

Resume Tips: Thinking Like an Employer

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Molly Fernhill
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WHOSE LAND ARE WE ON?

The University of Waterloo acknowledges that much of our work takes place on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee peoples. Our main campus is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land granted to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River. Our active work toward reconciliation takes place across our campuses through research, learning, teaching, and community building, and is co-ordinated within the Office of Indigenous Relations.

Curious about the land that *you* are on?

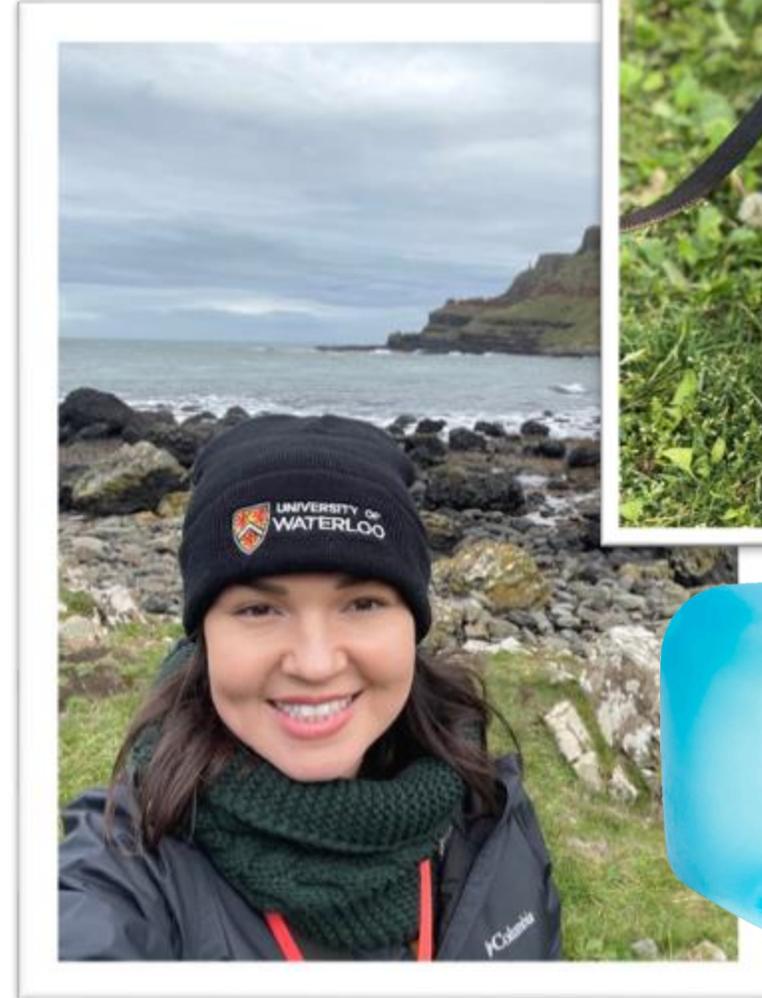
Visit <https://native-land.ca/>



About Me

Molly Fernhill (she/her)

- Career Advisor, Centre for Career Development (CCD)
- Previously a Co-op student
- Love all things creative
- Latest obsession: Needoh



WHAT TO EXPECT



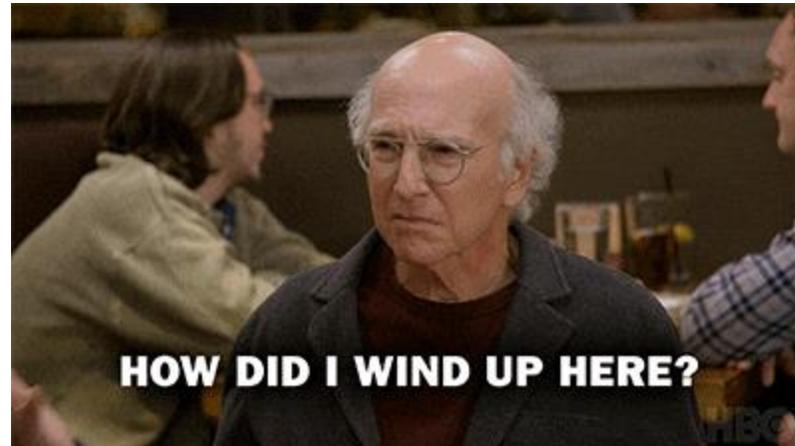
- Principles of curiosity, care and respect
- Participate in a way that works for you: everything is optional
- Take what works for you, leave what doesn't
- Ask questions throughout



I'm not getting interviews

Don't know how to cater my resume to a job

WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE TODAY?



