

Career Resource Guide



CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION CENTER

Resume, Cover Letter, and Interviewing Techniques

Cleveland Hall 306, 1300 Elmwood Ave, Buffalo, NY 14222
716-878-5811/careers@buffalostate.edu/CAPE.buffalostate.edu



Resume

RESUME CONTENTS

CONTACT INFORMATION:

- Name, phone number (include area code). Make sure you have a professional voicemail.
- Include a professional e-mail address.

JOB OBJECTIVE: *(optional)*

- A job objective is brief and can help you and the employer focus on a specific position or career goal. Your resume should support your objective.
- Education majors applying for teaching positions do not need to include an objective but should rather indicate your certification.



EDUCATION:

- Name of school, city and state of school, major, degree and the date (month and year) received. The official name of this institution is: State University of New York Buffalo State University.
- Include honors and grade point average if it will enhance your image. Above a 3.0/4.0 is recommended for inclusion.
- If you graduated from more than one school, list the most recent first. If you do not have a degree or certification from other schools you have attended, you don't have to list those schools. Do not list high school unless you are a first year student.
- Include any additional training you have, minors, and concentrations.

EXPERIENCE/WORK HISTORY:

- Paid employment, internships, field work, volunteer, service-learning, and military. Describe your experience in that position emphasizing accomplishments, skills, and abilities appropriate to the position for which you are applying. Note the employing organization, city and state, dates of employment, and job title.

RESUME FORMATS

When selecting a format, it is important to choose a format that enables you to best emphasize your particular strengths.

While there are many different formats for resumes, the most widely used is REVERSE CHRONOLOGICAL. This format lists your experiences with the most recent first. You may arrange or subdivide your headings in various ways depending upon which aspects of your background you want to emphasize or have noticed first. An exception to reverse chronological might occur when your past experience is more related to your goals than your recent experience, in which case you would group that related experience under heading "Related Experience" followed by "Work Experience."



OPTIONAL CONTENTS

COURSES: Upper-level courses relevant to the position for which you are applying, may be listed. Six to eight courses are recommended. *For example: Personnel Administration or Machine Design, not the course number and credit hours.* You might want to include any significant coursework concentrations you have also had. *For example: Marketing or Energy Systems.*

SPECIAL SKILLS: These should be marketable skills in your career area, e.g. languages, technical, and computer skills, not "communication skills" or "working with people."

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE: Clubs, honors groups, student organizations. List any leadership roles held. A brief description of your activities can be included if it relates to your career objective or demonstrates your skills, e.g. fundraising, event planning.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: Significant projects, activity participation, and offices held should be mentioned as they relate to your career goal.

LICENSES AND CERTIFICATIONS: Health-related, CPR, First Aid, computer, etc. These must be current.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS: Membership in professional and/or student organizations. If applicable, list any offices held.

RESEARCH, PUBLICATIONS, AND PRESENTATIONS: Include title, name of periodical, publisher, place of publication or presentation, and date. A description of any research conducted should be included when relevant.

PLEASE NOTE: Personal data (e.g. height, weight, age, etc.) and pictures **should not be listed** on a resume, cannot be required by potential employers under federal regulations, and, in fact, may provide the employer with a basis for discrimination. There are some career fields where personal data is relevant and required (e.g. acting)

ADDITIONAL RESUME HEADINGS

EDUCATION/TRAINING

Academic Background
Academic Training
Education Background
Certification
Special Training
Academic Preparation
Course Highlights
Coursework
Related Courses
Relevant Coursework
Technical Courses
Professional Licensure
Military Training
Study Abroad
Conferences Attended

EXPERIENCE

Career Achievements
Additional Experience
Employment
Professional Background
Professional Work
Professional Experience
Related Experience
Work Experience
Work History

OTHER TYPES OF EXPERIENCE

Teaching Experience
Student Teaching Experience
Field Experience
Substitute Teaching
Coaching Experience
Practicum Experience
Research Experience
Civic Activities
Military Experience
Internships
Part-Time Experience
Summer & Seasonal Experience
Volunteer Experience
Service-Learning Experience
Community Service
Volunteerism

