

Resume Tips: Thinking Like an Employer

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Sarah Badran (she/her)
Career Advisor, Centre for Career Development



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Photo credit: @bruce.digital

Whose land are we on?

The University of Waterloo acknowledges that we live and work 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 work toward reconciliation takes place across our campuses through research, learning, teaching, and community building, and is centralized within the Office of Indigenous Relations.

Support: O:se Kenhionhata:tie – [Land Back Camp](#), @ose.kenhionhatatie, Willow River Centre

Some local community members: Bangishimo Johnston @bangishimo, Amy Smoke @amysmoke, C. Elizabeth Best @lizbot5000

Reports: [TRC Calls to Action](#), [National Inquiry into MMIWG](#)

Reading: [The Inconvenient Indian](#), [21 Things You May Not Have Known About the Indian Act](#), [This Place: 150 Years Retold](#)

What land are you on? native-land.ca

Learning: INDG 201 The Indigenous Experience in Canada, Office of Indigenous Relations <https://uwaterloo.ca/indigenous/>



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



Co-creating a safe(r) space

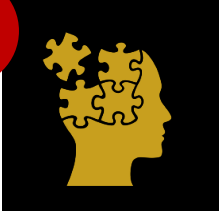
Going into this presentation, my intention is to create as safe a space as possible.

- A safe space means different things for everyone, but we'll do our best! Let's keep 3 things in mind:
 - Choice, Respect ,Care
 - Participate in the way that feels most comfortable for you!
 - Please use the chat or raise your hand to ask questions during presentation time.
 - Feel free to send me a direct message if you have a question or comment you would like to share anonymously
- Ask questions whenever! We'll also dedicate time at the end for Q&A
- Take what works for you, leave what doesn't.



STEPS TOWARDS BUILDING A GREAT RESUME

1



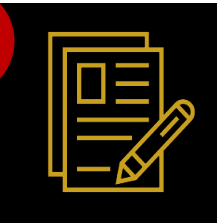
IDENTIFY your skills, interests, experience, values and work search goals.

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 BUILDING A GREAT RESUME



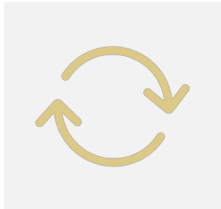
IDENTIFY your skills, interests, experience, values and work search goals.



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



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



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



SKILLS CAN COME FROM ANYWHERE



Image from: <https://blog.jobactive.gov.au/how-to-write-about-skills-experience-your-resume>

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



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 Environmental 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
Part-time Waiter at a Restaurant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Coordinated activities with other staff to ensure tasks were done quickly and accurately -Commended twice by manager for excellent customer service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Time management and problem solving -Customer service and relationship building

What skills do I want to (further) develop?



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Translating Academic Skills

Passive (Academic) Language	Active Language
Look at/study/examine x	Evaluate/analyze x
Hold office hours	Communicate complex information to non-expert audiences
Run tutorials	Facilitate/lead group meetings
Defend thesis	Led discussion on research findings and methodology with experts in field
Give presentation	Presented research findings interactively (to experts in the field)
Do research	...



Translating Research and Teaching Experience

Defended my thesis

vs.

Presented research results and justified my methodological approaches through engaging in a discussion with experts in the field

Conducted successful tutorial sessions

vs.

Facilitated engaging group discussions by ensuring group members felt heard and their opinions were valued



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Resume Basics

The purpose of a resume is to:

- Communicate your competencies (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



Photo by chenspec from Pixabay



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?

What are employers looking for?

- Accomplishments and results – not duties performed
- Relevant knowledge/skills/education/experience
- Personality

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"



JOB DESCRIPTION ANALYSIS

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 are some key words we can identify in this job description?

JOB DESCRIPTION BREAKDOWN

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 accountingsystem
- 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
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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.



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



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



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Aspects of a resume

Style

- Appearance, layout, formatting choices, pictures icons, graphics

Content

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



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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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



SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS 1

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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SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS 2

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Current First-aid and CPR certification.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills.
- Familiar with Microsoft Office Suite.
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- 2 years of office work experience.
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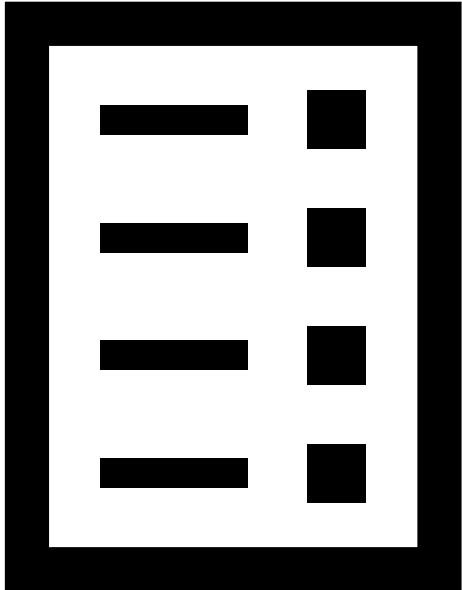
VS

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



Writing Experience Bullet Points



A few strategies:

- Skill + Evidence
- What + How + Why
- Action + Impact
- Job duties/responsibilities

A few tools:

- Action verbs
- Quantification
- Bolding/emphasis



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



DESCRIBING YOUR SKILLS / EXPERIENCE



VS

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.

