

# Workshop To Go

## **RESUMES, COVER LETTERS, & REFERENCES**



*Helping you take the next step*

*Framingham State College*  
*Career Services*  
College Center Room 510  
508-626-4625  
[www.framingham.edu/careerservices](http://www.framingham.edu/careerservices)

# RESUME WRITING

## **INTRODUCTION**

To compete in today's market, it is important that you know how to effectively present your skills, experience, knowledge, and background in a manner that will interest potential employers. Many well-qualified people are often passed over for job interviews because of poor resumes.

A resume is an individually designed summary (usually one or two pages) of your personal, educational, and experiential qualifications as they relate to the type of employment you are seeking. It should be an honest, concise, well-organized presentation of YOU - your interests, skills, abilities, and accomplishments.

Using the information contained here, you can create a resume with an attractive layout that highlights your qualifications and skills.

## **WHAT ARE THE USES OF A RESUME?**

You can use your resume to:

- Send with a cover letter in response to a specific job advertisement or lead.
- Send with a cover letter or an inquiry letter to an organization that interests you to inquire about potential job openings.
- Distribute among a network of contacts.
- Send to employment agencies or recruiting firms.
- Complete an employment application.
- Clarify your thinking about your skills and your job objective.
- Review your qualifications prior to job interviews.
- Refer to during an interview.

## **POINTS TO CONSIDER**

In the initial screening process, the person reviewing your resume may give it as little as 15 – 30 seconds of consideration. Follow these guidelines to make those seconds count!

- Be relevant. Select information that supports your job objective and enhances your qualifications in the mind of the reader.
- Be brief. Your resume should be as complete as possible without being redundant or irrelevant (preferably 1 page).
- Be consistent in layout and writing style. Stylistic techniques (e.g., underlining, asterisks, indenting) can be effective if used selectively. If you choose to boldface a job title, be consistent and boldface all job titles.
- Remember that information on the first page, at the beginning of a section, in the left hand margin, or in a column, gets extra attention.
- Use action verb phrases to emphasize your skills, (e.g., "organized a promotional campaign" or "developed and taught in-service courses"). See page 8 for a list of action verbs.

- Avoid first person pronouns (e.g., "I", "me", "my") and phrases such as "duties included..." and "responsible for...".
- The description of current positions should be written in present tense; previous positions should be in past tense.
- Be conscious of image. Your resume and cover letter are often your first contacts with a prospective employer. Resumes should be visually appealing and error-free (no misspellings or grammatical errors). They should be laser printed on bond paper. It is best to avoid colored paper. You may use white, off-white or gray paper.

## **FORMAT**

There are two main resume formats.

*Chronological:* This is the most commonly used format and therefore the most familiar to employers. It is a categorical listing of information presented in reverse order of occurrence.

*Functional:* This approach emphasizes capabilities, skills, and accomplishments rather than job titles or time spent at various jobs. This format is effective if you are changing fields, seeking a different emphasis in your career, or are reentering the workforce after an absence from the job market.

*Note:* If you feel that this format may be the most effective one for you, be sure to make your skills clear, your language concise, and include an employment section after your skills section.

## **CONTENT**

The following categories are often included in resumes. Consider your unique educational and work experiences when deciding which categories will be most effective. Arrange whichever categories you use to reflect your strengths in the most advantageous way.

### ***PRIMARY HEADINGS***

#### **Contact Information:**

Name, address(es), and phone number(s) with area code(s). E-mail addresses and cell numbers can also be used. The object is to enable them to contact you easily and quickly. You should be conservative in your choice of answering machine messages and email addresses.

hotmomma@hotmail.com does not convey a professional image!

#### **Objective:**

One sentence including some or all of the following: the kind of position you want, the function(s) you want to perform, the skills you want to use, the experience and/or background you bring, and the environment in which you wish to work.

#### **Education:**

*Mandatory information:* Name of institution, city/state, degree, major, and year the degree was (will be) received. Also include areas of certification, if you are planning to teach.