HONORS/AFFILIATIONS

Activities & Distinctions
College Activities
Honors & Distinctions
Honors & Awards
Campus Leadership
Professional Membership
Professional Organizations
Student Organizations

SPECIAL SKILLS

Computer Skills
Language Competencies
Studio Skills
Technical Skills
Social Media Skills



RESUME LAYOUT

- Keep your resume brief enough to fit on one page, or two pages if experience is extensive. Be sure the second page has enough information to cover at least half the page. Your name and page number should be included on the second page in the top right-hand corner.
- The top one-third of your resume is what a recruiter or hiring manager scans to determine if they will read the rest within seconds. You want to show what you can do for an employer, not what they can do for you.
- Boldface type, italic type, underlining, and the use of some headings written entirely in CAPITAL LETTERS can highlight important parts of your resume. However, **DON'T OVERDO IT!**
- Resume templates are **not recommended** as there is limited flexibility in changing the format. It is recommended that you use a blank document such as MS Word for your resume as it gives more layout options. For an excellent video on formatting tips using Word, see the resume information section on the CAPE website (CAPE.buffalostate.edu).
- Be aware that many employers cannot access google docs and therefore cannot view documents submitted as google docs. Be sure to send/upload resume as a pdf.

QUICK TIPS



- Check for typos or spelling errors
- Choose a visually pleasing, consistent format
- Tailor your resume to fit the position
- Be concise and to the point
- Use action verb statements instead of complete sentences and/or paragraphs
- Emphasize your most relevant skills, employment history, and educational experiences
- Use industry jargon and key words if you know what they mean
- Stress accomplishments, responsibilities, and any advancement in your previous roles
- Carefully name your resume file e.g. First Name Last Name—Job Title
- Follow application instructions and select the appropriate file format (PDF, .doc) for your application.
- Use black ink. Choose one font throughout.



- Forget to check for typos or spelling errors
- Use personal pronouns, such as "I" or "My"
- Exaggerate or lie about your qualifications
- Include sensitive information, such as your Social Security Number, or a photo of yourself
- Use abbreviations without first writing out the acronym; except for GPA, e.g. Career and Professional Education (CAPE)
- Include the full street address and phone number of previous employers; city and state are sufficient
- Use a template if it limits your ability to display your most relevant qualifications effectively
- Use different font styles or bright, colors; keep it neat and easy to read.
- Include references directly on your resume.

ACTION VERB STATEMENT

The use of well-chosen action verb statements is a proven, highly effective resume writing technique. Incorporating action verbs with the description of your experiences emphasizes the strengths and skills you possess. Think of the bullet point as an invisible "I"

Examples:

- Tutored a group of students in remedial reading.
- Organized information for budget and delivered to management.
- Conducted interviews with prominent sports figures for student newspaper.
- Directed test programs to ensure conformance of equipment to customer requirements.
- Edited and produced digital video documentary on community needs.
- Created an Access database with related tables, input forms, queries, and reports.
- Selected, supervised, and trained a staff of 20.
- Created, built, and tested a piston pump later adopted by the company.
- Collected and interpreted survey data. Documented results and conclusions.
- Planned and promoted a fundraising event for department scholarships.



