

2024-2025

The Ultimate Guide to
**RESUMES
AND
COVER
LETTERS**



NORTHWEST
MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY

CAREER SERVICES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1

RESUMES

Strategies	3
Design	4
Sections	5
• Header	6
• Summary of Qualifications	7
• Education	8
◦ Education Examples	9
• Experience	10
◦ Powerful Bullet Points	11
◦ Strong Action Verbs	12
◦ Experience Examples	13
• Organizations	14
Resume Submission	15

2

COVER LETTERS

Strategies	16
Sections	
• Header and Example	17
• Introduction and Example	18
• Body and Example	19
• Closing and Example	20
Complete Cover Letter Example	21

3

REFERENCES AND OTHER COMMUNICATION

References	22
• Example	23
Other Types of Communication	24
• Examples	25

RESUME STRATEGIES

The resume is often your first introduction to an employer, explaining why you are the best candidate for a position. The goal is to get invited for an interview. Most resumes will only get a 15-second scan, as employers look for reasons to screen out unqualified candidates quickly.

Begin documenting your experiences early

- Create a master document to keep track of your activities in class, outside of class, and within the community
- Update your master document with projects, internships, part-time jobs, volunteer opportunities, organizations, research, and more
- Add experiences as you complete them rather than try to remember them later

Use the job description to develop your resume and cover letter

- Customize your resume for each application
- Include specific details that outline why you are a good candidate for the position
- Highlight your qualifications and transferrable skills that relate to the job description

TIP

Visit Career Services for assistance with any of these steps

Content is important

- Review and customize the bullet items under your experiences
- Use numbers to quantify specific achievements and results when possible

Proofread your work

- Resumes with errors, typos, and bad grammar will likely be discarded
- Ask others to review your resume to avoid errors and inconsistencies

RESUME DESIGN

Simpler is better

- Colors and lines can add uniqueness and individuality to your resume, but they should never look more predominant than the text
- Consider how well these items will photocopy in black and white
- **Boldface type**, underlining, and CAPITALS can bring attention to important heading and information on your resume
- Too many typestyles, lines, and bullets can create a cluttered appearance

Formatting the document

- Pre-made resume templates often provide a quick starting point for resume creation, but they may also be difficult to adjust or edit in future drafts
- Right alignment of dates will balance the right margin of the resume and make it easier to read
- Try to avoid two-column resumes
- Most resumes should be one page
- Two full pages is the absolute maximum length
- If you have a lot of content, be strategic in condensing your experience to one or two pages

DO	DO NOT
Use an easy to read, common font Use a readable font size, typically 10-12 point Use uniform margins, between .5 and 1 inch Be consistent with formatting	Use table and graphs Use colors or designs, unless specific to your industry Use paragraph descriptions for experiences Use clipart or photos

RESUME SECTIONS

There are several sections on a resume. Some are required, while others are optional.

Research your specific industry

- Make sure you are highlighting relevant job-related skills and experiences
- What you include should change from one resume to the next

REQUIRED

- Resume Header
- Education
- Experience (paid and unpaid)

RECOMMENDED

- Summary of Qualifications
- Organizations
- Activities

OPTIONAL

- Related Coursework
- Awards
- Leadership
- Publications
- Speaking Engagements

NOT RECOMMENDED

- References
- Scholarships

RESUME HEADER

What to include

- Your name should be the most prominent text on the page and the first thing to be seen
- Your header should include current contact information, including city, state, and zip code, phone number, and email address
- Do not include a street address on your resume
- Links to your website, LinkedIn, and/or portfolio may also be included depending on your industry
- Use the same header for your cover letter and reference page for consistency

EXAMPLES

Robert E. Bearcat

BobbyBearcat@gmail.com | 660.867.5309 | Maryville, MO 64468 | LinkedIn: bbearcat

Robert “Bobby” Bearcat

BobbyBearcat@gmail.com | 660.867.5309 | Maryville, MO 64468

*Robert E.
Bearcat*

BobbyBearcat@gmail.com
660.867.5309
Maryville, MO 64468

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

Customize this section to the job description

- Use 3-5 bullet points, presenting your most relevant qualifications
- Pay attention to the “preferred” or “ideal candidates” sections of the job description and prioritize bullet points to match
- Your summary should change with each application
- The use of strong action verbs and quantifiable results will help you stand out
- This section should be your most relevant and important information since the employer will see it at the top of the document