*Additional education information:* Study abroad, related course work, and minor may also be listed. Include your G.P.A. if it is 3.0 or higher. *Note:* Do not list high school.

### **Experience:**

*Mandatory information:* Name of organization, job title, city/state, dates of employment, and description of accomplishments and responsibilities. Use short descriptive phrases beginning with ACTION verbs (see page 8) to highlight your skills and accomplishments. Consider including volunteer work, internships, student teaching, field placements, research projects, summer and part-time jobs, or other work experiences related to your field.

*Additional Information:* Include other jobs that do not relate to your field of interest to show that you have had exposure to other work environments and relevant transferable skills.

*Note:* You may want to have two different categories: Related Experience and Additional Experience.

## **SECONDARY HEADINGS**

### **Honors/Awards:**

List academic scholarships, grants, and Dean's list (may also be included under Education).

### **Language Skills:**

List foreign languages with a statement as to your level of mastery (e.g. conversant, proficient, fluent). If you are bilingual, state it.

### **Computer Skills:**

List computer languages, software, hardware, and operating systems if appropriate.

### **Memberships:**

List professional and community affiliations, clubs/organizations, and student groups. Include the name of the organization, dates of membership, and offices held, if any.

### **Interests:**

List special interests, activities, or travel experiences.

### **Publications:**

List any publications you have written or co-authored.

### **References:**

Do not list the names of your references. Prepare a separate sheet of references' names and contact information. The statement "References Available Upon Request" is not necessary. However, if you have extra space on the resume it can serve as a way to signal "THE END."

## **FINAL CHECK**

Test market your resume by asking someone you know for feedback on the impression it gives of you and for suggestions on improving it. Have your resume checked by a Career Counselor at Career Services for professional feedback.

## SAMPLE RESUME

### Jane A. Job Searcher

100 State Street  
Framingham, MA 01701  
(508) 555-1234  
[jsearcher@email.com](mailto:jsearcher@email.com)

### OBJECTIVE

Seeking a full-time Corporate Communications position using my writing skills and knowledge of public relations policies.

### EDUCATION

#### **Framingham State College**

Candidate for Bachelor of Arts Degree in English  
Concentration in Technical Writing  
Relevant Coursework: Journalism, Public Relations Policies

Framingham, MA  
May 2006

### HONORS/AWARD

- GPA 3.4/4.0
- Dean's List

### RELATED EXPERIENCE

#### **Special Software, Inc.**

##### Corporate Communications Intern

Boston, MA  
Aug.-Dec. 2006

- Co-produced company newsletter, including story development and writing
- Assisted in writing press releases to be distributed to the media
- Created slide shows for company presentations using PowerPoint

### ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### **Bakers Pharmacy**

##### Cashier

Framingham, MA  
June 2003-July 2006

- Handled cash and credit transactions
- Organized and tallied inventory
- Assisted customers with concerns and questions

#### **Framingham State College**

##### Library Assistant

Framingham, MA  
Sep. 2004-May 2005

- Assisted visitors with research
- Maintained periodicals

### COMPUTER SKILLS

- Microsoft Office: Proficient in FrontPage, Excel, Publisher, PowerPoint
- Netscape Composer
- FileMaker Pro

### LANGUAGE SKILLS

- French (fluent)
- German (conversant)

### ACTIVITIES

- Journalism Club
- Amnesty International

## **CHECKLIST FOR EFFECTIVE RESUMES**

### **APPEARANCE**

- ☐ is inviting and easy to read
- ☐ uses appropriate font styles and font sizes (10-14 pts.)
- ☐ incorporates enough white space between sections to emphasize
- ☐ keywords (for scannable resumes, use boldface only)
- ☐ print is letter quality
- ☐ appropriate length: one page for every five-seven years of work experience

### **WRITING STYLE**

- ☐ begins sentences or phrases with powerful action verbs
- ☐ short paragraphs mostly under five lines; short sentences
- ☐ brief succinct language; no unnecessary words
- ☐ absolutely free from grammatical, spelling, punctuation, usage, and
- ☐ typographical errors

