

SKIDMORE COLLEGE CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER Resume & Cover Letter Guide



Career Development Center
Starbuck Center
815 North Broadway
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
<http://www.skidmore.edu/career>

Creative Thought Matters. **Creative Thought Works.**

What is a Resume?

A resume is a brief document that articulates a candidate's **most relevant** and **recent experiences** to a potential employer or graduate / professional school program.

A strong resume is **targeted for a specific opportunity** and focuses on a candidate's key credentials, skills, interests, and accomplishments. The resume should encourage an employer to read your cover letter, and ultimately, invite you to interview.

THERE IS NO SINGLE PREFERRED FORMAT FOR A RESUME. HOWEVER, A RESUME SUBMITTED BY COLLEGE STUDENTS AND RECENT GRADS SHOULD BE NO LONGER THAN ONE PAGE.

THE FOLLOWING SHOULD BE INCLUDED:

Name / Contact Information

- **Why this is Important:** This allows the employer to easily contact you.
- **Include:** At the very least, include your first and last name, street address, phone number, and email. Include ONLY one email to avoid confusion

Education

- **Why this is Important:** To convey academic qualifications and training.
- **Include:** In **reverse chronological** order, list degree granting colleges and institutions in which courses have been completed, including off-campus study (it is not mandatory to list transfer institutions). Note location (city, state or country), dates of degrees or dates attended (month / semester, year), the degree earned, and majors / minors. Most students include cumulative GPA. You may also choose to include a major GPA, if the number is higher than your cumulative GPA. Students may also consider including honors and awards, such as the Thoroughbred Award, Deans List, etc.

Experience Sections (e.g., Work Experience, Relevant Experience, or Leadership, etc.)

- **Why this is Important:** To provide evidence of skills and non-academic qualifications, demonstrating relevance for the position the resume is being submitted for.
- **Include:** For internships, collaborative research, co-curricular and leadership involvement, volunteerism, athletics, job shadowing, and consider any other relevant experiences, include your title, the name of the organization, its location, the dates of your involvement and a description of the experience (relevant experiences will always be described; non-relevant experiences may not be described and may even be edited off the final draft.

Experiences should be listed in **reverse chronological** (most recent first) within each section.

Skills

- **Why this is Important:** This provides a forum to highlight skills not demonstrated in the Experience descriptions.
- **Include:** Languages (indicate proficiency: Native, Fluent, Proficient, Conversant), Certifications, Computer Programs.

Writing Descriptions

Begin Experience descriptions with a strong action verb.

The verb tense should reflect whether the experience is ongoing (present tense) or has been completed (past tense).

Include details of major accomplishments, responsibilities, and impact.

Provide facts, numbers, and results achieved whenever possible.

Do not write in complete sentences; pronouns SHOULD NOT be used, and eliminate non-essential words for length.

Use bullets or short paragraphs.

Allocate space based on relevance; these experiences should get the most bullets.

Formatting Tips

Effective resumes are organized and easy for an employer to quickly scan. Most employers spend 30 seconds or less [Megan, my understanding is it's only 5-10 seconds!] when deciding between applications. Consider the following:

Use approximately 1" margins (top, bottom, and both sides). If you need additional space, the margins can be reduced to .5" inch. The resume should look framed.

Use standard font sizes between 10 – 12 point. Choose a commonly used and easily read font, such as Times New Roman or Arial.

DO NOT use a MS Word template or tables. It is difficult to modify these formats. Additionally, they do not always download correctly between different versions of MS Word.

Be consistent in:

- Punctuation – periods are not required at the end of each statement; you can choose to include periods or not. Either way, be consistent throughout the entire document.
- How Information is Highlighted – be sure that bold, italics, and caps are consistent throughout.

The most important and relevant information should be closest to the top and left margins.

NEVER overstate qualifications, accomplishments, or abilities. Any exaggeration can damage the credibility of the entire resume and is considered a misrepresentation.

Resumes should be error-free, including spelling, punctuation, grammar, and accuracy of dates.

Content should only appear once; avoid redundancy.

When submitting electronically, save the resume as a PDF with a title that assists the reader (for example, "LScribnerResume.pdf"). The PDF will maintain your formatting when sent.

References are NOT included on the resume; they should be on an addendum to the resume. Include contact information for individuals who have agreed to speak of your qualifications; information to submit includes the person's name, position, employer, street address, email, and phone. It may also be helpful to include the person's relationship to you. Typically, only academic and professional references are provided, not family or friends.

