

# **WRITING RÉSUMÉS AND COVER LETTERS**



**GRAND VALLEY  
STATE UNIVERSITY®  
CAREER CENTER**

# ABOUT THE CAREER CENTER

The Career Center connects students and alumni to career-related resources, including experiential learning programming and opportunities that enhance your long-term career planning and preparation. These services include full-time job and internship search assistance, workshops and seminars, career fairs, on-campus recruitment, and simulated interviews.

## Career Center Mission

To assist students and alumni with preparation for a career, empowering them to attain their career goals, thereby furthering the university's commitment to a comprehensive and integrated liberal education.

## Career Center Services

- **LakerJobs.** The free online job search tool at [www.gvsu.edu/lakerjobs](http://www.gvsu.edu/lakerjobs) provides students and alumni access to hundreds of internships and full-time jobs with Grand Valley employer partners.
- **Individual assistance.** Meet one-on-one with a career advisor to discuss any aspect of your job search, including résumé and cover letter writing, networking strategies, and much more. To schedule an appointment, simply call or stop by our offices.
- **Workshops, seminars, panels, and events.** Career-themed outreach is available to students and alumni on all campuses. The Career Center also offers a job and internship search class.
- **Internships and cooperative education.** In a survey conducted by the GVSU Career Center, 99 percent of employers agreed that students would benefit from having career-related experience in addition to a college degree. The Career Center provides assistance in preparing for and obtaining internships and other meaningful work experiences.
- **On-campus recruitment.** Employers come to campus to interview current students and alumni for internships, cooperative education, and full-time employment. Check with the Career Center or visit [www.gvsu.edu/lakerjobs](http://www.gvsu.edu/lakerjobs) for a listing of specific employers, times, and locations.
- **Career fairs.** On- and off-campus career fairs offer students opportunities to meet and network with a wide variety of employers.

# RÉSUMÉ WRITING

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A résumé is a concise and targeted outline of your education, experience, activities, accomplishments, and skills as they pertain to your employment goals. Employers may spend only 30 seconds (if that!) scanning a résumé to determine whether your background matches their requirements. You need to think of your résumé as a marketing tool that demonstrates how your product (you) meets the needs of your potential customer (the employer).

The overall goal with your résumé is to get the interview, where you can then go into more detail about your background, qualifications, and “fit” for the job or internship. The résumé is not a laundry list of everything you’ve ever done up until this point in your life.

## Effective résumés get noticed because they

- › **emphasize relevant accomplishments** and potential contributions, not just general duties;
- › **focus on the skills necessary** in a particular field or the requirements of a specific position;
- › **are concise, well-organized, easy to read**, and have a very polished, professional look;
- › **grab the reader’s attention right away** by listing the most relevant information toward the top; and
- › **are designed well**, and have a good balance of white space and text.

## What does NOT belong on a résumé:

- › **Reference list:** This should be on a separate sheet UNLESS your résumé is two pages and you have room left on the second page.
- › **Salary history/expectations:** This will be discussed in a later interview or in a job offer setting.
- › **Irrelevant personal information:** Do not include age, marital status, religion, national origin, Social Security number, or health status.
- › **Photograph:** Though you may think this will make you more memorable, some companies cannot accept résumés with photos due to Equal Opportunity Employment (EOE) regulations.

## Where do you begin?

First, make a list of everything you’ve done in recent history — really, everything. Include internships, volunteering, jobs, academic projects, and extracurricular activities, as well as involvement on campus, with student organizations, etc.

Then, look at a job description for a position that interests you. Highlight key skills, experiences, and traits that the employer is seeking.

Use your highlighted job description to pare down your larger list into a more compact list, featuring only the items most relevant to the job description.

Once you identify what an employer is looking for and which of your experiences are most relevant, the hard part is over. Now you just need to showcase the match on your résumé. **Plan to tailor your résumé for each position to which you apply.** Once you have a general framework for your résumé, it is actually quite simple to go in and make the changes and additions that are going to add value, as well as show the employer that you are speaking their language.

