

RESUMES, REFERENCES, & COVER LETTERS

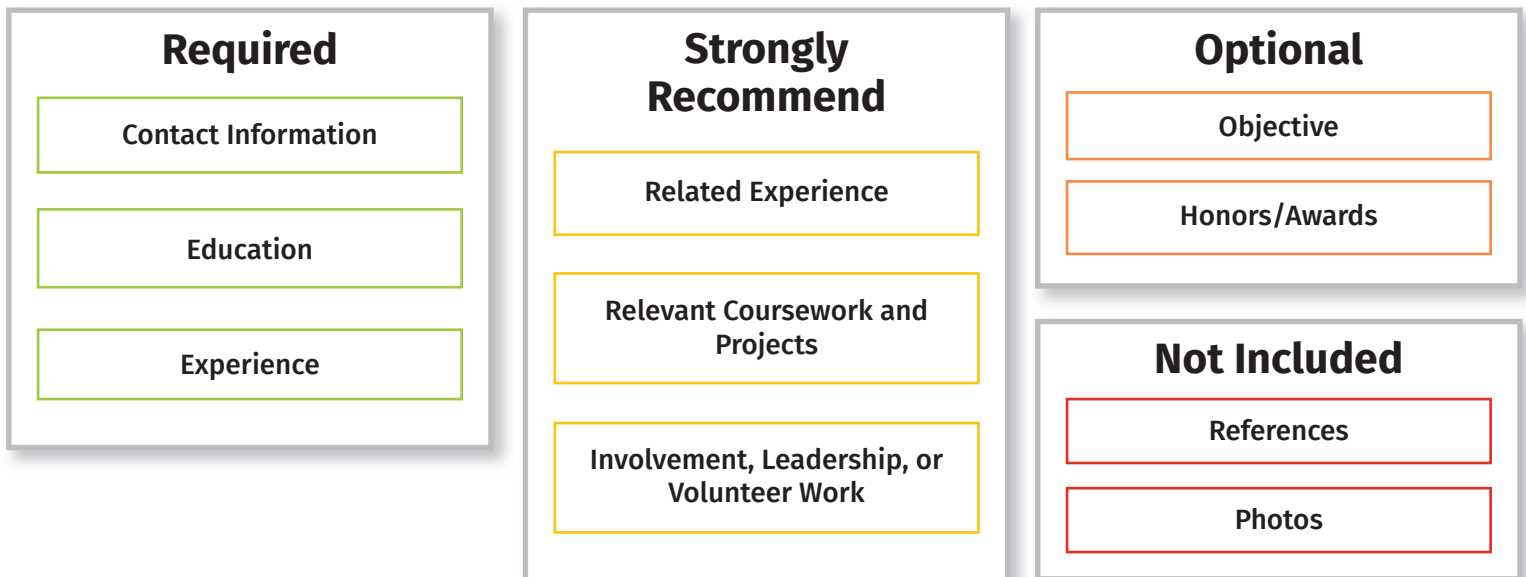
What is a resume?

A resume is a written document summarizing your education, work experience, skills, and accomplishments. It is typically used as part of an application process that showcases your individual qualifications.

What should I include on my resume?

Developing a resume is an individualized process with many possible sections to consider. Ultimately, each individual should select the sections that represent their qualifications in the best way possible.

Below are some recommendations for college students who need to represent their current skills and experiences while also featuring sections that highlight the careers they are building.



Do's

- ✓ Use an easy-to-read font, typically 11-12 point font.
- ✓ Set margins to 1 inch on all sides.
- ✓ Bold or italics: Apply to headings, subheadings, or specific achievements to help emphasize.
- ✓ Bullet points: Use to help with the flow of reading. List accomplishments and skills within each section using bullets.
- ✓ Use consistent spacing, alignment, and font. Stay to one page unless necessary for relevant content.
- ✓ Format education and experiences in reverse chronological order, listing the most recent first.

Don'ts

- ✗ Avoid typos and grammatical errors.
- ✗ Do not use pronouns that refer to yourself, i.e, I, my, we, and our.
- ✗ Avoid personal information, i.e., marital status, date of birth, or personal interests.
- ✗ Avoid templates that limit customization and may not be detected by online application systems.
- ✗ Do not use photos. This can lead to discrimination.
- ✗ Avoid distracting colors or designs, unless expected from the industry.

