

Career planning – resumes, cover letters and interviews



Chalmers Careers Service



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Writing an effective resume

What is a resume?

A resume or curriculum vitae* presents the achievements of your professional and academic life in such a way that anyone who reads it will quickly and easily be able to find the information they want. Think of your resume as an advertising brochure that sells a product and the product is you.

We presume that you are a good product that employers would want to buy if they only realised how good you are; unfortunately, employers, like the rest of us, often buy the best marketed product, not the best product.

Since many employers and recruiters have piles of resumes to work through, you haven't got many seconds to catch their attention – but there are some basic guidelines you can follow to avoid sending your resume to the uninteresting pile. Building a resume takes time and careful work.

Remember that your resume doesn't get you the job – but hopefully it can get you the interview. The interview gets you the job.

*In the US a curriculum vitae is usually a document for academic purposes. A similar document which focuses on getting a job is called a resume. In Britain, the term resume is not usually used, and if it is, it is a synonym for CV. Ultimately, what matters is less what you call your document and more whether it has the appropriate content and presentation.

Who is going to read it?

Who will be reading or glancing at your resume? Whoever it is, they won't be spending much time with it, and they expect you to present it in an easy to read format where the information can be found quickly.

They want to see the information that matters most to them first, not have to wade through information that is important to you but not to them. Throughout the process of writing your resume keep this person in mind and try to imagine what you would want to see if you were in their position.

The academic CV

This is a resume you use when applying for work in university and research institutions.

When applying for a study or research place, it is important to emphasize your academic abilities. Your education will take pride of place, and summer schools, conferences (especially if you have presented), publications and awards or scholarships should be listed. Employment should also appear, especially any work

which is connected in any way with your field of research interest though small, irrelevant jobs like working evenings in a restaurant are of no interest and should be left out.

The business resume

A chronological, organised approach to presenting your information is in general the most successful one, and employers appreciate being able to follow your work and educational experience and being able to see what you have been doing with your time.

Depending on how lengthy your work experience is, your education in general should come first.

- If you are a student, then your education is what you are bringing to market, and your work experience is added value.
- If you have a well established track record at work, then your education simply provides a foundation and is quickly passed over.
- If your work experience is by far the most interesting or compensated for a weak academic background, then the section on your work experience should come first.

Opening your resume with an Objective Statement is becoming very common, a brief introductory paragraph of 3-4 lines where you explain your goals, plans, vision for the future or clearly state your strengths and what you have to offer. It can also be called "Professional Summary, or a wide variety of other things – check out the internet for ideas.

Content

The basic content in your resume is often quite similar as you apply for different positions, but some jobs may disappear with time, others may become more important. Certain courses and programs may be of interest to prospective employers, but not to schools. Some basic structure remains the same although the details may vary.

The basic content of a resume can look like this:

- Name
- Contact Details
- Personal Details
- Objective statement
- Education
- Work Experience
- Awards, scholarships, etc.
- Leadership experiences, like sitting on a Board, leadership development programs
- Computer and human languages
- Skills and Qualifications
- Volunteer Activities

- And many other areas – this depends on who you are and what you have done!
- The vexing question of references

Now before we get starting on the details of content, lets look at a couple of main issues you need to keep in mind as you write and design your resume. One is that while you need to stick to telling the truth, you don't need to expose every bad experience or bad habit that you've ever had. The other is to please show consideration for the reader. Keep it short and to the point!

Telling the truth

You should never lie on a resume. Having said that, an employer, unlike a court of law, does not require you to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. We all have failures in our lives, whether they are failed exams or jobs where we didn't get on.

There is no need to mention your failures in your resume.

If at school you took three exams and failed one, don't say you failed one, just mention the two you passed. If you started a job, really hated it, argued with your boss and left after 2 months, don't put it on the resume. If someone asks, of course, you will have to tell the truth, but you are under no obligation to present yourself in a bad light from the outset.

There is of course a limit to how much you can sweep under the carpet. If you failed a whole three year degree, you may have a hard time leaving it out altogether, but you can perhaps mention it as 'other studies'. It doesn't look particularly good, but you should have thought of that when you were out drinking instead of studying for your final exams.

Show consideration for your audience – keep it short!

The length of a resume often depends on the standards set in various countries, for example a good Australian resume will be at least 5 pages, a Canadian resume is two, and in Britain, they would have a two page document called a CV.