## SAMPLE RÉSUMÉ: INEFFECTIVE FORMAT

2300 Greer St. (616) 555-1212  
Anywhere, MI 12345 partygirl@gvsu.edu

### Nots O. Sharpe

#### Objective

To find a challenging job where I can gain leadership and communication skills and develop professionally.

#### Experience

5/2010–9/2010 Social Services Detroit, MI

##### Intern

- Participated in training
- Took calls from residents
- Assisted residents with needs

Sept. 2011–Dec. 2011 Center for Women in Transition Holland, MI

##### Intake Coordinator

I took calls from people dealing with crisis situations  
Helped residents with various needs  
Worked on directory of local resources

#### Education

2005–2012 Grand Valley State University Allendale, MI

B.A., Behavioral Science with emphasis in sociology.  
Dean's list every semester but one.

#### Interests

Listening to music, running, gardening, carpentry, computers, volunteering, tutoring youth, and research women's issues.

#### Awards

Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, Psi Chi National Honor Society,  
Nominated for KRV Award.

**Don't use an unprofessional e-mail address.**  
Set the tone for your level of professionalism.

**Avoid using first person**  
(I, me, and my) and simply begin bullet points with strong action verbs.

**Listing the year** you graduated or intend to graduate is better than showing how long it took you to complete the degree.

## What makes this résumé ineffective?

- This is a Microsoft résumé template. Instead, create your own résumé from a MS Word document. Show the employer that you do have computer skills and that you can present pertinent information through an organized and professional-looking document.
- If you use an objective, keep it short, tailored to the position and/or company, and focus on what you can contribute to an employer rather than what you hope to gain.
- Your experiences and education should be listed in reverse chronological order (most recent first).
- For each statement, highlight your accomplishments using quantifiers, qualifiers, and outcomes rather than just listing job duties.

- Be consistent in types of bullets used, how the dates are listed, and any other formatting.
- Don't abbreviate important information like the name of your degree.
- Mention and detail relevant experiences rather than burying them within general headings. This résumé sheds little light on the volunteer, tutoring, and research experience which could further market this person for positions in which they are interested.
- Arrange the categories of your résumé in a way that focuses on your most important qualities rather than waiting until the middle or end to mention them. Capture the employer's attention early.

## Yule B. Sharpe

2300 Greer St.  
Anywhere, MI 12345  
(616) 555-1212  
sharpey@gmail.com

## SAMPLE RÉSUMÉ: IMPROVED FORMAT

### EDUCATION:

**Grand Valley State University**, Allendale, MI April 2012

Bachelor of Science: Behavioral science, with emphasis in sociology

Minors: Women and gender studies, Spanish

Graduated Cum Laude, GPA 3.8

### SOCIAL SERVICES EXPERIENCE:

**Center for Women in Transition**, Holland, MI September–December 2011

#### Intake Coordinator

- Responded to calls on 24-hour crisis line and documented crisis calls in database
- Assisted shelter residents with various needs, including transportation, child care, locating housing, and employment
- Attended and helped facilitate a domestic violence support/education group
- Represented agency at community centers and functions
- Shadowed case manager's meetings with clients at shelter and clients' homes
- Updated and redesigned a directory of local community resources for clients

**Social Services Network**, Detroit, MI

May–August 2010; December 2010

#### Intern

- Completed 40-hour training program
- Assisted shelter residents with needs, including child care
- Responded to calls on 24-hour crisis line

**Child and Family Guidance Services**, Muskegon, MI

June–December 2009

#### Program Intern

- Organized annual statewide conference, "Families Matter," for over 500 participants
- Learned proper techniques for conducting client intakes
- Served as receptionist in busy office during co-worker's extended absence

### ACTIVITIES:

Volunteer, Disability Advocates of Kent County Walk 'n' Roll fundraiser (2010)