THE RESUME BELONGS ONLY TO THE PERSON SUBMITTING THE RESUME.
IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE OWNER TO MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF THE DOCUMENT.

Need Help?

It is highly recommended that resume drafts are reviewed by many sources. **Career Coaches** and professional **career counselors** are available to offer insight into content, format, and presentation.

Individual appointments with career counselors can be scheduled by calling 518-580-5790. Drop-ins with career coaches are held daily from 2 – 4 PM during the academic year in the Career Development Center.

Evening Drop-ins are held from 8 – 10 PM in Scribner Library. Assistance is also available through E-Resume Review hours (submit materials to: careercoach@skidmore.edu).

For updated times and locations, visit: <http://www.skidmore.edu/career/about/index.php>

Transferable Skills Clusters

Use this list to identify strong action verbs to articulate your skills:

MANAGEMENT

Developed
Planned
Organized
Executed
Supervised
Assigned
Directed
Coordinated
Analyzed
Prioritized
Delegated
Hired
Fired
Recommended
Evaluated
Administered
Contracted
Produced
Controlled

COMMUNICATION

Influenced
Persuaded
Helped
Directed
Motivated
Reasoned
Developed
Recruited
Created
Negotiated
Arbitrated
Arranged
Mediated
Reconciled
Merged
Obtained
Wrote
Interpreted
Enlisted

FINANCIAL

Calculated
Computed
Planned
Managed
Budgeted
Solved
Accounted
Audited
Appraised
Researched
Analyzed
Prepared
Detailed
Accuracy
Speed
Allocated
Administered
Quantified
Developed

HELPING

Related
Guided
Led
Adjusted
Serviced
Referred
Attended
Cared
Sensitivity
Listened
Spoke
Directed
Perceived
Intuited
Understood
Maturity
Team work
Mentored
Rendered

RESEARCH

Clarified
Surveyed
Interviewed
Investigated
Inspected
Gathered
Synthesized
Examined
Diagnosed
Reviewed
Organized
Evaluated
Critiqued
Perceived
Collected
Wrote
Interpreted
Extrapolated
Decided
Recognized

CREATIVE

Innovated
Developed
Created
Imagined
Designed
Planned
Conceptualized
Synthesized
Integrated
Abstracted
Generated
Perceived
Memorized
Discriminated
Intuited
Visualized
Sensitivity
Humored
Fashioned
Shaped

TEACHING

Influenced
Persuaded
Briefed
Informed
Encouraged
Communicated
Advised
Guided
Coached
Instructed
Explained
Enlightened
Stimulated
Invented
Enthusiasm
Adapted
Adopted
Facilitated
Coordinated
Developed

DETAIL

Approved
Validated
Retained
Executed
Dispatched
Responded
Followed through
Implemented
Enforced
Responsible
Tolerated
Met deadlines
Arranged
Time management
Varied
Routine
Memorized
Judged
Collected
Compiled

WRITING RESULT ORIENTED STATEMENTS FOR YOUR RESUME

There are no absolutes when writing your result-oriented statements for your resume, but you do want to convey your accomplishments, skills, and responsibilities to the potential employer in the most effective way. Ultimately, you want to provide active descriptions that outline goal-oriented results in order to sell your unique experiences to the employer.

USING ACTION VERBS TO DESCRIBE SKILLS

Focus on using action verbs to describe forceful, highly specific facts in your statements, instead of general verbs and adjectives. This is what makes you unique to all other job seekers out there! Here are some typical examples and ways to rework them.

Poor: Customer Service
Better: Provided customer service for bank clients

What were the bank services?
Were there policies/procedures?
What did your service result in?

BEST: **Resolved consumer problems, explained bank services and policies, and communicated knowledge of financial planning, resulting in greater customer satisfaction**

Poor: Department Manager
Better: Managed department and recruited participants

How did you manage the department?
What did you recruit for?
How many did you recruit and manage?

BEST: **Managed 12 person department
Recruited participants for marketing research studies
Cut costs by 1/3 in less than 6 months**

[note: change of format so they don't think that BEST always means NO BULLETS]

Poor: Worked with children with special needs
Better: Organized and initiated group activities for children with special needs

What were your duties?
What did they result in?
How did they fit into working with gifted students?

BEST: **Initiated and organized group craft activities for children with special needs to enhance peer interaction and develop motor skills**

Poor: Duties included planning team teaching
Better: Coordinated team teaching activities

What grades did this include?
What was the result of the activities?

