



**STEPHEN F. AUSTIN
STATE UNIVERSITY**

Center for Career and
Professional Development

Professional Documents Guidebook

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ccpd@sfasu.edu

Baker Pattillo Student Center

Room 3.302



**STEPHEN F. AUSTIN
STATE UNIVERSITY**

Center for Career and
Professional Development

Résumé 101

A résumé is a professional document that summarizes your educational and professional background, experience and skills. The goal of your résumé is to get an interview. Keep in mind that the contents and order of a résumé will vary from person to person, but formats are somewhat standardized.

YOUR NAME

Email • Phone Number • Location (City and State only)

EDUCATION

Full Title of Degree, Graduation Month and Year (EX: May 20XX)

Name of School, City, State

Minor, Concentration, or Certificate, Cumulative GPA or Major GPA

EXPERIENCE

Position

Dates (Month and Year)

Company, School, City, State

- Start each bullet point with an **action verb**
 - Use **5W's (who, what, when, where and why)** to create bullet points
 - Keep between **3-5 bullet points**
-

COCURRICULAR EXPERIENCE

Position

Dates (Month and Year)

Organization, School, City, State

- Start each bullet point with an **action verb**
- Use **5W's (who, what, when, where and why)** to create bullet points
- Keep between **3-5 bullet points**

Position, Organization, 20XX-20XX

Organization, 20XX-20XX

- Position, 20XX-20XX

RÉSUMÉ SECTIONS

SECTION	CONTENT	DETAILS
Heading/Contact Information	Include your contact information: Name, city and state, and professional email address. Do not use abbreviations.	You should place this within the heading of your document. All sections that follow should be in reverse chronological order.
Education	List your education in reverse chronological order (most recent first). If you have previously attended other educational institutions, be sure to include this information.	Standard rule: GPAs (listing both cumulative and major GPA is fine) should only be included if they are a 3.0 or higher. Omit high school information by your sophomore year.
Experience	List work and internship experiences in this section. When describing your duties/responsibilities use short, bulleted phrases and focus on transferrable skills.	Do not include any high school jobs unless you are a freshman. Begin each bullet with an action verb (remember to use correct tense).
Optional sections – Include if you need to fill space or it’s relevant to the position.		
Objective	Construct a brief statement clearly stating what type of position, industry or specific job you are seeking.	Be sure to emphasize what skills, experience or knowledge you have to offer, not what you want from the position.
Involvement	List any memberships in organizations (on or off campus). Be sure to include any leadership roles.	Consider placing under Experience if the position or organization is applicable to the job.
Honors and Awards	List any notable honors and/or awards received through academics, scholarships, sports, community service, work or other achievements.	For tips and examples, see Résumé Tool: Other .

DO'S AND DON'T'S

DO:

- Keep your résumé layout simple and clean
- Target your résumé to a specific position or industry and research job requirements
- Keep the most important information at the top
- Be concise in your objective statement and when describing your experiences
- Use bullets to help organize information
- Use a font size that is easy to read (10-12 point) and fonts such as Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman
- Use a separate page for your references
- Keep information on your résumé current

DON'T:

- Use a premade template or complicated format
- Use full sentences or long wordy descriptions in your objective statement or experience section
- Arrange content in paragraph form
- Use any decorative fonts that are difficult to read
- Change format from one section to the next
- Lie

CHECKLIST

- Did you have someone proofread or check for errors?
- Are the margins between ½ inch and 1 inch?
- Would you want to read this? Is your résumé visually appealing?
- Were you consistent with verb tenses (i.e., current activities in current tense, past activities in past tense)?
- Have you tailored your résumé to the job description? Did you list specific, relevant qualifications for the position?
- Do you have current information?
- Have you quantified examples of qualifications when possible?

SCHEDULE APPOINTMENT WITH OUR CENTER FOR CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Our resources are available to all students. To make an appointment, email us at ccpd@sfasu.edu, go through Handshake, or call us at (936)468-3305.

