You should begin with your resume because you will be referring to it within your cover letter.

What to include in your resume

On your resume, your name should be the first thing on the page, centered at the top, with your address, phone number, and e-mail address (if you have one) directly underneath. The rest of your resume should be divided into distinct sections with appropriate headings (capitalized and either boldfaced or italicized) and should be lined up on the left margin. Skip lines between each entry.

While there are a number of ways to organize this piece of writing, it always requires some general items and follows some general rules (see sample below). The choice of headings differs from person to person, but it is a good idea to include the following in this order: **CAREER OBJECTIVE, EDUCATION, WORK EXPERIENCE** (you can divide this category into **PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT** and **POSITIONS HELD WHILE IN COLLEGE**), and **SPECIAL SKILLS** (or **HONORS AND ACTIVITIES**).

If you are a recent graduate, your **PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT** section may be rather short, so you should be sure to use active words and detail to make the most of what you have. Remember, just listing your job history is not enough; you need to demonstrate your qualifications by describing your responsibilities in detail.

Also, include information such as making the Dean's List, being scholarship chairperson for your fraternity or sorority, or volunteering for the Special Olympics, all of which could go under **HONORS AND ACTIVITIES**, while your knowledge of specific computer systems and software packages, for example, would fall under the **SPECIAL SKILLS** heading.

What to include in your cover letter

Now you are ready to move on to your cover letter. Your cover letter will, in most cases, use a standard business letter format, with block paragraphs lined up on the left margin. It usually does not exceed 200 words. The format for the opening and closing of the letter (date, address, salutation) should follow the sample.

Your opening paragraph should mention how you found out about the position (magazine article, classified ad, contact through a placement office or business acquaintance, for example). You should also illustrate your knowledge of the company and its goals. Subsequent paragraphs should document your compatibility with the position, and you should mention your enclosed resume at some point, using it to demonstrate your qualifications. You want your cover letter to answer the question, "What can I do for this company?"

Your closing paragraph needs to invite some action on the part of the potential employer, usually by requesting an interview. You can also state your intention to follow up with a phone call.

Revise Your Documents

Once you have created drafts of your resume and cover letter, it is **essential** that you allow adequate time for revision. Be sure to proofread carefully; a confusing format or a number of sentence-level errors will reflect poorly on you. You will also want to use the same typeface throughout both documents since varied fonts look fussy and can be hard to follow. You should print your resume and cover letter on nice (though not too colorful) paper and should avoid crumpling or smudging it. The goal is a polished and professional piece of writing, one that will impress a future employer.

Examples

The following are models of a cover letter and resume from a soon-to-be college graduate who is looking for a position in a major corporation. Notice the use of active words and detail in both the cover letter and the work experience section of the resume.

312 E. 10th St., Apt. 8
Bloomington, IN 47401

April 15, 2004

Andrew Baker
Personnel Director
Kendal Financial Corporation
110 Adams St.
Chicago, IL 45708

Dear Mr. Baker:

I am writing in response to your advertisement of an opening in the marketing division of Kendal Financial in the April 2, 2004 *Chicago Tribune.* This entry-level position matches my career interests and is strongly compatible with my skills and experience.

Your company is well-known for its innovations in the areas of marketing and advertising. In particular, your recent ad campaign for your line of mutual funds was original and creative, and I am extremely interested in joining such a dynamic organization.

I will be graduating from Indiana University in May with a degree in marketing, and I also have considerable experience in the field as a result of my work in my family's business. As the enclosed resume further illustrates, my employment background would allow me to readily fit into your marketing division's team concept.

I look forward to meeting with you to discuss the position at your earliest convenience. I will call you next week to arrange an interview.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

JANE SMITH
312 E. 10th St., Apt. 8
Bloomington, IN 47401
(812) 555-1212
janesmith@indiana.edu

CAREER OBJECTIVE
A position in advertising or marketing that will best utilize my skills.

EDUCATION
B.A., Marketing, May 2004 (expected)
Indiana University, Bloomington, IN
GPA: 3.4/4.0

PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT
Summer 2003: *Marketing Intern, Eli Lilly, Indianapolis, IN.* Helped create slogans and logos for new product lines. Took part in developing advertising campaigns for a variety of media. Attended forecasting meetings with senior management.

Summers 2001 & 2002: *Advertising Executive, Hoosier Precious Metals, Inc., Indianapolis, IN.* Planned radio and print advertising. Wrote advertising copy. Recommended and implemented marketing strategies to improve sales. Established contacts in the advertising field.

POSITIONS HELD WHILE IN COLLEGE
Fall 2004: *Staff Coordinator, Student Recreational Sports Center, IUB.* Supervised aquatics staff, planned work schedules, and taught aerobics classes.

Fall 2002-Fall 2003: *Assistant Manager, Showplace 11 Cinema.* Arranged work assignments, processed box office receipts, and dealt with the public.

Fall 2001-Spring 2002: *Server, Chili's Restaurant.* Waited on patrons in a busy restaurant environment.

HONORS AND ACTIVITIES
Dean's List - four semesters
Volunteer for Indiana Special Olympics

Tips for an Effective Resume

- Remember that an employer may spend less than sixty seconds scanning your resume; use a format that looks professional and that clearly shows the headings and organization.
- Describe your job responsibilities using phrases rather than whole sentences, and be sure to use action verbs.
- List your education and professional employment in reverse chronological order, with the most recent items first.
- Make sure that the formatting of your resume is consistent; that is, all the entries under a particular heading should be organized in the same way.
- Proofread your resume, and ask a friend to look at it also.

Some Useful Action Verbs

achieved	designed	negotiated
administered	developed	organized
advised	directed	planned
analyzed	established	prepared
authored	evaluated	produced
conducted	implemented	provided
controlled	increased	researched
coordinated	initiated	scheduled
created	instituted	supervised
decreased	managed	trained

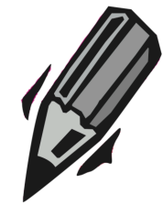
For free help at any stage of the writing process:

Writing Tutorial Services

Wells Library Information Commons
Indiana University
855-6738
www.indiana.edu/~wts/

See our website for hours, times, and locations

Revised 08/11/11



Writing Resumes and Cover Letters

At some point during an academic career, the vast majority of students will have to write a cover letter and resume. As parts of a class assignment or as components of your job search, resumes and cover letters need to be written concisely and formatted well in order to be effective. This type of writing uses action words and descriptive statements to convey your qualifications and career objectives. Since your resume and cover letter function together as an introduction to a potential employer, it is **imperative** that you allow enough time for revision.

Prepare Your Materials

Writing a resume and cover letter, like other types of writing, requires preparation in order to decrease frustration during the writing process itself. Obtain copies of documents such as transcripts and resumes; keeping them in front of you will make your job of writing much easier. Make a list of important information, in particular names and exact titles of former employers and supervisors, titles of jobs you have held, companies you have worked for, dates of appropriate work or volunteer experiences, and the duties involved. In this way you will be able to refer to these materials while writing in order to include as much specific detail as possible.

Write a First Draft

After you have gathered the necessary materials, the next step is creating a draft of your resume or cover letter.