# Chapter 13: Job Application Materials

## Objectives

Upon completion of this chapter, readers will be able to do the following:

1. Analyze job posting to identify keywords, employer expectations, and required qualifications, and use that analysis to tailor application materials to a specific position.
2. Compose a professional application/cover letter that clearly connects a candidate’s qualifications to a specific job, using appropriate tone, structure, and detail.
3. Design and format a resume that follows current best practices, organizes information logically, and highlights relevant experience, skills, and education.
4. Develop or revise a LinkedIn profile that includes a professional headline, About section, and Experience entries, incorporating industry-relevant keywords and personal branding elements.
5. Evaluate and revise application materials for clarity, readability, specificity, and alignment with employer expectations.

## Introduction to Job Application Materials

Whether you are seeking an internship, a first job after graduation, or a new position mid-career, your job application materials are often your first—and sometimes only—opportunity to make a positive impression. These documents must clearly and persuasively present your qualifications, highlight your strengths, and demonstrate your understanding of the employer’s needs. Hiring managers in technical and professional fields expect concise, well-organized, and tailored application materials. Generic or poorly written documents won’t earn you an interview, regardless of your background.

This chapter focuses on the core components of a successful job application: well-planned resumes, cover letters, and LinkedIn profiles. You’ll learn how to analyze job postings, align your experience with employer expectations, and adapt the tone and style of your job application documents to suit professional norms. You will be able to craft application materials that reflect your skills and achievements in a manner that distinguishes you from other candidates. By the end of this chapter, you will be equipped to approach the job application process with confidence and clarity.

## Job Application Letters

This section focuses on the application letter (sometimes called a "cover letter"), which together with the resume is often called the "job application packet." You may already have drafted one or both employment-seeking documents. Please review and study this section then apply the guidelines provided here to the resumes and application letters you’ve previously created.

The role of the application letter is to draw a clear connection between the job you are seeking and your qualifications listed in the resume. Essentially, the letter matches the requirements of the job with your qualifications, emphasizing how you are right for that job. **The application letter is not a lengthy summary of the resume.** Instead, it selectively mentions information in the resume, as appropriate.

### Common Types of Application Letters

To begin planning your letter, identify the type of application letter best fits your background and responds well to the employer’s requirements. Application letters can be defined by the amount and kind of information needed:

* **Objective letters:** One type of letter says very little: it identifies the position being sought, indicates an interest in having an interview, and calls attention to the fact that the resume is attached. It also mentions any other special matters, such as dates and times you are available to be interviewed. This letter is very brief. (It represents the true meaning of "cover" letter.)
* **Highlight letters:** Another common type of application letter, often used in technical writing courses, summarizes key details from your resume to highlight your fit for a specific position. Its primary goal is to clearly connect your qualifications to the job opening. How do you know which to write? For most technical writing courses, write the highlight letter. However, in "real-life" situations, try calling the prospective employer; study the job advertisement for clues.

### Common Sections in Application Letters

As for the actual content and organization of the paragraphs within the application letter (specifically for the highlight type), consider the following common approaches.

#### *Introductory Paragraph*

That first paragraph of the application letter is the most important; it sets the tone, focus, and includes your most important qualification. It may be tempting to dive directly into your work and educational experience; however it is good practice to include some combination of the following:

* State the purpose of the letter: to inquire about an employment opportunity.
* Indicate the source of your information about the job: online job posting, a personal contact, or other.
* State one attention-grabbing fact about yourself in relation to the job or the employer that will encourage the reader to continue.

You must accomplish all these things in the space of very short paragraph—no more than 3 to 4 lines of the standard business letter.

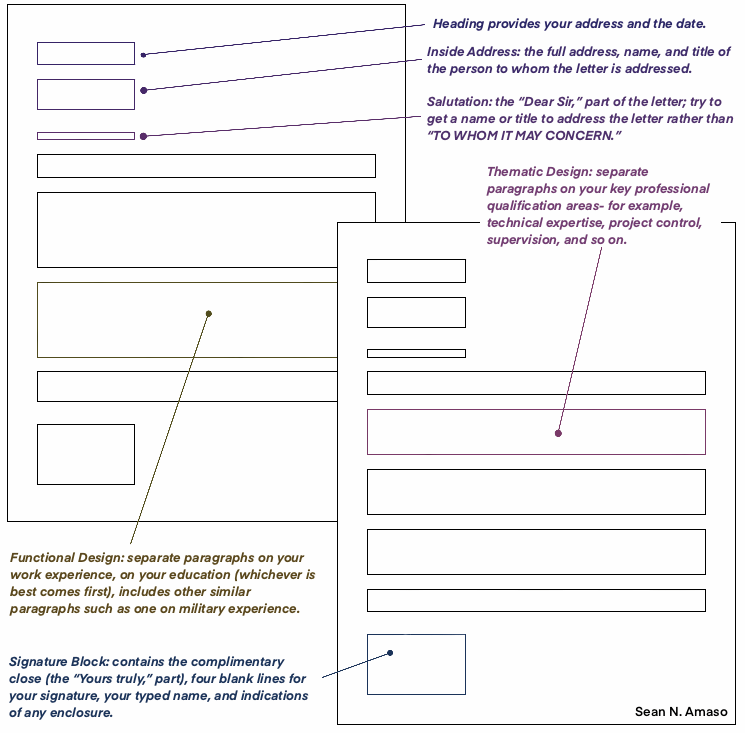
#### *Main Body Paragraphs*

In the main parts of the application letter, present your work experience, education, and training—whatever makes that connection between you and the job you are seeking. Remember that this is the most important step you must do in the letter—enable the reader to see the match between your qualifications and the requirements for the job.