Tutor, Hispanic Center of West Michigan HOY program (2009)

Presented research on gender bias at Student Scholarship Day (2010)

Independent study, GVSU Psychology Department (Fall 2009)

Represented GVSU at National Association of Campus Activities Conference (2010)

Participated in GVSU's Annual Leadership Conference (2010)

### AFFILIATIONS/AWARDS:

Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society

Psi Chi National Honor Society for Psychology

Nominated for Kenneth R. Venderbush Student Leadership Award

## SAMPLE RÉSUMÉ: CANDIDATE WITH LITTLE OR NO EXPERIENCE

### Dale Allen

1 Campus Dr, Allendale, MI 49401  
allend@mail.gvsu.edu • (616) 555-1212

#### Objective:

To obtain the Workforce Development Legal Intern position with Disability Advocates of Kent County.

#### Education:

**Grand Valley State University**, Allendale, MI

*Bachelor of Arts*

Major: Legal Studies

**Related Coursework:** Legal Research and Writing, Family Law, Property and Probate Law, Research Methods in Criminal Justice, Criminology, Civil Litigation

#### Skills Summary:

- Proficient in Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel; exposure to Lexis Nexis and Westlaw
- Typing Speed: 45 WPM
- Excellent business communication skills
- Experienced in research and presenting to small groups
- Demonstrated ability to resolve conflicts

#### Course Projects:

**Family Law**, GVSU

Fall 2008

- Formulated topic related to family law to research and present solutions to classmates
- Served as lead researcher in group of four classmates

**Legal Research and Writing**, GVSU

Winter 2010

- Wrote 20 page paper on the topic of "Law in the Public Sector" within group of three students
- Synthesized information for research paper from academic databases and peer-reviewed journals

#### Related Experience:

*Student Researcher*, GVSU Legal Studies Department

- Selected as one of three students to present paper to Grand Rapids Bar Association
- Worked with Legal Studies faculty member to complete GVSU legal studies program ABA approval and accreditation paperwork

#### Awards and Activities:

GVSU Student Senate Representative

"I am Grand Valley" Award Recipient

Back Bay Mission, Service-Learning Volunteer

August 2010–Present

January 2010

March 2009

#### Employment:

**Old Navy**, Grand Rapids, MI

*Sales Associate*

June 2010–Present

**Best Buy**, Hometown, MI

*Customer Service*

May 2004–May 2008

#### PROVIDE FOCUS

A targeted objective statement tells the reader exactly what this résumé is all about. It can reflect the job or internship and company, or the career area you are focusing on. Another example objective may be, "To obtain a Winter 2013 tax internship with a CPA firm." DO NOT state, "To obtain a challenging position with a progressive company." You may lose the reader right away!

#### MAKE YOUR EDUCATION SHINE

For candidates with limited experience in their field, or for those pursuing internships, highlighting relevant courses in the education section provides a nice set of keywords and shows what concepts/areas you've already been exposed to.

- Be sure to spell out your degree, majors/minors, etc. e.g., "Bachelor of Science," "Bachelor of Arts," "Bachelor of Business Administration."
- List your anticipated or obtained graduation date, not the date range of when you attended.
- For internships especially, highlighting your GPA on the résumé is important, because that can be a screening criteria. If your GPA is a 3.0 or above, you should include it. Consider also your major GPA; if that is higher, you can list it, but be sure to identify which GPA you are referencing.

#### ARTICULATE YOUR SKILLS

This section can be an important one in identifying those things which you bring to your career area. Think about which skills you've developed as they pertain to the field you are pursuing. Sometimes, the job or internship description will be your guide. Focus on tangible skills, such as technical abilities, language skills, etc. Stay away from creating a list of only "soft skills," such as "team player," "detail oriented," etc.

#### PROJECT WORK

Going in-depth into some of your courses and identifying specific projects you are particularly proud of can be effective. Again, this will work only if it directly relates to some of the specifics of the internship or job to which you are applying.

