



BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE RESUME

The purpose of your resume is to get the interview. You can set yourself apart from your competition by building an effective resume that focuses on how you bring value to the job and what you can deliver for a future employer.

Why resumes matter to employers and to YOU: Your resume is a key part of your job application package: most employers ask for a resume when you apply for a job. Your resume is also essential to your overall job search strategy. Writing your resume gives you an opportunity to think about your experience and how to communicate to an employer what you have to offer. This process will help you prepare for networking, interviewing, negotiating an offer, and the career management you'll do after you land the job!

Get Ready

Before you begin, gather the information you will need to craft an effective resume designed to get you the interview.

1. **Begin with a Job Description** that interests you. Every journey needs a map, and a relevant job description or posting can help you create a resume that is tailored to your goals and the employer's needs. Analyze job descriptions to identify:
 - **The job's purpose and deliverables:** think about how you've done similar work at school or in past jobs.
 - **Skills and abilities desired:** highlight or list the skills and abilities you have *or are developing*. Use these KEY WORDS in your resume and LinkedIn profile.
2. **Collect and Save your Career Data:** Create a *Career Journal* that includes the following information. Add to the journal as you achieve career milestones, gain new skills, or accomplish new things:
 - **Work History:** including job titles, employers, dates of employment, job descriptions, and performance appraisals.
 - **Education records:** including specific degrees/certificates earned, dates of completion, and the name of the awarding high school, technical college, college, university, etc.
 - **Honors, Awards, Scholarships:** include names, dates, and the organization giving the award.
 - **Activities & Accomplishments:** include additional training, projects completed at work or school, language skills, leadership, and community involvement. Focus on the results delivered and where possible quantify those results.

Create Your Resume

Building your resume can seem intimidating, especially if you've never written one before. Relax! By following this section-by-section guide and working with [FVTC's Employment Advisors](#) you can create a great resume. Remember that a resume is a simple and strategic OUTLINE of your Education, Skills, and Experience as they relate to the job or type of job you are applying for.

Heading & Contact Information:

Include the following information at the top of your resume. This content should be centered or left-justified. Do not include your street address.

- Your Name
- Phone number
- Professional email address
- LinkedIn URL
- City, State

Education:

- Degree, Diploma, or Technical Certificate name as it appears on your advising document or diploma.
- College/educational institution name and the city and state in which it is located.
- Grade point average and academic honors such as Dean’s List or Phi Theta Kappa can be included here as well.
- Certifications & Training: include additional training and certifications if relevant to your current career goals or expected for your industry. See program-specific resume examples for additional guidance.

Skills:

- Label this section “**Technical Skills**” or “**Professional Skills**”.
- Describe your skills using nouns or compound nouns such as “MS Office 365”, “Customer Service”, or “Income Tax Preparation”.
- Focus on your **relevant skills** that align with the skills described in the job description you are applying for. This section should show the reader how you are qualified for the job.

Work Experience:

- List your work experience in **reverse chronological order**, beginning with your current or most recent job.
- For each work experience include the **Job Title, Employer, City, State, and dates of employment** including the month and year.
- Provide up to **10 years** of prior experience. NOTE: There are reasons to provide more work experience, [see an Employment Advisor for additional guidance](#).
- Create **evidence-based** bullet points describing your unique accomplishments and achievements and communicating how you bring value to your employer, customers, or team members. Ask yourself these questions to generate your descriptions:
 - **WHAT** did you do? List tasks, duties, functions, and projects.
 - **HOW** did you do the work? List skills, methods, tools, techniques, technology, strategies.
 - What **OUTCOMES** did you deliver or produce? List results, value, impact, learning.
- Begin bullet points with **power verbs** that communicate YOUR actions. Use present tense verbs for current work and past-tense verbs for past jobs. Use **adverbs** and **adjectives** to describe your actions and accomplishments. See lists online at www.fvtc.edu/lists.