BEST: **Coordinated team teaching activities resulting in increased understanding and cooperation among all primary grades**

Example of a first, general (not targeted) resume:

Lucy Scribner

815 North Broadway
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

518-580-5000
lscribner@skidmore.edu

Education:

Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY May 2015
Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, Minors in Classics and Honors Forum
Overall GPA: 3.68; Major GPA: 3.89; Deans List (Fall 2011 – Spring 2012)

Study Abroad: Skidmore in London, London, United Kingdom Fall 2011

Leadership Experience:

Web Designer, UJIMA, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY Fall 2012
Development and maintenance of club's website (publicize events via website)
Plan club programs including guest speakers and dinners
Direct main-stage fashion show

Student Government Association, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY Spring 2012 – Present
Elected by student body to serve as representative in student senate to oversee schools clubs, organizations and student led initiatives
Interview and recommend candidates for Student Government positions

Respect Matters Campaign, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY Spring 2012
Develop campus-wide campaign promoting diversity efforts on campus
Peer advisor to two leadership focused groups for incoming first year and sophomore leaders and facilitated group meetings
Co-collaborate with other student groups to sponsor diversity-focused programs and reactive to bias events on campus
Brainstorming and implementing initiatives to be proactive

Additional Experience:

Resident Assistant, Skidmore College Residential Life, Saratoga Springs, NY Fall 2012 – Present
Ensure safety and management of residential building
Act as support network for incoming freshman and other residents
Plan and execute community building programs

Campus Representative, Apple Inc., Saratoga Springs, NY Spring 2012 – Present
Plan and execute numerous marketing campaigns per month; work with campus bookstore to drive sales
Host demo tables and workshops; act as a resource for existing and perspective Apple customers

Summer Marketing Intern, National Sculpture Society, New York, NY Summer 2011
Assist with planning, installation and de-installation of exhibitions
Develop bi-monthly news bulletin and publicity web pages
Create online slide shows of organizations events
Prepare instruction manual for staff members on how to create online slideshows and basic template for web page

Skills & Languages:

MS Office, Adobe Creative Suite: Photoshop, Dreamweaver, In Design and Flash, Apple: iLife Suite
Fluent in Spanish; Proficient in Italian

Sample of Targeted Resume: Political Research

Lucy Scribner

Phone: (518) 580-5000 Address: Skidmore College, 815 North Broadway, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 Email: lscribner@skidmore.edu

EDUCATION

SKIDMORE COLLEGE, Saratoga Springs, NY: BA in American Studies May 2013
Cumulative GPA: 3.93

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY STUDY ABROAD: University of Trier, Germany Spring 2012

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY: Washington, DC: Washington Semester in American Politics Fall 2011

RESEARCH / ANALYTICAL PROJECTS

U.S. Department of Education: Intern, Office of the Deputy Secretary Washington, DC Summer 2012
Generated concise written synopses of current legislative action for use by Department, Congress members, and general public through ED website
Researched and presented to policymakers several successful school design and construction projects to support Administration's "Schools as Centers of Community" proposal

Washington Semester Independent Research Project: American University Fall 2011
Examined how increasing dependence of needy students on federal loans instead of grants for higher education has affected college access and enrollment; culminating in 65-page paper

Historical Society of Saratoga Springs: Research Assistant Saratoga Springs, NY Summer 2011
Researched archival materials, wrote text panels, and selected objects for historical exhibit on Saratoga in 1930s

LEADERSHIP

Student Government Association: Vice President / Academic Affairs Skidmore College Fall 2012 – Present
Chaired 60-member body representing each academic department and student perspectives on curricular issues
Participated in college-wide policy decisions concerning such ethical issues as sale of cigarettes on campus
Made detailed oral and written presentations of curricular reforms actions in public student forum

Presidential Search Committee: Student Representative Skidmore College Fall 2009 – Spring 2011
Served as one of two students on college-wide committee to nominate the seventh President of Skidmore College, through all stages
Conducted detailed self-study of institutional needs and goals to determine selection criteria
Searched for, and hired, higher-education specialty consultant
Interviewed and wrote evaluation of each applicant, made final recommendation to Board of Trustees

Honors Forum Council: Study Body Representative Skidmore College Fall 2009 – Spring 2010
Set goals and guidelines for first two years of comprehensive honors program

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Peer Mentor, First Year Experience, Skidmore College Fall 2010 – Spring 2011
Skidmore Community Orchestra: French Horn Skidmore College Fall 2009 – Spring 2010
Committee on Academic Freedoms: Student Representative Skidmore College Fall 2009 – Spring 2010
Student Worker, Skidmore Dining Services, Skidmore College Fall 2009 – Spring 2010

COMPUTER / LANGUAGE SKILLS

Fluent in Spanish, proficient in German
Adobe InDesign, Adobe Illustrator, MS Word, MS Excel, MS Access
Extensive experience with HTML, C++, Java

What is a CV?