Appointment topics include:

- Mock interviews
- Major and career exploration
- Career assessments
- Résumé, personal statement, curriculum vitae, and cover letter review and critique



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Cover Letters 101

Every résumé that you submit to an employer should be accompanied by a cover letter. A cover letter is formal, customized correspondence officially stating your interest in a job. The cover letter is your opportunity to highlight your abilities, expand on your qualifications, and explain why you are the ideal candidate for the job.

1. General Format

- One page in length.
- Approximately four paragraphs long.
- Written in professional business format (see example).
- Printed on the same paper in the same font as your résumé (if mailing).
- Use the same header as your résumé.

2. Audience

- Address your cover letter to a specific person.
- Avoid terms like “To whom it may concern” or “Dear Sir or Madam.”
- Look at the job description for the individual to address the letter to (if none is listed, do some research on the organization and determine who is likely to make the hiring decision).

3. Introduction Paragraph

- Clearly identify the position you're applying to.

- Introduce yourself and give your general experience and qualifications.
- Mention how you found this position. If you heard from a current employee, ensure to mention their name.

4. Body Paragraph

- Use concrete examples, including numbers, when applicable.
- Elaborate on experiences and education listed in the résumé instead of restating the information.
- Directly address the job description, listing desired or required skills and qualifications.
- Use words specific to your industry or job description – your résumé should cater to it.

5. Conclusion Paragraph

- Ask about the next step.
- Mention your contact information for a follow-up or scheduling an interview.

COVER LETTER FORMAT

John Doe

City, State | johndoe@gmail.com | (123)456-7890

Today's Date (January 30, 20XX)

Recipient's Name
Recipient's Position
Company Name

Company Address

Dear Mr./Miss _____, (Recipient's Name)

Why are you writing? I recently applied for the _____ position. While actively searching, I found this position available through _____ and have filled out an application. Currently, I am working toward a _____ (degree type) with a (month) 20XX completion date from Stephen F. Austin State University. I am very interested in the opportunity to use my (short list of relevant skills) that I have gained in the past four years.

How do your qualifications fit this job? Explain your achievements and qualifications, especially those that meet the requirements listed on the job description. Here is where you expand on details in your résumé. Refer the reader to your general qualifications on your enclosed résumé. Also, highlight any points that will be of specific interest to this employer. Incorporate information that reflects your knowledge of the company and industry.

Summarize briefly how your career aspirations and work skills uniquely align with the company to help set you apart from other candidates.

Ask about the next step. I am very interested in this position and the opportunity to learn from a reputable company. I can be reached at johndoe@gmail.com or (123)456-7890 to set up an interview or review next steps. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Doe

Enclosure (this notes that you have enclosed your résumé)

ACTION VERBS

Communication

Addressed
Conveyed
Formulated
Moderated
Referred
Advertised
Convinced
Furnished
Negotiated
Reinforced
Arbitrated
Corresponded
Incorporated
Networked
Reported
Arranged
Debated
Influenced
Observed
Resolved
Articulated
Defined
Interacted
Outlined
Responded
Authored
Developed
Interpreted
Participated
Solicited
Clarified
Directed
Interviewed
Persuaded
Specified
Collaborated
Discussed
Involved
Presented
Spoke
Communicated

Drafted
Joined
Promoted
Suggested
Composed
Edited
Judged
Proposed
Summarized
Condensed
Elicited
Lectured
Publicized
Synthesized
Conferred
Enlisted
Listened
Reconciled
Translated
Consulted
Explained
Marketed
Recruited
Wrote
Contacted
Expressed
Mediated

Creative

Acted
Created
Entertained
Instituted
Performed
Adapted
Customized
Established
Integrated
Photographed
Began
Designed
Fashioned

Introduced
Planned
Combined
Developed
Formulated
Invented
Revised
Composed
Directed
Founded
Modeled
Revitalized
Conceptualized
Displayed
Illustrated
Modified
Shaped
Condensed
Drew
Initiated
Originated
Solved