WORD BANK

ACCOMPLISHED	COACHED	DIRECTED	IDENTIFIED	MONITORED	RECEIVED	STREAMLINED
ACHIEVED	COLLABORATED	DISPLAYED	ILLUSTRATED	MOTIVATED	RECORDED	STRENGTHENED
ACQUIRED	COLLECTED	DISTRIBUTED	IMPLEMENTED	NEGOTIATED	RECRUITED	STRUCTURED
ACTIVATED	COMBINED	DOCUMENTED	IMPROVED	NOTIFIED	REDUCED	SUCCEEDED
ADAPTED	COMMUNICATED	DRAFTED	INCORPORATED	OPENED	REFEREED	SUMMARIZED
ADDED	COMPARED	EDITED	INCREASED	OPERATED	REFERRED	SUPERVISED
ADDRESSED	COMPILED	EFFECTED	INDEXED	ORDERED	REFINED	SURVEYED
ADJUSTED	COMPLETED	ELIMINATED	INDIVIDUALIZED	ORGANIZED	REORGANIZED	SYSTEMATIZED
ADMINISTERED	CONCEIVED	ENABLED	INFORMED	ORIGINATED	REPORTED	TABULATED
ADVERTISED	CONDENSED	ENCOURAGED	INITIATED	OVERSAW	REPRESENTED	TAUGHT
ADVISED	CONDUCTED	ENFORCED	INSPECTED	PARTICIPATED	RESEARCHED	TESTED
ALIGNED	CONNECTED	ENLARGED	INSTALLED	PERFORMED	RESHAPED	TRAINED
ALLOCATED	CONSULTED	ENSURED	INSTITUTED	PERSUADED	RESPONDED	TRANSFERRED
ALTERED	CONSTRUCTED	ENTERED	INSTRUCTED	PLANNED	RESTORED	TRANSLATED
ANALYZED	CONTRACTED	EQUIPPED	INSURED	PREDICTED	RESTRUCTURED	TUTORED
ANSWERED	CONTRIBUTED	ESTABLISHED	INTERPRETED	PREPARED	REVAMPED	UPGRADED
ANTICIPATED	CONTROLLED	ESTIMATED	INTERVIEWED	PRESENTED	REVIEWED	UTILIZED
APPLIED	CONVERTED	EVALUATED	INTRODUCED	PRESIDED	REVISED	WROTE
APPRAISED	COORDINATED	EXAMINED	INVENTED	PROCESSED	SAVED	
APPROVED	COUNSELED	EXPANDED	INVENTORIED	PRODUCED	SCANNED	
ARRANGED	CREATED	EXPEDITED	INVESTIGATED	PROGRAMMED	SCHEDULED	
ASSEMBLED	CRITIQUED	EXPLAINED	LOCATED	PROJECTED	SCREENED	
ASSESSED	CULTIVATED	FACILITATED	LOGGED	PROMOTED	SECURED	
ASSURED	DECREASED	FORMULATED	LOWERED	PROPOSED	SELECTED	
ATTAINED	DELEGATED	FOSTERED	MAINTAINED	PROVED	SERVED	
AUDITED	DELIVERED	FOUNDED	MANAGED	PROVIDED	SOLD	
AUTHORED	DEMONSTRATED	GATHERED	MANIPULATED	PUBLICIZED	SOLICITED	
AWARDED	DESIGNED	GENERATED	MAXIMIZED	PUBLISHED	SORTED	
BUDGETED	DETECTED	GOVERNED	MEDIATED	PURCHASED	STANDARDIZED	
BUILT	DETERMINED	GROUPED	MENTORED	RAISED	STARTED	
CATALOGUED	DEVELOPED	GUIDED	MODELED	RECOMMENDED	STRATEGIZED	
CALCULATED	DEVISED	HANDLED	MODERATED			
CHAired	DIAGNOSED	HOSTED	MODIFIED			

Cover Letter

COVER LETTER CONTENTS

A cover letter, also referred to as a letter of interest or letter of intent, accompanies your resume and tells the employer why you are writing to them. The cover letter is used to complement your resume and bridges the gap between what the employer is looking for and the skills you have to offer. Cover letter basics:

First - Be Specific.

The cover letter should always be written specifically for a particular organization.

Second - Generate Interest.

After reading your letter, the employer should want to review your resume for more information.

Third - Create a Positive Impression. It can be the first impression that a potential employer has of you. The letter needs to be visually pleasing and should be grammatically correct.

COVER LETTER FORMAT

1. The Opening or First Paragraph

- Focuses on the employer and *their* needs, not *yours*.
- States why you are writing.
- Captures the reader's attention.
- Shows your knowledge of the field and the research you've done about the organization.
- Tells how you heard about the organization or job.
- States why you are interested in that organization.
- Reference your referral person (if applicable).