BUILDING BULLET STATEMENTS

Bullet statements help present and articulate key information, making it easy for hiring managers to assess your qualifications and achievements quickly. They can be used to describe internships, jobs, volunteer and leadership positions, relevant coursework, projects, and more.

To build a bullet statement, use the **What + How + Why Formula**



Example:

Mentored 25+ students | through individual and group sessions | to provide support and guidelines as they adjusted to college.

Example transition words: as part of, by, because of, due to, in order to, so, that, through, to, using, with

Resources

The following resources can be great idea generators to help you describe your skills and experiences. Just be sure to refine and tailor the bullet statement to fit your experience.

- Thesaurus.com
- ChatGPT
- O*NET
- Google keywords for your field



Example 1: Getting Started

Transitioning a high school resume to a professional format

Willy Wildcat

(866) 972-2228 | wiwild01@wsc.edu | Wayne, NE 68787

Education

Wayne State College, Wayne, NE
Bachelor of Arts, May 20XX (anticipated)
Major: Undecided

Wayne Public High School, Wayne, NE
High School Diploma, May 20XX
GPA: 3.3/4.0

Work Experience

Pac N' Save, Wayne, NE
Clerk, June 20XX-Present

- Assist customers in locating products to provide excellent customer service.
- Manage cash register, process payments, and ensure accurate financial transactions.
- Maintain cleanliness and organization of store shelves to create a pleasant shopping experience.

Leadership

Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), Wayne, NE
Treasurer, August 20XX-May 20XX

- Managed the Chapter's finances, ensuring accurate record-keeping and transparency.
- Planned and organized five fundraising events by collaborating with other offices to raise funds for various initiatives.

National Honor Society (NHS), Wayne, NE
Member, October 20XX-May 20XX

- Collaborated with other NHS members on community service projects, dedicating 60+ hours to initiatives including park clean-ups and food drives.
- Engaged in school meetings and events to represent the NHS chapter by effectively communicating the organization's initiatives to students, parents, and staff.

Involvement

Active Minds Student Organization, Wayne State College, Wayne, NE
Member, August 20XX-Present

- Learn about ways to support and promote positive mental health awareness.

Little Red Hen Theatre, Wakefield, NE
Cast Member, May 20XX-July 20XX

- Rehearsed weekly to enhance performance skills to act in and produce seasonal productions for the community.

Honors and Awards

Career Scholars Program, Wayne State College, Wayne, NE, August 20XX-Present

- Engage in Career Development program to develop skills, experiences, and professionalism.

High school education and experience may be included initially but should be replaced by junior year.

Start with a **strong action verb** at the beginning of your bullet statement.

Start with a strong action verb in **past tense** if you are no longer in the role.

Example 2: Getting the Internship

Applying for internships, research opportunities, or major-related experiences

Willy Wildcat

(866) 972-2228 | wiwild01@wsc.edu | Wayne, NE 68787 | www.linkedin.com/in/willy.wildcat

Education

Wayne State College, Wayne, NE
Bachelor of Arts, May 20XX (anticipated)
Major: Communication Studies
Concentration: Organizational Leadership and Public Relations
GPA: 3.6/4.0

GPA is optional. If you have a 3.0 or higher, we recommend adding it to your resume.

Relevant Coursework and Projects

Organizational Leadership, Communication Arts Department, Wayne State College, Fall 20XX

- Studied prominent leadership theories, including transformational, situational, and servant leadership.
- Analyzed real-world examples to understand how different leadership styles impact organizational dynamics.
- Engaged in discussions and case studies to evaluate the applicability of leadership theories in diverse contexts.

Communication Arts Department, Wayne State College, Wayne, NE, Spring 20XX

- Led a team in developing a comprehensive communication strategy for a mock campaign.
- Conducted in-depth market research to identify the target audience and tailor messaging.
- Crafted compelling content, including persuasive press releases, and engaging social media posts.
- Presented the strategy to peers, receiving positive feedback for creativity and strategic thinking.

Identifying a course or project and writing bullet statements of the knowledge or skill you gained is a great way to position entry-level experience in a field.

Work Experience

Jimmy John's, Wayne, NE

Team Member, May 20XX-Present

- Demonstrate exceptional customer service by greeting customers, taking orders, and addressing inquiries in a friendly and efficient manner.
- Prepare and assemble sandwiches efficiently and accurately, adhering to Jimmy John's high-quality standards.
- Collaborate with co-workers to ensure smooth operations during busy periods, contributing to a positive and fast-paced work environment.