There are two common ways to present this information:

* **Functional approach:** presents education in one section, and work experience in the other. Include any relevant military experience in another section. Place your "best stuff" after the introduction.
* **Thematic approach:** divides experience and education into groups like "management," "technical," and "financial," then discusses your related work and education in separate paragraphs.

Of course, the letter is not an exhaustive list of your background—it highlights just those aspects of your training that make the connection with the job you are seeking.



*Figure 1: Common Sections of Application Letters*

Another section worth considering for the main body of the application letter is one in which you discuss your goals, objectives (the focus of your career) what you are doing or want to do professionally. A paragraph like this is particularly good for people just starting their careers, when there is not much to put in the letter. Of course, be careful about loading a paragraph like this with "sweet nothings." For example, "I am seeking a challenging, rewarding career with a dynamic upscale company where I will have ample room for professional and personal growth" would be akin to saying "I want to be happy, well-paid, and well-fed."

#### *Closing Paragraph*

In the last paragraph of the application letter, state how the prospective employer can contact you and when are available for an interview.

### Background Details in the Application Letter

One of the best ways to make an application letter exceptional is to work in, specifics about related aspects of your educational and employment background. Yes, if the resume is attached, readers may view the details there, however including these examples in the application letter increases the chance that the reader will find the letter engaging and memorable. A letter that is overly general and vague might generate so little interest that the reader might not even care to turn to the resume.

Look at this example, which is rather lacking in specifics:

As for my experience working with persons with developmental disabilities, I have worked and volunteered at various rehabilitation hospitals and agencies in Austin and Houston [say which ones to inject more detail into this letter]. I have received training [where? certificates?] in supervising patients and assisting with physical and social therapy [which specific therapies?]. Currently, I am volunteering at St. David's Hospital [doing what?] to continue my education in aiding persons with developmental disabilities [which specific disabilities?]

Now look at the revision:

As for my experience working with persons with developmental disabilities, I worked and volunteered at Cypress Creek Hospital in Houston and Capital Area Easter Seals/ Rehabilitation Center and Health South Rehabilitation Hospital in Austin. I received CPR, First Aid, and Crisis Intervention certificates from Cypress Creek Hospital. Currently, I volunteer at St. David's Hospital assisting with physical therapy to persons with developmental disabilities in the aquatics department.

### Early-Career Application Letters

In the preceding, you've seen some rather impressive application letters. If you don't have all that experience, then how do you construct an effective application letter?

* Cite relevant projects (both in academia and community) you've worked on, even if they are not directly related to the career you desire.
* Spend extra time describing college courses and programs you completed. Include team projects, research projects, or reports as experience.
* Include any volunteer work that may be considered technical. (If you've not done any volunteer work, consider doing so soon.)
* List any organizations you belong to and describe any of their activities that could be considered technical in nature. (If you've not belonged to any technically oriented organizations, consider joining.)
* As with the resume, you can use formatting to stretch what information you have to help fill out the resume page.

In the example student application letter below, notice that the writer describes his coursework and the applications that he used. His reference to a professional exposition shows an active interest in a particular technical area. Moreover, his visit with an employee of the company with which he seeks employment is a crafty form of name dropping. In general, the letter expresses enthusiasm about working in the VLSI area.

Edward Darnien   
1307 Marshall Lane   
Pflugerville, TX 78660

June 6, 2013

Vern Whittington   
University Recruiting Manger   
Dallas Semiconductor   
4401 South Beltwood Pkwy   
Dallas, TX 75244-3292

Dear Mr. Whittington:

I am writing you to express my interest in becoming a VLSI design engineer with Dallas Semiconductor. I will earn my BS degree in Electrical Engineering from The University of Texas at Austin in August, 2008. My objective upon graduation is to become a successful VLSI design engineer in the semiconductor industry.

During the Engineering Career Exposition in September 20018, Tiffany Oberlin, a Dallas Semiconductor college staffing coordinator, talked to me about career opportunities with Dallas Semiconductor. Her description of the company’s wide range of products, especially touch memory for automatic identification, impressed me. I am very interested in becoming part of the VLSI design team working on this challenging project.

As my enclosed resume explains, I have completed courses related to VLSI design, including digital system design and reduced instruction set microprocessor design. I am also proficient in several VLSI design tools such as Synopsys and Workview. In addition, my three co-op tours with National Instruments have demonstrated my ability to work with people and to apply my technical knowledge to practical skills.

I am looking forward to discussing my qualifications with you. Please feel free to contact me either at (512) 111-2222 or at platapus@aussieu.edu. Meanwhile, I greatly appreciate your kind help and attention.

