

What are résumés?

The résumé is a focused and tailored document that succinctly highlights your most relevant experiences and skills in 1-2 pages. The reader (human or computer) can clearly trace the connection between your experiences and what they're looking for in a candidate.

Formatting the résumé

The résumé is 1-2 pages in length and highlights your relevant experiences that are related to the position you're applying to. It can be difficult to condense your academic CV into 2 pages, so to whittle it down ask yourself these questions:

- What experiences have I had that are most relevant to the work I would be doing?
- What skills have I developed that are transferrable and relevant?

Another difference from the academic CV is that you will have more descriptions of your skills under your experiences (bullet points). After you list the key pieces of information, use a short series of bullet points to describe the skills you developed and impact you made:

Position Title, Company/Org. name – Location, ST

Start – End Dates

- Start and end dates can be either October 2016 – November 2018, or 10/2016 – 11/2018
- Each bullet point should start with a strong action verb (designed, taught, led, developed, organized, etc.). Do not use “I” or “my” in your resume
- Quantify as much as possible (% , \$, # , frequency, etc.) and include results (ex: received 98% positive course evaluations)
- Try to keep bullet points to no more than 3-8 lines total for each experience to ease reading/skimming

Other resume formatting tips:

- Font size: generally, 10-12pt for the body text, 14-16pt for headers
- Avoid using resume templates. These resumes are not unique, the formatting is hard to adjust when you need it to, and some are not readable by application tracking systems
- Instead of including your header information in the header of the Word document, move your header to the body of the document and move the margin up. This ensures the header is read by computers.
- Don't forget to include computer and language skills in a separate skills section – if the job description explicitly mentions Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint skills, then mention these on your resume.
- Be aware that applicant tracking systems may scan your résumé when applying for jobs online. [Click here to learn more about ATS systems!](#)
- Common sections to include: Education, Skills, Professional Experience, Professional Summary (optional)

For more assistance with your non-academic resume, contact Ashley Weibel at Ashley.Weibel@du.edu or schedule an appointment on Pioneer Careers (www.du.edu/pco, under the Appointments tab).

Key Resources:



To schedule appts:
du.edu/pco



To explore online resources:
career.du.edu



To email your Career Advisor:
Ashley.Weibel@du.edu



To use the DU Career Network:
DU.firsthand.co

What is an industry, governmental, or NGO-oriented cover letter?

When applying for an industry, governmental, or non-profit position, the cover letter is often an optional document to include with your application. Many people opt-out of writing a cover letter since they are not required, and there is no guarantee that they will be read. However, I (Ashley Weibel) strongly recommend that you always submit a cover letter with your application, unless the company or organization explicitly instructs you not to do so. The cover letter is your chance to tell a potential employer why you are a good fit for *them*, instead of simply repeating the experiences on your resume.

Overview

If you are applying for a position outside of your traditional experience in academia, the most important thing to do is make sure that you are clearly and directly connecting your experience and skills to the job description and what they're looking for.

Additional tips:

- Keep your sentences simple and straightforward. Avoid excessive adjectives and flowery language that is vague and general.
- Do not draw attention to the fact that you don't have experience in their specific field or industry. Instead, make it clear that you have the skills that they're looking for.
- Translate your achievements in academia. For example, instead of assuming they know how difficult it was to be accepted to a specific journal, tell them! "I was selected out of 2,000 applicants to be published in ____ journal, which is one of the premier journals in the industry."
- Identify their writing style and tone and match it with your cover letter. If their company website uses words like "fresh, funky, and innovative", your language and sentence structure should reflect that in some way.

Header & Formatting

The cover letter should be one page maximum, with the same header used on your résumé. Margins should be approximately .75" – 1.0", single-spaced, with an additional space in between each paragraph. There is no one correct font to use, but choosing the same font as the résumé is a safe option.

In addition to the main header information at the top of the page (name, email, phone number, city and state, website/LinkedIn URL), you also will include the date of submission and the full street address of the company or organization. While this is an outdated formatting style from when applications were physically mailed, it still hasn't fallen out of favor as the traditional cover letter format.

Content & Organization

Cover letters follow a formulaic structure, which I discuss below:

Paragraph 1: Introduction

The position you are applying for and how you learned about it. This is the place to name drop, if you have a connection at the company.

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CAREER & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A sentence that connects you to the mission, vision, or current project/initiative of the company, that demonstrates you have done your research. (For example: *I strongly support the University of Denver's commitment to the public good, and it would be a privilege to contribute to that mission in this position.*) Doing this also demonstrates that you're a good cultural fit for the organization, in addition to being able to technically do the job.

Your specific "thesis" statement of why you're qualified. For example: *I know that my 7+ years of undergraduate teaching experience, PhD in English Literature, and strong editing skills would make me a great fit for this role.*

Paragraphs 2-3: Specific Examples

The middle portion of your cover letter should be specific examples of your experience and skills that are relevant to the position. Note that this section does NOT have to be in chronological order with the examples you mention.

First, go back to the job description and identify 3-5 core skill themes of what they're looking for in the role. Then, for each skill area, think of one specific example in your experience that demonstrates your knowledge in that area. This creates the structure for the middle content of your cover letter. Order the examples from most important to least important, based on the relevance to the job description.

Sample skill themes and examples:

1. Strong editing skills → editor for the poetry journal
2. Project management → dissertation writing and draft organization
3. Report writing → copy writing internship with local non-profit
4. Critical thinking / analysis → research for dissertation, used databases
5. Supervising interns → taught 2 undergraduate English courses of 15 students each

Paragraph 4: Conclusion

- Reiterate your interest in the position and their organization.
- Thank them for taking the time to review your application.
- Many people put their email/phone number in this last paragraph – I find this redundant, since the information is already in the header and it is assumed that they can contact you if you're applying.

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CAREER & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Sample Non-Academic Cover Letter Formatting

Ashley Weibel

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June 6, 2022

Ibotta
1801 California St. #400
Denver, CO 80202

Dear [Position Name] Hiring Committee,

[Cover letter content]

Sincerely,

[optional: insert image of signature, or name in signature style font]

Ashley Weibel

Learning more about cover letters

Videos:

- Cover Letters 101 ([link](#))

Articles:

- To Write or Not to Write: Things to Know About Cover Letters ([link](#))
- Cover Letter Guide ([link](#))
- Cover Letter Writing Guide ([link](#))
- Resume Basics Overview ([link](#))
- Writing Strong Resume Bullet Points Overview ([link](#))

Email: Ashley Weibel, CAHSS Graduate Career Advisor, Ashley.Weibel@du.edu.

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Letters of reference for non-academic jobs

For non-academic jobs, you only include references with your application when explicitly asked for. Most often, when references are asked for they are simply wanting the contact information of your references, not a full letter of recommendation from them.

There is no need to include the phrase “References available upon request” on your résumé itself. When references are requested, create a new document with the same header as on your résumé, and below that include your references. This is the recommended format, as a sample:

REFERENCES

Dr. Donna Beth Ellard

Assistant Professor, Medieval Literature

University of Denver - Department of English and Literary Arts Email: Donna.Ellard@du.edu

Phone: 000-000-0000

Relationship: *enter a brief note about your relationship, years known*

(Repeat above format for additional references)

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