So find out what is expected, and follow the rules. But remember, no matter how fascinating and extremely important you feel all the information you have to say is – it is not important to the reader. They don't want all the details of your wonderful story.

Employers will often have had to sort through piles of resumes and if they can't find what they need or interests them in about 1- 2 minutes – they will put it away and move to the next one.

So keep it clear, clean, easy to navigate in and easy to scan. HELP the reader find those genuine nuggets in information that they are looking for.

The resume content

Name – now this is straightforward, right? Well mostly. Make sure the reader will know if you are a man or a woman. You may think it would be better not in a discriminating

world, but if the readers cannot tell your gender, they will be irritated, particularly if it is a culturally unfamiliar name. So add on a Ms. or Mr. if it is needed for clarity. Make sure your name is easy to read, preferably in bold lettering.

Contact address - now this is getting easier these days, they can often reach you at an email address or your cell phone. But give them a proper street address as well. Make sure the contact details are actually where you can be contacted, they will not hunt around after you; they expect you to answer or return their call within a day or two at the most. Are you out of reach for a longer period of time? Say so in your cover letter or leave a message on your phone that says so.

Personal details – now this is a tricky one, because it varies from country to country. Your nationality or ethnic origin or religious beliefs should in general not be included unless they have some relevance. Date of birth is found in a Swedish resume, but absolutely not in an American one. And your marital status is another questionable bit of information. Find out what is expected in the country you are looking for work in and follow their standards!

Objective statement – this varies as well, but certainly won't cause any problems if you include it and it isn't a bad idea. It's basically a brief statement about what your goals are or what you are good at – a summing up of what you have to offer. It won't be that easy to write of course – and shouldn't be more than 3-4 sentences.

Education – mostly it should come first – unless you do not have a formal education and feel your work experience makes up for it. But if you are a student – then that's primarily what you have to sell. Make sure you start with your latest education and go backwards – and if you have a Masters in Physical Engineering, you hardly need to include your high school. See below for info on writing out your degree.

Work experience – if you have many years of experience, then leave out the irrelevant jobs, as long as you can establish consistency. If you are a student, then everything is of value, including the job waiting tables and driving a forklift.

Awards and scholarships – always very popular with employers. Make sure you include them nice and clearly – even if it's only a minor award

Volunteer work – can even be used under work sometimes. Otherwise it looks very good on your resume

Languages – note down the languages you know – but not the ones you only can say hello in – and that means both human and computer languages!

Sports, music, organisations – include these kinds of things, if you've been a scout leader, a trumpet player, an elite swimmer – it is interesting, puts more flesh on your resume and identifies some characteristics that an employer might be interested in – leadership abilities, creativity, perseverance.

Other important things – sure, you decide what might be relevant or not. Remember to keep it interesting and brief and don't run away with it and tell them your life story.

Dates, breaks and backwards chronological order

Now you know what to put in your resume. But how to assemble it? Well a key thing is to use dates, in a clear and easy to follow manner. And put your information in backwards chronological order. There are of course some exceptions to this.

Why are dates so important? Well the person reading your resume is going to see what you were doing when and they are looking for unexplained gaps – so don't leave any. If you were at home caring for children then make sure that is clear if necessary. If you travelled around the world a year – better make sure that shows up to. Don't worry about months here and there, don't try matching it up, the reader isn't a detective. But use full years or seasons to make life easier.

Dates need to be presented clearly and consistently – so that means following the left or right hand margin. Also avoid using months – seasons work better – like “summer 2009”. And don't use abbreviated dates - it is not clear what 12.7.2009 really means and the standard varies enough to cause confusion.

So that means when do your education section, your latest degree comes first. That's because kindergarten and grade school just aren't that interesting. If you have a university degree, we'll assume that you graduated from high school, and leave it at that.

It's not really the same for jobs, but in general it's easier to follow a person's development by following the jobs starting with your most recent employment and working backwards. And if it's easier for a potential employer, so much the better. But some jobs you might want to group into specific functions of similar jobs, like waiting tables, summer jobs, from 2003-2008. The reader can follow no problem.

Layout, appearance and space

Make sure your resume is appetising. Don't use any strange paper, colours or fonts. Keep it clean and spacious. That means lots of white space so it's easy on the eyes. And no using tiny typeface. People's eyesight does actually get a bit worse with age – amazing isn't it? And a 40 year old recruiter who finds she has to squint to read your size 9 font is only going to feel irritated. If you were trying to inspire interest and admiration you are out of luck.