Sincerely,

Edward Damien

Enclosure

### Checklist of Common Problems in Application Letters

* **Readability and white space**: Are there any dense paragraphs over 8 lines? Are there comfortable 1-inch to 1.5-inch margins all the way around the letter? Is there adequate spacing between paragraphs and between the components of the letter?
* **Page fill*:*** Is the letter placed on the page nicely: not crammed at the top one-half of the page; not spilling over to a second page by only three or four lines?
* **General neatness, professional-looking quality*:*** If submitting the application with a hard-copy job package, is the letter on good quality paper, and is the copy clean and free of smudges and erasures?
* **Proper use of the business-letter format*:*** Have you set up the letter in one of the standard business-letter formats? (See Chapter 12)
* **Overt, direct indication of the connection between your background and the requirements of the job*:*** Do you emphasize this connection?
* **A good upbeat, positive tone*:*** Is the tone of your letter bright and positive? Does it avoid sounding overly aggressive, brash, over-confident? Does your letter avoid the opposite problem of sounding stiff, overly reserved, blasé, indifferent?
* **A good introduction*:*** Does your introduction establish the purpose of the letter? Does it avoid diving directly into the details of your work and educational experience? Do you present one compelling detail about yourself that will encourage the reader to keep reading?
* **A good balance between brevity and details*:*** Does your letter avoid becoming too detailed (making readers less inclined to read thoroughly)? Does your letter avoid being so general that it could refer to practically anybody?
* **Include specifics (dates, numbers, names, etc.)*:*** Does your letter present specific detail but without making the letter too densely detailed? Do you present hard factual detail (numbers, dates, proper names) that make you stand out as an individual?
* **Minimize the use of information that is simply your opinion*:*** Do you avoid over-reliance on information that is simply your opinions about yourself? For example, instead of saying that you "work well with others," do you cite work experience that proves that fact?
* **Grammar, spelling, usage*:*** Does your letter use correct grammar, usage, and spelling?

## Resumes

A resume is a selective record of your background—your educational, military, and work experience, your certifications, abilities, and so on. You send it, sometimes accompanied by an application letter, to potential employers when you are seeking job interviews. It is not a one-size-fits-all document, however. A resume should be tailored to the specific job you are applying for. Particularly if you seek work in a field where you might fit a number of job types (for example in the computer science field you could apply for jobs as a software developer, web designer, IT support, etc.), you might have differently organized resumes with different focuses based on the different kinds of jobs you are applying for.

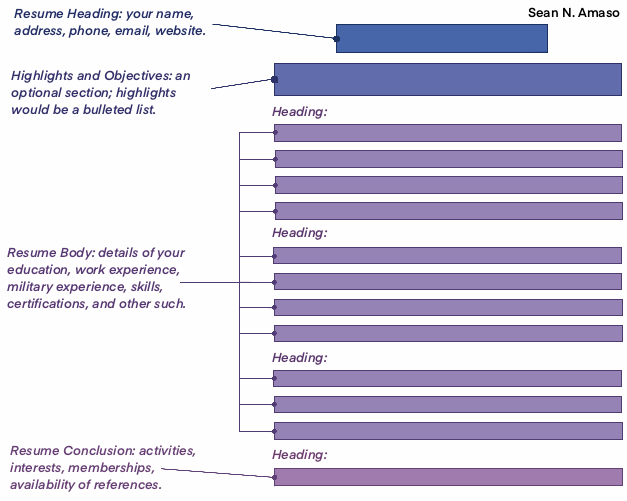
A resume should be clear, well-designed, and tailored to your audience. In a technical writing course, your instructor may allow you to include projected details to reflect your future qualifications. However, if you're early in your college education and have limited experience, consider using these strategies to create a resume that more accurately represents your current skills and background. Learning to craft a strong, honest resume now will prepare you for future opportunities.

### Resume Design: An Overview

Before personal computers, people used one resume for various employment searches. However, with modern technology, employment seekers often have multiple renditions of their resumes to best suit different types of jobs. For example, someone seeking employment with a community college and/or with a software-development company would submit a different resume to each organization. The contents of the two might be roughly the same, but the organization, format, and emphases would be quite different.

Be aware of resume-writing software and resume-writing services. If you are in a time bind or if you are insecure about your writing or design skills, these services might help, but often they create a very generic resume with the same structure/design as every other person using their service. These agencies simply cannot be that sensitive or perceptive about your background or your employment search. Why not learn the skills and techniques of writing your own resume here, save the money, and write better resumes anyway?

There is no one size fits all resume template. Each person's background, employment needs, and career objectives are unique to that individual and, therefore, so is their resume. Each aspect of your resume must demonstrate who you are, what your background consists of, strives to match the employer’s hiring goals, and what concisely relays what your employment goals are. Please use this chapter to design your own personalized resume, browse through the various formats, and play around with designs until you find one that works for you.



*Figure 2: Basic Sections of a Resume*

### Sections in Resumes

Resumes are generally divided into three sections: the heading, body, and conclusion. Each section contains relatively common contents.

