

Resume Writing Tips for Recent College Grads

As students around America graduate, hundreds of thousands of people will soon enter the full-time workforce for the first time. Many of you may be asking, “How do I land my first job when I don’t have any experience?”

One key tool for job seekers is a resume. In many cases, it offers an employer the first impression of a job seeker – and as a result of the quality of your resume you could be accepted or rejected as a candidate within a matter of seconds. Here are some resume writing tips for first-time job seekers:

Play up your accomplishments at school

Do you have a high grade point average? Include it! Make sure to include any awards, competitions, publications, and news clippings that are examples of your most impactful work and experience. You may also want to list additional coursework that is outside your major if you think it is relevant to the job you are seeking, particularly if it was at the 400 level or above.

Your extracurricular activities may also be a great source for relevant real-world experience. Clubs, internships, volunteer work and similar experiences may have resulted in the development of personal skills that are highly marketable. You may find that you have more relevant experience than you think!

Tailor your resume to the job you are seeking

If you are applying for a job in a particular field, make sure to emphasize relevant experience. This may mean using more descriptive content to explain your experience, or placing those experiences closer to the top of the page.

Make sure to research an organization’s website and social media channels before submitting a resume and cover letter. Look for keywords and phrases that are frequently used on these channels. Write your resume in the voice of the company you are applying to. This strategy will send a clear signal that you have done your homework and have made the effort to understand the employer’s culture.

Language and presentation matters

Use strong, action-oriented verbs to explain your experience. Don’t say “worked on”; use “managed”, “led,” or “improved” instead. This conveys seriousness and accomplishment not to mention an active, rather than passive, style of writing. Also, since you are fresh out of college keep your resume to one page. Being too wordy or including irrelevant experience at this point in your career can only hurt you.

Cover letters matter

A lot of candidates place emphasis on their resume, but don’t spend nearly the same amount of time thinking about their cover letter. This is where you can shine. Cover letters are your first personal introduction to an employer that gives a view of the person behind the resume. You can make a great impression by writing about your experiences and what you’ve learned from them.

Most companies want their employees to think for themselves, so your cover letter is a place where you can express your insights into your experience and the job you are applying for. Make sure to be courteous, and if you know the hiring manager’s name, you should address the letter specifically to her or him. Personalizing your cover letter in this manner shows your interest in this organization is genuine.

Landing your first job is both scary and exciting. Keep in mind, if you don’t get the first job you apply for, that doesn’t mean you’ve failed. Rather, think of this as a new class you are taking: “How to Get a Job.” Each part of the application and interview process is a learning experience.

You may find that the more jobs you apply for, the more your job seeking, writing and interview skills will improve. So present yourself as the best fit for that dream position so you can land it!

