

Resume Tutorial

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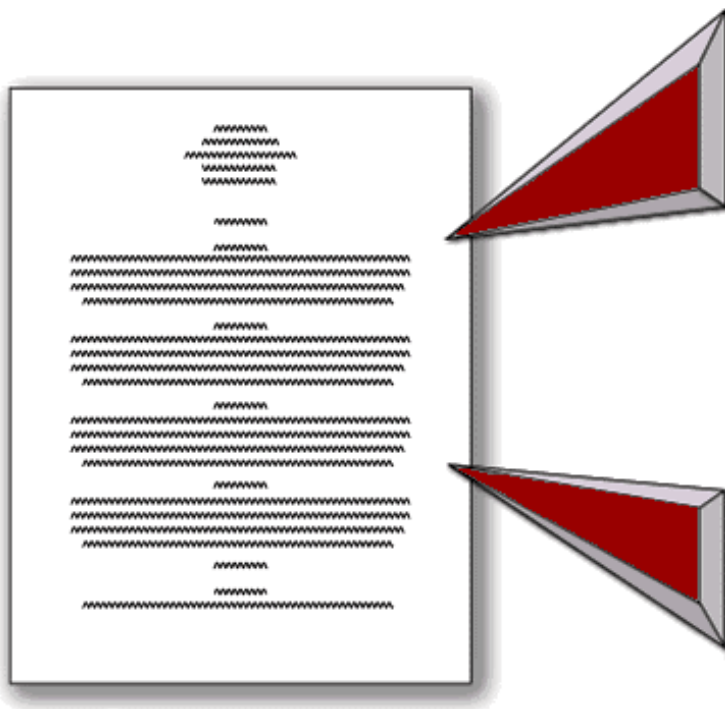
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Resume Tutorial

Introduction

"A resume is just like life... you never get a second chance to make a first impression!"



Your resume should provide a crisp, positive, and accurate overview of your work experience, job skills, and education. The purpose of your resume is to market your abilities to get an interview.

Stand out from the crowd! Your resume will likely be one of many under consideration. This online guide will help you build a resume employers will want to see. Go [step by step](#) or skip to the section that interests you.

You can also download a [PDF version](#) of this tutorial. This requires the free [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) plug-in.

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Getting Started

The hardest part of building a resume can be the start. If you are unsure where to start, talk to friends and family who know you well. Get their ideas. Set a clear goal or objective. Plan to write and rewrite again!

As you start the process...

Maintain Focus

Develop a concise job objective or summary statement that shows how the position matches your career goals. It is not vital that you include this statement on your resume, but make sure the rest of your resume reflects this objective.

Be Accurate

Avoid misrepresentation of your abilities.

Target Your Resume to the Position

Your resume is a marketing plan selling YOU! Choose skills and activities most relevant to the job. Include information on how you can contribute to an employer's bottom line. Employers are interested in what you can do for them, not what they can do for you.

Highlight Your Accomplishments

Provide examples of challenges you faced and problems you solved. Quantify your achievements using action verbs. Avoid passive phrases. Emphasize the positive!

Choose Your Words Carefully

Convince the employer you are right for the job. Use readable fonts and make every word count. Learn to pack every word with power.

Be Professional

Proofread your resume several times (and have a friend do the same). If sending a hard copy, print your resume with a quality printer on high-grade paper.

Don't Spam Employers

Sending more resumes does not guarantee more interviews. You have a better chance of winning an interview with a quality, targeted resume sent to a few employers.

Avoid Resume "Don'ts"

Check out this list of possible controversial issues.

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Resume Don'ts

Avoid the resume reject pile!

Think twice before using these items in your resume:

Items of Controversy - Avoid listing political affiliation, controversial employers or activities, or religious beliefs. Follow this rule unless you are applying for a political, activist, or religious job.

Personal Information - Listing your age, height, weight, race, ethnicity, or marital status is not necessary. It may provide open invitations for discrimination.

Personal References - Remove personal references from your resume. It is assumed you have references.

Salary Requirements - Do not mention your salary desires or wage history.

Errors - Check your resume several times for accuracy, consistency, correct use of grammar, and spelling. Stick with a single verb tense. Have someone proofread your resume.