#### Heading

The top third of the resume is the heading. It contains your name, phone numbers, location (city and state is plenty, but some people still include their full address), and other details. Some resume writers include their profession, occupation, or field. In some examples, you'll see writers include certifications like "Certified Physical Therapist" prominently in the heading. Headings may contain a goals and objectives subsection and/or a highlights subsection. These special subsections are described later in the chapter.

#### Body

In a one-page resume, the body is the middle portion, taking up a half or more of the total space of the resume. In this section, you present the details of your work, education, and military experience if applicable. This information is arranged in reverse chronological order—from most recent to least recent, based on the *end* date of each position (if the end date is the same for more than one position, then organize those ones by start date). So, any position that is *current* should be listed first, in general. However, if you are building an early career resume and have past internships that are more relevant than, say, a current retail position, put those internships before the retail jobs. You want your more relevant experience to come up first as an employer skims over your resume.

In the body section, you also include your accomplishments, for example, publications, certifications, equipment you are familiar with, and so on. There are many ways to present this information:

* You can divide it functionally—into separate sections for work experience and education.
* You can divide it thematically—into separate sections for the different areas of your experience and education.

#### Conclusion

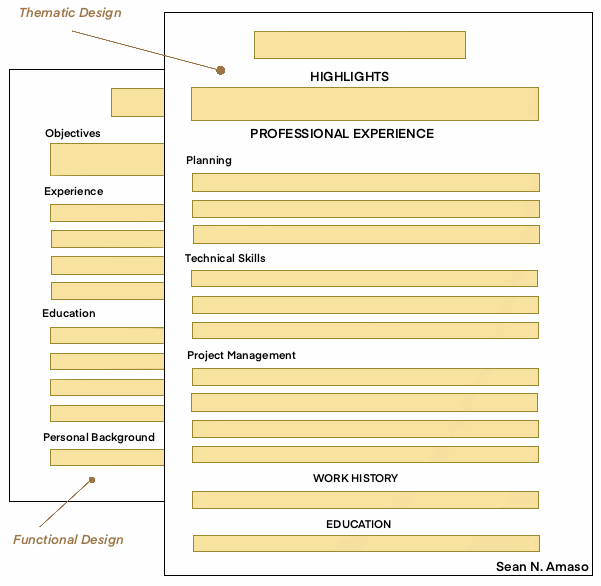
In the final third or quarter of the resume, you can present other relevant information on your background. For example, you can list activities, professional associations, memberships, hobbies, and interests. At the bottom of the resume, people sometimes put "References available on request" and the date of preparation of the resume. However, recent advice indicates that “References available on request” is now outdated and unnecessary. Many jobs still want references, but they will ask for that information on the job form—it's not necessary to waste valuable resume space with a statement to request references. Listing non-work and personal information humanizes you to potential employers and gives you a great conversation starter. For example, if you mention in your resume that you raise goats, the interviewer may choose to discuss your experience during those moments of otherwise uncomfortable silence.

### Resume Types

To begin planning your resume, decide which type of resume you need. Base your decision on the potential employer’s requirements, and that best reflects what your background and employment needs. Resumes can be defined according to how information on work and educational experience is handled. There are several basic, commonly used plans or designs you can consider using.

#### Functional Resumes

Illustrated schematically below, the functional design starts with a heading; then presents either education or work experience, dependent upon which is stronger or more relevant; then presents the other of these two sections; then ends with a section on skills and certifications and one on personal information. Students who have not yet begun their careers often find this design the best for their purposes. People with military experience either work the detail in to the education and work-experience sections as appropriate, or they create separate section specifically for military experience at the same level as education and work experience.



*Figure 3: Two Basic Organizational Approaches to Resume Design*

#### Thematic Resumes

Another approach to resumes is the thematic design, illustrated schematically in the preceding. It divides your experience and education into categories like project management, budgetary planning, financial tracking, personnel management, customer sales, technical support, publications—whichever areas best describe your experience. Often, these categories are based directly on typical or specific employment advertisements. If the job advertisement says, for example, that Company ABC wants a person with experience in training, customer service, and sales, then it might be a wise move to design thematic headings around those three requirements. If you want to use the thematic approach in your resume, take a look at your employment and educational experience. What are the common threads? Project management, program development, troubleshooting, supervision, maintenance, inventory control? Take a look at the job announcement you're responding to. What are the three, four, or five key requirements it mentions? Use these themes to design the body section of your resume. These themes become the headings in the body of the resume. Under these headings you list the employment or educational experience that applies. For example, under a heading like "Financial Records," you might list the accounting and bookkeeping courses you took in college, the company-sponsored seminars on Excel you took, and the jobs where you implemented these skills.

#### Objective Resumes

Objective resumes provide dates, names, and titles. These are very lean, terse resumes. In technical-writing courses, you are typically asked *not* to write this type. The objective-resume style is useful in resumes that use the thematic approach or that emphasize the summary/highlights section. By its very nature, you can see that the thematic approach is unclear about the actual history of employment. It's harder to tell where the person was or what they were doing, year by year.

#### Detailed Resumes

Detailed resumes provide dates, titles, names, and specific details about your responsibilities. Statements about the quality and effectiveness of your work is also important to include. Most technical-writing courses focus on producing detailed resumes to highlight your work.

