

The resume and cover letter are documents required by most employers as they consider candidates for a job or internship. This may be the first and only opportunity you have to make an impression; therefore, it is important that these documents accurately represent your skills, experience, and accomplishments.

FEEDBACK & REVIEW RESOURCES

- **Workshops**
Attend a resume and cover letter workshop to learn how to create strong documents. Log-in to Handshake (gwu.joinhandshake.com) and click on 'Events' to see upcoming workshops.
- **Resume, CV, Cover Letter Review Appointment**
Students who need more in-depth assistance can schedule an appointment with a career services staff member to review their documents. Sign in to Handshake to schedule an appointment.
- **Writing Center Appointment – Cover Letters and Personal Statements ONLY**
Schedule a 50-minute consultation to receive feedback and improve your writing.
- **VMock** (<https://www.vmock.com/gwu>)
Upload your document to get instant, personalized feedback on your resume formatting and content.

RESUMES

A resume is an overview of your work and educational background that communicates your qualifications to a potential employer. Choose the appropriate resume style based on your background, experience level, and target industry.

Resume Styles

For most people, the Chronological or Combination Style is recommended.

- **Chronological** – Work experiences are listed in reverse order, with the most recent or current position listed first. This format is straightforward and a good way to show consistent work experience and career growth.
- **Functional** – Skills, knowledge, and achievements are grouped to highlight transferrable skills. Work history with dates and places of employment is listed separately. This format is used less frequently and may work best for individuals with little work history or career changers with previous experience in a different industry.
- **Combination** – This format combines elements of the chronological and functional styles – work experiences are grouped in sections to highlight relevant experiences. This style is appropriate for most people because it allows you to quickly and easily tailor your resume for each job application.

Resume or CV?

In the United States, a CV (curriculum vitae) is different from a resume. It is typically used in the academic and medical fields and focuses on education and research experience. CVs contain more sections than a resume such as Teaching Experience, Publications, Research Projects, or Presentations. Use the [SEAS CV Template](https://careers.seas.gwu.edu) for an outline to create a CV. Most U.S. employers prefer to see your resume.

Resume Formatting

Consistency is key! Employers typically spend 7-10 seconds reviewing a candidate's resume. Good formatting allows the reader to quickly identify your qualifications.

Do	Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Set margins between 0.5 – 1.0 inch✓ Choose an easy-to-read font, size 10-12 such as: Calibri, Times New Roman, Arial, Garamond,✓ Be brief. ONE page for each 7-10 years of work experience✓ Use bold, <i>italics</i>, CAPS, and <u>underlining</u> consistently✓ Write dates with month and year: 08/2020, August 2020, Aug 2020✓ Use active voice with correct verb tense✓ Be concise (not more than one page every seven year of experience related to the job)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Grammar and spelling mistakes✗ 1st person pronouns (I, me, my)✗ Personal information such as gender, marriage status, race/ethnicity, nationality, etc.✗ References – provide only when requested✗ Jargon and elaborate language

Resume Sections

Each person's resume will vary based on their background and experiences, however, there are some common sections employers expect to see. **See example resumes on pages 4 and 5.**

Required Sections	
Header	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name, phone number, email address, physical address (city and state), LinkedIn profile
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• List schools in reverse order starting with the most recent institution; include the full name of the institution and location (city, state, or country if outside the U.S.)• Full name of degree (no abbreviations), major/concentration, and graduation date• Grade point average (GPA) is optional
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Languages• Technical skills and certifications such as software, tools, and programming languages• Indicate the level of expertise for each skill (e.g., proficient, advanced, fluent)• DO NOT list soft skills in this section (e.g., good communicator, organized, hardworking, etc.) – these types of skills should be described in the experience section.
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name of organization and location (city, state or country)• Job title• Start and end dates of employment (month and year)• Bullet point list of your activities. See page 3 for examples of strong descriptions.

Optional Sections	
Profile/ Professional Summary	This section is best fitted candidates with extensive work histories or career changers (more than 7 years). It overviews your relevant skills, experiences, and goals. In a few sentences, describe how your background matches the qualifications for a specific job.
Professional Affiliations	List any relevant industry organizations that you currently belong to and positions you hold.
Presentations or Publications	Include a citation or link to the work
Honors and Awards	List awards that relate to the industry or showcase your skills. Academic honors can be listed with the corresponding institution in the education section.

Write Strong Descriptions

When writing about your experiences, do not just list of responsibilities. Describe experiences and the skills you used with detailed yet concise sentences that list your **ACTION**, the **DETAILS** of what you did, and show an **OUTCOME**.