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Types of Resumes

There are four basic types of resumes: chronological, functional, combination, and curricula vitae (CVs). Choose a format that best fits your experiences and industry or one that you are comfortable with. Ultimately, the choice of resume format is up to you.

Chronological resumes present information in a timeline approach.

Functional resumes group work experience and skills by skill area or job function.

Combination resumes highlight your skills and experiences.

Curricula vitae (CVs) provide a detailed statement of your qualifications. They are only used in certain positions and industries.

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Chronological Resumes

Chronological resumes present information in a timeline approach. Typically, the most recent work or educational experience is listed first, followed by the next most recent.

This is the most common type of resume. It illustrates how you have made progress towards your career objective through your employment history.

A chronological resume is best if you have demonstrated experience within your desired career field. It highlights the positions you have held and the companies for which you have worked.

Advantages:

- Many employers and recruiters expect and prefer this format
- Employers can easily scan chronological resumes
- Provides a straightforward history of your work experiences

Disadvantages:

- Can demonstrate a lack of work experience
- Will show any gaps in employment history
- Employers can guess your age if you include older experiences

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Functional Resumes

Functional resumes group work experience and skills by skill area or job function. Use functional resumes to point out your skills over your specific employment history.

You can showcase the work experience that is most important to your career objective. The functional resume can be used to minimize employment gaps. It highlights more relevant skills instead of position titles.

This type of resume may work best for first-time job seekers, those reentering the workforce after a long break from employment, or those changing careers.

Advantages:

- Provides a flexible approach
- De-emphasizes lack of experience in a field
- Minimizes possible age discrimination

Disadvantages:

- Employers may expect the chronological format

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Combination Resumes

Combination resumes merge the chronological and functional styles. It presents the knowledge, skills and abilities gained from work in a reverse-chronological order.

This resume type highlights your skills and experiences. The combination type of resume is best if you:

- Wish to include volunteer or internship experience
- Have a varied employment history
- Are changing careers

Advantages:

- Provides employers with the expected chronological format
- Highlights your skills

Disadvantages:

- Can be repetitious if similar functions or skills are utilized in different positions
- May be longer than the chronological and functional formats

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Curricula Vitae

Curricula vitae (CVs) are very different from resumes and are only used in certain positions and industries. CVs provide a detailed statement of your qualifications.

How are resumes and CVs different?

A resume provides a short summary of your relevant qualifications. A CV is more biographical in nature. Resumes are usually limited in length; CVs can be much longer. Resumes are usually written for a specific type of position; CVs are generally not targeted.

CVs are most often used in higher education, science, and medicine. CVs are also used extensively in other countries. You may wish to develop one if you seek international employment.

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Design & Presentation

Enhance the content of your resume with a professional presentation.

It is important to please the reader's eye. Short narratives work well in summary statements while bullets, keyword phrases, and highlights market your skills in an effective manner.

Complete sentences are not necessary. Market yourself with action verbs, careful use of white space, and emphasis on indentation. One-inch margins and a balance of content in the body make your resume more readable. Be consistent in all resume design, text, and punctuation decisions. Be professional!

Key points to remember:

- Use a readable font rather than one that is decorative.
- Maintain font sizes between 10 and 14.
- White is still considered the best choice of paper color.
- Avoid unnecessary graphics and shading.
- Use laser printing on high quality paper.
- Make sure photocopies of your resume are clean and sharp.
- NEVER handwrite your resume.

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Essential Features

Each resume contains required elements. Most of your time should be spent completing these parts. Browse the sections below to learn more.

A **career objective** can focus you and help you write a tight resume. Each statement in your resume should reflect your objective.

Write a **summary statement** to show why you are the ideal candidate for your desired job. The summary statement is a place to highlight your past accomplishments. Emphasize the professional characteristics that make you stand out.

Your **contact information** tells the employer who you are and how to contact you for additional information. This is essential in setting up an interview, via phone, email or in person.

Your **education** background shows your academic achievements and fields of study.

Include information on any **licenses** you may hold that fulfill state legal requirements.

List your **certifications** to indicate your specialized expertise in a particular field.

Your **work experience** tells the employer where you have worked and what you have done.