### Layout and Detail Format in Resumes

At some point in your resume planning, you'll want to think schematically about the layout and design. The general layout involves designing and positioning headings, individual section headings, and the orientation of detailed text. Detail formats determine how you arrange and present your education and work experience details.

#### Layout

Observe the resumes in this book and elsewhere strictly in terms of the style and placement of the headings, the shape of the text (the paragraphs) in the resumes, and the orientation of these two elements with each other. Some resumes have the headings centered; others are on the left margin. Notice that the actual text—the paragraphs—of resumes typically does not extend to the far-left and the far-right margins. Full-length lines are not considered as readable or scannable as the shorter ones you see illustrated in the examples in this book.

Notice that many resumes use a "hanging-head" format. In this case, the heading starts on the far-left margin while the text is indented another inch or so. This format makes the heading stand out more and the text more scannable. Notice also that in some of the text paragraphs of resumes, special typography is used to highlight the name of the organization or the job title.

#### Detail Formats

You will need to make a fundamental decision about how you want to present the details of your work and education experience. Several examples of typical presentational techniques are shown below. The elements you work with include:

* Occupation, position, job title
* Company or organization name
* Time period you were there
* Key details about your accomplishments and responsibilities while there.

A document showing two versions of a resume entry for an "Accounting Customer Service Specialist" at "Fennimore Insurance Company" from "1992-Present." The bulleted lists for this position describe duties such as balancing billing statements and preparing daily corrections. Below that, a different entry describes a "Programmer/Analyst" position at the "First Bank of Austin."



*Figure 5: Examples of Detail Formats*

There are many ways to format this information. It depends on what you want to emphasize and how much or how little content you have available to you. Whether you are struggling to fit all the information onto a single page or struggling fill an entire page, try the different types of detail formats shown above.

### Special Sections in Resumes

Here are some ideas for special resume sections, sections that emphasize your goals or qualifications.

#### Highlights/Summary

In the illustration below, you'll notice the "Highlights" section that occurs just below the heading (the section for name, address, phone number, etc.) and just above the main experience and education sections. This is a popular section in resumes. Resume specialists believe that the eye makes first contact with a page somewhere one-fourth to one-third of the way down the page—not at the very top. If you believe that, then it makes sense to put your very "best stuff" at that point. Therefore, some people list their most important qualifications, their key skills, and their key work experience in that space on the page. Actually, this section is useful more for people who have been in their careers for a while. It's a good way to create one common spot on the resume to list those key qualifications about yourself that may be spread throughout the resume. Otherwise, these key details about yourself are scattered across your various employment and educational experience—in fact, buried in them.

#### Objectives/Goals

Some resumes contain a section that falls under the heading in which you describe what your key goals or objectives and what your key qualifications are. Some resume writers avoid including a key-qualifications section because they fear it may deter employers from reading the rest of the resume. It’s similar to a highlights section but shorter and in paragraph form.

**Personal Computer Systems Background**

Ten years experience with personal computer systems, including eight years with IBM-compatibles and one year with Apple MacIntoshes. Over six years in the IBM-compatible personal computer industry.

**Hardware Experience**

*System Units.*Extensive experience with IBM PC, PCXT, and PC/AT, including compatibles, IBM PS12 Model 30 and 386 and 486 ISE system units. Also, Tandy Radio Shack Color Computer 1 and 2 system units. Intermediate experience with Apple MacIntosh system units. Introductory experience with Sun SPARCstation-compatible system units.

*Mass Storage Device Subsystems.*Extensive experience with floppy diskette subsystems, hard disk subsystems, encompassing ST412/506, ESDI, SCSI, and IDE technologies and tape backup subsystems, particularly QIC-02 and QIC-10 technologies. Intermediate experience with CD-ROM subsystems. Limited experience with optical cartridge and WORM subsystems.

*Video Subsystems.*Extensive experience with MDA/MGA, CGA, EGA, and VGA subsystems.

*Other Products.*Extensive experience with I/O (serial, parallel, and game port) boards, expanded (LIM EMS) and extended memory boards, keyboards, modems, mice, and printers, including laser printers. Intermediate experience with fax boards, Cheapernet (thin Ethernet) network boards, and scanners.

**Operating System Experience**

Extensive experience with DOS (MS-DOS/PC-DOS), including Windows. Intermediate experience with OS/2 and Novel NetWare. Also, OS-9 (a UNIX-based operating system for the Motorola 6809 CPU). Limited experience with UNIX System V, Xenix, and CBIS NetOS. Introductory experience with Apple’s System 6 and 7.

**Software Experience**

Experience with a broad range of application packages and utilities too numerous to mention in entirety; notable including Microsoft Word and Word for Windows and MicroPro WordStar word processor, Microsoft Excel and Lotus 123 spreadsheet, ButtonWare’s PC-File and PC-File/db flat-file database manager and ProComm Plus telecommunication applications.

**Programming Languages**

Extensive experience with BASIC and Turbo Pascal, including two semesters of college. Intermediate experience with COBOL (two semesters). Limited experience with assembly language and C. Currently learning Object-Oriented Programming (OOP).me

If you have lots of detail about what you know, this approach on page 2 of the resume may work. On the first page of this resume, the writer divides the presentation into experience and education sections and takes a chronological approach to each. On the first page, he only provides company names, job titles, dates, and discussion of duties.