Wayne State College, Wayne, NE

Student Activities Board - Treasurer, December 20XX-Present

- Plan, organize, and manage events focused on entertainment for students on campus.
- Accurately record meeting notes and e-mail minutes from each meeting to members, informing them about upcoming events and ideas.
- Utilize social media to advertise and inform students of upcoming events through the school's website as well as Facebook and Twitter.

Pac N' Save, Wayne, NE

Clerk, June 20XX-May 20XX

- Assisted customers in locating products to provide excellent customer service.
- Managed cash register, processed payments, and ensured accurate financial transactions.

Leadership and Involvement

Active Minds Student Organization, Wayne State College, Wayne, NE

Member, August 20XX-Present

- Collaborated with five members serving on the Mental Health Awareness Committee to create and distribute handmade signs campus-wide encouraging students to stop the stigma.

Honors and Awards

Career Scholars Program, Wayne State College, Wayne, NE, August 20XX-Present

- Engage in career development program to develop skills, experience, and professionalism.

Lambda Pi Eta (National Communication Honor Society), Wayne, NE

Member, September 20XX-Present

Example 3: Getting the Job

Employers and hiring managers use keywords, or specific sets of words and phrases, to identify which individuals are most qualified for the given position. Many employers also use applicant tracking systems (ATS) to scan resumes for these relevant keywords. Do your best to include the following in your resume:

- Skills and qualifications
- Industry-specific terminology
- Certifications and licenses / industry-specific tools and software
- Education
- Company names
- Action verbs
- Keywords from job descriptions

Job Description

(see how Willy Wildcat highlights keywords in Resume Example 3 on the next page)

Education and Outreach Coordinator

Responsible for the professional and liaison work in facilitating outreach projects and training community members by improving public awareness of various services, activities, programs, plans, and projects.

Specific Duties Include:

- ✔ Develop and **implement innovative programs** in conjunction with educational institutions, local **business groups**, and **service organizations**.
- ✔ **Facilitate** and coordinate committee activities, **training**, **service volunteers**, mentors, and staff.
- ✔ **Design** and **develop training** information **materials**.
- ✔ **Coordinate** and **engage** in **community events** and **programs**, **fundraisers**, and other forums.
- ✔ **Collaborate** with area schools and **civic** and **community associations** that may be related to the specific department's **awareness programs**.
- ✔ **Track income** and **expenses** for **outreach** activities and **provide** status **reports** relative to **grant funds**.
- ✔ **Establish** and **monitor goals** for **assessment** and **evaluation** of the department's specific program areas.



Research shows that hiring managers spend 6-7 seconds skimming a resume to determine if the candidate has what they are looking for.

Example 3: Getting the Job

Seeking full-time opportunities after graduation

Willy Wildcat

(866) 972-2228 | wiwild01@wsc.edu | Wayne, NE 68787 | www.linkedin.com/in/willy.wildcat

Education

Wayne State College, Wayne, NE
Bachelor of Arts, May 20XX (anticipated)
Major: Communication Studies
Concentration: Organizational Leadership and Public Relations
GPA: 3.2/4.0

Related Experience

Haven House, Wayne, NE

Community Education and Outreach Intern, May 20XX-August 20XX

- Developed **10+** presentations to give to multiple **community businesses and service organizations** to promote the mission and services of the organizations.
- Coordinated three **fundraising events** that brought together **community leaders** and raised over **\$10,000** for the organization.
- Refined and curated **database of donors** and **community leaders and stakeholders** to **streamline outreach efforts**.
- **Collaborated** with marketing team to create **training materials** to provide **guidance** and **support** to **volunteer advocates**.

Qualitative Research Design Course, Communication Department, Wayne State College

Individual Research Project, Spring 20XX

- Developed a mixed methods **assessment** to examine the impact of cell phone usage on college students.
- **Conducted 15+ in-depth interviews** and **facilitated five focus groups** on a variety of student identities inquiring about the average number of hours they use their phone and how it impacts their mental and physical health.
- **Analyzed, tracked, and summarized the results** via Excel and wrote a research paper outlining the findings.

