May 2018
Memorial University, St. John's, NL

Work Experience

Invigilator/Teaching Assistant Sept. 2015 – March 2018
Department of Sociology, Memorial University

- Supervised 40 students for final examinations in History 3000
- Corrected students' assignments
- Recorded marks and reported to the Professor

Tour Guide April 2017 – Aug. 2017
City of St. John's, NL

- Developed and presented city tours for groups of tourists
- Led groups through historical sites
- Scheduled appointments for tours

Office Assistant April 2016 – Aug. 2016
Accounts Division, Department of Finance, Government of Newfoundland

- Formatted documents using WordPerfect, Excel, and MS Word
- Directed incoming calls and answered general inquires
- Processed data entry for attendance records and payroll direct deposit
- Created, maintained, and updated a filing database of 2,000 employees

Research Assistant Sept. 2015 – April 2016
Department of Sociology, Memorial University

- Conducted research via telephone surveys and interviews
- Analyzed research findings and submitted report on conclusions

Student Communicator

Sept. 2015 – Dec. 2015

Alumni Affairs, Memorial University

- Promoted Opportunity Fund to Memorial alumni and updated the alumni database

Sales Associate

June 2013 – Aug. 2015

Wal-Mart, St. John's, NL

- Provided quality service to customers and recorded inventory of products
 - Worked cash register and balanced cash float
-

Volunteer Experience**President, Sociology Society**

Sept. 2016 – Apr. 2018

Memorial University

- Organized activities for students such as fundraisers, mixers and exam support
- Represented student body at meetings and during departmental events

Group Leader, Fall Orientation

Sept. 2015

Memorial Student Affairs & Services

- Organized activities for first year students and their parents
 - Co-led a group of new students around campus for tours and events
-

Interests/Achievements

- Dean's List May 2018
 - Memorial University Entrance Scholarship Sept. 2014
-

References

Available upon request.

Appendix B: Sample of a Combined Resume

Jane Smith

123 Main Street
St. John's NL, A1E 4E7
(709) 555-1234
jane@resume.ca

Highlights of Qualifications

Interpersonal/Communication Skills

- Marketed the Opportunity Fund to Memorial University Alumni
- Directed incoming calls and answered general enquiries
- Provided quality customer service

Research/Analytical Skills

- Conducted research on the Internet
- Compiled research and prepared reports on results of research
- Completed academic term papers using various sources of research
- Interpreted research collected and submitted report on conclusions

Teamwork/Leadership Skills

- Elected President of the Sociology Society
 - Co-led a group of new students for Fall Orientation
 - Supervised 40 students for final examinations in History 3000
-

Education

Bachelor of Arts (Major: Sociology; Minor: History)
Memorial University, St. John's, NL

Sept. 2014 – May 2018

Relevant Work Experience

Invigilator/Teaching Assistant

Sept. 2015 – March 2018

Department of Sociology, Memorial University

- Supervised 40 students for final examinations in History 3000
- Corrected student assignments
- Recorded marks and reported to Professor

Office Assistant

April 2017 – Aug. 2017

Accounts Division, Department of Finance, Government of Newfoundland

- Formatted documents using WordPerfect, Excel, and MS Word
- Processed data entry for attendance records and payroll direct deposit
- Created, maintained, and updated a filing database of 2,000 employees

Research Assistant Sept. 2016 – April 2017
Department of Sociology, Memorial University
• Conducted research via Internet and telephone surveys
• Interpreted research collected and submitted report on conclusions

Student Communicator Sept. 2016 – Dec. 2016
Alumni Affairs, Memorial University
• Promoted Opportunity Fund to Memorial University alumni
• Updated Alumni database

Volunteer Experience

President, Sociology Society Sept. 2015 – April 2018
Memorial University
• Organized activities for students such as fundraisers, mixers and exam support
• Represented student body at meetings and during departmental events

Group Leader, Fall Orientation Sept. 2015
Memorial University Student Affairs & Services
• Co-led a group of new students
• Organized activities for first year students and their parents

Interests/Achievements

- Dean's List May 2018
 - MUN Entrance Scholarship Sept. 2015
-

References

Available upon request.

Appendix C: Sample of a Cover Letter

123 Main Street
St. John's NL, A1E 4E7

June 3, 2018

Mr. Noel Brown
New Industries Inc.
Point Drive, NL, A1B 2C3

Dear Mr. Brown:

This letter is in application for the *Research Assistant* position with New Industries Inc., which was posted on your company's webpage on May 15th, 2018.

