

Resume & Cover Letter Guide for Accounting

This handout serves as a guide for developing resumes and cover letters. As you develop your resume, answer three questions: 1. What do you want to communicate about yourself as a professional? 2. Who is your primary audience and what do they need to know about you? 3. How will they receive the resume (medium: paper, electronic, plain text, modified via an online application system) and what do you need to do to make the most of the medium?

Sample Resume

Make sure your voicemail greeting is professional.

Focus on the employer's needs when developing your resume.

Demonstrate relevant skills in the Experience section.

Related activities and service provide a fuller picture of you as a candidate.

YOUR NAME Address City, State Zip Phone E-mail Address	
<hr/>	
OBJECTIVE (optional) An objective should be brief and specific to a particular job or accounting area.	
EDUCATION San Diego State University San Diego, CA Degree and Major Expected graduation Include minor, emphasis, and study abroad. List your Overall, Major, and Accounting Grade Point Averages (if 3.0 or above). Be selective in listing academic honors. By junior year of college, limit or omit high school information.	
EXPERIENCE	
<u>Job Title</u> ORGANIZATION	Dates of employment City, State
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe your responsibilities here, starting with active verbs.• Make your descriptions energetic and short.• Present information in reverse chronological order.	
<u>Job Title</u> ORGANIZATION	Dates of employment City, State
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bullet format is preferred by many employers.• Focus on results, skills, leadership, initiative and teamwork.	
SKILLS Include foreign language skills. Emphasize computer software knowledge, especially programs used in accounting, such as Excel. Avoid general descriptors (like "self-motivated"), but include skills specific to accounting, like tax preparation skills.	
OTHER HEADINGS Choose additional headings that highlight your strengths in areas such as Activities, Leadership, Athletics, Professional Organizations and/or Community Service, indicating your accomplishments and offices held.	

Use an e-mail address that conveys professionalism.

Increase visual impact through selective use of bold, underlining and capitalization.

Spell check and review your resume carefully for errors.

Limit your resume to one page. Use black ink and white or off-white resume paper.

Resume Dos & Don'ts

Employers evaluate resumes quickly. Tailor your resume to meet their needs. Here are some suggestions to help focus your edits. They address the issues of form, function, feedback, and electronic resumes.

FORM deals with appearance.

- ✓ **Templates:** Avoid resume wizards and resume software templates. They are difficult to edit and do not allow you to present information in the most effective format.
- ✓ **Length:** For college students and recent college graduates, use a one-page resume.
- ✓ **Font:** Choose a basic, easy-to-read font such as Times New Roman, Arial or Helvetica in 10-14 point size. Use black ink.
- ✓ **Paper:** Use 8 ½" x 11" resume-quality paper in a light color such as white or off-white. Buy envelopes and cover letter paper to match your resume.
- ✓ **Spacing:** Margins of 0.7 to 1 inch and double-spacing between headings improves readability.
- ✓ **Layout:** Use bullets, bold, capitalization, and underlining sparingly to call attention to the most important information. Leave some white space to create an uncluttered look.
- ✓ **Format:** Present information in reverse chronological order. Common headings include: Education, Experience, Skills, Activities, and Community Service.
- ✓ **Professionalism:** Eliminate all typos and misspellings by asking other people to proofread.

FUNCTION conveys an impression of you that meets the readers' needs.

- ✓ **Image:** Decide what image you want your resume to communicate. Does it show that you are a leader, a team player, an artist, an innovator, a salesperson, or something else?
- ✓ **Content:** Select three core qualities that define you and are of importance to the position for which you are applying. Make sure that your resume focuses on skills and accomplishments that reflect these core qualities.
- ✓ **Style:** Start off sentences with action verbs to convey enthusiasm and achievement. Sample verbs include: *Advised, Analyzed, Assisted, Coordinated, Created, Developed, Evaluated, Guided, Handled, Implemented, Increased, Led, Maintained, Managed, Organized, Performed, Planned, Presented, Processed, Researched, Served, Sold, Taught, Trained, Wrote.*
- ✓ **Avoid:** Do not list your own web site if it includes personal information. Never reveal confidential personal data such as social security, driver's license or credit card numbers on a resume.

FEEDBACK allows others to offer ideas for strengthening your resume.

- ✓ **Sources:** Consult Career Services, professors, family, friends, and professionals in your field.
- ✓ **Review:** When you receive feedback, decide if the changes suggested are useful.

