

# Résumé and Cover Letters Resource Guide

**EMPLOYERS  
INITIALLY SPEND  
ABOUT SEVEN TO  
30 SECONDS  
REVIEWING YOUR  
RÉSUMÉ...  
Make your  
seconds count!**



**Prairie State College  
Student Career Development Center  
Adult Training and Outreach Center (ATOC)  
Suite 148, Rooms 151 & 152**

**Follow us on social media** for the latest on jobs/internships, employer recruiting events, career information and more:

Twitter: @psccareer

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Register at [collegecentral.com/prairiestate](http://collegecentral.com/prairiestate) for all internship and job postings.

## WHAT IS A RÉSUMÉ?

A RÉSUMÉ IS A BRIEF HIGHLIGHT OF YOUR WORK OR ACTIVITY EXPERIENCES, EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND, AND SKILLS AS THEY RELATE TO THE TYPE OF JOB YOU ARE SEEKING. A RÉSUMÉ IS DESIGNED TO GET YOU AN INTERVIEW, SO MARKET YOURSELF EFFECTIVELY TO YOUR READER.

## HOW IS A RÉSUMÉ USED?

A RÉSUMÉ IS MOST OFTEN USED WHEN APPLYING FOR EMPLOYMENT. IT ALSO CAN BE USED TO APPLY FOR AN INTERNSHIP, A SUMMER JOB, FULL-TIME POSITION, GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL, OR FOR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN AN ORGANIZATION.

## Résumé Writing

- **Your résumé may take hours to prepare.** Give yourself time to write and rewrite. Stop by the Student Career Development Center (ATOC-RM A151) for feedback.
- **A one-page résumé is sufficient for most students.** Your résumé doesn't have to list every position you've held or every activity in which you've been involved. If you have a lot of experience, only include what is relevant to the position for which you are applying. Go to two pages only if absolutely necessary.
- **Avoid templates/wizards.** Résumé templates or wizards may seem helpful, but it can be tough to make changes or move things around when using one. Templates may lose their formatting when applying online, which make them impossible to read for the employer. It is important to customize your résumé to best represent your strengths. Use a blank Word document that will leave you the flexibility you need.
- **Custom design your résumé for each position.** If necessary, change the content and the format so that it best compliments each position.
- **Catch your reader's eye.** Readers prefer statements that begin with bullets, bold print, and indentions to guide their eyes quickly to the main points. Stick to one font so that your résumé doesn't look cluttered, and organize the information so that it is visually appealing and easy to follow.
- **Accentuate the positive.** Your résumé is the first impression most employers will have of you, and how well you write indicates what type of employee you might be. Highlight accomplishments, not mere duties. Don't just list what you did; show how it contributed to the organization. Quantify your statements with numbers, statistics, and percentages, when possible.
- **Use action verbs** (e.g. created, delegated) instead of passive verbs (e.g. took, had). For past activities, use past tense verbs (supervised, developed). For activities you're currently engaged in, use present tense verbs (supervise, develop).

### DO NOT INCLUDE

religion, race, gender, high school information (unless applying for an internship and it is relevant), marital status, height/weight, birthplace, date of birth, or a photograph.



### Résumé Appearance

- Keep the content and formatting consistent.
- Make certain that all spelling and grammar is flawless by having other people look over it carefully.
- Use italics, bold facing, and bullets to add variety and place emphasis on certain areas.
- For ease of readability, always use a computer, an 11- or 12-point font size, a basic font type, and a laser printer.

# PREFERRED RÉSUMÉ FORMAT: CHRONOLOGICAL

**KERRY DOE**

10325 S. State Street – Chicago Heights, IL 60411

(708) 555-1111 kdoe@mailbox.com

**EDUCATION** Prairie State College  
Associate of Arts, Mass Communication: Multimedia  
**Expected Graduation: May 2020**  
Major GPA: 3.90/4.00, Overall GPA: 3.79/4.00

## Course Highlights

Principles of Communication	2D Animation
Introduction to Web Site Development	Multi-Media Writing

**HONORS** Dean's List, two semesters

## **ACTIVITIES**

- Service Club, 2011-13
- Communications Chair, 2012-13
- Coordinated the organization's first-ever clothing drive for the homeless.
- Helped restore a community park that was destroyed by flood waters.