1. Action	2. Details	3. Outcome
<p>Start with an action verb to convey a particular skill. Use the list of verbs on page 8.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Avoid phrases such as “responsible for” and “duties include”. ○ Review the job description and use similar language. 	<p>Add relevant details.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Who were you working with? ● Where? ● What tools or equipment did you use? ● What was the subject or topic? ● How often? ● How many? 	<p>Provide the reason or purpose of your action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Describe any change or difference in impact. ● Quantify results if possible. ● Share an accomplishment or reward.

Collaborated with a team of 6 engineering students to design and build a micro-satellite prototype and submitted the proposal to NASA.

ACTION

DETAILS

OUTCOME

Example Descriptions

- ✖ Responsible for software development.
- ✓ Designed software using Java and Eclipse to develop a cellular application to allow customers to take notes on their cell phone.
- ✖ Teaching assistant for 3 undergraduate courses.
- ✓ Created lesson plans, graded assignments, and held weekly office hours for 3 undergraduate computer science courses with a total of 65 students.
- ✖ Updated website with JavaScript, Python, and MySQL.
- ✓ Wrote and tested code for company website to improve performance and user experience using JavaScript, Python, and MySQL.

Having trouble writing bullet points?

Start by making a list of all the things you do at the job, even the things that don't seem very important. Then, for each item, ask yourself: *How did I do this? Why did I do this?* Try to add as much detail as you can remember, you can always edit it later.

Customize the Resume

Nowadays, more companies are using an applicant tracking system (ATS) that allows recruiters to source their potential candidates: therefore, it becomes important to tailor your resume to each application. You can quickly and easily customize your resume by:

- Match the action verbs to the job description and include the right keywords
- Highlight relevant courses and projects
- Limit the number of bullet points for experiences that are not relevant to the job

GENE GRAY

Washington, DC, genegray@gwu.edu, (555) 555-5555, graygenes.github.io

EDUCATION

The George Washington University, School of Engineering & Applied Science Washington, DC
Master of Science in Computer Science, GPA 3.8/4.0 Expected May 2021

- **Relevant Coursework:** Design & Analysis of Algorithms, Big Data & Analytics, Artificial Intelligence

South China University of Technology, Guangzhou, Guangdong, China
Bachelor of Science in Computer Software, GPA 92/100 May 2019

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Programming Languages: Java (Advanced), PHP (Advanced), SQL (Familiar), Python (Beginner)
Frameworks: Struts, Spring Boot, Spring MVC
Database Systems: MySQL, SQLite, Google Cloud Platform
Software: MATLAB, Microsoft Excel

RELEVANT PROJECTS

Speech Recognition Program, The George Washington University January 2020 – April 2020

- Developed software that can identify a speaker's voice by comparing the voice with an array of samples.
- Simulated the superimposition of Hidden Markov Model states in MATLAB and achieved 95% recognition accuracy.

Cellular Phone Note App, The George Washington University September 2019 – December 2019

- Created software using Java to develop a cellular application that will allow customers to take notes on their cell phone.
- Tested software code to analyze specific word frequency used by customers and increased recognized vocabulary to 35,000+ words.

WORK & INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

GW Hatchet, Washington, DC March 2020 – Present

Front End Developer

- Editing and designing the web page for GW's independent student newspaper using PHP and its frameworks.
- Meeting weekly with the editorial board to discuss plans for website design, metrics, and troubleshooting.

TECH Org, San Francisco, CA June 2019 – July 2019

Intern

- Implemented and evaluated algorithms and database queries to support scalability and stability.
- Researched new technologies and trends from industry journals and wrote recommendation memos for senior leadership.
- Worked closely with quality assurance testers, product owners, and utilized feedback from end users to rapidly fix bugs and incorporate suggestions for improvement.

ACTIVITIES & MEMBERSHIPS

GW Tech Collective, Women in Computer Science, American Association for Artificial Intelligence

Shuang Wu

800 22nd Street NW, Washington, DC | wushelby@gwu.edu | 555-555-555

EDUCATION

The George Washington University, School of Engineering & Applied Science, Washington, DC

Doctorate of Philosophy in Civil Engineering and Environmental Engineering

Expected 6/2023

Thesis: The Future of Water in Urban Environments

University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI

Master of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering

5/2017

Chi Epsilon Honors Society, American Society of Civil Engineers Fellowship Recipient

South China University of Technology, Guangzhou, Guangdong, China

Bachelor of Engineering in Hydraulic and Hydropower Engineering

5/2016

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Environmental Engineering Lab, The George Washington University, Washington, DC 10/2019 – Current

Lab Supervisor

- Mentoring a team of seven undergraduate students on water toxicity research.
- Educating and supervising students on equipment use, including a gas chromatograph, an atomic absorption spectrophotometer, incubators, and associated water testing equipment.