Don't know where to start

I don't know how to pull skills from my experiences



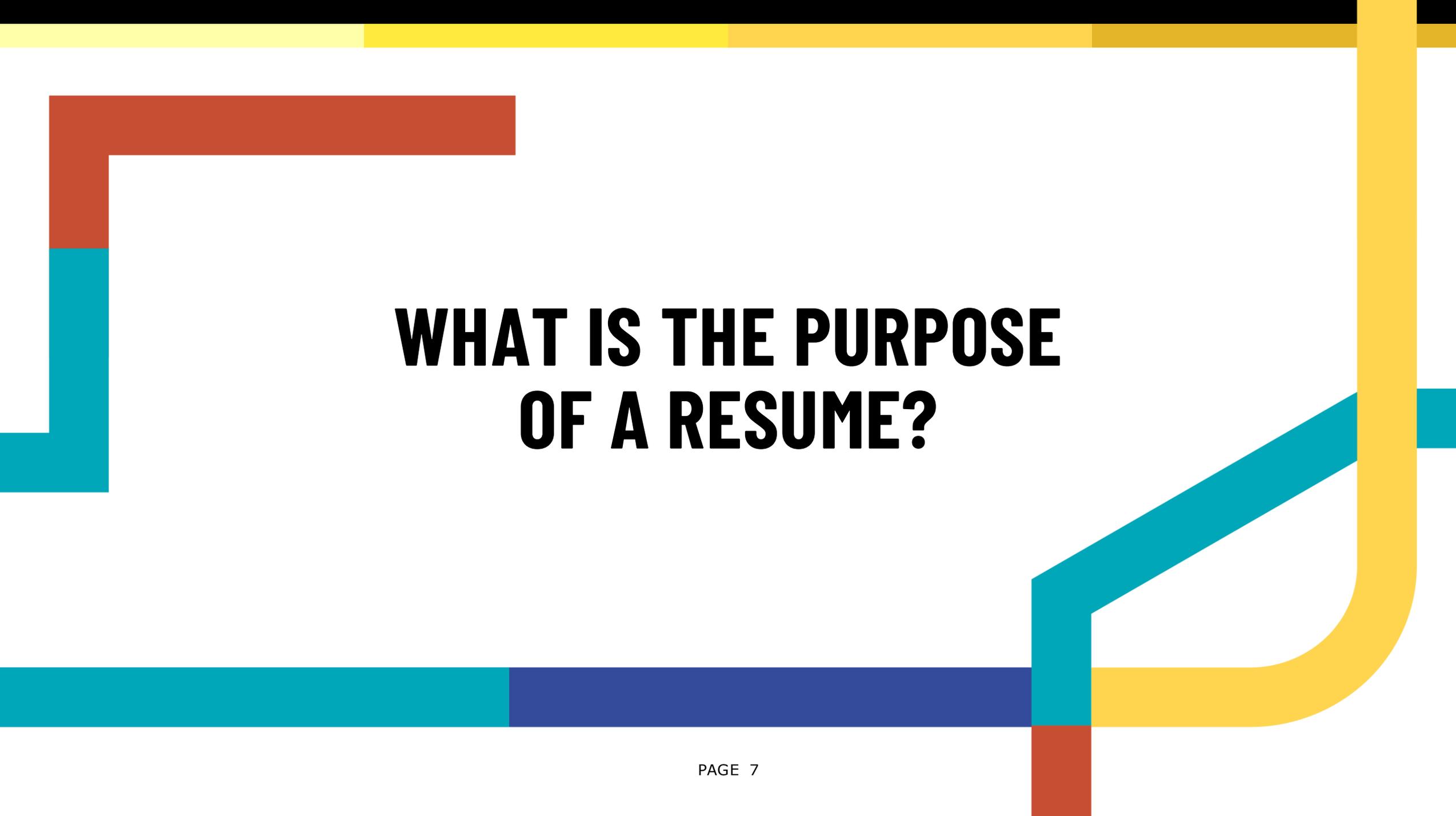
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Today's Roadmap

- Identify and articulate your skills and experience
- Understand what an employer is looking for from a job posting
- Learn ways to connect your skills to what the employer is looking for
- Present & market this information in your resume





WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A RESUME?