Examples for the opening paragraph:

- "I am applying for the position of editor at (name of magazine) that was posted on your website."
- "This letter is an expression of my interest in an Elementary Education position in your district. I am excited about the opportunity for employment in an urban district which stresses the whole language approach to learning."
- "David Anderson at Bank of America told me about your plans to begin treasury operations in New York City. I will soon be relocating to Manhattan and would enjoy the opportunity to speak with you about this initiative."
- "I read with great interest the article in last week's The Buffalo News that discussed your recent expansion. Micromacs's venture into convo-imaging is not surprising as I learned about this cutting-edge technology during a recent internship."

Examples for the body:

- "My placement at Baker Victory Services, a facility similar to yours, was rewarding as I counseled adolescent boys with emotional and physical disabilities."
- "My writing and organizational skills were enhanced when I led a letter-writing campaign to promote campus safety. As a result, the undergraduate student government recognized me as student activist of the year."
- "During my student teaching in a rural district, I was able to integrate a variety of learning experiences, such as..."
- "Throughout my internship I completed tasks such as budget preparation, payroll distribution, and employee evaluations."

2. The Body (One or Two Paragraphs)

- Focuses on you.
- Matches your qualifications with their needs, as shown in the position description.
- Demonstrates skills you can bring to the organization.
- Highlights a few major points of your background.
- Enhances, but does not simply repeat, information to be found on your resume.

COVER LETTER FORMAT

The Closing or Final Paragraph

- Summarizes why you would "fit" the organization.
- Requests action to be taken, e.g., asking for an interview or application.
- Indicates how you may be reached.

Examples for the closing paragraph:

- "I would like to meet with you to discuss the possibility of teaching in your district. I look forward to hearing from you."
- "My knowledge of consumer issues, combined with my enthusiasm for public service, make me an excellent candidate for this position."
- "I will be in your area after July 1st and would welcome the opportunity to discuss my candidacy. I will call then regarding a possible meeting."
- "I look forward to speaking with you about the position. The best way to contact me is at phone number or email."

STYLE TIPS

- Try to address your letter to a specific person using his/her title. This can usually be obtained with a simple phone call, or by researching the organization. If you can't find a name, write "Dear Hiring Manager"
- Do not start with a question, e.g., "Are you looking for a bright, talented person to fill your needs?"
- Tell what you can offer them, not what you anticipate they can do for you.
- Avoid being cute, humorous, or overly pushy.
- Keep the tone positive. Don't apologize for poor grades or lack of experience.
- Highlight key points of your experience. Be specific!
- Keep it short and to the point. Keep length to one page.
- Think in terms of quality not length of cover letters.
- Keep a copy of every letter for future reference and to help you with follow up.
- If you are asked to provide salary requirements in your cover letter, it is advisable to give a general range of your expectations (after you have researched salaries in your field). Then qualify this by stating that you would be happy to further discuss compensation during an interview.

Interview

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

The path to performing well in a job interview is preparation. There are a number of things you should do before the interview begins.

Research the job and the organization:

The more information you have about a prospective employer, the better prepared you will be during the interview. Review company website, job posting, and reliable information online, e.g. LinkedIn:

- Description and location of position for which you are applying.
- Major duties of the position.
- Minimum requirements for the position.
- Age, growth history, and anticipated growth of organization.
- Products or services of organization.
- Current problems of organization (chief competitors).
- Location and number of plants, offices, and stores of organization.
- Parent company and subsidiaries of organization.
- Salary range.
- Recent related items in the news.
- Culture of organization

Self-Assessment:

It is also important to assess your own strengths and weaknesses as a candidate for employment. Before going to an interview, you should be able to identify your relevant skills, qualifications, and other characteristics related to the position. You should be able to demonstrate how your experience, training and activities qualify you for the job. Be able to answer the question, "Why should I hire you?"

Verify the Particulars:

When you are setting up an appointment for an interview, be sure to find out the exact time and location of the interview, and the interviewer(s) name(s) and title(s). You should also make sure that you know exactly how to get to the interview location, how long it will take you to get there, where you are supposed to park, if you have to pay to park, and what building entrance you should use. Avoid being late for a job interview, so plan to arrive five to fifteen minutes early.