#### REAL WORLD APPLICATION

Related experience can be paid, unpaid, or volunteer work that is directly related to your field of study. Putting these experiences in their own section can really put the spotlight on them, and helps the reader find this information more quickly.

#### OTHER SUPPLEMENTAL SECTIONS

Depending on your background and experience, you may choose to include a section about your involvement at GVSU, your volunteer work, awards you may have received, etc. Try to focus on your college achievements, not high school.

#### JOB YOU'VE HAD

This candidate has done a great job of focusing the résumé on their future in the legal field. They still list paid work experience that is unrelated, but the candidate does not go into depth about it.

## SAMPLE RÉSUMÉ: CANDIDATE WITH EXPERIENCE

### EMILY EMPLOYABLE

6897 Bay Avenue  
Anytown, MI 49111  
(616) 555-1212  
emilyemployable@email.com

#### PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY:

- Experienced Human Resources professional with background in recruitment/staffing, payroll, and benefit administration
- Knowledge of federal and state employment laws
- Exposure to applicant tracking systems, including Powerbase
- Intermediate level Spanish language skills, both oral and written

#### EDUCATION:

**Grand Valley State University**, Allendale, MI

Bachelor of Business Administration  
Major: Management, emphasis in human resources

**Study Abroad: Universidad de Guadalajara**, Guadalajara, Mexico  
Nine Spanish credits earned

Obtained 2011

Summer 2010

#### RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:

**Manpower**, Ann Arbor, MI

*Staffing Assistant and Patient Attendant Scheduler*

- Answer phones, review résumés, and screen applicants by phone
- Perform drug screens and background checks
- Schedule patient attendants to work at University of Michigan, St. John's, and in private residences; coordinate schedules with the unit nurses and staff
- Supervise over 12 employees

April 2011–Present

**Child and Family Resources Council**, Grand Rapids, MI

*Human Resources Intern*

- Developed policies for future interns, covered the reception desk, and assisted with payroll
- Further developed and enhanced knowledge of federal and state employment laws and policies

Winter 2011

**Porter Hills**, Grand Rapids, MI

*Human Resources Intern*

- Assisted with the employee Christmas party and United Way campaign
- Researched and developed policies for the employee manual
- Gained experience with several types of applicant tracking systems

Fall 2010

#### ACTIVITIES AND VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT:

**Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)**

- Secretary in 2008 and Public Relations Chair in 2009
- Hosted several human resource speakers; assisted with meetings and organization of events

2009–2011

**Alternative Spring Breaks, Grand Valley State University**

- Volunteered during spring break; advocated for many social and cultural issues such as animal rights, AIDS, hunger and homelessness, and cultural diversity
- Site leader during the 2009 volunteer trip

2009–2011

### MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION

A “Professional Summary” section at the top of the résumé can be an effective way to outline your skill set and engage prospective employers in a way that is understandable and easy to scan. To get the most out of your summary, remember these tips:

- Keep it short, usually 3–5 bullet points
- Be honest and clear
- Focus on what you can contribute, not what you hope to gain

### YOUR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

For most candidates who are coming out of college, education is one of your biggest selling points, so this section should be toward the top of the résumé. Once a candidate gains significant experience in their targeted field, the education section can drop below their work experience.

- Spell out your degree and when you expect to complete/have completed it.
- If you studied abroad, this should be included in your education section, with the name of the institution attended, what courses you took, and where you traveled.

### EXPERIENCE MATTERS

Notice that this candidate can now speak about all of her human resources-related experience, and does not need to list other nonrelated work that she’s done. This may or may not be the case for you, but you may want to consider separating your work into “Relevant Work Experience” and “Other Work Experience.”