Resume Basics

The purpose of a resume is to:

- Communicate your skills, knowledge, abilities and experiences in a structured format
- Land an interview!

Typically, resumes are...

- Used for employment/volunteer opportunities
- 1-2 pages in length
- Tailored to a specific field or job



Learn more on
[CareerHub](#)



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THE EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE

“Recognize that most employers are using the résumé to screen you out rather than to select you in.”

Derek Chapman, Ph.D.,
Professor of Industrial Organization and Psychology at the
Haskayne School of Business



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What are employer looking for in a resume?

What are employers looking for?

- Accomplishments and results – not duties performed
- Relevant knowledge/skills/education/experience
- Personality (and how it fits)

What problems do they notice?

- Vague, confusing or irrelevant content
- Poor written communication
- Lack of visual appeal/formatting consistency
- "Here's what you can do for me"



Making Your Case

Why are you a match for the job? (*aka catering your skills to the employer's wants*)

- Identify the employer's "wish list"
- Identify your skills & experiences
- Create a table if it helps!



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STEPS TOWARDS BUILDING A GREAT RESUME

1



IDENTIFY your skills, interests, experience, values and work search goals.

2



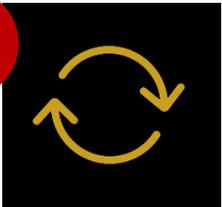
ANALYZE job description(s) and **IDENTIFY** what employers are looking for in a successful candidate.

3



DESIGN & CREATE a document that showcases how you could contribute through your skills/experience.

4



REFINE your document to ensure it is making the right impression, highlighting your strengths, and speaking to employers.



STEPS TOWARDS BUILDING A GREAT RESUME



IDENTIFY your skills, interests, experience, values and work search goals.



ANALYZE job description(s) and **IDENTIFY** what employers are looking for in a successful candidate.



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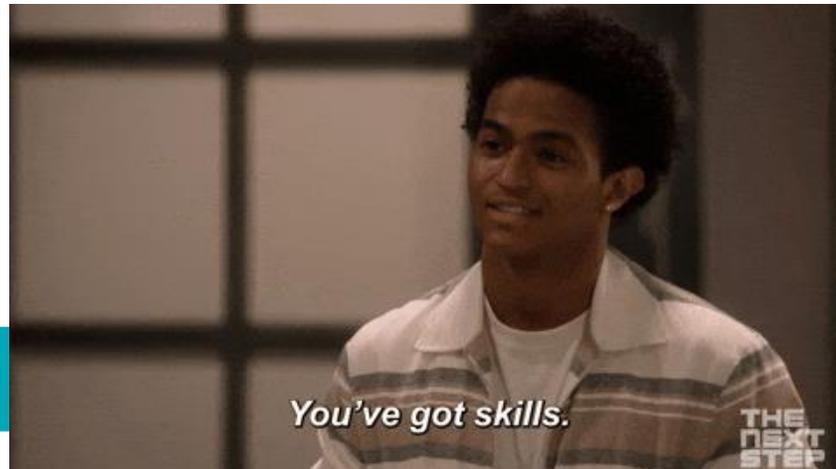


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WHERE CAN SKILLS COME FROM?

Use the chat or raise your hand!