### **CONTENT**

#### **Contact Information**

- ☐ address, current and permanent (if necessary)
- ☐ telephone number(s) where you can be reached; email address

#### **Objective (Optional)**

- ☐ briefly indicates the sort of position, title and possible area of
- ☐ specialization sought
- ☐ language is specific, employer-centered not self-centered, avoids broad or
- ☐ vague statements

#### **Summary of Skills, Accomplishments or Expertise (Optional)**

- ☐ identifies 3-6 skills that support the objective
- ☐ summarizes relevant work experience and accomplishments that support the objective

#### **Education and Training**

- ☐ highest level of attainment is listed first; work from most current degree backward
- ☐ degree in progress or most recently completed degree; include type of degree, name of university, location of university, "candidate for" or "awarded"

- ☐ list of other degrees, relevant higher education coursework, continuing professional education or training courses and study abroad
- ☐ major, minor and/or program(s)
- ☐ job-relevant courses, papers, projects; include thesis or project titles
- ☐ GPA (if 3.0 or above), honors, awards or scholarships
- ☐ percentage of educational expenses earned (i.e. through work study)

### **Relevant Experience**

- ☐ start with your most recent experience
- ☐ include all paid, volunteer, intern, or other experiences that are relevant to your objective.
- ☐ title held, organization name, city, state or country location (if not in USA)
- ☐ dates position held. If several positions for one employer, list employer once and put titles and job descriptions in reverse chronological order.
- ☐ contributions to the organizations, i.e. ways your work helped increase profit, membership, publicity, funding, motivation, efficiency, productivity, quality, saved time or money, improved programs, management, communication, information flow etc.
- ☐ quantitative or qualitative indicators that describe the results of your contributions or accomplishments, i.e., "increased sales by \$50,000"; "significantly improved staff ability to access data"
- ☐ learning that took place on the job that is relevant to your job objective (optional)
- ☐ describe accomplishments in the jargon of the field (see Action Verbs, page 9)

### **Skills**

- ☐ computer skills; software applications, languages, hardware, operating systems
- ☐ language skills: specify level of fluency and ability to read and write as 'basic,' 'working knowledge,' 'proficient,' 'fluent,' or 'bilingual'
- ☐ other

### **Extracurricular Activities, Community Service, Professional Associations**

- ☐ list of significant positions or responsibility; include title, name of organization or team, dates of leadership roles, achievements and transferable
- ☐ skills that are job relevant

### **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS**

- ☐ demonstrates ability or potential to do the job; supports your objective
- ☐ speaks to the employer's needs and requirements (employer-centered not self-centered)
- ☐ indicated knowledge of the field, typical issues or problems, solutions
- ☐ omits age, sex, marital status, names of references

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

## EDUCATION

Framingham State College

Bachelor of \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_

Concentration: \_\_\_\_\_

Minor: \_\_\_\_\_

Awards: \_\_\_\_\_

Achievements: \_\_\_\_\_

Framingham, MA

Mo/Yr of graduation \_\_\_\_\_

## EXPERIENCE

Employer Name \_\_\_\_\_ City/State \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_ Dates \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Employer Name \_\_\_\_\_ City/State \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_ Dates \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### ACTIVITIES/CLUBS/ORGANIZATIONS

- \_\_\_\_\_

SPECIAL SKILLS OR INTERESTS

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



## Action Verbs

### ***Management***

Administered  
Analyzed  
Assigned  
Attained  
Chaired  
Contracted  
Consolidated  
Coordinated  
Delegated  
Developed  
Directed  
Evaluated  
Executed  
Improved  
Increased  
Organized  
Oversaw  
Planned  
Prioritized  
Produced  
Recommended  
Reviewed  
Scheduled  
Strengthened  
Supervised

### ***Creative***

Acted  
Conceptualized  
Created  
Designed  
Developed  
Directed  
Established  
Fashioned  
Founded  
Illustrated  
Instituted  
Integrated  
Introduced  
Invented  
Originated  
Performed  
Planned  
Revitalized  
Shaped

