

## How to Create a Successful Résumé and Cover Letter

Updated February 18, 2016

### Part One: Résumés

**What is a résumé?** A résumé is a snapshot of your experience, skills, and qualifications for potential employers to consider when you are applying for a job.

**What are the qualities of a successful résumé?** You should use the following guidelines to catch the interest of an employer with your résumé:

- Keep length to no more than 2 pages, and make use of margins and spacing to keep your résumé neat and easy to read.
- Use a consistent header to keep application materials (such as the résumé and cover letter) together. In the header, give your name and contact information (phone number and professional email address that includes your name).
- Save a copy of your résumé as a pdf (to preserve formatting in your electronic file), unless another file type is specified, with a clear and logical file name, such as janedoe\_resume\_2016 (first and last name, document type, and year).
- Focus on your relevant experience, such as sales, management, and computer experience (basically, whatever experience the **job advertisement** calls for).
- When discussing your computer experience/literacy, be specific about programs and versions you are most comfortable using (ex: Microsoft Word 2016).
- Focus on the following abilities: multitasking, learning material quickly, organization, communication, and teamwork.
- Include educational skills (ex: accounting) and additional skills (ex: written or spoken languages) if relevant.
- Choose the general structure (Chronological, Functional, or Combination) that works best for your situation.
- Use descriptive verbs (see table below) and active voice to describe your contributions.
- Edit your résumé carefully, checking spelling, accuracy of dates, and grammar/punctuation.

<b>Descriptive Verbs</b>			
Attained	Budgeted	Implemented	Reorganized
Accomplished	Built	Improved	Reduced
Acquired	Conducted	Initiated	Saved
Adapted	Controlled	Lectured	Supervised
Adjusted	Coordinated	Maintained	Treated
Administered	Developed	Modified	Targeted
Advised	Established	Performed	Trained
Approached	Expanded	Produced	Updated

### Choosing the General Structure

Jane Owen 419-555-1111 janeowen@yahoo.com

Jane Owen  
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Maumee, OH 43634  
419-555-1111  
janeowen@yahoo.com

**OBJECTIVE**  
To obtain an executive position in marketing with an emerging company dedicated to a long-term program.

**EXPERIENCE**

5/2002 – Present ABC SOFTWARE, INC., Temperance, MI  
Regional Sales Manager Contingency marketing agency

- Designed marketing strategies for local and national companies
- Met payroll of 25 full-time employees
- Improved sales for one company by over 25 percent in a 12-month period
- Developed marketing programs for corporations

1/1999 – 5/2002 CASSIDY ENGINEERS, Fort Wayne, IN  
Sales Associate Business communications systems

- Set regional sales records in six months
- Procured ten national accounts
- Exceeded company goals for the 2000 fiscal year
- Developed sales marketing program for the northwest regional area
- Developed database for reselling directly

**EDUCATION**

2002 – 2004 OWENS COMMUNITY COLLEGE, Toledo, OH  
Associate degree in Marketing and Sales

- Graduated *summa cum laude*
- Completed project on International Business and outsourcing
- Completed Business Management Co-op with ABC Software focusing on international marketing programs

**REFERENCES**  
Available upon request

**Chronological:** This structure works for applicants with strong employment histories who are staying in the same career path. Chronological structure is the most common means of organization and preferred by most employers.

List work experience starting with the most recent job first and include

- Job title and name of company
- City, state, and dates of employment
- Brief description of title and duties; highlight how you improved the company
- Catalogued responsibilities, such as management, budgetary, production, technical

Put dates in **bold** font for emphasis.

**References:** State “Available upon request” or exclude this section from résumé. However, be sure to have the following types of references *ready* to provide a potential employer: **Instructors** for classes in your major (Ask for a letter at the end of the semester.); **Employers; People working in the field** you are targeting who know of your credentials.

**Functional:** This structure, also called a **skills résumé**, highlights abilities acquired through volunteer and unpaid experience. It can also be helpful to those changing fields.

Gwendolyn Lloyd 567-276-0577 gwenlloyd@hotmail.com

Gwendolyn Lloyd  
590 Wales Rd.  
Rossford, OH 43619  
567-276-0577  
gwenlloyd@hotmail.com

**Objective** Director of volunteer activity at The Make-A-Wish Foundation

**Management** Skills and Abilities  
Recruitment and training of volunteers  
Scheduling of volunteer shifts  
Meeting certification requirements

**Office** Proficiency in Microsoft Office 2010  
Bookkeeping

**Writing** Script-writing for telemarketers  
Annual Reports

**Organization** Donations of refreshments and gifts  
Establishment of support groups  
Phone tree

**2002 – present** **Related Experience**  
Volunteer office staff – Glenwood Jr. H.S.  
Use Microsoft Office 2010 to create promotional materials, enter data, and keep financial records for PTO. Create phone trees and scripts for callers.

**2000 – 2004** Director of Book Fair – Brookdale Elementary School  
Assessed market, ordered books, and kept financial records. Recruited, trained, and organized volunteer staff. Reported to PTO.