SKILLS CAN COME FROM ANYWHERE

- Formal / informal training, courses, workshops
- Relevant skills/experience:
 - Paid jobs
 - Volunteering
 - Student club
 - Extracurricular activities
- Relevant projects/achievements
- Awards and recognitions

Myth: Only paid experiences are valuable



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SKILLS CHART

- ✓ Identify technical + transferable skills you have from your experiences
- ✓ Identify skill gaps
- ✓ Resource you can keep long term + use for cover letter, resume + interview prep

Experience Type (Role/Activity/Project/Class/Club)	Experience	Skills/Attributes
Took Biol 130 (Introductory Cell Biology)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completed a DNA extraction and sequencing project and created a presentation for the class (received a grade of 89%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project management• Communication and presentation skills• Laboratory skills (DNA extraction and bacteria culture)
Organized Fundraiser for Chess Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organized and scheduled club meetings, annual clothing drive, bake sale events• Created posters and advertising material for events• Managed the club's community bank account	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Microsoft Excel, Canva• Event planning, organization, and management• Budget and financial reviews

STEPS TOWARDS BUILDING A GREAT RESUME



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SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION

Administrative Assistant | Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada is an international leader in providing innovative services for people with MS and their families and advancing research into the cause and cure of multiple sclerosis. Reporting to the Finance Department, the successful candidate will be involved in the regular processing of financial transactions at the chapter, division, and national office level as well as a number of Finance projects supporting different business units. We are looking for an enthusiastic individual to fill an Administrative Assistant position with us.

Specific job responsibilities:

- Enter bank deposits from regional locations into accounting system
- Processing of accounts payable and accounts receivable transactions
- Review financial statements and maintain cash flow schedules for all locations on a monthly basis
- Complete financial analysis for various projects
- Assist with budget analysis and preparation of budget templates for next fiscal year
- Generate tax receipts for donations to fundraising events, process credit cards and encode cheques for fundraising events
- Assist with formatting and distribution of financial statements as required and other finance members with filing as required

Required qualifications:

- Working knowledge of Microsoft Office suite, including strong working knowledge of Excel
- Familiarity with accounting software with working knowledge being a benefit
- Detail and deadline oriented and able to work in a fast-paced environment
- Demonstrate a strong attention to detail with a high level of accuracy
- Possess excellent time management skills with the ability to prioritize multiple tasks
- Ability to solve problems and practice good decision-making
- Strong communication skills, both oral and written, accompanied by solid interpersonal skills

What skills is the employer asking for in this job description?

JOB DESCRIPTION BREAKDOWN

Administrative Assistant | Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada

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DRAWING CONNECTIONS

Draw connections between what employers want and what you have.

What employer wants	Evidence I have it
Time management	Effectively balanced role as club president and a full-course load while maintaining Honour Roll status.
Verbal communication	Prepared and delivered 15-minute presentation to a panel of judges; received feedback that ideas were clearly communicated and convincing.
Microsoft Excel	Created functional Excel spreadsheet to club meetings; increased efficiency of scheduling process.



Steps towards building a great job application



IDENTIFY your skills, interests, experience, values and work search goals.



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Two aspects of a resume

Style

Appearance, layout,
formatting choices,
pictures icons, graphics

Content

Structure, sections, bullet
points, summary of
experience, skills,
knowledge, etc.



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[CareerHub](#)

What about ATS?