### Early-Career Resumes

If you are at the beginning of your career, the advice and examples in this chapter may seem ideal, but what if you have very little experience? It is important to acknowledge that limited experience is a common starting place among resume writers. Consequently, it is important to have solid strategies to showcase your potential on your resume by highlighting to boost your readiness as a confident entry-level candidate are. There are several strategies available to help you enhance your resume and convey your strengths and accomplishments effectively.

* **Highlight Relevant Projects:** Include academic, personal, or community-based projects, even if they are not directly aligned with your intended career path. Emphasize the skills developed and your specific contributions.
* **Expand on Academic Coursework:** Provide brief descriptions of relevant college courses, particularly those involving team projects, research, or technical writing. These can demonstrate your subject knowledge and collaborative skills.
* **Include Volunteer Experience with Technical Components:** If you have participated in volunteer work that involved any form of technical task or problem-solving, be sure to include it. If not, consider seeking out volunteer opportunities that allow you to build and demonstrate these skills.
* **List Organizational Involvement:** Mention any clubs, student organizations, or professional groups you have participated in. Describe your role and highlight any activities that involved technical or leadership skills.

In the first student resume shown below, notice how much space that details about education take up. This resume writer could have included even more: Descriptions of key courses and projects could have been provided under a heading such as "Essential Coursework."

[Example of an Early-Career Resume](https://alg.manifoldapp.org/projects/open-technical-communication-2e/resource/open-tc-2e-chapter-13-early-career-resume-example-1)

[Another Example of an Early-Career Resume](https://alg.manifoldapp.org/projects/open-technical-communication-2e/resource/open-tc-2e-chapter-13-early-career-resume-example-2)

Notice too that the resumes above include plenty of co-op and part-time work. The bulleted-list format extends the length of the resume so that it fills up the page. At the bottom of the resume, the writer lists awards and organizations. These too could be amplified if necessary. Details as to what the award is about, why this writer received it, and what those organizations are. These are examples of good information that could be added, if necessary.

Subtle changes in format can also help make your resume fill a page. Top, bottom, left, and right margins can all be pushed down, up, and in from the standard 1.0 inch to 1.25 inches. You can add extra space between sections. To do so, don't just press Enter. Instead, use the paragraph-formatting feature of your software to put 6 or 9 points, for example, below the final element of each section. Line spacing is another subtle way to extend a resume. If your software by default uses 13.6 points of line spacing for Times New Roman 12-point text, experiment with changing the line spacing to exactly 15.0 points.

### Resume Checklist

As you plan, write, or review your resume, keep these points in mind:

* **Readability**: are there any dense paragraphs over 6 lines? Imagine your prospective employer sitting down to a two-inch stack of resumes. Do you think she's going to slow down to read through big thick paragraphs? Probably not. Try to keep paragraphs under 6 lines long. The "hanging-head" design helps here.
* **White space**: Picture a resume crammed with detail, using only half-inch margins all the way around, a small type size, and only a small amount of space between parts of the resume. Our prospective employer might be less inclined to work through that also. "Air it out!" Find ways to incorporate more white space in the margins and between sections of the resume. Again, the "hanging-head" design is also useful.
* **Special format**: Make sure that you use special format consistently throughout the resume. For example, if you use a hanging-head style for the work-experience section, use it in the education section as well.
* **Consistent margins**: Most resumes have several margins: the outermost, left margin and at least one internal left margin. Typically, paragraphs in a resume use an internal margin, not the far-left margin. Make sure to align all appropriate text to these margins as well. Avoid unnecessary multiple margins: they give your resume a ragged, messy look.
* **Terse writing style**: It's okay to use a rather clipped, terse writing style in resumes—up to a point. The challenge in most resumes is to get it all on one page (or two if you have a lot of information to present). Instead of writing "I supervised a team of five technicians." you write "Supervised a team of five technicians." However, you don't leave out normal words such as articles.
* **Bold, italics, different type size, caps, other typographical special effects**: Use special typography, but keep it under control. Resumes are great places to use all of your fancy word-processing features such as bold, italics, different fonts, and different type sizes. Don't go crazy with it! Too much fancy typography can be distracting (plus make people think you are hyperactive). Also, whatever special typography you use, be consistent with it throughout the resume. If some job titles are italics, make them all italics. Avoid all-caps text—it's less readable.
* **Page fill**: Do everything you can to make your resume fill out one full page and to keep it from spilling over by 4 or 5 lines to a second page. At the beginning of your career, it's tough filling up a full page of a resume. As you move into your career, it gets hard keeping it to one page. If you need a two-page resume, see that the second page is full or nearly full.
* **Clarity of boundary lines between major sections**: Design and format your resume so that whatever the main sections are, they are very noticeable. Use well-defined headings and white space to achieve this. Similarly, design your resume so that the individual segments of work experience or education are distinct and separate from each other.
* **Reverse chronological order**: Remember to list your education and work-experience items starting with the current or most recent and working backwards in time.
* **Consistency of phrasing**: Use the same style of phrasing for similar information in a resume—for example, past tense verbs for all descriptions of past work experience.
* **Consistency of punctuation style**: For similar sections of information use the same kind of punctuation—for example, periods, commas, colons, or nothing.
* **Translations for "inside" information**: Don't assume readers will know what certain abbreviations, acronyms, or symbols mean—yes, even to the extent of "GPA" or the construction "3.2/4.00." Take time to describe special organizations you may be a member of.
* **Grammar, spelling, usage**: Watch out for these problems on a resume. Watch out particularly for the incorrect use of its and it's.