ELECTRONIC RESUMES & TECHNOLOGY

- ✓ **E-mail text resumes:** If you copy the text of your resume into the body of an e-mail, use left-hand justified, plain text format. Avoid using tabs, bullets, underlining, bold, and graphics.
- ✓ **E-mail attachment resumes:** If you e-mail your resume as an attachment, use your name in the document title. Some employers will not accept attachments because of the danger of viruses.
- ✓ **Online resumes:** Follow the directions on the Web site where you are submitting a resume; directions for online submissions vary considerably.
- ✓ **Scanned resumes:** Use key word phrases relevant to the position, employer, and career field. Use capitals, bullets and bold for emphasis. Avoid underlining, graphics, and italics.

The Cover Letter

Are Cover Letters a thing of the past?

The increasing popularity of e-mailed, web-based, and faxed resumes have people wondering if cover letters remain a relevant tool in today's job search. Generally, a cover letter should accompany each resume (except for on-campus interviews). The cover letter allows you to demonstrate your ability to write and offers the first statement of why you should be hired.

What Are My Options for E-mailing a Cover Letter?

If an employer requests that you send your cover letter and resume through e-mail, you can:

- 1) send your cover letter and resume as attachments (e.g., Microsoft Word documents),
- 2) copy your cover letter into the body of your e-mail message and attach your resume, or
- 3) cut and paste your cover letter and resume into the body of your e-mail message (which eliminates your formatting).

Sample Letter

Cover

Whenever possible, cite a specific person. It may take research to learn the contact's name, correct spelling and title.

Tailor your letter to the position description and the employer's needs. Focus on strengths that define you as a candidate.

Remember to sign your name here.

YOUR NAME
Address
City, State, Zip Code
Phone Number
E-mail Address

Date

Name
Title
Company Name
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Ms./Mr. Name:

OPENING PARAGRAPH: State that you are applying for a specific position and how you learned of the position, using a contact name where possible. Personalize the letter by saying why you want to work for this organization.

MIDDLE PARAGRAPH(S): Succinctly outline the qualifications that make you a strong candidate. Relate your qualifications to the needs of the current job opening. Specific examples can demonstrate your skills and experiences.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH: Provide contact information and state your next action step, repeating your interest in the position. Thank the employer for reviewing your resume and request an interview.

Sincerely,

Your name typed

Use the same "letterhead" that you use for your resume, or choose another style from the following samples.

Use a colon here.

Conduct a spell check and review your resume carefully for errors.

Choose quality paper that matches your resume.

Sample Networking Letter Modified Block Format

Jane Doe

1939 Montgomery Street
San Diego, California 92110
(619) 739-8100
jdoe@sdsu.edu

August 1, 2006

Mr. Jeffrey Thomas
Ace Accounting Firm
400 Tax Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90017

Dear Mr. Thomas:

I am writing to express my interest in an entry-level accounting position at the Ace Accounting Firm. I recently met Anne Carlson, a manager in your San Diego office, at a university alumni function. She advised me to contact you about opportunities in your Los Angeles office.

I am completing my degree in Accountancy this coming May at San Diego State University. I have supplemented required accounting courses with courses in _____. My recent experience as an intern with the DEF firm has allowed me to enhance my cost accounting and personal relations skills in a professional environment.

In addition to my university course work and internships, I have been active in the Accounting Society at SDSU. I am currently serving as Director of Community Service, in charge of coordinating our chapter's participation in local activities. This leadership role has strengthened my public speaking and event planning skills. During the past year, I feel that I have demonstrated my ability to succeed by balancing the demands of my classes, internship, community service and leadership roles.

I will contact you next week to discuss your employment needs for the coming year. Thank you for your time and attention to my resume.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

Sample Application Letter Full Block Format

621 Alameda Street
San Diego, California 92110

October 20, 2005

Ms. Sarah Allen
123 Accounting Firm
400 Audit Avenue
San Diego, California 92110

Dear Ms. Allen:

I am responding to your posting for an entry-level audit position through SDSU Career Services. I am very interested in your firm after hearing your presentation at the Accounting Society meeting on campus last month.

I am presently maintaining a 3.60 grade point average while completing my Master of Science in Accounting at San Diego State University. I have supplemented my accounting coursework with advanced study in Spanish, as required in your job description. After studying abroad in Spain and participating in an internship with KPMG in Madrid during my junior year, I would rate my Spanish language skills as highly developed.

In addition to my university classes and internship, I have been very active in on-campus groups at SDSU. I am currently serving as Treasurer, in charge of overseeing all the financial operations of _____. This role has strengthened my leadership, teamwork, and public speaking skills. I feel that my strong grade point average and Spanish language skills, in conjunction with my internship and leadership activities, are good indicators of my ability to succeed as an auditor with your firm.

I will contact you at the end of the week to discuss the possibility of an interview for this position. If you have any questions about my resume or application, please call me at 619-123-6789 at your convenience. Thank you for your time and attention to my interview request.

Sincerely,

John Doe