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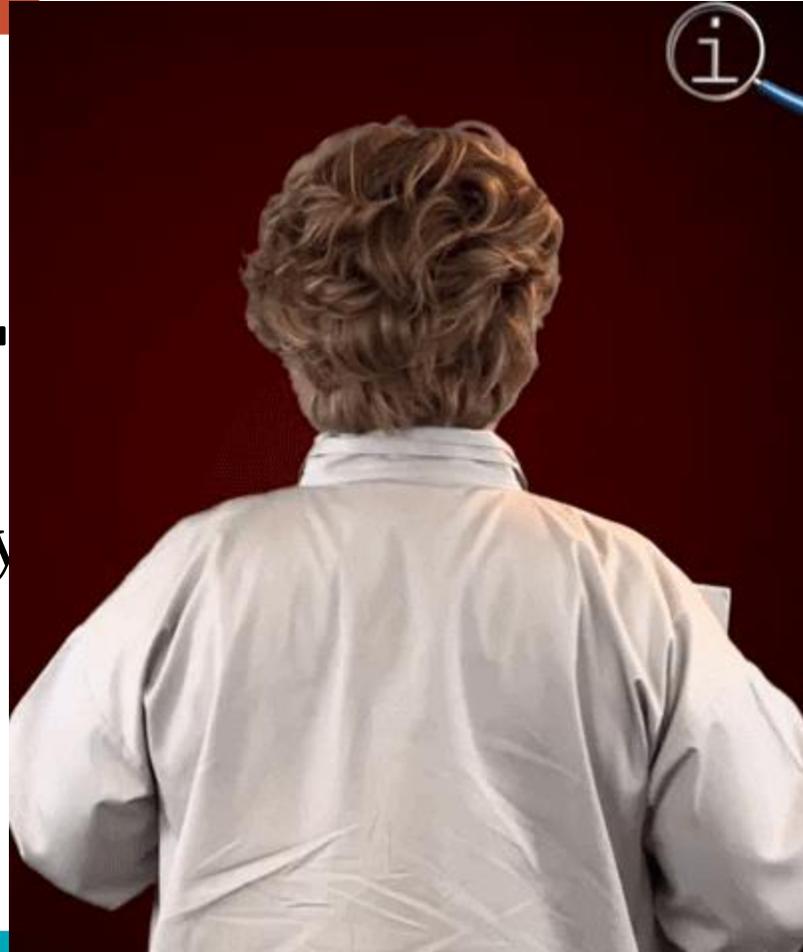
What to include on a resume?

- Background, experience, knowledge, skills, languages
- Job/career objectives
- Accomplishments, awards, certificates
- Interests, passions, hobbies
- Personality



What does “relevant” content mean on a resume?

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the sections

SECTIONS OF A RESUME

- Contact Information
- Summary of Qualifications
- Education
- Work Experience
- Volunteer Experience
- Projects
- Awards and Certificates
- Activities and Interests

Other sections: objective statement, technical skills, languages, relevant courses, publications, references



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[CareerHub](#)



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Resume Styles

- **(Reverse) Chronological Resume**
 - Organizing experiences in reverse chronological order, from present to past
- **Modified Chronological Resume**
 - Prioritize work experience by relevance rather than date
- **Functional Resume**
 - Grouping/organizing experiences under skill headings



Summary of Qualifications

A “highlight reel” of 4-6 points that demonstrate your fit for the job.

- Relevant experience/accomplishments related to your field/industry.
- Relevant knowledge/skills/expertise (language, technical, transferrable).
- Education/awards that complement practical experience.
- Relevant personal characteristics and attributes.
- Specialized training/education relevant to the objective.
- Strengthen bullet points by referencing where or how you developed the above skill



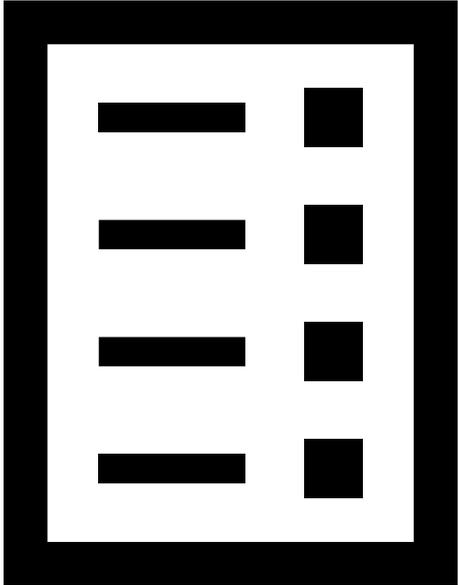
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Writing Bullet Points



A few strategies:

- Skill + Evidence
- What (X) + How (Y) + Why (Z)
- Action + Impact

A few tools:

- Action verbs
- Quantification
- **Bolding/emphasis**



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WRITING EXPERIENCE BULLET POINTS

- **Paint a picture with words** (help the employer envision you doing those jobs).
- **WHAT—HOW—WHY**

WHAT you did	HOW you did it	WHY it's important
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Action or achievement verb (e.g., arranged, updated, prepared)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tool (e.g., programming language)• Approach/methodology• Adverb (e.g., effectively, accurately)• Role (e.g., member, treasurer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Result or accomplishment• Outcome• Impact• Quantify where possible

Examples:

- Designed client database using MS Access, doubling the speed of information retrieval
- Delivered engaging tutorials as a peer tutor to groups of 50 first-year physics students



SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS: ACTIVITY



JOB DESCRIPTION ANALYSIS

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SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS ACTIVITY

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Current First-aid and CPR certification.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills.
- Familiar with Microsoft Office Suite.
- Fluent in French.
- 2 years of office work experience.
- Enthusiastic individual with an academic background in accounting and finance.