EXAMPLE

Sample Qualifications from Job Description

- Candidate must be organized, detailed oriented, and self-sufficient in record keeping, and conduct his/her self in a professional manner
- The position allows for high autonomy: Prospective candidate must be able to set tasks and prioritize the completion of set tasks
- Candidate must be able to work on projects as a team

URNS
INTO

Summary of Qualifications

- Highly organized college student with more than 3 years of bookkeeping experience at local non-profit organization
- Maintained a 3.75 college GPA while working 25+ hours per week during academic year
- Actively involved in several student organizations, holding leadership positions in both Student Accounting Club and Student Senate

EDUCATION

What to include

- Spell out the full name of your degree, which is never plural nor possessive
- Never put a date range for education, it creates confusion for employers
- Only use your date of graduation or expected graduation
- Include the full name of the institution, city, and state
- If your major or overall GPA is 3.0 or above (on a 4.0 scale), you may wish to include it
- Choose only one GPA to include
- Convert any non-standard GPAs to a 4.0 scale
- It is not necessary to include high school information or other education experiences that did not lead to certification or degree

EXAMPLES

Single major

Bachelor of Science: Accounting

Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, MO

April 20XX

Major GPA 3.75/4.0

Single major and minor

Bachelor of Science: Accounting | Minor: Psychology

Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, MO

April 20XX

Major GPA 3.75/4.0

Double major

Bachelor of Science Double Major: Accounting and English

Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, MO

April 20XX

Overall GPA 3.5/4.0

EDUCATION EXAMPLES

Transfer student with Associate degree

Bachelor of Science: Accounting

Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, MO

April 20XX

Major GPA 3.75/4.0

Associate of Arts: General Studies

North Central Missouri College, Trenton, MO

December 20XX

Overall GPA 3.25/4.0

Two degrees from the same institution, different times

Master of Business Administration: General

December 20XX

Bachelor of Science: Accounting

April 20XX

Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, MO

Related coursework

Bachelor of Science: General Biology

Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, MO

April 20XX

Major GPA 3.75/4.0

Related coursework: Genetics, Cell Biology, Human Physiology

Single major with certification

Bachelor of Science: Accounting

Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, MO

April 20XX

Major GPA 3.75/4.0

Certified Financial Planner

CFP Board, Washington, DC

March 20XX

EXPERIENCE

When writing bullet points, don't just think of the task; think about what you did and what outcome was produced. This is your opportunity to show an employer how these experiences have prepared you for the position you are applying for.

Just like in the summary of qualifications, use the job description as a guide to know how to focus your bullet points.

What to include

- List experiences in reverse chronological order; most recent first
- Include job title, employer, city and state, and dates of employment, followed by 3-5 strong bullet points describing your accomplishments/responsibilities
- Paid and unpaid experiences like academic projects, internships, work, and other relevant experiences should be included
- Quantify items using numbers or percentages such as budget size, number of people supervised, etc.
- Present and past tense verbs should be utilized
 - Present tense verbs should be used if the experience is currently happening
 - Use past tense verbs for past experiences

Action verbs

- Action Verbs are the words you should use to start your resume bullets - they help describe your skills to a potential employer
- One of the best places to find these is in the job description, using the same words the employer uses in the job description helps ensure you are highlighting the correct skills for that position
- You should avoid repeating action verbs as you talk about the various experiences on your resume

POWERFUL BULLET POINTS

What did you do?	How did you do it?	Why did you do it?	Quantify
Sold advertising spots for campus media	Contacted 40 area businesses every week to buy advertising spots	To increase advertising sales income	25% sales increase
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted weekly advertisement sales throughout Maryville and the surrounding areas for newspaper, yearbook, radio, and television spots, increasing advertising sales by 25% from the previous year 			
Worked as a reading tutor in Student Support Services	Spent 30 minutes with each student, 3 times per week	Improved reading proficiency	6 students, 30 minutes per week each
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tutored six students, spending 30 minutes per week with each student, improving reading proficiency by an average of two steps over the academic year 			