Your **skills** list shows what abilities you have related to your desired job.

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Career Objective

A well-developed career objective helps you determine your next career move.

1. Your objective and [summary statement](#) set a tone for the rest of your resume. Try to keep them short.
2. Your objective is your employment goal. You should develop an objective even if you choose not to include it in your resume. Write the rest of your resume with this focused objective in mind. Remove any statement that does not reflect your objective.
3. Employers may look at your resume before your cover letter. A well-written career objective catches an employer's interest and channels this attention to the details of your resume.
4. The career objective summarizes your expectations for pursuing your desired career. These expectations should include what an employer should expect from you as well as target skills that you can bring to the company. Some objective statements refer to specific positions within the hiring organization. Consider broadening the statement to include other potential opportunities available.
5. A good objective may improve your chances of winning an interview. Avoid vague descriptions, as they are meaningless to employers.
6. A good objective mentions a specific job category, such as "office position" rather than "data entry clerk." Being too specific may eliminate you from possible openings within a company. You may also mention an industry, such as "the communication industry" tailored to that of your potential employer. You may want to highlight some of your specific skills that are of interest to the hiring party. Focus on what you have to offer a potential employer, not on what they can do for you.

Example:

Career Objective To obtain an entry-level office position where my word-processing computer skills and attention to detail may be fully utilized.

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Summary Statement

Write a summary statement to show why you are the ideal candidate for your desired job.

The summary statement highlights your past accomplishments and emphasizes the professional characteristics that make you stand out. You only have one chance to make a good first impression. Use action verbs and keywords to wow the reader.

The summary is optional. You can use it instead of or in addition to a [career objective](#). Develop a career summary even if you choose not to include it in your resume. As with the career objective, this process will provide you focus as you develop the rest of your resume. The details of your resume should reflect your summary.

Highlight yourself ... a summary statement may include:

- Your job title or position.
- Your areas of expertise.
- Your skills.
- Your best professional qualities.
- A short career objective.

Before you begin to write a summary statement, do some research. What is your potential employer looking for in a job candidate? What special qualities and talents will you bring to the position? Why are you the perfect candidate for the job?

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Contact Information

Your contact information serves two purposes. It tells the employer who you are and how to contact you for additional information or to set up an interview.

Contact information should make it easy for a prospective employer to contact you directly or leave a message to which you can respond the same day. Only provide information you are ready and willing for potential employers to use. Make yourself available for their calls, and check your answering machine (or voice mail) and e-mail on a regular basis!

Stand out! Let employers notice and remember your name by using a **larger font**, all CAPITAL letters, and/or a **bold-faced** font. Use your full first and last name. Your middle name or initial is optional. Do not use nicknames.

Be sure to include your full address. Except for your state, spell out all abbreviations.

Supply a phone number where you can be reached at all times. If you prefer, you can include a day and home phone number, a cellular phone number, and/or a pager number. Always include the area code. If you include multiple numbers, provide a descriptive title for each (e.g., Phone, Cell, Fax).

Provide an e-mail address that you can access from both home and work, if possible. Keep in mind that employer-provided e-mail accounts may be monitored. You may prefer to use a personal e-mail account for contact purposes. Make sure the e-mail address you provide sounds professional.

If you provide information on a web page, update your page on a regular basis. Make sure employers cannot access personal parts of your web site. Only provide information you are willing to share with employers.

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Education

Depending on the type of job you seek, this section may be even more important than your work history.

Accuracy with starting and ending dates, degree titles, and school contact information is crucial.

List your educational levels attained, starting with your most recent. If you have taken college classes but are not pursuing a degree, list any classes pertinent to the position you are seeking. Include your high school or GED information if applicable.

A potential employer may thoroughly research your educational background based on the information you provide. You may be asked to provide your college GPA (Grade Point Average) and GPA for your major field of study. Make sure you have this information with you during an interview, whether you provide it within your resume or not. A general practice is to list your GPA if 3.0 or higher.

Education Examples:

Name of School. City, State. Degree, Major/Minor/Concentration. Date received.

General Educational Development Diploma, Name of School, City, State. Date received.

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Occupational Licensure

Occupational licensure is important in many fields, particularly technical and health industries.