Engineers for Sustainable World, San Mateo, Guatemala

2/2017 – 6/2017

Team Member, University of RI Chapter

- Researched and designed a dosing siphon and trickling filter to treat the effluent from a septic tank for a school of 200 students.
- Collaborated with local and school officials to identify installation location and to install the septic tank and siphon.

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

DCWater, Washington, DC

9/2019 – 5/2020

Intern

- Shadowed city officials on site visits to inspect residential, commercial, and construction sites.
- Supported engineers by tracking material cost estimations, organizing documents related to permits, and corresponding with site supervisors.
- Attended farmers markets throughout the city to inform and educate residents on water conservation.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

The George Washington University, Washington, DC

8/2018 – Current

Teaching Assistant, Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering

- Leading three lab sections totaling 150 undergraduate students.
- Designing lesson plans for each section in accordance with department objectives.

TECHNICAL SKILLS & LANGUAGES

Software: S-Frame, FlowMaster, StormCAD, SewerCAD, AutoCAD Civil 3D, MicroStation, ArcGIS

Languages: Fluent in Mandarin and English

COVER LETTER

This document is an opportunity to share more of your story with the employer, and it should complement your resume – not restate it. A good cover letter will demonstrate how your skills and experience fit the role and show your ability to communicate your thoughts. Some important tips:

- Customize each letter to a specific position.
- Express yourself with confidence – highlight what makes you a strong candidate.
- Be concise. The cover letter should never be longer than one (1) page.

Writing a Cover Letter

You can use this simple framework to draft your letters. **See an example cover letter on page 7.**

1. **Choose your focus.** Review the job description and identify 2-4 qualifications you want to highlight in your cover letter.
2. **Match your experience.** Refer back to your resume and identify an experience for each qualification. You only need one example per qualification.
3. **Make a connection.** Describe how your past experience has prepared you for the new job. Explain how you will apply your skills to meet the responsibilities of the job.

Cover Letter Sections	
Header	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name, phone number, email address, physical address (city and state)• Use same font and style as the resume
Date, Address & Greeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Date the document is submitted• Use the address listed in the job posting or from the company website• Address the letter to a person using their title (Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr.) and their full name• Use “Dear Hiring Manager” or “Dear Selection Committee” if the name is unknown
Introduction Paragraph	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specify the position you are applying to, how you found it and a specific reason you are interested in the job. Try to make a connection between yourself and the company’s mission or values.• If you learned of the opportunity through a person (e.g., recruiter, GW alum, or faculty) do mention the person’s name (if they approve). Do not exaggerate the relationship.• Identify the key skills you will focus on for the cover letter.
Body Paragraphs (2 or 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For each skill you listed in the introduction, provide a specific example of how you have used that skill before. Do not just copy bullet points from your resume.• Make a connection between your previous experience and how you can apply that experience and skill in the new role. Look at the list of job responsibilities to determine how your skills will be a good fit.• Stay focused! Choose one example for each skill and do not bring up additional skills beyond what was outlined in the introduction.
Closing Paragraph	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Briefly restate your interest in the job and summarize why your skills make you a good candidate.• Include requested information such as start date, hours of availability, etc.

Use the same header style as the resume.

G. W. Smithson

123 Pennsylvania Street NW, Washington, DC 20052
(555) 555-5555, smithgw@gwu.edu, www.linkedin.com/GWSmith

July 17, 2020

John Graham
Revature LLC
11730 Plaza America Drive
Reston, VA

You can also use "Hiring Manager" or "Selection Committee"

Dear Mr. Graham,

INTRODUCTION:
Specify your interest in the job and 2-4 skills to focus on.

I am submitting my application for the Revature Software Engineer Manager position that I found on the Handshake website. As an organization that strives to make an impact through well-trained IT professionals, I am attracted to the opportunity to continue my professional development while supporting the work of Fortune 500 companies. I believe that my technical knowledge, leadership ability, and collaborative nature make me a strong candidate for this role.

BODY:
Provide an example for each skill.

I chose to return to school and obtain a Master's degree in Computer Engineering at The George Washington University School of Engineering & Applied Science to learn more about graphics and user interface. My coursework has covered the design of interactive multimedia and the design of human-computer interface, which has prepared me to immediately contribute to a variety of projects.

BODY:
Connect your previous experience to the job.

Additionally, my ability to lead teams makes me a good fit for the manager position. In my current role, I guide four other engineers as we develop products to fit the needs of a large federal client. At each stage of the project I identify the key issues that need to be addressed and assign tasks accordingly. I also schedule regular meetings with the project manager in order to incorporate feedback and ensure that our work is aligned to client goals. My ability to engage with internal and external stakeholders will be a valuable quality when working for high profile clients at Revature.