Data/Financial

Administered
Audited
Corrected
Marketed
Projected
Adjusted
Balanced
Determined
Measured
Qualified
Allocated
Budgeted
Developed
Netted
Reconciled
Analyzed
Calculated
Estimated

Planned
Reduced
Appraised
Computed
Forecasted
Prepared
Researched
Assessed
Conserved
Managed
Programmed
Retrieved

Helping

Adapted
Coached
Encouraged
Helped
Rehabilitated
Advocated
Collaborated
Ensured
Insured
Represented
Aided
Contributed
Expedited
Intervened
Resolved
Answered
Cooperated
Facilitated
Motivated
Simplified
Arranged
Counseled
Familiarized
Prevented
Supplied
Assessed
Demonstrated
Furthered

Provided
Supported
Assisted
Diagnosed
Guided
Referred
Volunteered
Clarified
Educated

Management/ Leadership

Administered
Converted
Generated
Managed
Recommended
Analyzed
Coordinated
Handled
Merged
Reorganized
Appointed
Decided
Headed
Motivated
Replaced
Approved
Delegated
Hired
Navigated
Restored
Assigned
Developed
Hosted
Organized
Reviewed
Attained
Directed
Improved
Originated
Scheduled

Authorized
Eliminated
Incorporated
Overhauled
Secured
Chaired
Emphasized
Increased
Oversaw
Selected
Considered
Enforced
Initiated
Planned
Streamlined
Consolidated
Enhanced
Inspected
Presided
Strengthened
Contracted
Established
Instituted
Prioritized
Supervised
Controlled
Executed
Led
Produced
Terminated

Organization

Approved
Corrected
Maintained
Purchased
Screened
Arranged
Corresponded
Monitored
Recorded
Submitted
Catalogued
Distributed

Obtained
Registered
Supplied
Categorized
Executed
Operated
Reserved
Standardized
Charted
Filed
Ordered
Responded
Systematized
Classified
Generated
Organized
Reviewed
Updated
Coded
Incorporated
Prepared
Routed
Validated
Collected
Inspected
Processed
Scheduled
Verified
Compiled
Logged
Provided

Research

Analyzed
Determined
Extracted
Investigated
Searched
Clarified
Diagnosed
Formulated
Located
Solved
Collected

Evaluated
Gathered
Measured
Summarized
Compared
Examined
Inspected
Organized
Surveyed
Conducted
Experimented
Interviewed
Researched
Systematized
Critiqued
Explored
Invented
Reviewed
Tested
Detected

Teaching

Adapted
Coordinated
Explained
Instilled
Taught
Advised
Critiqued
Facilitated
Instructed
Tested
Clarified
Developed
Focused
Motivated
Trained
Coached
Enabled
Guided
Persuaded
Transmitted
Communicated
Encouraged

Individualized
Simulated
Tutored
Conducted
Evaluated
Informed
Stimulated

Technical

Adapted
Constructed
Fabricated
Programmed
Solved
Applied
Converted
Fortified
Rectified
Specialized
Assembled
Debugged
Installed
Regulated
Standardized
Built
Designed
Maintained
Remodeled
Studied
Calculated
Determined
Operated
Repaired
Upgraded
Computed
Developed
Overhauled
Replaced
Utilized
Conserved
Engineered
Printed
Restored



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References 101

References are people who can professionally attest to your skills, education or other requirements for a job. When determining who to ask to serve as a reference, it is important to select people who can attest to your work-related qualities. Try your best not to ask people who only know you in a social setting (i.e., family and friends). While those people may have pleasant things to say about you, employers won't be able to use them as references. Supply your reference page to an employer when you are asked. Come to an interview prepared with several copies of your reference page. If you have reached the close of the interview and have not been asked for them, then you may offer this document.

Get permission from your references in advance

One of the biggest mistakes you can make is listing someone as a reference without seeking their permission first. Reasons to contact an individual in advance:

- Confirm that individual remembers who you are.
- Confirm that individual will speak favorably on your behalf.
- Verify their contact information to ensure accurate information on your reference page
- Provide your reference a copy of your résumé so they can become familiar with other facets of your background.
- If possible, give your reference a copy of the job description(s), so they can be better prepared to explain how you are a good fit for the position.