A curriculum vitae is a more detailed synopsis than a resume which is usually at least 2 pages or more. It includes a summary of your *educational and academic background*, as well as *teaching and research experience, publications, presentations, awards, honors, affiliations*, and other details.

In the United States, a CV is used primarily when applying for academic, education, scientific or research positions. It is also applicable when applying for fellowships or grants.

Possible Sections to Include In Your CV:

Heading	Name, address, phone number, and email.
Education	Listing of academic degrees beginning with the degree in progress or most recently earned. Include: Name of Institution, city and state, degree type (B.A., B.S., M.A., etc.) and area of concentration; month and year degree was (will be) received. You may also include "Relevant Coursework" under this heading.
Certifications	List all relevant certifications and the year received.
Honors and Awards	Receipt of competitive scholarships, fellowships, and assistantships; names of scholastic honors; teaching or research awards.
Relevant Experience	Listing of positions (part-time, full-time, volunteer, temporary and permanent) related to the work sought. List these in reverse chronological order.
Other Experience	Groupings of other experiences (including volunteer work and/or internships) can enhance your CV. Experience can also be broken down into different categories such as: Teaching, Counseling, Administration, Volunteer, etc.
Grants Received	Include name of grant; name of granting agency; date received; title or purpose of research project, etc.
Professional Associations	Memberships in national, state, regional and local professional organizations should be listed. Also list significant appointments to positions or committees in these associations.
Publications	Give bibliographic citations for articles, pamphlets, chapters in books, research reports, or any other publications that you have authored or co-authored. Use the format appropriate to your particular academic discipline.
Presentations	Give titles of professional presentations including the name of the conference or event; dates and location
Research	Description of research projects recently conducted or in progress. Include the type of and a brief description of the purpose.
Institutional Service	List institutional committees you have served on, including offices held, student groups you have supervised, or special academic projects for which you have assisted.
Courses Taught	List the names of courses you have taught, institution and dates where taught, and brief course descriptions.
Community Involvement	Appropriate and relevant volunteer work, community service organizations, etc.
Qualifications or Skills	A summary of particular or relevant strengths or skills which you want to highlight.

What is a Cover Letter?

A cover letter is a persuasive document that **highlights the candidate's skills, knowledge of the employer, and ability to contribute to the organization.** It is usually the first document the employer sees – first impressions count!

A well-written cover letter has many of the same elements of a well-written paper. Start by thinking about some of the written class assignments for which you had to develop a thesis statement and outline, gather evidence, and defend your thesis.

Thesis Paper

Designed for a particular audience and guided by a single controlling idea, the thesis. Uses an outline to rough out the sequence of ideas.

Clear thesis statement

Supporting explanation and details

Logical transitions and appropriate language

Conclusion

Revisions aimed at perfection

Cover Letter

The single controlling idea revolves around the particular job for which you are applying and that employer's required qualifications or **skill set**. The skill set acts as the outline for the paper, because you need to address those skills in your letter.

Every point in your letter is driven by the needs/self-interests of your audience (the employer and the specific job for which you are applying).

The thesis on a cover letter belongs in the first paragraph, presenting a clear statement on why you're applying.

State the name of the position you are applying for, and summarize why you believe there's a good fit between you and the job. If you were referred by a mutual third party, mention that up front!

The body should follow the outline to support your thesis. Address how you meet the qualifications with evidence to prove each of your points. Evidence can come from: work, internships, co-curricular life, volunteerism, or class projects.

Follow the outline created by the job's skill set so you know that you're speaking to your potential employer's values and priorities.

Use the language of the industry you are applying to.

State clearly if and when you will follow up (unless you are specifically told not to).

Re-read your letter out loud (does it make sense?). Give it to others to review. Proof carefully for content and typos.

Cover Letter Sentence Starters

The purpose of the cover letter is to get the reader excited about your candidacy and make them want to read your resume. As such, you want to communicate your relevant qualifications as they fit the needs of the position while also expressing your enthusiasm towards a particular company and/or career field.

Use these starters as examples when drafting the three parts of your cover letter.

INTRODUCTION

It is with great interest that I am applying for the position of _____.