### WHAT ELSE?

What makes you a well-rounded candidate? Were you involved on campus when you were at GVSU? Did you volunteer in the community? Campus involvement can be shown for those who have graduated recently, but can drop off of the résumé after a few years out of college. Only list volunteer work if it is something you can speak about with conviction and have been involved with over time, not just a one-time service opportunity which lasted a couple of hours.

# Résumé accomplishment statements show results

## What are accomplishments?

**Accomplishments are things you started, completed, worked on, created, developed, or made possible — things that happened because you were there.** It can be a long- or short-term project; something created or supervised with others, or by you. But they're always specific, not general, and they are always things in which you played an active role, even if others worked with you. Look at the difference between a duty and responsibility (which does not market you effectively, but is the way most people write their résumés) and the same situation described as an accomplishment.

Here's a task, duty, or responsibility like those that appear on a **typical résumé**:

*"Wrote weekly reports on sales and submitted these to home office."*

Now, as an **accomplishment**, the same information in **selective detail**:

*"Completed 134 summary reports on sales, including weekly volume, percent of increase, and new clients seen; received commendation from sales manager for accuracy and for never missing a deadline."*

Note that the **accomplishment** described the duty using **"quantifying and qualifying"** words.

## Tips for writing powerful accomplishment statements

Accomplishment statements may be part of your **summary statements**, **job descriptions**, and/or **descriptions of relevant skills and experiences**.

### Use Action Verbs

*Before:* Responsible for United Way campaign

*After:* Directed United Way campaign successfully reaching a \$1.5 million goal

### Use Numbers/Quantify Statements

*Before:* Supervised front desk of the residence hall

*After:* Supervised 8 front desk employees, ensuring excellent customer service to 150 residents

### Use Adjectives

*Before:* Experience working in a manufacturing setting

*After:* Assumed over 3 years of progressively responsible assignments in a fast-paced manufacturing environment

### Cite Positive Results of Work Done Well

*Before:* Managed and trained switchboard staff

*After:* Managed and trained switchboard staff to ensure adequate coverage and excellent customer service

Ask  
yourself

- What was your **greatest personal achievement** in this position?
- What **special skills or knowledge** did you need to perform this task satisfactorily?
- What **different levels of people** did you interact with to achieve your job tasks?
- What **verbal or written comments** did peers or managers make about your contributions in this area?
- What were your **duties**?
- What **aspects of your personality** were brought into play when executing this duty?

## Sample résumés

The following pages contain additional sample résumés, which are to be used as general guidelines. Remember, your résumé is a unique document, focused on a specific job or career area, so make sure to spend the time to make it your own. Some career areas are more on the creative side (advertising, graphic design, fine arts) and so these résumés can have a bit more flair, reflecting that industry. Notice how the sample résumés start out; some have objective statements, while others start with education or a summary.



- Who is going to be reading the résumé?
  - How am I applying for the position?
  - How can I best grab the reader's attention right away?