VS



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- Familiar with Microsoft Office Suite.
- Fluent in French.
- 2 years of office work experience.
- Enthusiastic individual with an academic background in accounting and finance.

VS

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- 2 years work experience in fast-paced office environment
- Enthusiastic individual with diverse academic background in accounting and finance
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills strengthened through various volunteer positions
- Proficient user of Microsoft Office Suite; 4+ years experience working with Excel
- Fluent in French



Quote: THE EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE

“Imagine a doctor's résumé... do you want the doctor's résumé to say, "has worked with patients" or “familiarity with medical practices" or do you want her to say "successfully performed 20 surgeries" and leave all that other stuff off? [Use] the highest value points and leave the other stuff to be implied.”

Director of Product Management, Primal

DESCRIBING YOUR SKILLS / EXPERIENCE 1



Sales Associate, Campus Bookstore | Ottawa, ON

- Helped customers at the store cash register.
- Used Microsoft Excel to enter data.
- Answered questions and provided customer service.

VS

DESCRIBING YOUR SKILLS / EXPERIENCE 1



VS

Sales Associate, Campus Bookstore | Ottawa, ON

- Helped customers at the store cash register.
- Used Microsoft Excel to enter data.
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Sales Associate, Campus Bookstore | Ottawa, ON

- Communicated **effectively with customers in-person, over email, and on the phone to ensure satisfaction when responding to inquiries.**
- Improved inventory management and tracking by creating data storage spreadsheets using Excel.
- Commended on 2 occasions for outstanding problem-solving and customer service by the store manager.

strong action verb + **what** + **how** + **why** + **highlighting a skill**



BUILDING A GREAT RESUME



IDENTIFY your skills, interests, experience, values and work search goals.



ANALYZE job description(s) and **IDENTIFY** what employers are looking for in a successful candidate.

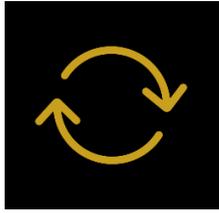


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REFINE



Additional Support

- Book an appointment with a Career Advisor at the Centre for Career Development (virtually or in-person) for one-on-one support with your job search and application documents, including **resumes & cover letters**

<https://uwaterloo.ca/career-development/appointments-drop-ins>



A screenshot of the University of Waterloo Centre for Career Development website. The header includes the University of Waterloo logo and navigation links: "About us", "Appointments & drop-ins", "Prepare for your career", "Job search", "Workshops & events", "Student opportunities", "Contact us", and "News". Below the header, there are links for "Alumni", "Employees", "Graduate students and postdoctoral fellows", "International students", and "Parents and supporters". The main content area is titled "Appointments and drop-ins" and features a photograph of two women in an office setting. To the right of the photo, there is a "Chat with us" section with the text "Every Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. ET, get your questions answered through our live chat." and a "Live chat" button. Below this, there is a "Resources at your fingertips" section with the text "As you work your way through your career journey, we are here to help."