Licensure requirements apply to specific occupations, many dealing with public health and safety. They are regulated by the states or Federal government. Licensure requirements vary by state. If a license is required by your state, unlicensed practice of an occupation is a criminal offense.

Depending upon the type of license, you may need to renew your credentials on an annual or semi-annual basis. If your license has lapsed, you may leave it out of your resume. You may also indicate the beginning and ending time period (month and year) you were actively licensed.

If you are licensed to practice in multiple states, be sure to list each state. Although it is not required to include a copy of your license with your resume, be prepared to show the original to a prospective employer.

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Occupational Certification

Certifications are an independent verification of expertise.

Certifications are available in many fields of work. Although many are familiar with computer and technical certifications, a wide range exists. Certifications address occupations from interior design to automotive sales.

This optional feature reflects your interest in staying current in your field of expertise. Prospective employers can see that you have fulfilled the steps to complete your certification. Many times, that requires passing a series of standardized tests. Your certification may speak for your work abilities in a particular field. Avoid certifications that are conferred simply by paying a fee.

Once completed, you may need to renew your certification. If your certification has expired, leave it out of your resume. You may choose to indicate the beginning and ending time period you were certified instead.

Be prepared to provide your potential employer with information on the vendor or organization providing your certification.

When including your certification on your resume, make sure to spell out any acronyms.

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Work Experience

This section gives prospective employers a quick view of your employment patterns and career progression.

Your work history reveals prior dates of employment and positions held with previous employers. When providing your work history, be accurate with starting and ending dates, job titles, and employer contact information. If you have gaps in your employment history, be prepared to explain them during an interview. A large gap in your work history can also be addressed in your cover letter. You should include volunteer activities and unpaid internships, although paid work experience should take precedence.

If you are a college student seeking first-time employment, list any work experience you may have. This work may include volunteering and internships during college, high school, and summer breaks. This will let employers know you have had exposure to a structured work environment.

An effective way to highlight your accomplishments is by using results statements. Result statements explain what situation you faced at work, what action you took, and the resulting outcome. Think about your successes or the problems you have solved. Be specific. The statement "works well under pressure" is general and does not tell the prospective employer much. Instead, give an example where you performed well under pressure. If your result is that you "completed the project under budget," be sure to state how much under budget.

Result Statements

Problem → Action → Results

The goal of these statements is to show an employer you have a proven track record of providing results. You can use results statements to both paid and unpaid employment.

Do not provide contact information for those current or previous employers you do not want contacted by your potential employer. If applicable, contact the personnel department of your current employer to inform them they may be contacted for purposes of verifying your employment. You should assume a potential employer will thoroughly research your work history based on the information you provide.

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Skills

Employers review skill sets when considering job applicants.

A worker with the ability to step into a position with minimal training often gets the job when time and training budgets are tight. List the skills you possess that are relevant to the position you are seeking. They should be ranked by importance to the potential position. If you are new to the workforce, or making a career transition, your list of relevant skills may be brief. If you lack related skills, you can emphasize the "soft" skills you possess (such as organization and communication).

Broad Examples of Skills

- Installation - Installing equipment, machines, wiring, or programs to meet specifications.
- Repairing - Repairing machines or systems using the needed tools.
- Troubleshooting - Determining what is causing an operating error and deciding what to do about it.
- Equipment Maintenance - Performing routine maintenance and determining when and what kind of maintenance is needed.
- Equipment Selection - Determining the kind of tools and equipment needed to do a job.
- Product Inspection - Inspecting and evaluating the quality of products.
- Testing - Conducting tests to determine whether equipment, software, or procedures are operating as expected.

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Methods of Delivery

There are many ways to distribute your resume to prospective employers: mail, in printed form; fax; e-mail, as embedded text or as an attached document; or by creating online and posting to a resume database. You can also create a scannable resume.

If possible, find out which method your potential employer prefers. Sometimes job advertisements will indicate a preference, or give only one means of employer contact information. When replying to an ad, the fax, e-mail, and online methods will get your resume to employers most quickly.

Mail is the traditional method of delivery.

Faxing gets your resume to an employer quickly, but with slight loss of quality.