**1995 – 2000** Swim Team Parents Leader – Toledo Marlins  
Recruited parents to chaperone away meets, organized donations for refreshments, created directory of participants, trained meet officials in timing swimmers and recording data.

**2006** **Education**  
Associate of Applied Business, Owens Community College, Toledo, OH

**1990 – 1995** **Work Experience**  
J.B. Welders, St. Louis, MO  
Reviewed certifications of welders and safety codes. Scheduled educational events for employee certification. Entered data.

For each job you apply for, create a specific job objective that clarifies the position you are interested in filling. Don't make the employer guess what you can do for them.  
**Note:** The objective statement may be optional for some positions.

This **Education** (Post-secondary) section includes the basic information of **graduation year, degree(s) earned, and school name and address**. You may also include **years attended, honors and scholarships earned, major courses related to field, and major projects completed**.

This **Skills and Abilities** section is categorized according to skill type. **The Related Experience** section (starting with most recent) shows how the skills have been used in unpaid positions.

Laura McStudent (419) 555-1234 lauramcstudent@yahoo.com	
Laura McStudent, LPN 600 Elmwood Avenue Small-town, OH 49000 (419) 555-1234 lauramcstudent@yahoo.com	
License & Certification	Licensed Practical Nurse State of Ohio, December 10, 2013 CPR Certification (expires August 2014) First Aid Certification (expires March 2015)
Education	Associate of Applied Science, Owens Community College, Findlay, Ohio 2013 LPN Certification
Nursing Experience	Toledo Children's Hospital, Toledo, OH Clinicals 2012 – 2013 Taught and prepared patients and their families for a surgical experience Monitored vital signs immediately after surgery
Skills & Abilities	Skilled and trained in all LPN duties and have applied every skill Ability to interact with children with severe physical, emotional, and psychological problems Ability to establish rapport and communicate well with both patients and their families Teaching and training—other employees, patients, and their families
Accomplishments	Created a comic book to teach children about the hospital experience and help them know what to expect Wrote a Parent Information Handout to inform parents about the procedure for same day surgery Workshop Leader for Positive Action Committee – Revamped Unit Clerk Expectations, resulting in a hospital-wide increase in the clerks' productivity
Awards	Hospitality Award, Image of Nursing Award
Professional Associations	American Nurses Association Ohio Nurses Association Nursing Council Forum

**Combination:** This structure contains elements (such as educational experience and skills obtained through means other than paid employment) from both chronological and functional résumés. When using this résumé structure, one must avoid repetition and be careful not to create a résumé that is too lengthy.

Use white space for readability and balance.

Emphasize abilities.

The Accomplishments and Awards sections are optional and should contain achievements relevant to the position, which will be of interest to the employer.

### Part Two: Cover Letters

**The purpose:** To convey your understanding of the company's current needs and to reflect your skills and personality in depth

1. Do some basic research about the specific company, town, and interviewer (if possible) so that you can customize the letter to that specific job.
2. State the name of the person who referred you to the position or where you saw the position advertised.
3. Include the title and the position for which you are applying.
4. Briefly express what you can offer the company and why you are interested in the position, highlighting the qualities not evident in the résumé.
5. Express your interest in an interview.
6. Keep it short and simple.
7. Follow proper business letter format.
8. Read it several times, checking for typos and misspellings.

Laura McStudent (419) 555-1234 lauramcstudent@yahoo.com	
Laura McStudent 600 Elmwood Ave. Small-town, OH 49000 May 17, 2014	Start the letter with your address and the date, followed by the company's address.
Director of Human Resources Flower Hospital 200 Harroun Rd. Sylvania, OH 43560	
Dear Mr. Jacobs:	
After hearing from Dr. Kathy Pear about the cancer research and post-operative care given to your patients, I was pleased to learn that there was an opening in your Oncology Unit for an LPN. I am interested in filling the full-time nursing position beginning June 2, 2014. My experience at Toledo Hospital and studies completed at Owens Community College make me an excellent candidate for this position. I enjoy working with patients and their families, and I am especially interested in working as a liaison with cancer patients.	
As a student nurse at Toledo Children's Hospital, I enjoyed working closely with families explaining the medical procedures and preparing children for surgery. To help in the explanation of the procedure, I developed a comic book that is now being used at several area hospitals and helped me to earn the Image of Nursing Award.	
As a member of the American Nurses Association I helped to spearhead a committee on Unit Clerks. In this group, we explored ways to optimize the productivity of the unit clerks by minimizing their paperwork. I hope to continue to work collaboratively with all departments within the hospital as well as the surrounding community.	
I welcome the opportunity to meet with you to further discuss the position and have enclosed my résumé. If you have any questions, please email me at lauramcstudent@yahoo.com or call me at (419) 555-1234. Thank you for considering me for this position. I look forward to hearing from you.	
Sincerely, Laura McStudent	Include your contact information (phone number where you can be reached and professional email address).