Maintain contact with references. Keep references posted on your job search progress and let them know names of employers who might be calling to ask about you. Remember your manners; write thank you letters to your references!

What information to include on your reference page

Remember, information regarding your references should be listed on a separate page, NOT on your résumé. Most employers prefer to see 3-4 individuals listed as references. You should provide the same header as you did on your résumé complete with contact information. Maintain a consistent format; provide the same set of information on each reference:

- full name and title
- organization with which the person is affiliated
- mailing address (optional)
- phone number
- email address



Heading Tool

A résumé heading houses your contact information. It should be clean, simple and contain current information. Your heading is located at the very top of the document. Avoid overly decorative fonts and word art. Your heading should be professional and striking.

Your full name

Use your full name as it appears on academic records and other documents that an employer may ask you to provide. If you go by a nickname or middle name, you can emphasize this such as: Jillian (Jill) N. Smith or Jack Bradley (Brad) Jones. Your name should be in a larger font size than the rest of your heading information.

Phone number(s)

List the number(s) that you can be reached at (home, cell or both). Make sure any numbers that you list are accompanied by a professional voicemail.

Mailing address

If you are student, you may list either or both current/local and permanent addresses. However, stick to only the city and state. Employers may contact you during school breaks or after graduation; make it possible and easy for them to find you.

Email address

Do you have a professional email address? Consider creating one that you can include on your professional documents. It's a good idea to set up an email using your full name such as michael.davis@mail.com, that way an employer can easily associate the address to your name.

EXAMPLES

Jasmine Doe

Houston, TX • (123) 555.5055 • jasmine.doe@mail.com

Jonathan Doe

Current:
Nacogdoches, Texas

123.555.5555
doej@mail.com

Permanent:
Dallas, Texas



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Objective Tool

The objective statement is the introduction of your résumé and your first chance to communicate who you are and your career interests. A good objective statement verbalizes the job and/or field you are pursuing, and demonstrates the relevant value you bring to the position. An objective statement should be tailored to each specific position you are seeking. Remember, this is your opening statement: Make it short, sweet and focused!

Tips for writing an objective statement

- If you choose to elaborate, be sure to emphasize what skills, experience, or knowledge you have to offer, not what you want from the position.
- The rest of your résumé should be designed to support your objective statement
- If the purpose of your résumé is for admission into graduate school or a scholarship, state this in your objective.
- Be sure your objective communicates to the employer what type of work you want to do, the industry you want to work in, the skills you want to apply, or a combination.
- Avoid objectives like “position which utilizes my skills and abilities” without specifying your skills and abilities. This applies to “position in/related to (name of your major),” when your major does not describe a job or career field. For example, a “position in business” is unclear.
- If you are seeking an internship, summer job or some other non-permanent position, be sure to state this in your objective so that an employer will not misinterpret that you are a graduating student seeking full-time work.
- If when creating your résumé, you find you have several different areas of focus, create more than one version of your résumé. Each version can be slightly different to support its objective.

EXAMPLES

Poor Objective: A position which allows me to use my skills and experience

Good Objective: Highly motivated graduate with excellent communication and organizational skills, seeking the human resources assistant position with (Company's name) to exercise my industry-specific knowledge gained through my internship and degree program

Poor Objective: An internship position with a physical therapy practice

Good Objective: Junior kinesiology major seeking an internship with (Company's name) to further my patient care experience in preparation for a career in physical therapy



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Education Tool

For most students and recent college graduates the education section almost always immediately follows the objective statement. Your education is your most recent, significant accomplishment which needs to be displayed near the top of your résumé. For alumni who have been in the work force for some time and now feel as though your work experience is your greatest achievement relevant to your objective, then you can flip flop the education and experience sections so that the experience is listed before education.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

- Name of institution, City and State
- Official degree title(s), Major/Minor, Graduation Month and Year
- Because this is a formal document, it is recommended that you do not abbreviate
- If you have more than one degree, list the most recent first (reverse chronological order).
- Either the degree or the university can be listed first, and either line can be bolded, depending on whether you want to call attention to your degree or the university.
- Bachelor of Science vs. Bachelor of Arts. Not sure what degree you are earning? Log into mySFA and view your unofficial transcript for details related to your degree title and major.