## **COMPUTER SKILLS**

Quark Xpress, Illustrator, Photoshop, HTML Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint

## **WORK EXPERIENCE**

**Midwestern Components Company** - Frankfort, IL

*Production Line Laborer* (3/06 - Present)

- Assemble electronic monitoring devices according to strict job batch specifications in a deadline-driven environment.
- Collaborate with co-workers to devise efficient production schedules.
- Perform quality control assessments on shipments delivered and received.
- Serve on the Employee Safety Improvement Team.
- Received recognition as Employee of the Month, June 2007.

**Museum of Geology** - Palos Heights, IL

*Security Officer* (1/04 - 2/06)

- Monitored the activities of more than 200 daily visitors to the facility.
- Received extensive training on proper medical and emergency procedures.
- Conducted a workshop for all employees on effective conflict resolution.

**REFERENCES** Available upon request.

## **HEADING**

Cap the top of your résumé with: full name, complete address, phone number (list cell or home, but list only one, personal website (if appropriate))

## **FORMAT**

This format allows you to focus on your employment history, organized in reverse chronological order.

## **STYLE**

Stick with an 11- or 12- point font for readability.

Employers prefer this résumé format.

## **WORK EXPERIENCE**

Include full- and part-time jobs, summer positions, volunteer work, military service, internships, and research projects. In some cases you may wish to divide this category into two sections: one called Relevant Experience and one called Additional Experience.

When describing your previous experiences, lead with strong **action verbs** and use industry related terms.

Bulleted phrases are used to describe your specific job duties. Highlight your accomplishments and skills enhanced or developed.

Current positions should be written in present-tense; former positions in past-tense.

# Additional Résumé Content

## Education

Degrees should be listed in reverse chronology. Include only those schools in which you earned a degree.

- Names and locations of school or programs
- Graduation date
- Degree or certificates
- Major
- Grade point average (if 3.0/4.0 or above)
- Awards/Honors/Scholarships  
(consider a separate section if more than 3)

### EXAMPLE:

**Prairie State College**  
Associate of Arts, Mass Communication:  
Multimedia, May 20XX  
GPA 3.2/4.0

-or-

**Prairie State College**  
Medical Billing and Coding Specialist Certificate  
Completion: June 2019

## RELATED COURSEWORK

This category is optional and can be part of the Education section. It is mainly used when you are lacking related experience, but want to demonstrate specific knowledge. List the titles of courses you've taken that relate to the position for which you are applying.

## HONORS, ACTIVITIES, AND PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

You may specifically want to list:

- Activities or leadership positions that demonstrate job-related skills or leadership qualities
- Honors or awards (scholarships may or may not be relevant)

## SKILLS

Mention any special abilities that you possess, such as technical proficiencies, instrumentation competencies, or foreign language abilities.

## VIDEO RÉSUMÉS

More employers are asking applicants to submit a two to three-minute video introducing themselves and explain why they think they are a good fit for the position. Here are some tips to shine in your video résumé:

- Dress professionally. Treat this as an interview and choose clothing that you would wear to an interview.
- Make sure to look at the camera on your computer or smartphone; this is virtual "eye contact."
- Don't recite your résumé. Make sure to talk about your skill set and experience as it relates to the position, and make sure to keep your video within the time limit the employer has asked.
- Practice before you record. It's helpful to write a script but don't read it. If you need to make several takes, that's okay.
- Smile! Act as though you are talking with a real person, so smile and nod as you speak enthusiastically.

## Additional Tips

- If you need to include some information not applicable to any of the sections above, then list another heading (e.g., Clinical Experience, Volunteer Experience, Exhibits, Additional Training, Professional Development, Conferences, Seminars, Workshops).
- Arrange the sections in the order that markets you best, with your greatest selling points ideally in the upper two-thirds of the document.