## LinkedIn Profiles

[LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com) is a professional social networking service that is used by job seekers and established professionals across academic and non-academic workplaces. LinkedIn is an important resource for students and professionals to create an online presence and connect with colleagues and influencers in your discipline and beyond.

### Four Reasons You Should Be on LinkedIn

If you are a professional who expects to have some type of career for many years to come, you need to be on LinkedIn. LinkedIn allows professionals across industries and roles to connect, share information, and explore new opportunities.

The following are a few reasons why LinkedIn is such a powerful tool.

#### 1. LinkedIn is the world’s largest professional network.

As of 2025, LinkedIn has over [900 million members](http://expandedramblings.com/index.php/by-the-numbers-a-few-important-linkedin-stats/) from 200 countries and territories, which is a lot of people you can network and connect with through this platform.

#### 2. LinkedIn is indispensable for job searching.

You can conduct a search for employment postings in the Jobs section based on various criteria, such as location, keywords, and company names. More importantly, LinkedIn displays who in your network is working at specific organizations, giving you the opportunity to reach out to these individuals for informational interviews and networking. One of these folks could be the inside connection you need to get your resume past the gatekeepers and directly onto the desks of hiring managers.

More than 30 million companies are on LinkedIn, many which have “company pages” detailing information such as their latest news, job postings, and who in your network works at these organizations. This is a great way to target specific organizations and keep tabs on your favorites.

#### 3. LinkedIn facilitates networking.

Due to major changes in today’s working world, we must build and nurturing a network of professionals throughout our entire careers, not just when we need a job. By engaging with colleagues on LinkedIn, you are there to not only receive assistance but to also help others, share and exchange information, and enhance relationships.

LinkedIn’s tools will help you expand your network and find professionals that could be valuable to your career. By searching for the schools you’ve attended, you can gain access to fellow alumni. Additionally, you can join groups on LinkedIn, which focus on different job sectors, career interests, corporations, nonprofits, universities, professional associations, and more. Once you join these entities, you can participate in their discussions, meet like-minded professionals, and learn about jobs that members post.

#### 4. LinkedIn can help you build a professional digital presence.

Finally, by crafting a profile on LinkedIn, you are establishing a positive, professional online presence. LinkedIn is highly ranked in search engine results, meaning that when someone searches for you on the internet, your LinkedIn profile will be one of the first items listed. Having a profile also allows your information to come up when employers, recruiters, and others conduct keyword searches on LinkedIn.

### Tips for a Strong LinkedIn Profile

According to research conducted at LinkedIn, the number one thing people spend time doing on the social network is looking at other peoples’ profiles. Within your profile page, what they look at first is your picture, followed by your name and your title. These are the most important parts to get right.

#### Profile Picture

Your profile picture should have a professional appearance. Make sure it shows your face clearly. Think of how you envision your best self in a situation of work competency. What would you be wearing? What facial expression would you have? Use these questions as a guide for how your profile photo should look.

Be leery of profile photos that are overly clever or that display non-work-related activities (including selfies and hobbies). Keeping it simple, straightforward, and engaging is the best recipe for an effective profile photo. And smile! Smiling makes people perceive you as friendly, approachable, and competent and makes them more likely to engage with you.

#### Headline

Your headline should succinctly express your work role. When writing your headline, think about keywords you want to be associated with. What are the keywords in your industry or the roles you’re pursuing? By including them in your headline, you’ll be more likely to pop up as a result in someone’s search query.

Once you’ve clarified some key terms to make your headline searchable, think about writing your headline as a “hook”—something intriguing and unique that expresses your personality and passion and stands out from the crowd. For example, “PhD candidate in anthropology at the CUNY Graduate Center” could be rephrased as “Experienced social scientist transforming information into knowledge in universities and beyond.”

#### About Section

The About section should provide a quick overview of your work role, passions, background skills, and competencies. When writing your About section, think of it as an elevator pitch: the written equivalent of a 30-second introduction that gives the reader a global view of your personal brand, while engaging them through concise insights about your overarching passion and motivation.

The recipe for crafting your summary is:

* Identify your passion
* State your value (skills and abilities)
* Show your personality

Write in the first-person voice to encourage the reader to feel a connection with your story. Your tone can be slightly less formal than it would be in a cover letter.

#### Experience Section

Your Experience section should serve as a resume (with some key differences). For each line, emphasize your role and what projects you accomplished. The more you can quantify the accomplishment, the more convincing and credible it will look to your reader. Emphasize the scope, scale, and impact of your accomplishments.