STRONG ACTION VERBS

Analyzed/Researched				
Assessed	Computed	Detected	Examined	Investigated
Calculated	Concluded	Determined	Identified	Maintained
Clarified	Critiqued	Discovered	Inferred	Monitored
Compared	Deduced	Evaluated	Interviewed	Observed
Assisted/Communicated				
Advised	Consulted	Cooperated	Facilitated	Participated
Collaborated	Contributed	Corresponded	Interpreted	Translated
Created/Developed				
Acted	Conceived	Established	Illustrated	Originated
Adapted	Constructed	Executed	Improved	Performed
Authored	Corrected	Expanded	Initiated	Planned
Built	Designed	Fabricated	Integrated	Presented
Clarified	Devised	Formulated	Introduced	Prioritized
Composed	Drafted	Generated	Modified	Produced
Improved/Increased				
Achieved	Assured	Encouraged	Motivated	Renovated
Acquired	Augmented	Enhanced	Overcome	Revised
Advanced	Bolstered	Expanded	Provided	Strengthened
Counseling/Instructed/Learned				
Advised	Assessed	Consulted	Encouraged	Guided
Advocated	Charged	Coordinated	Established	Mentored
Aided	Coached	Demonstrated	Explained	Resolved
Applied	Communicated	Enabled	Fostered	Supported
Organized				
Arranged	Clarified	Engineered	Obtained	Reorganized
Assembled	Complied	Instituted	Planned	Reviewed
Budgeted	Coordinated	Located	Prepared	Scheduled
Built	Developed	Maintained	Prioritized	Updated
Supervised/Managed				
Authorized	Coordinated	Enforced	Implemented	Moderated
Coached	Delegated	Evaluated	Led	Motivated
Consulted	Directed	Expedited	Managed	Officiated
Controlled	Distributed	Facilitated	Monitored	Oversaw

EXPERIENCE EXAMPLES

Supply Chain Intern

May 20XX - August 20XX

CNH Industrial Reman, Springfield, MO

- Collaborated with purchasing team on reporting activities and report building to assist with daily activities in the department
- Reviewed and reconciled more than 150 invoices and purchase orders per week to identify price discrepancies and track purchase variances
- Compiled a report of Supply Chain tools and processes and recommended improvements in final presentation to supervisors

Cashier

September 20XX - Present

Hy-Vee, Maryville, MO

- Deliver prompt checkout to more than 200 customers per day
- Provide exceptional customer service by addressing customer questions and concerns
- Close and balance register with 100% accuracy at the end of every shift
- Monitor self-checkout stations to ensure smooth operation and reduce loss from theft and scanning errors

Craniofacial and Dental Research Project

Summer 20XX

University of Minnesota

- Worked independently to design and execute experiments on how sugar levels affect bacteria in human mouths and document findings
- Spent 35 hours per week analyzing bacterial cultures and gram stains
- Presented poster and report of study findings at research summit at the end of project

ORGANIZATIONS

Documenting activities and organizational involvement demonstrates to employers that you are active in the community.

If the activity or experience is significant and relevant to your career goals, you may want to list it under experience.

What to include

- If you held an elected or appointed position, you should include the title, description of responsibilities accomplishments, and dates
- This information is the first item to be left off when space is needed

EXAMPLES

Lambda Pi Eta Member

August 20XX - Present

Secretary

January 20XX - Present

- Record detailed, accurate minutes for each chapter meeting
- Communicate weekly with all 45 members about upcoming dates and important events through email and messaging apps

Volunteer

May 20XX - Present

Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Nodaway County, Maryville, MO

- Develop one to one relationship with “little” through encouragement, role modeling, and consistency
- Plan and participate in various enrichment activities twice per month
- Tutor at Eugene Field Elementary school after school program 1-2 hours per week

RESUME SUBMISSION

Naming and saving

- When naming and saving your resume, use your full name and the position title, this ensures that you send the correct resume and allows the employer to quickly find the correct document
- If you are submitting your resume electronically, save it as a PDF to ensure the formatting is locked
- It never hurts for an employer to see your name repeatedly

Printing the resume

- If submitting your resume in person or through the mail, use the same paper and heading for your cover letter and reference page
- Consistency is essential throughout all documents because it helps an employer remember you
- Print your document on resume paper or bright white paper to show that you pay attention to details and increase the chances your materials stand out from the rest

Other things to Consider

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be a useful tool in resume and cover letter creation, but it should never be your final draft
- AI generated text often does not sound human and may contain errors or incorrect information
- Even though it may seem repetitive, be sure to fully complete any sections of the online application that ask for information similar to what is on your resume
- An incomplete application or repeated use of “See attached resume” may result in your application being rejected

If you have additional questions about resumes or applying for positions, please contact us at career@nwmissouri.edu or visit our website at nwmissouri.edu/career

COVER LETTER STRATEGIES

The purpose of a cover letter is to encourage an employer to review your qualifications and consider you for an interview. A cover letter should always be accompanied by a resume.