### ***Communication***

Addressed  
Arbitrated  
Arranged  
Authored  
Corresponded  
Developed  
Directed  
Drafted  
Edited  
Enlisted  
Formulated  
Influenced  
Interpreted  
Lectured  
Mediated  
Moderated  
Motivated  
Negotiated  
Persuaded  
Promoted  
Publicized  
Reconciled  
Recruited  
Spoke  
Translated  
Wrote

### ***Helping***

Assessed  
Clarified  
Coached  
Counseled  
Demonstrated  
Diagnosed  
Educated  
Expedited  
Facilitated  
Guided  
Referred  
Rehabilitated  
Represented

### ***Research***

Clarified  
Collected  
Critiqued  
Diagnosed  
Evaluated  
Examined  
Extracted  
Identified  
Inspected  
Interpreted  
Interviewed  
Investigated  
Organized  
Reviewed  
Summarized  
Surveyed  
Systematized

### ***Teaching***

Adapted  
Advised  
Clarified  
Coached  
Communicated  
Coordinated  
Developed  
Enabled  
Encouraged  
Evaluated  
Facilitated  
Guided  
Informed  
Initiated  
Instructed  
Persuaded  
Stimulated

### ***Technical***

Assembled  
Built  
Calculated  
Computed  
Designed  
Devised  
Engineered  
Maintained  
Overhauled  
Programmed  
Repaired  
Solved  
Trained  
Upgraded

### ***Finance***

Administered  
Allocated  
Analyzed  
Appraised  
Audited  
Balanced  
Budgeted  
Calculated  
Developed  
Forecasted  
Managed  
Marketed  
Planned  
Projected

### ***Administrative***

Approved  
Arranged  
Catalogued  
Classified  
Collected  
Compiled  
Executed  
Generated  
Implemented  
Inspected  
Operated  
Organized  
Purchased  
Recorded  
Tabulated

## COVER LETTER WRITING

- A cover letter accompanies your resume and is a brief introduction to who you are and what you are interested in. Many employers will judge you on your ability to communicate and to manage the presentation of information. A cover letter reflects both.
- Tailor each cover letter toward the position and company. Do some research on the company and the position to show the employer that you're specifically interested in their company.
- A cover letter should be neat and should be free from misspellings and grammatical errors.
- Use a picture-frame margin allowing a border of at least one-inch.
- Use a clear typeface large enough to allow for easy reading. Avoid script and other exotic typefaces.
- The cover letter should not be longer than three or four paragraphs and no more than one page. Be sure your name, address, and phone number are on your letter.
- Be proactive by closing your letter with a statement indicating that you will be in contact in a week or two to follow up.
- Keep a record of all the cover letters you send so you may refer to them when you have follow up conversations with employers.

### **COVER LETTER CONTENT**

**First Paragraph** - State the reason you are writing, name the specific position or type of work for which you are applying, and indicate from which resource (CRC, newspaper, referral, web site) you learned of the opening. Indicate why you are interested in the position, the company, and its products or services.

**Second Paragraph** - This is the place to emphasize what you can do for the employer. If you are a recent graduate, explain how your academic background makes you a qualified candidate for the position. If you have practical work experience, point out your specific achievements or unique qualifications.

**Third paragraph (optional)** - This extra paragraph isn't always needed, but it can be included if there is additional information that hasn't been mentioned on your resume or needs to be described in more detail.

**Closing Paragraph** - This final paragraph should be action-oriented. State when and how you will contact the employer to arrange a mutually convenient time to interview or to give them additional information. Also, be sure to state how and when they may contact you. However, do not assume that an employer will contact you after you send your cover letter and resume. It is your responsibility to follow up.

## **TO GET STARTED**

### **First Paragraph**

- ➔ I am excited that I found your listing for a...
- ➔ Your advertisement for a... in the June 6<sup>th</sup> *Boston Sunday Globe* piqued my interest.
- ➔ I am writing to inquire about the position...
- ➔ I am interested in exploring employment opportunities with your company.
- ➔ My Professor, Dr. Jones, informed me of the opening.
- ➔ Because of my background in..., I am applying for...
- ➔ Because of the excellent reputation of your firm, I am submitting my resume in application for...
- ➔ Your company interests me because...