So what should it look like? Go out on the internet and look for samples. You'll also find a few at the end of this material. Pick one that appeals to you and use that standard. The key things are:

- Most important info first – your name and contact info
- Easy to read
- Easy to get a clear overview
- Correct spelling and grammar
- Not cramped or overloaded with info
- Consistency – the dates should all be presented in the same way, for example

It is possible to use colours for headlines if you can do it neat and attractively. Remember light colours are harder to read, so avoid those. In general though, you'll never be wrong with your basic black.

A stand typeface is good to use as well, nothing fancy, Arial or something along those lines will do nicely.

Consistency

When you choose the font, style (bold, italic etc.) or point size for a given type of information, such as job dates, stick to it. Make sure if one section heading is Arial 12 pt bold, all section headings are Arial 12 pt bold and that none of them is underlined or italic. If the dates under Education are 11 pt, make sure that under Employment they are not 10 pt. If one entry has a bullet point, put bullet points on all. If you use paragraph spacing, make sure that you have the same space after or before each paragraph of the same type.

Clarity

- The information on your resume should stand out. This means that it should not be too small nor too cramped. White space is very powerful in design because it gives power to the little that is there.
- Packing your page as full as possible makes it visually unattractive and hard to read. Here are some guidelines:
- Ensure your margins are 2.5 cm minimum all round make sure you take into account different European and American margins.
- Spread out the information. If what you have to say doesn't fill the page, don't leave all the white space at the bottom; put empty lines between sections to separate them more clearly. If you have to have two pages, don't just put the last five lines on page two, spread the sections out a bit - and make sure a section is not split over two pages.
- Use the width of the page. Few lines of a resume will take the width of the page. If all lines are short, the text will all sit on the left and the result will be unbalanced. If this is the case, allow bigger margins.
- Do, whenever possible, however, make sure that title lines (such as date, job title, employer) do not wrap (i.e. go onto a second line). This can be achieved either by setting your margins to your longest line or reducing the number of words in that line.
- Descriptions of duties and skills can wrap if necessary, but make sure that you do not end up with an isolated word or two on a new line. Use (shift+enter) to split the sentence in the place you want without starting a new paragraph.

Simplicity

- A resume is a professional document; its appearance should be serious and businesslike, without clutter. The following guidelines can help make sure your resume looks neat and serious:
- Do not use more than a maximum of two different fonts, and these should be standard fonts like Times or Arial
- Decorative fonts are hard to read. If you are in a design or architect line, then consider what extra detail you can add to your resume to lift it – but be strict and professional.
- Avoid mixing too many different styles such as **bold**, *italics* or underlining.
- Bold or small can be used for headings, but All Caps (all capital letters), popular in the days of typewriters when all letters were the same size, is now rather clumsy looking – AND IT LOOKS LIKE YOU ARE SHOUTING.
- Avoid too wide a variety of point sizes. A good range to use might be 11 pt for basic text, and 12 pt for headings, or if you have a lot to fit in, 11 pt and 10 pt. Don't go below 10 pt.
- Avoid boxes and lines around text areas as these make the page look cluttered.

Institution and your degree

Keep the name of your university short and to the point. If it is impossible to understand for the English speaking world, then translate it. And if the title and the sub title are as long as a sentence, then cut it back to the basic core name. The complete name may be 'The Basil Tlostanov University of Vladivostok, School of Social and Cultural Anthropology of European Races' but 'Vladivostok University' is all anyone needs to know.

Regarding your degree, if you are in the middle of it, indicate it with your dates, for example

2009 - Masters in Bioengineering, Chalmers University, Gothenburg Sweden

Then I can see that you are still working on it. You would do the same for a job you are still at. Now if you have a strong focus or research area, then write it under the title, like this:

2009 - Masters in Bioengineering, Chalmers University, Gothenburg Sweden,
Specialising in emergence of life forms in Starbucks coffee sediment .

But that will do.

By this I mean that you should not and do not include all your courses or your marks – unless specifically asked for. If a certain area is required and you have it, then include it by all means, perhaps in your objective statement and your cover letter – in your resume if you can find a suitable place. If you have an impressive theses project then add it in as part of your education as well.

Proofreading

This is so important that a few lines deserve their own clear section! Proofread, proofread and proof read. (see?) And you can get away with a spelling or grammar mistakes in an article of this length, but not in a resume! It is short and concise, you should have sweat blood and tears over it – why couldn't you get the details right?