## References

- **Choose references** – Brainstorm a list of people who can speak highly of your past work performances (job, class work or research related). Ideally, your references should be those who supervised you or rated your performance, such as a previous boss or professor who knows you/ your work very well. In some cases, a colleague also can provide a strong reference of your work performance, particularly if you worked on a team project together. In general, you should provide a minimum of three references, but no more than five.
- **Ask references** – Never provide anyone’s name to a potential employer as a reference without first contacting those designated, and asking if they will give you a positive reference.
- **Gather contact information** – Make sure you have the proper spelling of your reference’s name, company name, official job title, mail address, and phone number.
- **Prepare references** – To help your references speak intelligently about your background and strengths, you should provide them with a copy of your résumé. They also should know what your goals are and the types of positions you are seeking.
- **Keep references informed** – Notify your references about each position for which you apply so they might anticipate a call and prepare to “sell” you based on the specifics of each position.
- **Thank references** – Notify references when you accept a position and send a thank-you letter.

**PSC Student**  
students.prairiestate.edu  
Cell (555) 123-4567 Home (555) 756-4321

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**REFERENCES**

**Professor Jones**  
Associate Professor  
Prairie State College  
(555) 555-3000  
professor@mail.com

**Ms. Employer**  
Manager  
McDonalds  
Address  
City, State, Zip  
(555) 555-0000  
msemmployer@mail.com

**Ms. Employer**  
Facilities Manager  
Health Imporia  
Address  
City, State, Zip  
(555) 555-0000  
msemmployer2@mail.com



## Cover Letter

Writing effective job correspondence is a vital activity in any job search. Every letter you write provides you with an opportunity to make a positive impression on the recipient. The purpose of the cover letter is to demonstrate the fit between your background and the position for which you are applying.

**Your emphasis should always be on what you can do for the employer, not what you hope to get from the experience.** Always send a cover letter with any résumé you send by mail, email, or fax.

**Format** - A professionally styled cover letter utilizes a block format to give it a clean appearance. All the sections should be typed in single space format, with double spacing used only to separate the sections.

**Heading** - The heading should list your address, telephone number, and the date. The next section includes the recruiter's name and job title, the organization's name, and its address. The salutation

should be formal and directed to a specific individual, whenever possible. If there is no way of ascertaining a specific addressee, then use the greeting "Dear Director," "Dear Administrator," "Dear Employer," or "Dear Recruiter," not "Dear Madam or Sir" or "To Whom It May Concern."

**Opening Paragraph** - Name the specific position or type of work for which you are applying, and indicate from which resource (website, career center, newspaper, employee, instructor, etc.) you learned of the opening or organization.

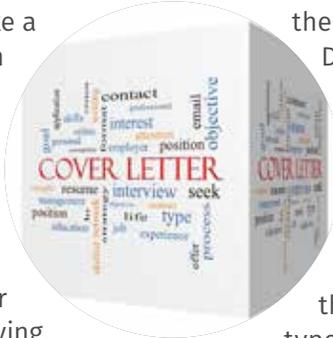
**Middle Paragraph(s)** - Indicate the reasons you are interested in and qualified for the position. Explain how your skills, academic background, work experiences, practicums, clinicals, internships, co-ops, and activities make you a well-suited candidate for the position. Refer to the specific achievements or unique qualifications you acquired in those experiences. Review the requirements for the position, and then try to match them with concrete examples that prove you actually

possess those skills. Mention something about the organization that motivates you to want to work for it. Try not to repeat the same information the reader will find on your résumé.

**Closing Paragraph** - State your desire for a personal interview. Repeat your telephone number and email address, and offer any assistance to help in a speedy response. Finally, finish with a statement that will encourage a response.

**Ending** - The ending should simply read "Sincerely," or "Yours truly," with your name typed three or four lines down to allow ample space for your signature above it if you are sending a hard copy.