As a recent graduate of the Bachelor of Science program at Memorial University, I am a well-rounded individual with strong written and oral communication skills. Having completed a major in Biology, I am familiar with a wide array of environmentally-relevant subject matters, including pollution control and mitigation, global climate change, and natural resource management. In addition, I am comfortable performing both primary and secondary research. While completing five courses during the academic semesters, I also worked part-time as a Teaching Assistant with the Department of Biology. This position allowed me to hone my time-management skills, as well as to demonstrate my organizational skills. In addition, I am confident working with Microsoft Office, especially Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Access.

Upon researching your organization, I was very excited to learn New Industries Inc. is spearheading a project to assess and improve environmentally friendly projects worldwide. I have a keen interest in this area of studies as I have completed several research papers on the topic of ecofriendly practices and sustainable resources during my degree. It would be an honor to work in such a progressive environment where practical biological theories can be applied to benefit our planet.

I believe that I am a strong candidate for the *Research Assistant* position with New Industries Inc., and I look forward to hearing from you to further discuss how I may contribute to your organization. Please feel free to contact me at (709) 555-4567 or via email at jane@resume.ca.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Jane Smith

Appendix D: Skill Related Action Verbs

Management Skills

Administered
 Analyzed
 Assigned
 Attained
 Chaired
 Consolidated
 Contracted
 Coordinated
 Delegated
 Developed
 Evaluated
 Executed
 Improved
 Increased
 Organized
 Oversaw
 Planned
 Prioritized
 Produced
 Recommended
 Reviewed
 Scheduled
 Strengthened
 Supervised

Communication Skills

Addressed
 Arbitrated
 Arranged
 Authored
 Collaborated
 Convinced
 Corresponded
 Developed
 Directed
 Drafted
 Edited
 Enlisted
 Formulated
 Influenced
 Interpreted
 Mediated
 Moderate

Negotiated
 Persuaded
 Promoted
 Publicized
 Reconciled
 Recruited
 Spoke
 Translated
 Wrote

Research Skills

Clarified
 Collected
 Critiqued
 Diagnosed
 Evaluated
 Examined
 Extracted
 Identified
 Inspected
 Interpreted
 Interviewed
 Investigated
 Organized
 Reviewed
 Summarized
 Surveyed
 Systematic

Technical Skills

Assembled
 Built
 Calculated
 Computed
 Designed
 Devised
 Engineered
 Fabricated
 Maintained
 Operated
 Overhauled
 Programmed
 Remodeled
 Repaired
 Solved
 Upgraded

Teaching Skills

Adapted
 Advised
 Clarified
 Coached
 Communicated
 Coordinated
 Demystified
 Developed
 Enabled
 Encouraged
 Evaluated
 Explained
 Facilitated
 Guided
 Informed
 Instructed
 Persuaded
 Set goals
 Stimulated
 Trained

Financial Skills

Administered
 Allocated
 Analyzed
 Appraised
 Audited
 Balanced
 Budgeted
 Calculated
 Computed
 Developed
 Forecasted
 Managed
 Marketed
 Planned
 Projected
 Researched

Creative Skills

Acted
 Conceptualized
 Created
 Customized
 Designed

Developed
 Directed
 Established
 Fashioned
 Founded
 Illustrated
 Initiated
 Instituted
 Integrated
 Introduced
 Invented
 Originated
 Performed
 Planned
 Revitalized
 Shaped

Helping Skills

Assessed
 Assisted
 Clarified
 Coached
 Counseled
 Demonstrated
 Diagnosed
 Educated
 Expedited
 Facilitated
 Familiarized
 Guided
 Motivated
 Referred
 Rehabilitated

Clerical or Detail Skills

Approved
 Arranged
 Catalogued
 Classified
 Collected
 Compiled
 Dispatched
 Executed
 Generated
 Implemented

Inspected
 Monitored
 Operated
 Organized
 Prepared
 Processed
 Purchased
 Recorded
 Retrieved
 Screened
 Specified
 Systematized
 Tabulated
 Validated

More Verbs for Accomplishments

Achieved
 Expanded
 Improved
 Pioneered
 Reduced (losses)
 Resolved
 (problems)
 Restored
 Spearheaded
 Transformed

Career Development (Student Life) Memorial University

For our online career resources, visit: www.mun.ca/student

careerdevelopment@mun.ca

Tel: (709) 864-2033 Fax: (709) 864-2437