Get a colleague or co-student to read it through. And someone else – ask teachers, parents, whomever you think can give you a clear and careful going over. Also be willing to lose a beautiful sentence or fantastic descriptions when your editor says “Sorry – but what do you mean?”

Not to be forgotten, Chalmers Careers Service can proofread for you and are more than happy to do so! Come by our drop in sessions and we can help you there.

The Top Ten Pitfalls of Resume Writing

To long – most new graduates should restrict their resumes to one or two pages. If you have troubles condensing, get help from a career center or a professional writer.

Typing, grammar or spelling mistakes – these areas suggest carelessness, poor education or laziness. Don't rely on the computer's spell or grammar checker's you need a pair of eyes looking it over.

Hard to read – a poorly designed, scanned, copied whatever resume looks unappealing. Too crowded, too small typeface, overuse of bolding, highlighting, underlining or capital letters also makes it hard to read.

Too verbose – don't use long or complicated sentence, keep it short and simple, and you can drop small words like a, and the.

Too brief – give more than the bare essentials, give the interesting bits that put meat on the bones – but not too much.

Irrelevant information – customize each resume to each position you are looking for, when necessary. Small shifts in attention can make a big difference. But focus only on relevant experience and interests – don't include age, sex, children, height, weight, church membership, etc.

Obviously generic – too many resumes scream – I need a job – any job! The employer needs and wants to feel that you are interested in that particular position with that particular company

Too snazzy – of course, if you are using paper, use good quality , but avoid exotic or coloured paper, photographs, binders and graphics.

Boring – make your resume as dynamic as possible, use action verbs and use your rich vocabulary so you don't get repetitive

Too modest – the resume is the prime advertising spot for your talents and achievements and is in competition with the other applicants. Put your best foot forward!

The three R's

The three R's of resume writing are Research, Research and Research. You must know what the company does, what the position involves and whether you are a good match before applying for the job. And that means doing research.

Research the company. Check out their web site. Look for articles in the daily newspapers and on business magazines.

Research the position. The more you know about the job, the better you will be able to sell yourself and to target your resume to that position. Try and see if you can talk to someone who has a similar job or who works at the company. What do they do?

Research yourself. Your goal is not just to get a job. Your goal is to get a job that you will enjoy. After you can find out all you can about the company and the position, ask yourself if you would like to work there – is this what you want to do and where you want to be?

Also, before you go to the interview make sure you review your resume – remember the resume only gets you the interview –it's the interview that gets you the job.

Resume Samples

NAME

Address

City, Province, Postal Code

Telephone Number

E-Mail Address

SUMMARY

Diversified experience in a quality control laboratory environment with specific detail to microbiology, bulk and finished product testing, GMP auditing, packaging and stability programs.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

COMPANY

Year-Year

Position

- Microbiological testing and plating of raw materials, bulk and finished products.
- Microbiological media and plates preparation.
- Raw materials analysis.
- Sanitary monitoring of surface and air in both processing and packaging areas.
- Quarterly GMP audits and member of annual self-inspection committee (in-house).
- Back-up for consumer calls regarding use of pregnancy tests.

Accomplishments:

- Created an environmental program to monitor air and surface growth every three months - this ensured that the sanitation program was maintained at a level acceptable to GMP.
- Headed self-inspection committee that annually audited GMP and company policies. Any problems were to be acknowledged and/or corrected by the department(s) involved prior to HPB inspections.
- With the cooperation of production, initiated a program whereby line workers were directly involved in GMP audits. This developed a sense of pride in their work by giving them the opportunity to see how the quality control system works.

COMPANY

Year-Year

Position

COMPANY

Year-Year

Position

EDUCATION

- College, City, Laboratory Technician Program (Year)
- College, City, Microbiology (Year)
- College, City, Packaging Materials and Testing (evenings Year)

ADDITIONAL TRAINING

- College, City (Year), Computer Applications, Evenings
- Effective Quality Assurance Auditing (1 day - Year)

Jane Smith
Nowhere road
Big Apple
+001-00100110100
me@hotmail.com

Summary

I am a motivated and ambitious computer science student keen on programming and problem solving. I am determined to be up to date on the latest computer and development technologies.

Education

2002 – **B.Sc. & M.Sc. Computer Science & Engineering, Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden.**
Focus on Software Development and Computer Security.
Anticipated graduation fall 2007.