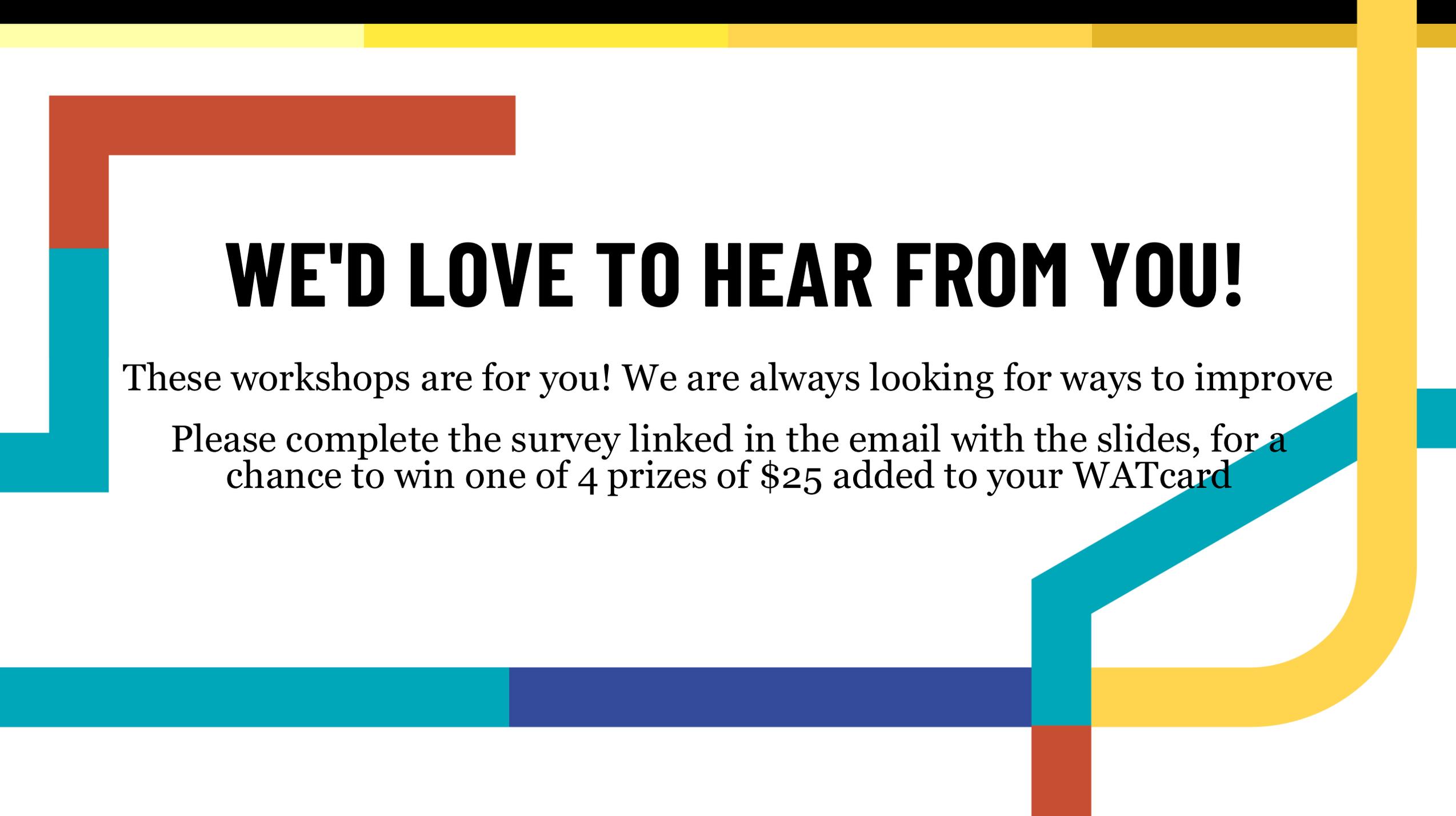
A Brief Summary

- Identify your most relevant skills, experiences, and career goals
- Understand the employer's needs by analyzing job descriptions
- Connect your qualifications to the job and back them up with evidence
- Prioritize and organize resume sections based on relevance
- Use clear, specific bullet points to highlight accomplishments and impact
- Continue to add and refine your resume over time



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WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

These workshops are for you! We are always looking for ways to improve

Please complete the survey linked in the email with the slides, for a chance to win one of 4 prizes of \$25 added to your WATcard

Questions?

Possible Next Steps

- Use a chart to identify what skills employers want from in the job posting, the skills that you have, and the evidence that you have it
- Check out [CareerHub](#) for support with resume sections, bullet point writing, and resume templates
- Book a resume [appointment with a Career Advisor](#) for further support



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