Practice your Answers:

Prepare by reviewing the list of frequently asked interview questions. You should practice answering them aloud with a friend or schedule a mock interview at the CAPE.

SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW DO'S & DON'TS



- Be prompt, neat, and courteous to everyone.
- Listen and allow the interviewer to fully ask questions.
- Make yourself understood and follow procedures.
- Use examples to highlight skills and experiences.
- Think of your potential contribution to the employer.
- **Practice** to minimize freezing or forgetting what you wanted to say.



- Criticize yourself or others.
- Become impatient or emotional.
- Interrupt when being asked questions.
- Talk too much or too little.
- Stretch out the interview.
- Make elaborate promises.
- Come unprepared.
- Ask about starting salary or benefits.

DAY OF THE INTERVIEW

Dress Appropriately:

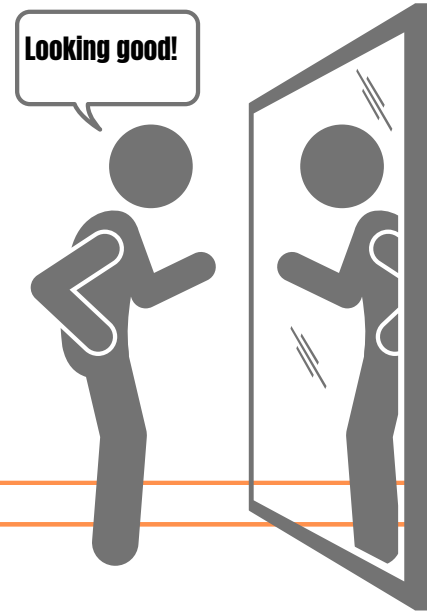
You are not only being evaluated by what you say in an interview, but how you present yourself. Dressing professionally is essential for creating a favorable impression.

Appropriate Attire includes:

- Understand the culture of the organization to help you gauge appropriate interview attire.
- Navy, charcoal gray, black or pin-stripe suit or pantsuit. The suit jacket and skirt/pants should be matching.
- Light colors can be worn underneath suit jacket (Avoid lace, stripes, or prints)
- If wearing a tie, keep it simple and neat.
- Polished and closed toe heel or dress shoes.
- Carry a portfolio, professional bag or simple purse.
- Nails and/or makeup should be natural in style.
- Wear moderate jewelry and no fragrance.
- Piercings and tattoos should align with organization culture or standards.

Other tips:

- Bring a quality pen.
- No smoking or drinking coffee prior to the interview.
- No chewing gum.
- Keep cell phones turned off and personal items out of sight. Bring a padfolio that contains extra copies of your resume and reference list.



DURING THE INTERVIEW

Some job interviews may be conducted one-on-one, but many times there will be two or more interviewers. The format of each job interview may vary, but most interviews have several phases:

Introduction:

Make sure to greet and be polite to everyone. The interviewer and candidate usually engage in a bit of small talk to establish some rapport. The interviewer will usually extend his/her hand for a handshake. Be sure yours is firm, not too weak or too strong. Remember, you are being evaluated from the moment the interviewer sees you. Although this first phase is often light and casual, don't underestimate its importance. People form a first impression. Make sure that yours is positive and favorable.

Background Analysis:

Once the ice has been broken, the interviewer will normally shift the conversation to questions about your background, often using your resume as the starting point. The purpose here is to gain information about your skills, qualifications, experience, education, and extra-curricular activities. In addition, an employer will be attempting to reach some judgments as to your attitude, self-confidence, ability to communicate, and how you handle yourself.

Matching Candidate to Position:

After the interviewer has the background information, they will begin to match your qualifications and the kind of person you are with the position for which they are recruiting.