OPTIONAL INFORMATION

- Cumulative GPA and/or Major GPA
General rule of thumb: if your GPA is a 3.0 or higher, then list it on your résumé. If lower than a 3.0, then leave it off.
- Study abroad
Include this information if you have already completed the study abroad program or have been accepted.
- Academic awards, scholarships and scholastic achievements
These accomplishments can be included in the education section or listed in their own "Honors and Awards" section.
- Memberships in campus organizations
You may list your memberships (and leadership roles) in the education section or you may choose to list them in their own "Involvement" section.
- Career-related coursework
- Class projects/independent studies

DON'T INCLUDE

- High School information
If you are in college, the employer knows you have completed high school and you need to be showcasing your college accomplishments. Unless you are a freshman with little college experience or you attended a special, well-known high school for outstanding students, then it is best to leave it off

EXAMPLES

One degree:

Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas
Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology, May 2022
Minor: Secondary Education

- Cumulative GPA: 3.2

Two degrees from same institution:

Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas
Master of Arts in Rehabilitation Counseling, May 2023
Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, December 2019

Two degrees from different institutions:

Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas
Bachelor of Science in Nursing, May 2021

- Cumulative GPA: 3.78; Magna Cum Laude
- President's List, 4 semesters; Dean's List, 4 semesters

Angelina College, Lufkin, Texas
Associate of Science, December 2017

Transferring credits: (Optional – Not Necessary to List)

Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas
Bachelor of Business Administration, December 2022

- Major GPA: 3.4

Tarrant County College, Fort Worth, Texas
Coursework completed towards undergraduate degree



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Experience Tool

How have the positions you've held in the past prepared you for the job you are applying for? That is what the potential employer wants to know. The experience section is where you can explain this. If you want a more in-depth activity to write the experience section, please see our *Résumé Toolbox: Experience*.

Essential information

- Position title
- Employer (or organization name)
- Location (city and state)
- Dates of employment (month and year)
- Concise description of duties, responsibilities and accomplishments on the job

Suggestions for describing experiences

- Use bulleted phrases, not complete sentences
- Each bullet should begin with an action verb (use correct tense)
- Focus on accomplishments/outcomes
- Qualify and quantify the scope of your experience using numbers
- Do not use personal pronouns (I, me, my, etc.)
- Avoid phrases like “duties included” or “responsible for”
- Do not repeat the same action verb at the beginning of your bullet points

NACE: Professional Skills Self Reflection

Take a look at the activity on the next few pages. Regardless of your major or work experience, employers are looking for these skills in any new hire. The following is an exercise on self-reflection in professional competencies provided by National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). To know if you're strong in a particular skill, you must be able to identify a specific situation where you demonstrated the skill effectively.

Part One: Identify NACE-defined three skills that you consider your strengths. Also find two skills that you deem a gap in need of improvement.

Career and Self-Development	Proactively develop oneself and one's career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities, and networking to build relationships within and without one's organization.
Professionalism	Knowing work environments differ greatly, understand and demonstrate effective work habits and act in the interest of the larger community and workplace.
Communication	Clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts and perspectives with persons inside and outside of an organization.
Teamwork	Build collaborative relationships representing diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, religions, lifestyles and viewpoints. Work within team structure and negotiate/manage conflict.
Critical Thinking	Identify and respond to needs based upon an understanding of situational context and logical analysis of relevant information.
Leadership	Recognize and capitalize on personal and team strengths to achieve organizational goals.
Technology	Understand and leverage technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks and accomplish goals.
Equity and Inclusion	Demonstrate the awareness, attitude, knowledge and skills required to equitably engage and include people from different local and global cultures. Engage in anti-racist practices that actively challenge the systems, structures and policies of racism.