Use this chart to organize your thinking and develop evidence-based bullet points to describe your work:

WHAT did you do?	HOW did you do it?	OUTCOME of the work	Completed bullet point
<i>List the task/project</i>	<i>Insert “by” or “using” to generate the how.</i>	<i>Insert “to” as you generate the outcome or result</i>	
Processed transactions	Using point of sale system	To provide accurate and efficient customer service	<i>Processed cash and credit transactions using point of sale system to provide accurate and efficient customer service</i>
Maintained residential and commercial landscaping	Using zero-turn mower, weed and hedge trimmers, aerator, and hand tools	To ensure attractive and engaging appearance	<i>Maintained several residential and commercial landscapes using zero-turn mower, trimmers, aerator, and hand tools to ensure attractive, engaging appearance</i>



Project Work: For project-based fields like Software Development you can show work-related experience by describing significant capstone projects or relevant gig or freelance projects. Include information like

- Project name, course name, semester and year.
- Tools, technologies, and methodologies used.
- Project description including desired end result, business purpose, and the work you did to achieve the desired deliverables.

Activities, Honors, and Community Involvement

- List student, community, and professional organizations in which you participate, indicate leadership roles and dates of involvement. Employers are looking for sustained involvement, not just a one-day activity.
- List scholarships, academic awards, competitions, and professional recognition, including dates.

General Formatting Tips: Resumes are read very quickly - be sure your resume is organized and easy to read.

- Limit your resume to **one page** and use **simple formatting** that is easy to skim in 30 seconds. There are some exceptions to the one-page rule – [meet with an Employment Advisor for guidance](#).
- Use **black type** on a standard MS Word or Google Docs document and an **easy-to-read font** like Arial, Garamond, Calibri, Cambria, or Times New Roman. Use one font size for your content – 10.5 to 12 point.
- Be **consistent** with your punctuation and type styles (**bold**, *italics*, and CAPITALS). Avoid underlining.
- Save your final version as a **PDF**. Use a file name that identifies you: "Firstname_Lastname_Resume_2023".

Common Resume Mistakes – Don't let this happen to you! Avoid these common resume mistakes:

- **No Errors.** Proofread your resume by reading it out loud. Look for errors AI won't detect: "preform" when you mean "perform" or "collage" when you mean "college." [An Employment Advisor can help you edit and proofread.](#)
- **No Templates.** Avoid using an online template from MS Word, Google Docs, Canva, etc. Templates are hard to edit and expand, and don't work well with AI-driven applicant processing technology used by many employers.
 - **NOTE:** *Creative fields are the exception to this rule. See the next section for more information.*
- **No Pictures.** Leave the photographs on LinkedIn and social media, they do not go on your resume. Pictures on a resume can create bias in the hiring process and complicate the recruiter's work.
- **No Graphs.** Avoid meaningless bar graphs that "rate" your skills. Instead, use the space to communicate your actual accomplishments and achievements.
- **No Pronouns.** You are the subject of your resume, so do not use personal pronouns like "I", "me", or "my".
- **No Headers, Text Boxes, or Tables.** Many applicant tracking systems (ATS) do not "read" content in headers, footers, text boxes, or tables. Read and follow all directions before you press "submit".
- **No "cute" email addresses.** Avoid using your student email or the email account you created in middle school. Create a "just for work" email account with an address that includes your first and last name.