E-mailing resumes can be complicated due to different options.

Online resumes can be stored and searched in online job banks.

Scannable resumes are "plain text" versions of your regular resume.

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Mailing Your Resume

The traditional method of submitting a resume has been via mail. A clean, neat, accurate print copy, along with a cover letter, is mailed to the attention of the company's hiring manager, or to the individual specified in a job posting.

Use high-quality, light-colored resume paper and a laser printer, if possible. A crisply printed resume looks more professional than one that is hand-typed and/or printed on normal weight paper.

Keeping your resume to one page is a good idea. If you feel you should provide more information, an additional page can be acceptable.

Always include a [cover letter](#) with your resume. Use a professional envelope. Many employers keep the envelope as part of your file. You may want to use an 8-1/2 x 11 inch envelope so you do not have to fold your resume.

Make sure to track when the resumes are mailed and to which employers.

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Faxing Your Resume

Sending your resume via fax gets your information to an employer quickly and easily. However, since print quality is often poor, use the fax method only if requested or if a submission deadline is due.

Follow these guidelines, as discussed in [mailing your resume](#), for creating a crisp, professional looking print version.

Use a high quality fax machine with a confirmation feature to ensure the fax is transmitted correctly. Be sure to include a fax cover sheet with your name and phone number, and a [cover letter](#). Be sure to track when the faxes are sent and to which employers.

Only fax a resume if it's requested in the job listing, even when using a cover sheet. Otherwise it may be discarded and never reach the person to whom it was intended.

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Resume Tutorial

Emailing Your Resume

E-mailing resumes can be complicated due to the different options involved. You can include your resume in the body of the e-mail or attach it as a separate document. There are tradeoffs between the two.

Including your resume within the body of the e-mail limits your formatting options. You can enter the text into the e-mail itself, or create an ASCII resume in a text editor such as Notepad. ASCII stands for American Standard Code for Information Interchange. It ensures that the information you input on your computer will appear the same on other computers. Learn more about ASCII resumes and how to convert your resume to ASCII format.

Attachments take longer to open and you only have a few seconds to catch the employer's attention. Some employers won't open attachments for security reasons. However, attachments offer more formatting options. Employers who accept resumes via e-mail may specify a document format to use (example: RTF - Rich Text Format). When no method is specified, RTF or Microsoft Word may be your best choice.

Make it easy on prospective employers. State the position you are applying for and your name in your email subject line. Whenever you send a resume by e-mail, you should include a brief [cover letter](#). E-mail cover letters are just like regular cover letters but are only one or two paragraphs in length. Be pithy and succinct and make sure you address any specific requirements of the job listing.

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Resume Tutorial

Creating Your Resume Online

Many sites on the Internet provide a platform to create an online resume. Some websites are resume "banks" holding thousands of resumes for employers to search and find qualified applicants.

Some businesses have their own online resume building tools. Incoming resumes are formatted to include information of specific interest to the company. These resumes can be routed automatically to specific departments and/or to certain job openings. The resumes are often put into a company's "resume database." Employers may search the database for resumes containing certain job skills, certifications, educational background, and work experience.

Always be aware of [privacy issues](#) and possible "[scams](#)" when submitting your resume online. Some web sites and resume services may collect your personal information and share it with others.

Keep track of where you have posted your resume, and when it was posted. If you want your resume to stay available, even if you find a job, remember to keep it updated with your new work experience and skills. Keep an ASCII format version of your resume for loading into online databases.

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Scanning Your Resume

Many employers use scanners to convert the contents of your paper resume to electronic format. Think of your scannable resume as a plain-text version of your typical resume.

Why create a scannable resume? Employers commonly scan resumes to screen large numbers of job applicants for likely candidates. Once your resume is in electronic format, a computer program can search your scanned resume for certain terms and keywords.

How are scannable resumes different from your basic resume? A computer, not a person, will "read" your resume. Content, not artistic value, matters the most. Formatting and graphics may not transfer to electronic format, and may create problems for computer programs.

Maximize the effectiveness of your scannable resume by minimizing formatting. Your scannable resume should:

- Be left-justified, not centered
- Limit the use of columns.
- Use a common font, such as Arial or Times New Roman.
- Limit the number of font types and font sizes.
- Avoid use of font formats such as italics or boldface.
- Not contain graphics, lines, or bullets.

