

CAREER GUIDE
FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS
AND POSTDOCS

RESUMES



Career
Services
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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Access the electronic version of this guide, with hyperlinks to online resources, here:

Introduction

Before you start your resume, decide on 3–5 key takeaways you want the reader to remember. These should match the requirements of the job or internship. This helps you build a clear, impactful story. Think of your resume as a highlight reel, and so don't make the reader guess what you can do! Use your resume to tell a clear, engaging story about your skills and achievements. When you decide on your main themes up front, you can make sure that every section supports and illustrates them.

Here is a summary of five pieces of key advice for creating effective resumes that are expanded on throughout this guide:

1. **Focus on skills and keywords:** Instead of just listing tasks, actively identify and highlight transferable skills relevant to the jobs you are applying for. Review each job description carefully to extract keywords and incorporate them naturally throughout your resume, especially in your “Skills” section and “Experience” section bullet points. Don't assume that employers will recognize your skills from your academic titles or research descriptions alone.
2. **Tailor your resume to each job:** Recognize that a resume is a dynamic document that needs to be customized for every specific job application. Prioritize the experiences, skills, and bullet points that are most relevant to the requirements and language of the job description. This may involve reordering sections within the resume and prioritizing specific bullet points, highlighting different skills, and using the employer's terminology. Avoid sending a generic resume or your academic CV for non-academic roles.
3. **Use the Skill-Context-Outcome approach for bullet points:** Craft your bullet points to tell mini-stories that clearly demonstrate your skills in action. Start with a strong action verb (relevant to the job description) that highlights a specific skill, provide the context in which you used that skill, and whenever possible, quantify the outcome or result of your actions. This structure makes your accomplishments more tangible and impactful for the reader.
4. **Quantify and qualify:** Make sure to add numbers and relevant descriptions to your experiences and outcomes. A bullet that mentions that you “trained students...” is less tangible than one that says that you “trained 5 students each semester...”. Saying that you “collaborated on a project...” is not as informative as saying “collaborated with 2 engineering PhD students and an MBA student to...”, as this illustrates your ability to work with different types of people.
5. **Prioritize clear and concise formatting:** Simple formatting wins over fancy designs. Make your resume easy to read and navigate by using consistent formatting, sufficient white space, and thoughtful use of bolding and capitalization to highlight key information. While resume templates can be a starting point, prioritize content rather than focusing on overly complex designs that might confuse Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) or distract human readers. Save your resume as a PDF to preserve formatting.

While resume format and style can differ between industries, and will also be influenced by the professional culture across different countries, this guide provides clear, actionable advice and insights that will be relevant to any resume that you will be working on. Use this guide as a starting point for creating an effective resume, and connect with an advisor at Penn Career Services for additional feedback on your drafts.

The Difference Between a CV and a Resume

Key conclusions:

1. CVs are comprehensive, static records that catalog your entire academic history—publications, presentations, teaching, and research—making them best suited for academic, faculty, or research-intensive roles.
2. Resumes are concise, dynamic documents that must be tailored for each position, focusing on the most relevant skills, experiences, and achievements that match the requirements and language of a specific job or industry.
3. The key distinction lies in narrative: resumes intentionally craft a story that connects your background to the employer's needs, while CVs mostly list credentials.
4. When in doubt, submit a resume for non-academic or industry roles, and consult with a career advisor if you're unsure which document is appropriate for a particular application.

CVs

In the United States, a Curriculum Vitae (CV) and a resume are two distinct professional documents used to showcase your qualifications, but they serve different purposes and audiences. A CV is a comprehensive record of your academic achievements, including publications, presentations, teaching experiences, and other scholarly activities. It is typically longer than a resume and focuses heavily on research and teaching, making it ideal for academic or research-oriented positions. Unlike resumes, CVs are not dynamic or narrative; they list accomplishments without explicitly describing the skills involved. While customization is possible, it is more common to maintain a single version of a CV when applying for faculty roles. CVs prioritize academic credentials over skills, making them less illustrative for non-academic audiences.

Is a CV always a CV?

Sometimes, people will use the terms CV and resume interchangeably, even in the US. Usually, this happens for jobs outside of academia/faculty roles, where the job description might ask for a CV or might say "CV/Resume". For the vast majority of jobs that are not faculty positions or postdocs, the hiring manager will be looking for a resume that is targeted to the specific position, and not a general CV. If you're unsure whether to submit a CV or a resume, it's usually safest to send a resume, especially for non-faculty or industry roles, where a concise, tailored document is expected. When in doubt, check with a Career Advisor at Penn Career Services.