(Name of contact) provided me with your name and suggested I contact you in reference to the _____ position. As a recent graduate of Skidmore College with a degree in _____ and an avid (reader, writer, sports enthusiast, etc.), I believe I am a strong applicant for the position of _____.

As a (marketing, research, congressional, etc.) intern with (name of organization) I have gained valuable experience in _____ that makes me an ideal candidate for the position of _____.

I am eager to apply for the position of _____ because I believe I have the _____ that it takes to be successful in the position.

Thank you for speaking with me on (date) and discussing the _____ position. I am very interested in _____.

The _____ position, recently advertised in the (Skidmore My CDC Account, paper, etc.), is a wonderful match for my talents and _____.

Your organization impresses me because of (the performance of your product, the integrity of your support staff, its customer satisfaction, etc.).

BODY

My experience as a _____ will help me to contribute _____.

Throughout my four years of undergraduate studies I have demonstrated skills and abilities that are exactly what the position of _____ demands.

I can contribute to your organization's effectiveness by _____.

My previous success in _____ has proven my ability to _____.

To highlight some of my accomplishments I have _____.

Working with _____ has strengthened and improved my already strong (analytical, research, interpersonal, organizational, etc.) and (analytical, research, interpersonal, organizational, etc.) skills.

I am confident that I can be a valuable asset to your organization because _____.

CLOSING

I am eager to learn more about _____ and would like to discuss my qualifications and interests with you.

I am interested in the position and would appreciate the opportunity to discuss my background and your requirements in greater detail.

I feel that my _____ and _____ make me a strong candidate for this position and therefore look forward to the possibility of employment with (name of organization).

I would appreciate the opportunity to further discuss my qualifications with you. I can be reached at (phone number) or at (email).

SENTENCES THAT CAN BE USED IN MULTIPLE PARAGRAPHS

I would like the opportunity to put my skills, drive and enthusiasm to work as a _____ for _____.

Being (a team player, results driven, a quick learner, etc.) who loves challenges, I will _____.

My career goal is to _____. Therefore I welcome the opportunity to make a contribution to (organization name here).

The _____ position described in _____ sounds exactly like the opportunity I'm looking for.

Best Practices for Cover Letters

DO:

Customize your letter for the position. **It is the writer's responsibility, not the reader's, to connect your experience to the employer's needs.**

Write concisely, formally, and keep your writing focused. Your letter should not exceed one page.

Address your cover letter to a specific person. If the contact is not provided, call the employer to secure the information, unless the employer specifically asks candidates not to call. If all else fails, use Dear (Name of Organization) Representative, rather than To Whom it May Concern or Dear Sir or Madam.

Provide your contact information (phone number and email) in the closing paragraph.

Have several people proofread your letter to ensure it is error free.

If sending a hard copy, print your letter using white or cream resume paper.

Sign your signature in blue or black ink.

Follow up with the employer within 10 days of sending your cover letter.

DO NOT:

Mass-produce your cover letter. Generic cover letters are obvious and will not be impressive.

Provide a list of accomplishments without articulating their connection to the employer's needs.

Overstate your accomplishments. Expect employers to research you.

Use slang, abbreviation, or other casual language.

Use "Mrs." In the salutation. ALWAYS opt for "Mr." or "Ms." (Last name). If you are unsure of the contact's gender, use Dear (Full name).

Sample Cover Letter Format

Your Name
Your Address
Your City, State Zip Code
Your Phone Number
Your Email

Month XX, 20XX

Name
Title
Organization
Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. LastName:

First Paragraph: *Why You Are Writing*

Remember to include the name of a mutual contact, if you have one. Be clear and concise regarding your request. Try to avoid opening your cover letter with the sentence, "My name is John Doe, and I will be graduating from Skidmore College in May." Besides the fact that your name is identified above and/or below, and your pending graduation is listed clearly on your resume, you need to be more direct in your opening.

Middle Paragraphs: *What You Have to Offer*

Convince the readers that they should grant the interview or appointment you requested in the first paragraph. Make connections between your abilities and their needs, using the job or internship posting as a guide for effective language. Remember, in these paragraphs, you are interpreting your resume.

It is YOUR responsibility to advocate why all of your experiences make you an effective candidate. Evidence should be presented in support of each statement you make.

Topics for discussion in the cover letter could include: research papers, projects, or experience, co-curricular activities, leadership activities, athletics, study abroad, and previous internships, volunteer, or work experiences.

Final Paragraph: *How You Will Follow Up*

It is your responsibility to follow-up, unless the job or internship listing specifically indicates that you should not. State when and how you plan to follow up.

Sincerely,

Your Name