There are 4 main sections of a cover letter. It is very important to include each section.

Your cover letter serves as a personal introduction to your resume and should be included unless you are handing out copies of your resume at an event like Career Day.

Things to consider

- Cover letters are usually a single page and are clear and concise
- The letter should be typed in a professional business-style format
- Cover letters should explicitly address what you can do for the employer, not what they can do for you
- Your resume, cover letter, and reference sheet should all have a consistent heading and font
- Read all application instructions and send your materials as requested by the employer
- Connect your cover letter to the job description and resume, but do not repeat the same information in both documents
- Avoid addressing the cover letter “To Whom It May Concern” look for a contact name on the application or use “Dear Hiring Manager” if you cannot find a specific contact

Questions to consider in your cover letter

- What are your strengths?
- What accomplishments are worthy of emphasis?
- Do you possess specific skills or talents that are relevant to the job?
- Can you demonstrate the essentials of previous jobs?

HEADER AND EXAMPLE

The header of your cover letter should be in business letter format. This is different than your other application documents.

What to include:

- The date you are writing
- The name, title, organization, and street address of the person you are sending the letter to
 - Research the job description or company to ensure you are addressing the correct person
 - If you cannot find a specific name use Hiring Manager
- Salutation or greeting (“Dear” is the most common)

Pay close attention to the correct spelling of the person’s name and company, as well as other contact information you include

EXAMPLE

Robert E. Bearcat

BobbyBearcat@gmail.com | 660.867.5309 | Maryville, MO 64468 | LinkedIn: bbearcat

September 21, 20XX

Mr. Gustavus Gorilla
President and CEO
Gorilla Industries, Inc.
123 Easy Street
Pittsburg, KS 66762

Dear Mr. Gorilla,

INTRODUCTION AND EXAMPLE

The introduction should catch the reader's attention and make them want to continue reading the rest of the document.

What to include:

- Mention the name of the position you are applying for and the name of the organization, this shows that you put effort into customizing the cover letter
- Reference how you learned about the position
- Include a brief statement about why you are interested in the position and why you want to work for the organization

Things to avoid:

- Do not overuse I and me in the text of your cover letter, it will make you sound self-centered and put off the employer
- Do not talk about what the organization can do for you, focus on what you can offer them

EXAMPLE

In a recent advisement appointment with Dr. Ben Blackford, I learned that Gorilla Industries has a new summer internship program for Accounting students. As a longtime fan of the amazing work you are doing at Gorilla Industries, I wanted to apply as soon as possible. In my first three years as an Accounting major at Northwest Missouri State University, I learned that I have a real passion for corporate accounting and a knack for numbers and figures.

BODY AND EXAMPLE

The body of a cover letter is where you can explain to the employer what you have to offer and why you should be considered.

A strong cover letter is not a repeat of the resume, it should illustrate for the employer additional information about who you are, what you have done, and how they would benefit from you joining the organization.

Tips for success:

- Try to sound like a real person, avoid overusing jargon
- Refer the reader to your resume and mention a few of the main qualifications and skills from your previous experiences and education
- Try to write from the reader's point of view, emphasize what you have to offer
- Always provide concrete examples without repeating information from your resume bullet points; avoid vague statements
- Research the organization and position and always tie that information back to you and your skills and accomplishments

EXAMPLE

As an Accounting student at Northwest Missouri State University I have been involved in several student organizations including the Accounting Society, the Financial Management Association, and the Pi Beta Alpha business club. In each organization I have gone beyond being a member and sought out leadership positions. As Treasurer, I managed budgets of up to \$20,000 per academic semester. This level of student leadership and financial management experience will enable me to contribute to the accounting student internship on day one.

CLOSING AND EXAMPLE

The closing section is a chance for you to tie everything together and tell the employer how to contact you for more information.