Skills

Languages	Java SE & ME, C, PHP, SQL, Haskell, UML, XML, HTML
Databases	Modeling & Normalization, MySQL, Oracle, Apache Derby, HSQLDB
Processes	Unified Process, eXtreme Programming, Personal Software Process
Techniques	Object Oriented Analysis and Design, Parallel programming, Design Patterns
Frameworks	Hibernate, Apache Cayenne, Apache Tapestry, Tomcat
Tools	JUnit, DBUnit, Eclipse, Netbeans, Ant, Subversion, CVS

Languages

Native Swedish, fluent English

Work Experience

2006
Spring, summer **Upstairs at Eric's, Sweden**
Java Developer
Development, design, maintenance of a multimedia client-server application for the advertising industry.

2005 – 06 **Larger School Development Project, Chalmers**
Java Developer
Part of a group of eight in a 280 hour/person project (280 hours per person? 280 total? Is this vital? If not cut), developing a PDA (what is PDA) extension in J2ME (what is J2ME) for a medical information system to be used at Sahlgrenska University Hospital in Gothenburg. The application is now deployed and in active use.

- 2003 – 05
Summer **Online Gaming Project**
Experimental project aimed at utilizing my knowledge of statistics to explore the profitability of online poker. The project was carried out in four phases; preliminary work, analysis, execution and reflection. Profitability was good, allowing me to continue for three summers.
- 2001 – 02 **Servera R&S, Halmstad, Sweden**
Warehouse worker
Drove electrical truck, manually packed frozen food at Sweden's leading wholesaler for the restaurant industry.
- 1998 – 00
Summer **HDF, Halmstad, Sweden**
Warehouse worker
Drove electrical truck, manually packed items for HDF, a wholesaler for the construction and farming industry.

Related Experience

- 1997 – 99 **FIRST Association, Halmstad, Sweden**
Head of IT
Managed the overall operation of a computer network for a computer and board game club with 150 members.
Spearheaded and co-managed an annual 100 person three-day computer network convention (LAN-party).

Interests

I enjoy reading technical articles and blogs, watching movies and reading techno literature. I even manage to keep in shape through regular workouts at the local gym.

Resume

Jane Goodess
Updown stairs
Avenue
Oromocto MAN
Anyplace anywhere
M: 0762-XXXXXXX
Email – janegoodies@hotmail.com

Summary

I will be graduating from the international Master's Program at Chalmers University in Gothenburg and am interesting in working in my field as a water treatment specialist: My thesis work on microbiological treatment of large aquatic systems dealt with the issues of filtering and maintenance and I am interested in putting my theories into practise

Education

2007 – Masters in Bioengineering, Chalmers Technical University, Gothenburg Sweden

Working Experience

Summer 2004-08 Volvo Parts, Gothenburg Sweden. Forklift driver, stocking shelves, making deliveries, keeping working area organised and parts in place to shorten lead times

2003-2004 Teacher for adults, English and Portuguese, Public School, public school certification (part time)

Other skills

Volunteer Work Working as a cook, did filing, extra work for a day care for poor children in social underdeveloped areas

Computer skills Fill in the blanks

Language skills Portuguese, English, Swedish

Family I have a large family in Timbuktoo and I am in touch with them often. Here in Sweden I live with my sambo and am a part of his large family and we meet often

Cover Letters

Your cover letter is a sales letter.

If your resume is the brick and mortar of a house, then your cover letter is the paint, the design, the decoration. The cover letter is your voice and heightens the interest a prospective employer will feel in you as a potential employee.

Make sure that you refer to the job you are applying for in a reference line – it is important that the recruiter and manager don't have to try and guess what job you are applying for. And if you can, it's a real plus to have a specific name of an individual you can send it to.

Please don't start the letter by stating your name and where you live and that you have three kids and what not. They are not really interested and it a waste of prime time space. Sell the interesting stuff!

So that means don't sell your degree, responsibilities or duties in a cover letter, sell your accomplishments. Write about the interesting or great stuff you have done – catch their attention! If they are looking for someone with an entrepreneurial spirit, tell them that you ran your first business when you were 10 and never looked back! Or maybe you are the only one in the country who can program in Ada! Or that you have a prize winning web site, that you are the perfect match to their job ad or that you could do lots for their company.