<u>Present Address</u> 401 Fulton St. W. Grand Rapids, MI 49504	<b>Isaac Indemand</b> (616) 331-6708 – indemand@mail.gvsu.edu	<u>Permanent Address</u> 7725 Louie Lane Chicago, IL 60610		
<b>Objective</b>				
To obtain the SAP Analyst position at Steelcase utilizing technical and business process knowledge in a customer focused and results-oriented work environment.				
<b>Education</b>	Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI	Obtained December 2011		
<b>Bachelor of Business Administration, Management Information Systems</b> , Major GPA: <b>3.32</b>				
<b>Professional Knowledge and Technical Skills</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ABAP, Java, HTML, C, SQL, and Visual Basic programming experience</li> <li>• SAP Business Process Integration and Solution Architect Certification (TERP10) with SAP ERP 6.0 (Obtained August 2011)</li> <li>• Lotus Notes, Service Manager, Access, Oracle, Linux, Dreamweaver, and Photoshop knowledge</li> <li>• AGILE and SDLC methodologies</li> </ul>				
<b>Internship Experience</b>				
Consumers Energy, Jackson, MI	May 2011–August 2011			
<b>SAP Development Intern</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worked as part of the Work Order and Asset Management Team as an ABAP Developer</li> <li>• Completed change tickets that added to and improved usability of existing business objects</li> <li>• Participated as a member of the Power Toastmasters Club</li> <li>• Collaborated with members of other teams to complete and test development work</li> <li>• Improved both ABAP development and problem solving skills</li> <li>• Worked with a fully implemented SAP system and other professional enterprise software suites</li> </ul>				
<b>ABAP Development</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved performance of existing work order costs interfaces by adding binary searches when reading internal tables; maintained Excel spreadsheet of all business development objects</li> <li>• Modified an Enhancement to allow table driven pasting limits when using T-codes SE16, SE16N, SQVI that significantly reduced the load on the system</li> <li>• Created an interface that kept track of modified equipment details to include eight fields in an output spool, printed the spool to a text file within SAP, and sent the information to a proxy to be stored on a centralized database</li> </ul>				
<b>Related Educational Experience</b>				
Enterprise Information Systems, MGT 351	Winter 2011			
Business Process Integration				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyzed and conducted the financial and material impacts of the various steps in the integration process using SAP</li> </ul>				
Customized ERP Solutions, MGT 475	Winter 2011			
ABAP Development Assignments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learned techniques and the importance of customizing off-the-shelf-software such as SAP</li> <li>• Programmed ABAP solutions tailored to various user needs commonly used in business practices</li> </ul>				
<b>Professional Experience</b>				
Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI	May 2009–Present			
<b>Moving Crew</b>				
FedEx Ground, Grand Rapids, MI	May 2008–Present			
<b>Package Handler</b>				

# Sally Science Student

600 Lake Dr. SE • Grand Rapids, MI 49506 • 616.722.4585 • sally.student@gmail.com

## EDUCATION:

*Grand Valley State University*

Bachelor of Science

Major: Chemistry, Emphasis in Biochemistry

Minor: Biology

Allendale, MI

Expected Graduation Date: December 2012

GPA: 3.6

## RELEVANT COURSEWORK:

- Organic Chemistry
- Criminal Justice
- Gross Human Anatomy
- Cell and Molecular Biology
- Human Physiology
- Physical Chemistry
- Forensic Analysis
- Quantitative Analysis
- Advanced Genetics

## SKILLS/TECHNIQUES:

### Chemistry/Biochemistry:

- Bioinformatics (sequence alignments)
- Agarose gel electrophoresis
- Restriction analysis of DNA
- Western blot
- PCR amplification of DNA
- Bradford and CENTA assays
- SDS – PAGE

### Forensics:

- Scene, impression, and fingerprint photography
- Preliminary serology analysis
- Arson evidence collection
- ELISA
- Latent print analysis using powders, cyanoacrylate fuming, and enhancement chemicals

## RELATED EXPERIENCE:

### *Crime Scene Technician Intern*

Kent County Sheriff's Department, Scientific Support Unit

January–May 2012

Grand Rapids, MI

- Assisted unit by practicing various techniques such as crime scene photography, latent print and impression processing, and video enhancement

## RESEARCH PROJECTS:

### *Latent Fingerprint Processing*

Kent County Sheriff's Department

Spring 2012

Grand Rapids, MI

- Compared the degree of enhancement of different types of latent fingerprints using fluorescent chemical genipin on various types of colored paper

### *Recombinant Expression and Characterization of TEM-1 $\beta$ -lactamase in *E.coli**

Grand Valley State University

Allendale, MI

- Isolated and amplified the TEM-1 gene using PCR, ligation into pET-28a recombinant plasmid, and induction by engineered T7 tag
- Determined success through Western blot, SDS-PAGE, and kinetic assays