Part Two: List the three skills you chose in the prior exercise and explain in one to three bullet points how you demonstrate your strength (hint: think of specific situations that you could directly reference previous experiences listed in your resume).

- _____
- _____
- _____

- _____
- _____
- _____

- _____
- _____
- _____

Part Three: List the two gaps you identified earlier and determine one thing you can do within the next two weeks to begin improving those skills.

If your experience seems to break into two distinct categories of “related” and “other”, you can use those two headings and divide your experience this way. If you do this, list your related experience first and devote more detail to this section. Then below you can list other experience. Remember to list your experience entries in reverse chronological order!

EXAMPLES

Supplemental Instruction Leader January 20XX– Present
Academic Assistance Resource Center (AARC)
Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, TX

- Mentor group of up to 17 college students on US History course
- Attend course lectures with students and take notes for purpose of educating clients
- Prepare study questions and reviews for traditional and non-traditional students
- Create educational interactive activities for history study group, including bingo and jeopardy
- Assist students in developing quality note taking and studying skills and proficiencies needed in any class

Recreation Specialist Summer 20XX
City of LaPorte, LaPorte, Texas

- Planned and implemented recreational activities for children ages 5-11 at camp “Lotta Funna”
- Supervised approximately 20 children on various field trips, including bowling, the movie theatre and swimming
- Developed educational programming on public safety, pet awareness, “Young Savers” banking and library policies
- Organized and distributed camp calendar which included all summer activities and events

See formatting and review our tips and guide through our [*Résumé 101 Handout*](#) and [*Résumé 101 example formatting*](#).



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Other Tool

After creating the standard heading, objective, education, and experience sections of your résumé, think about what other qualifications you have that relate to the job. If you have accomplishments that support your career objective, then create a section to house those credentials. Customize your résumé to reflect you!

See below tips and examples for Honors and Awards, Involvement, Skills, and Certifications sections.

Other sections found in a résumé

- Honors and awards
- Involvement
- Skills
- Certifications
- Summary of qualifications
- Volunteer work/community service
- Licensure
- Related class projects
- Relevant skills/strengths
- Professional associations

Honors and Awards

List any notable honors and/or awards received through academics, scholarships, sports, community service, work or other achievements. If you only have one or two items to put under this category and they are purely academic, you may want to consider doing away with this section and listing those items under your education section.

Example

- Baker Pattillo Student Leader of the Year Award, 20XX-20XX
- April E. Azalea Academic Scholarship, 20XX-20XX
- Presidential Service Award, 20XX
- President's List, two semesters
- Dean's List, three semesters

Involvement

List any memberships in organizations on or off campus. Below are some tips for listing your involvement:

- Only abbreviate an organization name after spelling it out fully. Ex: Organization of Latin Americans (OLA).
- If the purpose of the organization is not clear from the name, then provide brief explanation Ex: Pi Kappa Delta (PKD), Debate Fraternity.
- Do not precede each organization name with “Member of...” If you list the organization, then it is self-explanatory that you are a member.
- Be sure to include any leadership roles.
- Think twice before listing any political or religious organizations, as it may unintentionally alienate a potential employer who may not share the same political or religious philosophy.

Example

- Big Jacks Mentoring Organization, 20XX-20XX
- Alpha Psi Omega Theater Fraternity, Vice-President, 20XX-20XX
- American Marketing Association (AMA), Treasurer, 20XX-20XX

Certifications

List any certifications relevant to your career objective, such as teaching certifications, certified athletic trainer, CPR, etc. Weigh the importance of your certification section in regard to your career objective. If your certifications are directly related to your objective (like teaching certifications), then consider moving higher on your résumé.

Examples

CERTIFICATIONS

- The American Heart Association
- Basic Life Support (20XX)

CERTIFICATIONS

Certified Lifeguard, New York State
CPR Certification, New York State

Certifications

- Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist