

**Northern Caribbean University
Career & Employment Services Department
The Résumé & Cover Letter Guide**

How to vet your own chronological résumé

The key to preparing an effective résumé is to make it relevant to the job and to the organization. This takes much self-analysis and a sound understanding of the job.

1. Formatting

- For the **heading** use a larger font (e.g.14) for your name and bold to draw attention.
- 1 inch margin and an easy to read font; e.g. Ariel, Times New Roman, Calibri or Corbel.
- 11 or 12 font size for the body of the résumé.
- One line per bullet point and begin each line with an action word e.g. (conducted)
- The résumé should ideally be one page, but not exceed two pages.

2. Heading and Personal Information

Identifying information (name, address, phone number and e-mail address) is critical and should head the first page in a balanced layout. Do not begin your résumé with the heading *Résumé* or *Curriculum Vitae*.

NOTE: One suggestion is to center this information on three lines so it is readily visible to the viewer. If you have a multi-page résumé, be sure to include a header with your name, phone number and email address on the second page.

3. Career Objective

The career objective should feature three elements viz.

- The kind of job expected to perform, state the position and the functional area (operations, technical, administrative).
- Your unique selling point (i.e. special knowledge, skills or abilities that would make you an asset to the organization)
- Results expected to produce - indicate your intended contribution to the employer, in terms that are relevant to the objective.

Sample Objectives

1. “To obtain an entry level opportunity using my writing, editing and research skills in the communications industry.”
2. “A management position that requires excellent interpersonal, organizational and supervisory skills with assignments in operations, sales/marketing, customer service, human resources or related areas.”
3. “Seeking a position in sales where my five years of customer service experience will add value to the organization.”
4. “A position where my management and accounting skills and knowledge will be valuable to the growth of the organization.”

4. Education/Professional Accomplishments

Include the name of your university, city in which it is located, the name of your degree and the expected date of graduation, major and minor courses of study. You may also include your G.P.A. if it is 3.0 or above. List your educational accomplishments in reverse chronological order with the highest degree first. High school information does not need to be included if you are in your final year or have graduated, unless stipulated as a selection criterion by the employer.

5. Relevant Course work/Projects/Professional Training/Related Courses

List your relevant course work and projects in chronological order highlighting specific accomplishments, certifications and any professional training. These details are particularly useful for those with limited work experience in the given field.

6. Work Experience

The employment section should begin with your most recent position. First, state the name of the company, its location, and the period of employment (e.g. 1988-1995 or May-July 2011), then your job title. Following these details should be a brief description of your accomplishments as you carried out the functions of the job (using bullet points), emphasizing the strengths mentioned in your career objective. Continue in reverse chronological order. Quantify accomplishments where appropriate (for example say “collected and balanced more than \$3m in deposits” rather than “collected daily deposits”).

As an alternative to the order given above, the work history section could first state your job title in your most recent position, followed by the name of the company, its location, the years you were employed, followed by a brief description of the job.

7. Optional Categories

There are optional categories such as Honours and Awards, Special Skills, Community Service and Leadership Experience. These categories are specific to individuals and may be included on your résumé as necessary. In fact, you may include an optional category on a résumé tailored to one employer, but not include it on the résumé you have targeted to another organization. Whether or not you include them comes down to relevance.

8. References

Details about referees should not be listed on the résumé. Instead write “Available upon request.”

If requested, references may be provided on a separate sheet. Include name, title, work address, telephone number and email address for each reference. Select individuals who will be able to respond to employer questions about work habits, character, competence and special skills.

SAMPLE FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

Advising people	Handling complaints	Planning agendas
Analyzing data	Managing projects	Promoting events
Designing data systems	Negotiating contracts	Supervising others
Reviewing programs	Investigating problems	Motivating others

SAMPLE PERSONAL QUALITIES

Assertive	Expressive	Persistent
Candid	Enthusiastic	Respectful
Sincere	Spontaneous	Hardworking
Flexible	Firm	Dynamic
Cooperative	Committed to growth	Resourceful

Guide to Cover Letter Writing

A cover letter is your first real contact with a person who may become your employer. It is your chance to show the employer what qualifications you have for the job. A concise, well-written cover letter with the right information will make a good first impression. It pays to take time to learn about the company or organization you are applying to. If your cover letter is tailored to the company and job, you will show the employer that you can be a good fit.

General Guidelines

1. Structure your cover letter with three or four paragraphs.
2. Where possible, find out the name and title of the person to whom the letter should be addressed.
3. The letter should reveal your purpose and interest.
4. Identify the position for which you have interest and the source of information.
5. Outline your strongest qualifications (i.e. training and experience) that match the position.
6. Convince the prospective employer that you have the personal qualities and motivation to contribute to the organization.
7. Provide truthful evidence of your related experiences and accomplishments; make reference to your enclosed résumé.
8. Always express appreciation to the reader for his/her time and consideration.
9. End your letter with “Sincerely” or “Respectfully”.

Tips for polishing your Cover Letter

- Refer to the job that you are interested in. If there is a reference number, include it.
- Address your letter to the appropriate contact person, either the employer or a human resources officer. Use their name and title, and double-check the spelling.
- If the advertisement doesn't supply a contact, call and get the right name. Never assume a person is male or female based on a first name - check it out.
- Refer to how you heard about the job, i.e. job posting, newspaper article, or from someone in your network of contacts.
- Refer to what the company does, and how your skills, abilities and experience can be a valuable addition to their team.
- Give an indication of the action you would like the employer to take. – e.g. requesting an interview from the prospective employer.
- Provide your name, phone number and address.
- Keep your letter to one page. Type or print it out on good quality, 8 ½ x 11 inch paper.
- Proofread your letter, and ask someone else to read it as well. Correct the errors, and print a clean copy.
- E-mail, mail or hand-deliver your cover letter and résumé. Keep a copy for your files, and note the date that it was sent out.

Sample Layout for Cover Letter

Your Present Address
City, State, Zip Code

Today's Date

Individual's Name
Title
Company
Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear (Mr./Ms./Dr.) _____:

First Paragraph: Tell why you are writing; name of position; state where you learned of position.

Second Paragraph: Tell why you are interested in the company, type of work. If you have had related experience or specialized training, be sure to point it out. State qualifications you think would be of greatest interest to the employer. Refer the reader to the enclosed résumé and/or application.

Final Paragraph: Close by making a specific request for an interview, i.e. "I will be in contact with you in a week or so to further discuss my qualifications". Include your telephone number and e-mail address.

Thank the person for any consideration given to your request.

Sincerely,

(Your Handwritten Signature)

(Type your name here)

Enclosure