DESCRIBING YOUR SKILLS / EXPERIENCE 1



VS

Sales Associate, Campus Bookstore | Ottawa, ON

- Helped customers at the store cash register.
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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**



DESCRIBING YOUR SKILLS / EXPERIENCE 2



VS

Communications Coordinator, University of Waterloo | Waterloo, ON

- Managed social media accounts.
- Drafted and sent out bi-weekly email newsletter.
- Assisted in office management tasks as needed.

DESCRIBING YOUR SKILLS / EXPERIENCE 3



VS

Communications Coordinator, University of Waterloo | Waterloo, ON

- Managed social media accounts.
- Drafted and sent out bi-weekly email newsletter.
- Assisted in office management tasks as needed.

Communications Coordinator, University of Waterloo | Waterloo, ON

- Managed a Twitter and Instagram account with over 15,000 combined followers; designed, coordinated, and scheduled social media content using Canva and Hootsuite.
- Collected weekly department updates from 4 different teams and curated a bi-weekly email newsletter to maintain faculty-wide communications.
- Supported office manager in coordinating room bookings, tracking office inventory, and handling incoming and outgoing mail.

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



Visit the Centre for Career Development

Ask past supervisors you trust

Collect feedback from trusted friends, peers, mentors

Check out other people's resumes
(what do you like, what might you change?)



Remember...

- Starting point → identify relevant skills, experiences, goals
- Understand the employer perspective
- Analyze job descriptions to assess employer needs
- Draw connections between what employers want; provide evidence you have it
- Prioritize sections of your resume based on relevance
- Be specific about skills and accomplishments in your bullet points



More Tips

- Consider creating a “master resume”
 - A master resume contains ALL of your experiences and/or different versions of the same bullet point for a specific experience or skill
- Consider creating multiple versions of your resume tailored towards different job types/industries



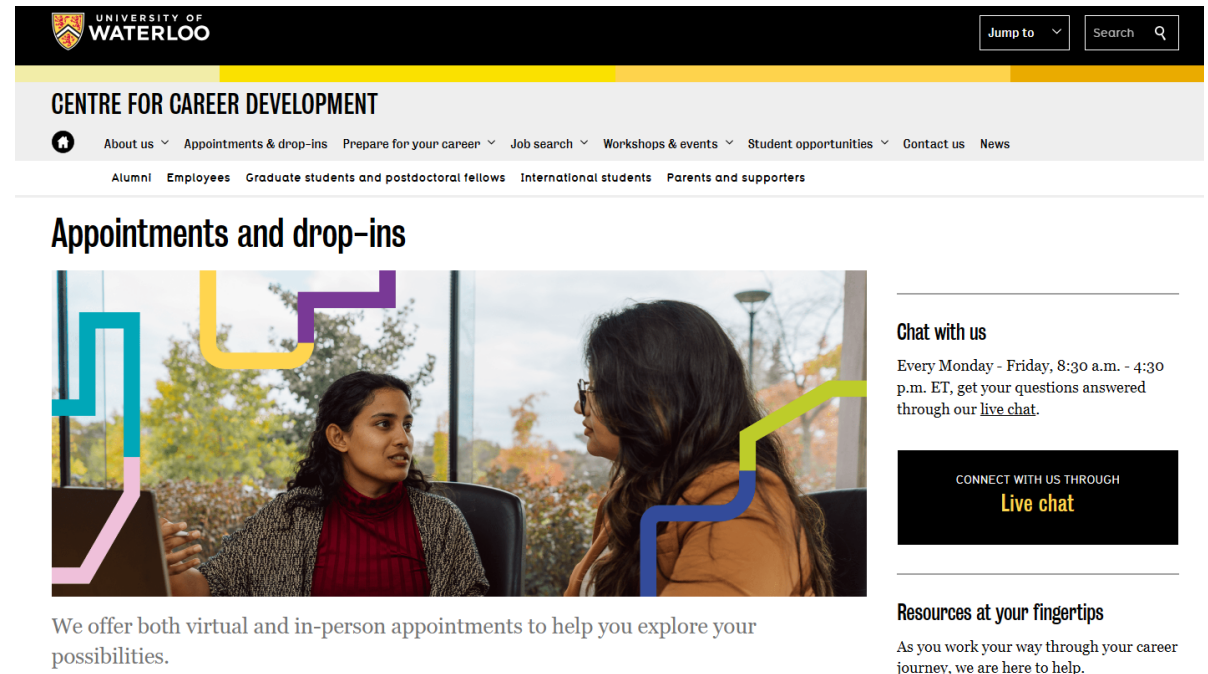
What if your resume is being run through an ATS?

ATS = Applicant Tracking System



Additional Support

- Visit 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**
- Same day 20-minute drop-ins
- 30-minute appointments
- <https://uwaterloo.ca/career-development/appointments-drop-ins>



The screenshot shows the website for the Centre for Career Development at the University of Waterloo. The header includes the university logo and navigation links. The main content area is titled 'Appointments and drop-ins' and features a photograph of two women in conversation. To the right of the photo, there is a 'Chat with us' section with a 'Live chat' button and a 'Resources at your fingertips' section.

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CENTRE FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

About us | Appointments & drop-ins | Prepare for your career | Job search | Workshops & events | Student opportunities | Contact us | News

Alumni | Employees | Graduate students and postdoctoral fellows | International students | Parents and supporters

Appointments and drop-ins

Chat with us
Every Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. ET, get your questions answered through our [live chat](#).

CONNECT WITH US THROUGH
Live chat

Resources at your fingertips
As you work your way through your career journey, we are here to help.

We offer both virtual and in-person appointments to help you explore your possibilities.

WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

These workshops are for you! We are always looking for ways to improve. Please complete the feedback survey delivered to your inbox



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