Allow your personal strengths and values to shine through. Increase your discoverability by incorporating keywords (terms you think someone would search for if they were looking for someone like you). Add rich media to your LinkedIn profile, including academic or professional slideshows (using the feature SlideShare) as embedded links.

Overall, think short and engaging when writing up your LinkedIn profile content. It is important to note that over 60% of LinkedIn profile views come from mobile devices. Access your profile on your smartphone to make sure it looks good on mobile web browsers.

### Establishing a Professional Presence

Once you have your profile set up, **generate content like status updates and blog posts to add value to your network**.You can produce four different types of status updates:

1. *A university or department-based status update*—Promote your participation in events, initiatives, or project outputs
2. *A university culture update*—Describe what it’s like to work there (including parties or events at departments or initiatives, volunteering activities, and so on)
3. *Discipline or industry-specific content*—Reflect your involvement in broader developments in the field you’re working in or in the industry you’re targeting for potential employment
4. *Open jobs and career path updates*—Emphasize the opportunity that you’re recruiting for, and put the reader in the shoes of what it would be like to work in that role

**Add value to your LinkedIn network by becoming a member of groups and publishing blog posts**. LinkedIn allows you to join up to 100 groups. Search for and join any group that may be applicable to your professional interests by using the search tab and selecting the filter for groups. Once you’ve joined a group or two, consider publishing a blog post with your take on some issues of concern to the community or posting a link to an interesting article that is relevant. With a global database of users, you’d be surprised the connections you can make by being an active and engaged member of the network.

**Target the industries and specific companies you’re interested in working for**. Identify potential employers; see how you’re connected to employees of those companies using the sidebar on their profile page.

Consider asking a mutual acquaintance for an introduction (such as, “Hey Angela, could you introduce me to Jennifer? I think I could add a lot of value to her projects”). Alternatively, consider messaging them yourself with a simple greeting such as: “Hi, we haven’t met before, but I’m interested in your work on natural language processing, and I’d love to connect with you.”

### Final Tips for Optimizing Your LinkedIn Profile

Congratulations! You are on LinkedIn and have a functional profile. The next step is to optimize your profile to increase the likelihood of being found by others and approached for career and networking opportunities. Your profile serves as your online resume or CV, speaking for your experience, skills, knowledge, and talents. By branding yourself well, you can make sure your profile is positioned to be picked up by keyword searches conducted by employers and recruiters in your field. In other words, you will be more likely to be found, recruited, and hired!

#### Complete every section of your profile.

By completing every section of your profile, you can make yourself more likely to be found and contacted by others. Make sure to upload a professional photo to serve as your profile picture, provide your industry and geographical location, complete the About section, include all your relevant job experiences, list all of the schools you have attended, and add key skills in the Skills & Endorsements section. All of these aspects will help you reach “All-Star” status, as designated by LinkedIn.

#### Optimize for keyword searches.

The more relevant keywords you include in your profile, the more likely you are to be linked to people within the field you are targeting. Spend some time researching the keywords for your industry and desired role, then incorporate them throughout your profile. To identify keywords, collect three to five job listings for your targeted role and review them for common themes. LinkedIn’s secret search algorithms especially favor keywords in the Headline, About, Experience, and Skills & Endorsements sections.

#### Perfect the top section of your profile.

Make sure the top section of your profile with your photo and headline is in near perfect form, as this is often the only information individuals see in search results (until they click on your entry). Upload a background photo for the top of your profile, which can help you stand out and communicate your brand. Customize your URL with your name and add links to your website, if you have one. Also, include an email address in your contact information so that you can easily be reached.

By incorporating the above suggestions into your LinkedIn profile, you will be more likely to be discovered by the “right” professionals, meaning by those in your targeted field and area. In addition, you will reach the coveted “All-Star” profile status; LinkedIn says users with complete All-Star profiles are 40 times more likely to receive opportunities through LinkedIn and be found by others.

For more tips on creating an effective LinkedIn profile, visit CareerAddict’s “[25 Best LinkedIn Profile Tips to Stand Out in 2025](https://www.careeraddict.com/tips-professional-linkedin-profile).”

## Attribution

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The content in Chapter 2.1 of the first edition of *Open TC* was originally sourced and revised from David McMurrey’s *Online Technical Writing*, section titled “[Business Correspondence and Resumes](https://mcmassociates.io/textbook/lettov.html),” which is openly available under a Creative Commons Attribution license.

This chapter is also revised from three blog posts from the City University of New York Graduate Center’s Office of Career Planning and Professional Development, titled “[Should I Be on LinkedIn?](https://careerplan.commons.gc.cuny.edu/blog/linkedin)” by Emily Seamone, “[Your LinkedIn Total Makeover](https://careerplan.commons.gc.cuny.edu/blog/your-linkedin-total-makeover)” by Anders Wallace, and “[Optimizing Your LinkedIn Profile](https://careerplan.commons.gc.cuny.edu/blog/optimizing-linkedin-profile)” by Emily Seamone, all of which are openly available under a Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial-ShareAlike License.

## AI Assistance Notice

Some parts of this chapter were brainstormed, drafted, and/or revised in conversation with ChatGPT 4o and Google Gemini 2.5 Flash. All AI-generated content was reviewed and revised as needed by a human author.