*Bright Ideas*

**Wayne.Writer@gmail.com**  
**123.345.4567**  
**231 Eastern Avenue | Allendale, MI 49401**

<b>Education</b>	<b>Grand Valley State University   Allendale, MI</b> Bachelor of Arts   Graphic Design   Professional Writing Anticipated Graduation   April 2013  <b>GVSU International Merit Award</b>   August 2010–Present Dean's List   6 semesters
<b>Experience</b>	<b>Web Developer/Designer</b>   November 2010–Present <i>Meijer Corporation</i> Grand Rapids, MI  <b>Develop database-drive Web interfaces</b> for rapid, real-time information sharing <b>Conduct user acceptance testing</b> and report results to 32 department leads <b>Create and execute a social media strategy</b> on Facebook and Twitter <b>Single-handedly increased page views to the CEO's blog by 840 percent</b>  <b>Editorial Intern</b>   December 2009–April 2010 <i>Rodale.com</i> Emmaus, PA  <b>Wrote 19 online news stories</b> <b>Networked with industry experts</b> , developing story leads and access to inside information <b>Copy edited</b> up to twelve 300 to 500 word news articles per day
<b>Skills</b>	<b>Software</b>   Adobe Creative Suite, CMS, Java Rhino, SPSS <b>Foreign Languages</b>   Italian, English, Albanian

*Wayne Writer*

# COVER LETTERS AND REFERENCES

Cover letters and e-mail messages to employers create their first impression of your communication skills, interests and motivation, and knowledge about the organization or field. Make every effort to target and tailor each letter or e-mail to show the connection between your qualifications and the employer's requirements. While this takes more time, targeted letters are far more effective in helping candidates land interviews.

## Do I need to send a cover letter with my résumé?

It is always a good idea to include a cover letter — even when it is not required — when you are applying for a position and when you will not be having a face-to-face conversation with the person in charge of hiring. Many job or internship applications only request a résumé; however, a well-written cover letter serves to introduce your résumé and gives you the opportunity to direct your reader's attention to specific areas of your background. In addition, you can clearly outline for the employer what specifically about the job or internship is interesting to you and what appeals to you about their particular company or organization — something you cannot do with a résumé.



### Things to consider

- › **Target your letter** to match each particular organization or position being sought.
- › **Match your skills** to the skills the employer is seeking and give concrete examples.
- › **Address your cover letter to a specific individual** whenever possible. When a name is not available, use "Hiring Manager," "Internship Coordinator," or "Human Resources" instead of "To Whom It May Concern" or "Sir/Madam."
- › If someone has **referred you** to this position or company (e.g., an alumni contact, family friend, or parent), mention this at the beginning of the letter.
- › Your cover letter will most likely be sent **via e-mail** (as an attachment, or as the message itself), or it may be uploaded as part of an online application along with other supportive materials. In very rare cases, a hard-copy printed version is requested to be sent via the postal service.

## Goals of a cover letter:

- › **Introduce yourself**, your major, degree anticipated, and how you learned of the opportunity.
- › **Express your interest and enthusiasm** in the position and the organization.
- › **Demonstrate your experiences** through specific, related examples and "match" your experience with the position requirements whenever possible.

- › **Convince the employer** that you possess the skills and abilities they are looking for in potential candidates and that they should call you in for an interview.
- › Make it **memorable!**

## References:

A reference page provides a list of people who are willing to speak with potential employers about your skills and experiences.

- › **Always get permission** to use someone's name as a reference. At the very least, provide each of your references with a copy of your résumé.
- › **Bring copies** of your reference page to interviews.

- › **Keep your references informed** on your search. Specifically, let them know when a potential employer might be contacting them. This will ensure your references are prepared to speak on your behalf, rather than be caught off guard.

## SAMPLE COVER LETTER: TRADITIONAL FORMAT

Your complete name and  
address block  
as it appears on your résumé

Today's Date

Name of person to whom you're writing

Person's job title

Organization name

Address

City, State Zip code

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. (Last Name):

(if you don't have a contact name, you may address the letter "Dear Hiring Manager" or "Dear Human Resources")

**First paragraph.** Use this paragraph to attract the employer's attention and to stimulate interest in your candidacy. Indicate your reason for writing the letter. When applying for a specific position, as opposed to simply writing a letter of inquiry, indicate how you learned about the opening. This also may be a good place to mention something that impressed you about the organization, based on your research.