Active Minds Student Organization, Wayne, NE

Vice-President, December 20XX-Present

- **Led a committee of eight peers** through regular meetings and email communication to **plan** the Send Silence Packing campus event each fall.
- **Collaborated with 10+ officers** through regular meetings and emails to outline meetings and events for the academic year.
- Coordinated the revision of the by-laws through collaboration with the executive board and submitted them to the National Organization.

Work Experience

Jimmy John's, Wayne, NE

Team Member and Delivery Driver, September 20XX-May 20XX

- Greeted and interacted with customers by taking their orders quickly and accurately to ensure customers satisfaction.
- Processed food and drink orders and received payment from customers through a point-of-sale system.
- Maintained health and safety standards by cleaning work areas after each transaction to comply with local, state, and federal regulations.

Honors and Awards

Career Scholars Program, Wayne State College, Wayne, NE, August 20XX-Present

- Selected to be **one of 40** scholarship recipients and participate in a professional development cohort program.

Recruiters often search for candidates using specific keywords related to the job opening. By including these keywords in your resume, you make it more searchable and increase the likelihood of being found by recruiters looking for candidates with your skill set.

- Position and highlight relevant experiences at the top of the resume that connect to the duties, skills, and qualifications in the job description.
- Including numbers, metrics, and keywords in your resume can help you stand out from the crowd.

Employers ask for references to gain insight into a candidate's work ethic, skills, and character. References also provide a way for employers to verify information provided by a candidate and can help them make informed hiring decisions.

You can ask current and past supervisors, professors, student organization advisors, academic or career advisors, and other professional contacts who can attest to your skills and work ethic to serve as a reference for you. Steer clear of having family and friends be references.

Example:

Willy Wildcat

(866) 972-2228 | wiwild01@wsc.edu | Wayne, NE 68787 | www.linkedin.com/in/willy.wildcat

References

Dr. Teresa Garcia

Professor of Communication
Wayne State College
1111 Main St.
Wayne, NE 68787
402-375-XXXX
tegarci1@wsc.edu
Current Professor

Ivy Johnson

Assistant Director, Student Activities
Wayne State College
1111 Main St.
Wayne, NE 68787
402-375-XXXX
ivjohns02@wsc.edu
Current Advisor for Student Activities Board

Marcus Smith

Manager, Jimmy John's
100 Main St.
Wayne, NE 68787
402-375-XXXX
msmith@jimmyjohns.com
Current Supervisor



TIP:

1. Always ask potential references prior to listing them if they are willing to serve as a positive reference for you.
2. Share a copy of your resume with your references and describe the types of positions you are applying for so they can prepare to discuss your strengths and qualifications ahead of the requests.

COVER LETTERS

Cover letters provide an opportunity to make a compelling case as to why you are the right person for the job. It gives you a chance to tell your story by elaborating on your experiences and sharing your accomplishments. A strong cover letter can significantly enhance your chances of getting noticed by potential employers during the application process.

Example:

Willy Wildcat

(866) 972-2228 | wiwild01@wsc.edu | Wayne, NE 68787 | www.linkedin.com/in/willy.wildcat

Date
Contact Name
Contact Title
Organization
Address
City, State Zip

Dear First and Last Name:

The **first paragraph** of a cover letter serves as an introduction to help establish the purpose of why you are writing. Start with an engaging sentence or two that states why you are interested in the internship, position or industry. Additionally, state the specific position you are seeking. Draw a connection to the employer and their needs and how your experience, interests, or skills can add value to the organization.

In the **body paragraphs**, highlight specific experiences and skills that qualify you for the position. Tailor your qualifications to the job description through using keywords. This is an opportunity to build on your resume bullets by sharing more of the story of how you developed and honed your skills through specific experiences such as through your coursework, internship, work experience, student involvement, and more.

In the **conclusion paragraph** restate your interest in the position and the organization. Consider sharing what you look forward to bringing to the role, the organization, or the culture. Share how to contact you and thank them for their time and consideration in reviewing your application.

Sincerely,

Signature
Your Name (Typed)

Utilize the same heading you have on your resume to show consistency across your materials.

Even electronic materials should have a formal business style with all the text left-aligned.

If you don't have the contact name, you can address the letter based on how the organization has the hiring information listed, such as, "Dear Human Resources," "Dear Talent Acquisition," or "People Operations Team."