See the interesting stuff – and there always is interesting stuff. Maybe – I am the original, complete computer nerd. Absolutely perfect for the job.

And never, never, never say anything negative about you, your abilities or your personal situation. No way.

The HR department and the hiring manager

The search for the right person to send your application should not end up being the HR Director. If the ad is for an electrical engineer pick up the phone and find out who the manager is. Then send an application to the Manager of Engineering as well as the HR department.

Since the HR department gets tons of resumes' but the hiring manager only gets a few, it will help you stand out. The HR department is definitely going to get involved, but if you have made a good impression on the hiring manager, so much the better

That doesn't mean you should phone up the manager and hang about or pester them. Nothing could be more fatal.

Final tips

Whether the cover letter is sent to a recruiter, an HR department or a hiring manager, there are certain parts that should be in place. Think of a cover letter as a short, one page story. It has an opening, body and a conclusion

- Opening – this is an attention getter that explains the purpose of the letter. Be sure to include the name of any reference person and the job you are applying for.
- Body – this highlights skills and matches the accomplishments you have against the company's specific needs
- Conclusion – ask for the interview

Are you considering getting an online company to write your cover letter or your resume for you – then think again! Don't be tempted!

The employer wants to hear YOUR voice – not some generic results of your history with a spin doctor effect! It isn't believable at all – so do it yourself – but get lots of help proofreading and commenting. Good luck!

Cover Letter Samples

Andrew Perroni
123 Stardust Way
Boise, ID 12345
123-555-1234
aperroni@bamboo.com

April 4, 2009

Mr. Ted Mitchell
President
Inline Skates Deluxe
123 23rd St.
Boise, ID 12345

Dear Mr. Mitchell,

As an avid skater on both blades and wheels, I can't imagine a better job than sharing my enthusiasm with your customers. When I saw your ad in the Boise News for a junior sales associate, I immediately put together the attached resume to send you. Please consider me for the position.

I am available for interviews any day during spring break next week. I'll give you a call to see when you can meet with me.

Thank you!

Andrew Perroni

Enclosure: resume

Fred Redman
993-B Coastal Route #25
Pacifica, CA 12345
123-555-1234
fredman@bamboo.com

February 27, 2007

Tilden Bishop, Ph.D.
Department of Genetic Research
St. Patrick's Medical Center
2005 Grand Ave.
San Francisco, CA 12345

Dear Ms. Bishop

As an experienced computer programmer who is presently pursuing a master's degree in electrical engineering at Chalmers Technical University in California. I am writing to request information about possible summer employment opportunities with HAL. I am interested in a position that will allow me to combine the talents I have developed in both computer programming and electrical engineering. However, as you can see from the attached resume, I have extensive experience in many related fields and I always enjoy new challenges.

I feel that it is important for me to maintain a practical, real-world perspective while developing my academic abilities. I am proud of the fact that I have financed my entire education through scholarships and summer jobs related to my field of study. This work experience has enhanced my appreciation for the education I am pursuing. I find that I learn as much from my summer jobs as I do from my academic studies. For example, during the summer of 1986, while working for IBM in Boca Raton, Florida, I gained a great deal of practical experience in the field of electronic circuit logic and driver design. When I returned to school in the fall and took Computer Hardware Design; I found my experience with IBM had thoroughly prepared me for the subject.

Having said all this, I realize that your first consideration in hiring an applicant must not be the potential educational experience HAL can provide, but the skills and services the applicant has to offer. I hope the experience and education described in my resume suggest how I might be of service to HAL:

I welcome the opportunity to discuss with you how I might best assist HAL in fulfilling its present corporate needs. I will be available for employment from May 14 through August 31, 2010. Please let me know what summer employment opportunities are available at HAL for someone with my education, experience and interests. You can reach me at the above address or by phone at 231-2435 3459.

Thank you for you time and consideration

Sincerely yours,

Fred Redman

Fred Redman
993-B Coastal Route #25
Pacifica, CA 12345
123-555-1234
fredman@bamboo.com

February 27, 2007

Tilden Bishop, Ph.D.
Department of Genetic Research
St. Patrick's Medical Center
2005 Grand Ave.
San Francisco, CA 12345

Dear Dr. Bishop,

Dr. Jones in the Biogenetics Department of U.C. San Diego mentioned that you are looking for a new scientist for your DNA team. When he told me that your project is embarking on a new study, I knew I must apply for the position quickly.