What to include:

- Thank the employer for their time and consideration
- Express your interest in meeting with them to discuss the position and learn more about the team
- List your contact information, including phone number and email address
 - Make sure any phone number you provide has a professional voicemail set up that you will check and return calls from
 - Your email address needs to be as professional as possible, avoid using your Northwest student email and think about the impression your email address could make with an employer
- Include a signature when possible, if you cannot use your handwriting use a script style font that looks like handwriting with your typed name underneath

EXAMPLE

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to an opportunity to discuss this internship, your company, and team further. Please contact me at BobbyBearcat@gmail.com or at 660.867.5309.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Bearcat

Robert E. Bearcat

COMPLETE COVER LETTER EXAMPLE

Robert E. Bearcat

BobbyBearcat@gmail.com | 660.867.5309 | Maryville, MO 64468 | LinkedIn: bbearcat

September 21, 20XX

Mr. Gustavus Gorilla
President and CEO
Gorilla Industries, Inc.
123 Easy Street
Pittsburg, KS 66762

Dear Mr. Gorilla,

In a recent advisement appointment with Dr. Ben Blackford, I learned that Gorilla Industries has a new summer internship program for Accounting students. As a longtime fan of the amazing work you are doing at Gorilla industries, I wanted to apply as soon as possible. In my first three years as an Accounting major at Northwest Missouri State University, I learned that I have a real passion for corporate accounting and a knack for numbers and figures.

As an Accounting student at Northwest Missouri State University I have been involved in several student organizations including the Accounting Society, the Financial Management Association, and the Pi Beta Alpha business club. In each organization I have gone beyond being a member and sought out leadership positions. As Treasurer, I managed budgets of up to \$20,000 per academic semester. This level of student leadership and financial management experience will enable me to contribute to the accounting student internship on day one.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to an opportunity to discuss this internship, your company, and team further. Please contact me at BobbyBearcat@gmail.com or at 660.867.5309.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Bearcat

Robert E. Bearcat

REFERENCES

References should be listed on a separate page from your resume or cover letter.

Use the same header as your resume and cover letter for a consistent look and feel for your application documents.

Include 3-5 people as references

Ask for permission

- Don't assume someone will be a positive reference for you, make sure to ask them if you can include them on your reference list
 - Ask them "Can you be a positive reference for me?"
- Good places to start looking include previous supervisors, co-workers, professors, and advisors
- Avoid asking family members and personal friends to be a reference, the person needs to be objective

Provide references with the appropriate tools

- Sending your references a copy of your resume, cover letter, and the job description helps them know what type of information you are sharing with the employer
- The more prepared a reference can be, the better, make sure they know the name of the position you apply for and the name of the organization and contact person
- Let your references know the time frame and keep them informed of the different stages of your application process, they will likely be contacted after an interview
- Make sure to thank your references even if you do not get the position, send them a thank you card or email and ask if you can use them as a reference again in the future

REFERENCES EXAMPLE

Robert E. Bearcat

BobbyBearcat@gmail.com | 660.867.5309 | Maryville, MO 64468 | LinkedIn: bbearcat

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OTHER TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

After you apply and submit your resume and cover letter you may want to reach back out or contact the employer again to make sure it was received and ask follow up questions.

Remember that these are still forms of professional communication even if they are sent in a more informal method like text messages or emails.

Written communication tips

- Use clear and concise language, keep your messages short and to the point to be respectful of the employers time
- Use an active voice, lead with the subject first
- Use short paragraphs or sections and break up large blocks of text

Always be thankful of the employers time and attention.

When possible, have someone proofread your writing before you send it, mistakes in grammar, spelling, or punctuation can leave a bad impression you cannot take back. If you cannot find someone to proofread a message before you send it, reading the message out loud can help you identify mistakes.

Use the following examples as a guide to get started, but remember that your own communications should reflect careful self-analysis, and research of the employer and position.

If you have additional questions, please contact us at career@nwmissouri.edu or visit our website at nwmissouri.edu/career

EXAMPLES

Application status email

Hello, this is Bobby Bearcat. I am reaching out to check the status of my application for the Accounting student internship at Gorilla Industries, Inc. During our October 2nd interview, you mentioned that decisions would be made and sent out by October 15th. I am still very interested in the position and look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you for your time and attention.

Thank you letter or email

Thank you for meeting with me today to discuss the Accounting student internship at Gorilla Industries, Inc. I appreciated the opportunity to talk about your organization's future and enjoyed meeting and interacting with the staff.

I feel confident from our discussion that my skills and experiences mirror your needs and I would contribute to your already amazing team. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you for your time and attention.

Position acceptance and thank you

I am pleased to accept the Accounting student internship at Gorilla Industries, Inc. I look forward to working with you and learning from your amazing team.

Per our conversation, I plan to start work on June 1st. I will be doing this internship for academic credit, so you may receive an email from my advisor in the next few days. Thank you for this opportunity!

**HIRE
A
BEARCAT**



ADMIN BUILDING 130



CAREER@NWMISSOURI.EDU



NWMISSOURI.EDU/CAREER