**Second paragraph.** Use this paragraph to relate your skills, knowledge, passions, and other background information to the needs of the prospective employer. You may wish to refer the reader to a specific part of your résumé. It is also a good idea to state why you're interested in this particular employer and/or position — just be sure to state this in terms of the employer's interests, not simply your own. Focus on how you can be an asset to the employer. Use specific examples to support your points — avoid recreating a list from your résumé. Instead, show the employer a concrete/anecdotal example of how your experience meets their needs.

**Third paragraph.** Express your interest in participating in an interview and provide a phone number where you can be reached. You may offer to take additional steps to complete your application. End with a positive statement; for example, indicating you look forward to hearing from the prospective employer. If you are writing a letter of inquiry, i.e., if you're initiating contact rather than responding to a posting, indicate you will follow up with the employer by a certain date (typically one to two weeks after the date of your letter) and provide a way to be reached should the employer wish to contact you before that time.

Sincerely,

*Handwritten Signature* (or electronic)

Your Name

## SAMPLE COVER LETTER: T-STYLE FORMAT

### Damon Jobhunter

Ravine Apartments #15  
Allendale, MI 49401  
(616) 895-0000  
jobhunterd@mail.gvsu.edu

Ms. Penny Greer  
Managing Partner  
Duncan and Associates, CPA  
50 Monroe NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

February 19, 2012

Dear Ms. Greer:

Mary Crone of Reese and Associates suggested I contact you regarding the vacant Staff Accountant position. I am extremely interested in the position and have listed how my skills and experiences exceed your requirements below:

#### Your Requirements:

- Minimum GPA: 3.0
- Computer experience
- One year related experience

#### My Qualifications:

- Overall GPA: 3.7
- Intermediate level Excel knowledge; familiar with various tax software, SAP, and Access databases
- More than two years of accounting experience, including exposure to both tax and audit procedures

Enclosed is my résumé, which will provide you with additional information regarding my educational and work history. I hope you'll agree that my coursework and demonstrated campus leadership help to make me a strong candidate.

I would really appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you how my skills and qualifications are a great match for the Staff Accountant position at Duncan and Associates. Please feel free to contact me at home at (616) 895-0000 during business hours if you have questions about my candidacy or require further information. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Damon Jobhunter

If you aren't comfortable writing eloquent persuasive prose, you may gravitate toward the **t-style cover letter format**. Many people seeking cover letter advice complain that they don't know how to describe their skills in a few paragraphs when they may be better at just listing out their abilities. The t-style cover letter caters to the strengths of list-makers who may not be great writers.

T-style cover letters are created using a **two-column method** showcasing how your specific qualifications match up with the job requirements listed for a position. For this reason, this format is also called the **job match format**, since it matches up your strengths with the job requirements.

### Damon Jobhunter

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### References

Mary Crone, CPA  
Reese and Associates  
523 Accounting Blvd.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
(616) 555-1212  
cronema@reese.com

Roberto Wilson, Owner  
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Joseph Professor (faculty advisor  
for Residence Hall Council)  
Grand Valley State University  
250 Lake Woebegone Hall  
Allendale, MI 49401  
(616) 895-1212  
profj@gvsu.edu

### Things to consider

- Keep the reference page **simple** and **easy to read**.
- Unless instructed otherwise, **list three to five references**. Good references include current or former supervisors, professors, advisors, or other employers. Avoid using family members or peers as references.
- **Include your contact information** at the top of the page; to keep a consistent look, you can copy and paste the contact information from your résumé onto this page.
- **Include** each reference's name, title, employer, address, and telephone number, including area code.

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