I believe that Dr. Jones spoke with you about my qualifications:

- * Seven years as a research assistant to Ernest Brentwood, Ph.D.
- * Key contributor to DNA studies presented at the 1995 Biogenetics Conference.

It would be a career highlight for me to work with you. I will call your office next week to see when you will be interviewing candidates. Thank you for giving my application serious consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Fred Redman

Enclosure: resume

Patricia Mills
321 Sunrise Lane
Phoenix, AZ 12345
123-555-1234
patmills@bamboo.com

June 21, 2009

Ms. Alicia Cobb
Manager
A Design, A.S.I.D.
987 Douglass St., Suite 500
Phoenix, AZ 12345

Alicia,

It was great to speak with you in person at the Women's Conference. I have attached my resume as you requested.

Your insistence on high-quality work and state-of-the-art technology fits perfectly with my interest in remaining abreast of ever-improving software. I think you'll be pleased when you see the scope of my work using parametric and associative dimensioning in CAD systems.

I'd like to get together again, this time in an environment that's more conducive to discussion. I'm eager to learn more about the designer position at your firm and to show you my complete portfolio.

I'll call Monday to see when we can meet at your office.

Sincerely,

Patricia Mills

Enclosure: resume

Interviewing

What happens during an interview?

It would be wrong to say that all interviews are the same but they do tend to follow a general pattern. And it is certainly safe to say that it is a stressful and nervous situation for the person being interviewed, no matter how often they may have been in the interview process!

Being aware of what happens and being prepared helps you be less nervous.

In general an interview will begin with small talk and general chit chat – you may get offered a coffee – do accept even if you don't drink it. Then the interviewer will start by perhaps telling you a bit about the job and the company and then ask you some general information about yourself. From there on the questions get specific.

The interviewer will often ask you if you have any questions – you should have – and then will come to a conclusion. Depending on the country an interview can take from 30 minutes to 2 hours.

Before you even say hello. The minute you are presented you are being evaluated. Your appearance, your voice, how you shake hands – the overall first impression is keenly scrutinized.

How good are you at small talk? Aside from your job skills and experience, an interviewer wants to know how good you are at informal communication – so you need to be able to do more than smile and nod, you need to chat and contribute.

The recruiter has the floor. They start the conversation and interview rolling often by talking about the organisation. Ask questions – make sure you understand the company and the position.

Now do you have any questions? This question may come after the presentation or at the end of the interview. Make sure that you have a few intelligent questions ready to ask – based on the careful research that you did on the company beforehand. Look for questions that will elicit a positive response. Asking intelligent, well-thought out questions shows the recruiter that you have put in the time and effort to be prepared for the interview.

On your way out the door. It isn't over until it's over. The interviewer will wrap it up and the final is important. The interviewer wants to get an overall assessment in place. Remain enthusiastic and polite. Shake the recruiter's hand and thank them for considering you for the position.

Expect the unexpected. You may get some odd questions – try not to be too surprised. They may simply wish to see how you deal with these things – how you react under pressure or when off the beaten path. You can't prepare for this so take your time and think a little then give a natural response.

Interview tips and ideas

Going to interviews is a stressful situation, even if you've been to many before. You will be nervous. But if you are prepared, you have a better chance of making a good impression. Here are the top ten rules of interviewing.

Keep your answers brief and to the point. Unless you are asked to give more detail, try and limit your answers to a few minutes per question. Work with a friend or tape yourself to see how long it takes

Include concrete, quantifiable data. People being interviewed tend to talk in general terms of what they have done and who they are. This approach unfortunately tends not to convince the interviewer that you have the qualities they are looking for. Be sure to discuss specific information and provide details to support your answers.

Repeat your key strengths three times. It is vital that you clearly and confidently can state your strengths. You need to explain how useful these strengths are and how the employer can benefit from them. If you explain these clearly and repeat them three times backed up with concrete examples then they are more likely to remember your strengths – and believe them!

Prepare five or more success stories. When you are getting ready for the interview, make sure that you make a list of your key assets and skills. Then Pick out a few occasions when you used these skills successfully.

Put yourself on their team. Think of how you can say things about their products or their profile – like “As a part of Company X, I would carefully analysis....and” Your research here could help your work up a potential scenario.

Image is often as important as content. What you look like and how you say something is just as important as what you say. Studies have shown that 65% of the conveyed message is nonverbal – gestures, physical appearance and attire are highly influential during job interviews.