CLOSING:
Restate your interest in the job.

I want to continue providing software solutions that improve business operations. I believe that my background makes me a strong fit for the Software Engineer Manager job, and I look forward to discussing my qualifications in an interview. Please let me know if you have any questions and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

G.W. Smithson

Do I have to write a new cover letter for every job?

Although you should write a different letter for each application, you don't have to start from scratch. If you are applying to jobs that require similar skills, you can use the same examples in the cover letter. Just be sure to make a specific connection to each company. For example, at Company A your communication skills may be useful for presentations, while at Company B your communication skills may be used for customer service.

ACTION VERBS

Communication						
Addressed	Composed	Developed	Formulated	Listened	Persuaded	Resolved
Advertised	Condensed	Directed	Furnished	Marketed	Presented	Responded
Advocated	Conferred	Discussed	Incorporated	Mediated	Promoted	Specified
Arranged	Consulted	Drafted	Influenced	Moderated	Proposed	Spoke
Articulated	Contacted	Edited	Interacted	Motivated	Reconciled	Suggested
Authored	Conveyed	Encouraged	Interpreted	Negotiated	Recruited	Summarized
Clarified	Convinced	Enlisted	Interviewed	Observed	Referred	Synthesized
Collaborated	Corresponded	Explained	Joined	Outlined	Reinforced	Translated
Communicated	Defined	Expressed	Lectured	Participated	Reported	Wrote
Technical						
Adapted	Conducted	Designed	Fortified	Programmed	Repaired	Standardized
Analyzed	Conserved	Determined	Installed	Rectified	Replaced	Studied
Applied	Constructed	Developed	Maintained	Reengineered	Restored	Transmitted
Assembled	Converted	Devised	Operated	Regulated	Solved	Upgraded
Built	Calculated	Engineered	Overhauled	Remodeled	Specialized	Utilized
Computed	Debugged	Fabricated	Printed			
Creative						
Acted	Conceptualized	Developed	Formulated	Initiated	Modeled	Revised
Applied	Condensed	Displayed	Founded	Instituted	Modified	Revitalized
Began	Created	Drew	Generated	Integrated	Navigated	Shaped
Combined	Customized	Entertained	Illustrated	Introduced	Originated	Solved
Composed	Designed	Established	Improvised	Invented	Performed	
Accomplishment						
Achieved	Created	Exceeded	Improved	Maximized	Revamped	Surpassed
Attained	Demonstrated	Expedited	Instituted	Partnered	Showcased	Transformed
Completed	Earned	Finished	Launched	Restructured	Succeeded	
Leadership						
Administered	Considered	Directed	Hired	Intervened	Overhauled	Restored
Analyzed	Consolidated	Eliminated	Hosted	Launched	Oversaw	Scheduled
Appointed	Contracted	Emphasized	Implemented	Led	Planned	Secured
Approved	Controlled	Enforced	Improved	Managed	Presided	Selected
Assigned	Converted	Enhanced	Incorporated	Mediated	Prioritized	Streamlined
Attained	Coordinated	Established	Increased	Merged	Produced	Strengthened
Authorized	Decided	Evaluated	Initiated	Motivated	Recommended	Supervised
Chaired	Delegated	Executed	Inspected	Navigated	Reorganized	Terminated
Challenged	Developed	Handled	Instituted	Originated	Replaced	United
Organization						
Approved	Collected	Incorporated	Operated	Purchased	Reviewed	Standardized
Arranged	Compiled	Inspected	Ordered	Recorded	Scheduled	Systematized
Catalogued	Corrected	Logged	Organized	Registered	Screened	Tabulated
Categorized	Corresponded	Maintained	Prepared	Reserved	Specified	Updated
Charted	Distributed	Monitored	Processed	Responded	Submitted	Validated
Classified	Executed	Obtained	Provided	Retrieved	Supplied	Verified
Research						
Analyzed	Conducted	Evaluated	Formulated	Interviewed	Reported	Solved
Clarified	Controlled	Examined	Gathered	Invented	Replicated	Summarized
Collected	Detected	Experimented	Identified	Investigated	Researched	Surveyed
Critiqued	Determined	Explored	Inspected	Located	Reviewed	Systematized
Compared	Diagnosed	Extracted	Interpreted	Measured	Searched	Tested
Teaching						
Adapted	Conducted	Encouraged	Communicated	Individualized	Instructed	Supported
Advised	Coordinated	Evaluated	Fostered	Informed	Lectured	Taught
Aided	Defined	Explained	Guided	Initiated	Motivated	Trained
Clarified	Developed	Facilitated	Helped	Instilled	Persuaded	Tutored
Coached	Enabled	Focused	Incorporated			