### **Second (and Third) Paragraph**

- ➔ As you can see from my resume, I have extensive knowledge in...
- ➔ I will be graduating from Framingham State College with a degree in...
- ➔ My background includes...
- ➔ I have consistently demonstrated my ability to...
- ➔ My qualifications and experience include...

### **Closing Paragraph**

- ➔ I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you personally...
- ➔ I will be contacting you in two weeks to see if you require any additional information.
- ➔ I will be in Boston the week of...
- ➔ I will be calling next week to arrange an interview.

## **SAMPLE COVER LETTER**

**Be sure to tailor your cover letter to reflect your personal style.**

100 State Street  
Framingham, MA 01701  
Janesname@frc.mass.edu

December 10, 2005

Ms. Mary Nelson  
Manager of Human Resources  
Major Corporation  
2900 Windy Way  
Chicago, IL 02088

Dear Ms. Nelson:

Your advertisement for a Technical Writer in the June 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the Boston Sunday Globe piqued my interest. The position fits very well with my education, experience, and career goals. I am especially interested in Major Corporation's emphasis on promoting employees who have successfully demonstrated skill and dedication.

I have recently completed my Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communications at Framingham State College with a concentration in Technical Writing. As you can see from my resume, I have extensive experience writing press releases, producing company newsletters, and creating multi-media presentations. Along with my experience, I have strong communication skills and have completed numerous projects using Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Adobe FrameMaker and Paint Shop Pro.

I am eager to discuss more about the work of Major Corporation and the Technical Writer position. I will be contacting you within the next two weeks to see if you require any additional information. In the meantime, I can be reached at (508) 626-4625. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
(Signature)  
Jane Job Searcher

## PREPARING A REFERENCE PAGE

References are typically part of the final stages of interviewing. It means that the interviewer is very interested in you and wants to obtain information in order to make the decision. You should never send your reference sheet unless it is requested. When the employer asks for your references, you should have a page already prepared to hand to them while you are in the interview.

References can be employers, co-workers, teachers, and other people who have witnessed and evaluated your work. Personal references should not be listed (ie. Mom.) When approaching potential references, ask them directly if they feel that they can give you a positive recommendation. If not, it's best to ask someone else who can. Provide them with a copy of your resume, and notify them when you have given their names to an employer so that they can be prepared for the call. Be sure to thank them for their help once you have accepted a position.

Your reference page should be on the same paper as your resume and cover letter, be printed in the same font, and have the same heading as your resume (ie. name, address, phone number). You should include a minimum of three references. The information included should be: reference name, title, place of employment, business address, phone number, and e-mail address. Also include your relationship to the person if it is not clear. List them in order of relevance to the position. Please see the example below.

### EXAMPLE

Jane A. Searcher  
100 State Street  
Framingham, MA 01701  
(508) 555-1234  
[jsearcher@frc.mass.edu](mailto:jsearcher@frc.mass.edu)

### PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES

Susan Jones  
Manager  
Smith Pharmacy  
3 Main Street  
Framingham, MA 01701  
(508) 626-4625  
[sjones@frc.mass.edu](mailto:sjones@frc.mass.edu)  
(Supervisor at Baker's Pharmacy)

Janet Wilson  
Assistant Director, Office of Residence Life  
Framingham State College  
100 State Street, P.O. Box 9101  
Framingham, MA 01701-9101  
(508) 620-1220  
[jwilson@frc.mass.edu](mailto:jwilson@frc.mass.edu)

Dr. Mike Hemenway  
Psychology Department  
Framingham State College  
100 State Street, P.O. Box 9101  
Framingham, MA 01701-9101  
(508) 555-2674  
[mhemingway@frc.mass.edu](mailto:mhemingway@frc.mass.edu)