Be sure to highlight and promote the contributions that you will make to the organization.

Include your name in a cursive font to serve as an electronic signature.



TIP:

In an online application, if you are asked to copy your cover letter into a text box, take the following steps:

- Remove your header, date, and contact information and only copy the greeting through your signature.
- Review and edit as needed and add returns between the paragraphs to make it more readable.

Example 1: Gaining Experience

Utilize the same heading you have on your resume to show consistency across your materials.

Willy Wildcat

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April 5, 20XX
Cathy Anderson
Executive Director
Haven House
340 E 7th Street
Wayne, NE 68787

Dear Cathy Anderson:

Throughout my coursework and involvement at Wayne State College, I have found that I enjoy building relationships, leading people and projects, and sharing stories of causes that make a difference. I was excited to come across your posting for the Education & Outreach Internship, as I believe the combination of my skills and abilities make me a great candidate for this opportunity.

As a communication major, I study various theories and approaches on how to build and maintain positive relationships with others. In my Organizational Leadership course, I have learned about the relational leadership theory that outlines five steps to increase trust and rapport with others which help increase a leader's influence on people and situations. This insight has been helpful as I work to get more involved on campus and given me more confidence to run for an officer position in Student Activities Council. As the Treasurer, I serve on the Executive Board that helps plan over 10+ events and I take detailed notes to share with the members in meetings. By demonstrating approachability and responsibility, I find that many of the members are willing to listen to my ideas and that I am making an impact on the programs that we offer.

In addition to learning how to lead and putting it into practice in my extracurricular activities, I have also had the opportunity to lead a team of my peers in a communication strategy project where we had to conduct in-depth market research surveys to our target audience, write persuasive press releases and social content and present our overall strategy to our peers in the course. I enjoyed collaborating and leading others on this project immensely and the work connects to the skills and qualifications that you are looking for in your Education & Outreach Intern.

In closing, I would like the opportunity to further discuss my qualifications and interest in this position. I believe I will bring the leadership, relationship-building, communication and the project coordination skills you are hoping to see in this position. Thank you for your consideration and you can contact me at (402) 375-XXXX.

Sincerely,

Willy Wildcat

Willy Wildcat

Scan me to access
builders for your
resume, cover letter,
and references!



www.wsc.edu/cs-builders

Example 2: Getting the Job

Willy Wildcat

(866) 972-2228 | wiiwild01@wsc.edu | Wayne, NE 68787 | www.linkedin.com/in/willy.wildcat

October 10, 20XX
Selma Garcia
Human Resources
Department of Health and Human Services
194 M Street
Lincoln, NE 68506

Dear Selma Garcia:

It is with great enthusiasm that I submit my application for the Education & Outreach Coordinator position at DHHS. Not only do I bring experience in facilitating multiple education and outreach projects, but I also find this work deeply meaningful, which drives me to stretch my skills to continuously learn and grow in this profession.

You are looking for a candidate with experience in engaging multiple business and community stakeholders. As the Community Education & Outreach Intern for Haven House, I presented persuasively to 10+ businesses and organizations sharing our mission to eliminate violence against survivors and promoted the many free and confidential services offered by the organization. Through these presentations, I was able to recruit 30+ community volunteers to serve in a variety of capacities, as well as lay the groundwork for our fundraising efforts.

In addition to my experience in community engagement, I was tasked with creating and facilitating five training sessions that provided both vision and inspired action to the community volunteers helping us fundraise and spread the Haven House mission and purpose. To provide inspiration, I shared several stories about the survivors and families who were supported and empowered to leave a challenging domestic situation. The testimonials that I shared helped the volunteers conceptualize the often-unseen work that the Haven House does to help survivors in the community navigate very challenging situations. Overall, the training and testimonials resulted in the volunteers assisting us in raising over \$10,000 at the summer fundraising event.

In closing, I am very excited about the opportunity to bring my skills, experience, and enthusiasm for this work to DHHS. Thank you for your time and consideration and I would welcome discussing the opportunity further and can be reached at (402) 375-XXXX.

Sincerely,

Willy Wildcat

Willy Wildcat

Utilize the same heading you have on your resume to show consistency across your materials.

This paragraph is using the STAR model to help describe the work they accomplished during their internship.

S - described the situation
T - described what they were tasked with
A - outlined the actions they took
R - shared one or more positive results that came from the actions they took