Here are more simple steps for a more effective scannable resume:

- Don't fold or staple your paper resume.
- Send originals, not copies of your resume.
- Use light-colored paper.

Finally, use keywords in the body of your resume. Keywords might include industry-specific terms, areas of expertise, skills, and anything else that matches an employer's needs and makes you stand out from the crowd.

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Resume Tutorial

Cover Letters

A carefully crafted cover letter is just as important as a well-written resume. Your cover letter is your chance to make a positive first impression on a potential employer.

Sell yourself to your prospective employer. Your cover letter allows you to highlight the key points from your resume.

[Cover Letter Overview](#) - discusses the issues and ideas that you need to convey in your cover letter.

[Cover Letter Content](#) - lists the important parts of a cover letter.

[Cover Letter Tips](#) - tips to compose a fresh and informative cover letter. Make your cover letter the best that it can be.

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Resume Tutorial

Cover Letter Overview

Your cover letter serves two major purposes. It should convince potential employers that "you" are a perfect fit for the position. It should explain how the potential position specifically meets your current career objective.

Sell your services accordingly. Make sure you emphasize the ways you can make a contribution to the selected employer's mission or bottom line. You may also emphasize how you might contribute to a problem the employer is facing.

An effective cover letter should also reveal:

- Your ability to write and communicate;
- Your relevant experience and qualifications;
- Your degree of professionalism; and
- Your attention to detail and organization.

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Cover Letter Content

Adhering to accepted standards for business letters is the only absolute in writing cover letters. An effective cover letter should include:

1. **Heading and Greeting** - State the date and your name/contact information at the top of the page. Address the letter to a specific name and (or) title whenever possible.
2. **Opening and Introduction** - Explain who you are and state your reason for writing.
3. **Body** - Here you will sell yourself and charm them. Reveal why you are a perfect and unique match for the position. Explain why you have chosen this employer.
4. **Assertive Closing** - Courteously take initiative toward further action and next contact. You may wish to suggest a time and method (phone call, meeting) for [follow up](#).

Don't bore your target audience with the generic form letter they have read a hundred times before. Don't simply restate your resume either. Check out our [list of tips](#) for creating a quality cover letter.

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Resume Tutorial

Cover Letter Tips

Keeping these tips in mind, it is up to you to compose a fresh and informative cover letter that deserves an interested employer's response. Actively engage your reader with a letter that clearly expresses your intentions and motivations.

Remember to:

- Tailor your letter to the target audience and industry.
- Be positive about your current employment situation and potential professional future.
- Indicate how you found out about the position.
- Emphasize what you can offer employers, rather than what they can offer you.
- Express focused and organized career goals.
- Communicate in short sentences. Don't ramble.
- Refrain from using empty or unproven claims on your abilities.
- Keep the letter to one page unless otherwise instructed.
- Proofread your letter thoroughly. Ask a friend's opinion.
- Thank the reader for his or her time.
- Use the same high-quality paper stock for both your cover letter and resume.
- Be sure to sign your cover letter.

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Follow Up

Smart job seekers enhance their chances with effective follow up to their resumes. In today's market, job seekers cannot afford to wait for interviews to find them. Enticing cover letters and quality resumes are crucial, but a proper follow up may be the key to job seeking victory.

Prior to engaging your potential employer, do your company homework. Knowledge about the company as well as understanding the company's place in the industry will help you shine during the follow up process.

A follow up phone call or letter should reiterate your interest in the position and showcase your knowledge. Unless specified otherwise in the job listing, a follow up phone call may be your best bet.

Here are some phone tips:

- Introduce yourself and ask the employer for a few free minutes.
- Check on your resume as a point of further conversation.
- Be engaging and specific in your discussion.
- Ask the employer for any questions they may have. Be prepared to answer.
- Be polite and professional.

A letter is another way to keep an employer's attention during the hiring process. An effective letter should convey that you:

- Remain interested in the company's opportunities;
- Have specific knowledge that would benefit the company; and
- Are looking forward to further dialogue.

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