Ask questions. The types of questions you ask and the way you ask them can make a tremendous impression on the interviewer. Good questions require advance preparation. Just as you are planning what to say make sure you plan what to ask. Don't ask about benefits or salary. Remember that an interview is a two way process where both partners get to evaluate each other to see if they match.

Keep the conversation flowing. By keeping a dialogue going as opposed to a monologue – you will make a more positive impression.

Research the company, its product line and competitors. Research will help you decide whether or not you are interested in the company and give you important information to refer to during the interview

Keep an interview journal. As soon as possible, write a brief summary of what happened. Note if you are to take any follow-up action and put it into your calendar, review how you answered and asked questions what you think went well and what did not.

Dressing for the interview

International: The time to display your fashion sense or your individualism is not now. Now is the time to be conservative, to follow standard business dress and to err on the side of being too formal.

Even if some IT and engineering companies are informal or some offices talk about casual Fridays – make sure you are well-dressed. Too casual or informal will count against you in most circumstances. For both men and women a suit is the best bet.

Men - Make sure you polish your shoes and wear a tie. Be sure to wear dark socks or a colour that matches your pants – no white socks. And when you cross your legs no skin should be seen

Women – Keep your make-up and accessory level modest, and use very little perfume, if any. Make sure you wear a bra and if you have a skirt on, use nylons.

Plan what you are going to wear at least two days in advance so you can buy those things you can't find, wash that shirt, sew on buttons that are loose or buy new panty hose because the ones you were going to wear probably have a run in them.

Sweden. Yes it is a bit different in Sweden, the standard for dressing is less formal, but still important. Still conservative. Make sure you dress neat and tidy, avoid jeans and t-shirts. Do dress up a bit, and if you wear dark pants don't wear white socks.

Make sure you aren't wearing a short skirt or showing too much skin. Sorry, but a belly showing t-top is inappropriate in the halls of Volvo! And guys, a stylish glimpse of your underwear as your jeans slide down your backside might not be met with much enthusiasm either.

Both men and women – make sure you keep jewelry and perfume levels modest.

A good night's sleep and a shower

This is important. No partying and staying out late the day before an interview. Get a good night sleep so you arrive well rested and relaxed. Know where you are going and how you are going to get there.

Don't bring any company with you to the interview. Have a haircut, shave if required and you might want to remove any unusual jewelry.

Have a shower and use deodorant. This will be noticed – mainly if your don't!

Extra tips and links

Words and phrases to use when writing a cover letter or your resume

Action words

analyse	establish	plan
assemble	encourage	perform
advise	facilitate	prepare
anticipate	generate	present
appraise	guide	prioritise
assess	inspect	produce
budget	interview	program
coach	investigate	promote
consult	improve	recruit
construct	increase	repair
co-ordinate	implement	represent
correspond	initiate	review
calculate	install	research
classify	instruct	schedule
communicate	lead	sell
compile	localise	serve
compose	manage	speak
control	market	supervise
create	maintain	teach
decide	mediate	troubleshoot
delegate	motivate	track
design	monitor	train
display	negotiate	update
distribute	operate	utilise
document	order	validate
evaluate	organise	verify
estimate	participate	write

Using verb phrases

handle complaints	attend promptly to requests
delegate effectively and clearly	determine policy and procedures
exchange ideas and information	influence others
deal with conflict situations	make recommendations
resolve problems	make decisions
maintain good relations	

Links to resume tips and ideas

The DAMN GOOD RESUME site by Yanna Parker
<http://www.damncom.com>

A good, fun and useful site by Yanna Parker – lots of good tips, advice and ideas.

How to write a masterpiece of a resume - Rockport Institute
<http://www.rockportinstitute.com/resumes.html>

Extremely lengthy and detailed (even more so than our page!) with lots of tips and suggestions, though there are no actual examples. Very job-oriented.

The Effective Resume - F-O-R-T-U-N-E Personnel Consultants of Huntsville
http://www.fpchuntsville.com/Content/effective_resume.htm

This one, on the other hand, has the examples without the suggestions. Again very commercially oriented, but there's no charge for looking.

Creating the Perfect RESUME - Europa Pages & Milk round Online
<http://www.europa-pages.com/jobs/cv.html>

Clear and not too commercial guidelines, with examples of good and bad resumes. Also relatively brief - you won't be up all night reading this

Sources of information, among others:

- Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, USA
- European University Standards, Central