RESUMES FOR CREATIVE FIELDS

Resumes for creative fields like Digital Marketing, Web Design, Interior Design, Culinary Arts, Baking and Pastry Management, Hospitality Management, Aesthetics, and Cosmetology are the exception to some of the "Common Mistakes" rules outlined in the preceding section. Creative professionals should create **two resume formats**: one that showcases their creative personality and design aesthetic and one that uses the simple, more traditional formatting described in this guide. Programs like Adobe Creative Cloud and online platforms like [Canva.com](#) provide tools and templates to create resumes that showcase your qualifications and your creative aesthetic. [FVTC Employment Advisors](#) can help you tailor your content and choose a look that presents you professionally and tastefully. You should also consider creating a professional online presence that showcases your work. Options include a **professional** ePortfolio, Linktree site, or Instagram account. Remember, it is important not to blur the boundaries between your personal and professional online presence

Sample Resume – additional samples available online at www.fvtc.edu/resumes

Susan R. Foxworthy

920-555-5555 | susanrfoxworthy@zmail.com | www.linkedin.com/in/srfoxworthy | Appleton, WI

EDUCATION

Business Management Associate Degree

Expected May 2025

Fox Valley Technical College | Appleton, WI

- GPA 3.76 | Dean's List: Fall 2023, Spring 2024
- Phi Theta Kappa Academic Honor Society
- Business Operations Technical Certification | December 2023

High School Diploma

June 2023

Appleton West High School | Appleton, WI

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- MS Excel - Advanced
- MS Office 365, Google Workspace,
- HTML, JavaScript
- Public Speaking
- Professional Correspondence
- Customer Service
- QuickBooks
- Inventory & Loss Prevention
- Market Research
- Social Media Marketing
- Hootsuite, Google Analytics
- **Bilingual:** English-fluent, Spanish-fluent

WORK EXPERIENCE

Team Leader & Sales Associate | T.J. Maxx and HomeGoods | Appleton, WI

September 2022 – Present

- Promoted to Team Leader in December 2022 based on strong performance in customer service, sales, and merchandising.
- Lead 8-member HomeGoods merchandising and inventory team to ensure floor displays are organized, attractive, and effectively marketing home furnishing products.
- Develop and implement text-based team communications system to enhance multi-shift collaboration resulting in improved performance in merchandising and inventory management.
- Onboard and coach new associates on all aspects of merchandising and inventory management including handheld scanning technology, increasing retention by 23%.

Barista | Up North Coffee Co. | Appleton, WI

June 2020 – May 2022

- Provided friendly and efficient customer service in a fast-paced, full-service café.
- Crafted custom hot and cold beverages and menu items using espresso machine, blenders, panini press, and oven.
- Processed cash and credit transactions using point of sale system and Square processing software.
- Cleaned and sanitized all food and beverage preparation areas, dining room, and bathrooms to exceed state standards.
- Trained new team members on beverage and food preparation to ensure consistent quality.

Camp Counselor | Fox Cities YMCA - Camp Nan A Bo Sho | Lakewood, WI

Summers 2021 and 2022

- Facilitated all camp activities for campers aged 8-14 attending week-long residential camp sessions.
- Developed mentoring relationships with campers through activities including crafts, sports, adventure, and ecology.
- Instilled values of acceptance, friendship, respect, honesty, and caring by modeling these qualities in all actions.
- Responsible for camper safety in all activities and functions including medication needs and dietary restrictions.

ACTIVITIES, HONORS & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Collegiate DECA | Fox Valley Technical College | September 2023 – Present
- Black Student Union | Fox Valley Technical College | September 2023 – Present



Resume Checklist - Use the following checklist to make sure your resume is ready for prime time!