**Miscellaneous** - Limit your document to one page. Although it is okay to use the personal pronoun "I," avoid using it too frequently. While still sounding professional and somewhat formal, try to use common language to sound natural. Review the letter carefully, since the reader will probably perceive it to be an example of your written communication skills. Print it on the same type of paper that you use for your résumé.



# COVER LETTER SAMPLE

## Sample Student

samplestudent@email.com  
(708) 555-1111

123 Cougar Street, city, ST 00000

October 9, 2018  
Mr. John Doe  
Recruiter  
Company ABC  
Chicago, IL 60600

Dear Mr. Doe:

I am writing to express my sincere interest in entry-level sales opportunities with Company ABC. Currently, I am attending Kaplan University and will graduate in December of 20XX with a Associate of Arts, in Mass Communications.

As you will note in my resume, I have strong language skills. My ability to communicate fluently in Japanese would allow me to conduct business with many of your international clients. Because I studied abroad for a semester, I am also aware of the cultural differences in Japanese-speaking countries. In addition to my language skills, I also have extensive experience working in fast-paced, dynamic environments. Not only does my current position require me to work with diverse groups of people, but I am also responsible for ensuring a standard level of service, training new advocates, and developing education programs.

I will contact you in two weeks to confirm receipt of my resume and the possibility of meeting. I am excited about the opportunities at Company ABC and feel confident that my skills will allow me to make an immediate impact on your organization. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sample Student

**Address letter to specific person rather than "To Whom it May Concern."**

**Vary your sentence style.**

**Add more specific details about your previous experience and/or activities.**

# THANK YOU LETTER SAMPLE

## Sample Student

samplestudent@email.com  
(708) 555-1111

123 Cougar Street, city, ST 00000

October 9, 2018  
Mr. John Doe  
Recruiter  
Company ABC  
Chicago, IL 60600

Dear Mr. Doe:

Thank you very much for interviewing me for the Public Relations Specialist position with your organization today. You and your colleagues provided me with a very warm reception and informative discussion.

My enthusiasm for working with your public relations department was strengthened as a result of our meeting. As mentioned during our conversation, my experience as the Community Communications Coordinator for my campus newspaper has prepared me extensively for the type of work required of this opportunity. In addition, my strong teamwork qualities and proficient communication skills would make me an ideal candidate for the position. Furthermore, the position is congruent with the type of career experience I am seeking.

Once again, I wish to reiterate my genuine interest in the position and your organization. If you have any questions, please contact me at 708-555-1111 or at samplestudent@kaplan.edu. Thank you very much for your valuable time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sample Student

**Sent within 24-hrs.**

**Sent to each person you met with during the interview.**

**Typed letter format is preferred. Other options include; an email thank you or a hand-written note.**

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**Jane Doe**  
123 Street Ave | Matteson, IL 60443  
(555) 555-5555 | janedoe@email.com

**SAMPLE**

## **Personal Profile**

- Enthusiastic, reliable and highly motivated
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills
- Effective working alone and cooperative as a team member

## **Education**

**Prairie State College**  
*Associate in Arts*

## **Special Skills**

Bilingual: spanish (oral & written)

## **Work Experience**

**ABC Company**, Tinley Park, IL, 10/2018 – Present  
Communications Intern

- Pitch relevant company story ideas to local media.
- Interview appropriate staff members about their position for web content.
- Write press releases to promote company to local and regional media.

**XYZ Services, Inc.**, Chicago Heights, IL, 8/2017 – 10/2018  
*Receptionist*

- Greeted customers and answered multi-phone lines/voicemail.
- Handled front desk operations including document duplication and transmission.
- Opened and closed main office.

**Clara's Boutique**, Ford Heights, IL, 6/2016 - 7/2017  
*Administrative Assistant*

- Scheduled meetings for quarterly updates.
- Ordered supplies and handled administrative duties.
- Oversaw payroll, billing and maintained employee records.

**It is no longer necessary to state “references available upon request” on your résumés as employers know they can ask you for these and you will provide them.**