Closing:

Normally, you will be given the opportunity to ask questions or comment on what the interviewer has told you. You should have some questions in mind that you wish to ask. The interviewer will usually indicate through some verbal or non-verbal action when the interview is over. Be sure you understand what happens next in the process. It's important to maintain your enthusiasm in the last moments of an interview. Briefly summarize the key points brought out in the interview and the procedures to follow. This will give the interviewer an opportunity to verify or correct your assessment of the interview and will provide assurance that there is no misunderstanding.

Behavioral Interviewing/STAR Technique

Behavioral Interviewing is based on the theory that past performance indicates future performance. Employers are looking for patterns of behavior that will help them learn if you are a good fit for the job, team, or organization. The focus is on experiences you have had and how they relate to your strengths and what you can bring to the position. One of the keys to success in interviewing is practice, so we encourage you to take the time to work out answers to questions using the **STAR** approach. Be sure not to memorize answers; the key to interviewing success is being prepared for questions and having a mental outline to follow in responding to them.

What is the STAR technique?

STAR allows you to respond to interview questions in a way that focuses on your experiences and behaviors in past situations and relate them to your strengths for the current position. STAR provides a framework so your answers are based on examples and enables you to get to the point.

S = Situation: Describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, a class project, or any relevant event.

T = Task: What was the specific task or tasks YOU needed to accomplish in that situation?

A = Action: Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did -- not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what you did.

R = Results: What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? What might you do differently next time? This is a key, but often forgotten, element when interviewing.

Examples of questions employers may ask:

- Tell me about yourself
- Why are you interested in working here?
- Why did you choose your major/this type of position?
- Tell me about a time you had to deal with a difficult person or difficult situation.
- Why do you think you are qualified for this position?
- What skills or experiences do you have that have prepared you for this job?
- In what areas would you say you need to improve in yourself?
- What would your references or former supervisors say about you?
- Why should I hire you?
- Do you have any questions for me?

Examples of questions you as a candidate should have for employers:

- Is there a training program? What does it entail?
- Do you have a mentorship program for new hires?
- What characteristics do you expect the person filling this job to have?
- Can you tell me why this position is currently vacant?
- What happens next in the hiring process?
- How are employees evaluated and promoted?
- Do you have concerns about my qualifications that I can address?
- How does this position fit with the goals of the organization?
- What are some challenges the organization/the person in this position faces today?

Examples of questions specifically for education/teaching candidates:

- What is your philosophy of education?
- Describe your style of teaching.
- Why do you want to work in our district?
- Define the role of the principal.
- Describe in detail a lesson that you taught.
- Describe your classroom management style.
- Why did you enter the field of teaching?
- What qualities do you have that make you an effective teacher?
- Tell me about your experience with special needs students.
- How do you involve parents and families?

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS

- Choose an appropriate background provided by the virtual platform or ensure your setting is professional
- Look into the camera – it will appear as if you are maintaining eye contact. Adjust your camera/screen so the interviewer is viewing you at eye-level, rather than looking at the top of your head or up your nose
- Test the virtual platform if you are unfamiliar with it. This will help you use features such as mute, sharing your screen, and other mechanics you may need to use during the interview.
- Use a laptop or desk top, rather than your phone.
- Free yourself from distractions - Let others in your household know when you'll be interviewing so your space will be quiet; turn off your phone and turn off notifications on your computer
- Use a space that is well lit, but be aware of backlighting – the interviewer needs to be able to see you, not your silhouette
- Be sure to dress professionally and fully. Dressing professionally head-to-toe will enable you to feel more professional and ready to impress during the interview.
- As with in-person interviews: smile, give examples when answering questions, be sure to ask questions, show interest and enthusiasm, and be sure to do your research about the organization!

Drop In Hours



Throughout the semester, you can drop in to the CAPE located in CLEV 306 to meet one-on-one with a career counselor for feedback on your resume or cover letter. An appointment is not necessary to participate. Counselors will work with students on a first come, first serve basis.

**Tuesdays
2pm - 4pm**

**Fridays
1pm - 3pm**

Need a Space to Interview Virtually?

Contact the Career and Professional Education Center at careers@buffalostate.edu to schedule private space and computer access for your next virtual interview! We highly recommend you use a laptop or desktop and not your phone for virtual interviews.