EFFECTIVENESS	
	Tailored to the job you are applying for, using key words to align your experience with what the employer needs.
	Focused on your unique accomplishments and achievements.
	Can be read in 30-90 seconds and demonstrates how you are qualified for the job.
	Accurately, ethically, and honestly represents your qualifications and experience
CONTACT INFORMATION – contained in the body of the document rather than the header.	
	Name – use bold type in 16-point font
	Phone number, professional personal email (do not use your @fvtc.edu email), LinkedIn URL, and City and State
EDUCATION	
	Full degree name(s): “Farm Operation Technical Diploma” or “Culinary Arts Associate Degree” or “Associate of Sciences”
	College Name in proper format, do not abbreviate or shorten: Fox Valley Technical College Appleton, WI
	Graduation Month and Year. Example: “May 2023” or “Expected May 2024”
	Academic Achievements: GPA – include if 3.5 or greater, Phi Theta Kappa, Dean’s List, etc.
	Scholarships can be listed here or in the Honors and Awards section
	Certifications and Licenses where relevant
	High school – include only if you graduated within one to two years of your current job search
PROFESSIONAL or TECHNICAL SKILLS	
	Skills are relevant to the job/industry and incorporate key words from the job description
	Easy to read nouns: “Public Speaking”, “Market Research”, “Adobe Suite”, “AC Delco TDS”, “GMAW”, “Phlebotomy”
	Quickly demonstrates how you are qualified for the job
WORK EXPERIENCE	
	Reverse chronological order, beginning with current or most recent job
	Includes internships, clinicals, and relevant volunteer experience
	Provides Job Title, Employer, City, State, and dates of employment: “Month Year – Month Year” or “Month Year – Present”
	Uses Bullet points (not paragraphs), using only “•”
	Each bullet point begins with an ACTION VERB (past tense verbs for prior work)
	Describes relevant skills, leadership, accomplishments, effectiveness, and results
	Uses quantifiable measures when available. Example: “increased sales by 6% in the third quarter”
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION – include if relevant	
	Multilingual skills – indicate if fluent, conversational, written, spoken or both
	Military Service – include in work experience or as a separate section
	Community Involvement – include student, community, and professional organizations, specify any leadership roles
FORMATTING	
	One page only for most industries and job seekers. See an Employment Advisor for guidance
	Black type only – no colors, borders, or backgrounds
	Consistent font size throughout: 10.5 – 12 point in a readable font: Arial, Cambria, Calibri, Garamond, Times New Roman
	Consistent structure: uniform section headings, spacing, bullet points are the same, etc.
	Save final version as a dated PDF named “Lastname_Firstname_Resume_20##”
	<i>Error-free!</i> Uses correct spelling, usage, grammar, and punctuation
DOES NOT INCLUDE – make sure your resume DOES NOT have the following	
	Photograph
	Objective or Personal Statement
	Personal pronouns: I, me, my, or mine
	References or “References Available Upon Request” – see guidance regarding references
	Information about race, ethnicity, gender, marital status, religion, age, health, nationality, or country of origin.

WRITING COVER LETTERS

Employers may ask you to submit a **cover letter** in addition to your resume. **The purpose of your cover letter is three-fold.** It should:

- summarize how your experience, skills, and education **match** the job you are applying for,
- demonstrate your professional communication skills, and
- express your professional values and how they connect with the employer's values and goals.

Like your resume, the cover letter is structured and strategic; follow these steps to **plan your content** before you begin writing:

- **Step 1: Analyze the Job Description** to identify 3-5 job components, deliverables, or duties that align with your experience.
- **Step 2: Identify evidence** from your resume that demonstrates those components, deliverables, or duties.
- **Step 3: Prepare your letter** using the following guidance.

Tips for Professional Writing

Your cover letter demonstrates your written communication skills. It should be written by you and accurately represent your best writing ability. It should reflect your voice and your vocabulary. Utilize spelling and grammar check tools and proofread your letter by reading it out loud. Do not copy cover letter samples or use AI tools to write your letter. Your cover letter, like your resume, should be a statement of truth written with academic integrity:

- Plan your letter using the guidance above.
- Choose "active" rather than "passive" voice to make your letter strong and easy to read.
 - *Passive:* "I have been employed as a barista by Up North Coffee, where I have been operating XYZ espresso making equipment to serve customers by crafting custom coffee beverages."
 - *Active:* "As a barista with Up North Coffee, I used XYZ espresso machines to craft custom beverages."
- Utilize strong verbs, adverbs, and adjectives to create clarity, variety, and readability. See our online resources at www.fvtc.edu/lists.