Resumes

A resume is a concise and targeted document designed to highlight your skills and qualifications relevant to a specific job or industry. Its primary purpose is to create a compelling image in the mind of the hiring manager, allowing them to envision you in the role. Resumes are shorter than CVs, often one page for entry-level candidates or up to three pages for professionals in certain industries, and require careful tailoring to the audience. They focus on showcasing what you can offer an employer by demonstrating how your skills have been applied in various roles. In a sense, a resume serves as a marketing tool that presents the best version of your skills, knowledge, and experience in action. Resumes also emphasize transferable skills like leadership and project management, often using keywords from job descriptions to align with the Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) that employers will use when you apply for a role. Unlike CVs, resumes are dynamic and narrative-driven, requiring customization for each application to ensure relevance and impact.

What is a narrative?

You will see the word “narrative” used a lot in this guide. In the context of a resume, a narrative is the intentional story you create about your skills, experiences, and knowledge, specifically tailored for the roles and industries you are targeting. A resume should not just be a list of what you have done, but should create a cohesive message that connects your achievements and experiences to the needs of the employer and the expectations of the job. This means that a resume narrative is dynamic and must be customized for every application. You can prioritize the experiences and skills most relevant to the job, sometimes reordering sections or using different terminology to match the employer’s expectations. As you are writing a resume, keeping your mind focused on the deliberate and cohesive story you can create will help you to emphasize the skills and experiences that make you the best fit for your target role.

AI prompts

Initial resume creation prompts:

- "Review my academic CV [paste CV content here] and identify 5-10 transferable skills that are most relevant for non-academic roles, explaining briefly how each skill could be framed to appeal to industry employers."
- "Given my experience in [describe a specific experience], identify 3-5 transferable skills that would be valued by employers outside academia, and suggest how I might describe these skills in a resume bullet point."
- "I want my resume to convey that I am [list 2-3 key qualities, e.g., a strong problem-solver, effective communicator]. Based on my background in [briefly describe your background], which specific experiences and skills should I prioritize and how can I best highlight them in my resume?"
- "Summarize the main experiences and accomplishments from my academic CV [paste CV content here] that can be reframed to emphasize skills and impact, providing 5 examples of how each could be rewritten for a resume."
- "Suggest a list of strong, industry-relevant action verbs to describe my responsibilities and achievements in [describe a past role or experience], and provide sample bullet points using these verbs."

Applicant Tracking Systems & AI

Key conclusions:

1. Optimize your resume for ATS by weaving in keywords and phrases directly from the job description, especially for skills, certifications, and job titles, across all sections, not just in a dedicated skills list.
2. Use a single-column, text-based format without tables, graphics, or unusual fonts to ensure ATS can accurately parse your information; standard headings like "Education" and "Experience" are essential.
3. As ATS technology evolves, anticipate systems that assess soft skills and cultural fit by highlighting adaptability, alignment with organizational values, and relevant soft skills in your resume, cover letter, and LinkedIn profile.

Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) are software tools widely used by organizations to streamline the hiring process especially when they receive a large number of applications. They automate tasks such as resume collection, reviewing content, and ranking candidates based on job-specific criteria like keywords, skills, and years of experience. ATS systems filter out resumes that do not meet predefined requirements, ensuring only the most relevant applications are reviewed by human recruiters.

To optimize your resume for ATS, it's crucial to use relevant keywords from the job description and ensure a clean format that is free of complex elements like tables, graphics, or columns, which can disrupt parsing. This means carefully reading the job description and incorporating relevant keywords and phrases (e.g., skills, certifications, and job titles) directly into your resume. Use standard section headings like "Education," "Experience," and "Skills" to ensure the ATS can easily categorize your information. Avoid creative formatting, such as using tables, columns, graphics, or unusual fonts, as these can cause the system to misread or overlook important details. Remember, the ATS software doesn't care about your use of color, but it will seek out your keywords!

Looking ahead, ATS systems are expected to incorporate even more sophisticated AI capabilities. These advancements will allow them to assess soft skills by analyzing unstructured data, such as cover letters or LinkedIn profiles, and include these data in the ranking process. Job seekers should adapt by highlighting transferable skills, aligning their resumes with company values, and showcasing adaptability through projects or experiences relevant to emerging technologies.

A Step-by-Step Process for Creating Effective Resumes

This guide provides detailed information on the different sections you will have within your resume. The steps below highlight the general process you can use when putting together your resume:

Step 1: Conduct thorough background research

Gain a strong knowledge of the field and the specific roles you are targeting. Understand what is valued in that industry, what skills are sought after, and the industry-specific language used to describe those skills. Analyze job descriptions carefully to identify the skills, knowledge, and experience they are looking for, and the overall needs of the employer. Pay attention to the language used in the job description, as you'll want to incorporate a similar style of language in your resume. If you don't understand what a specific job responsibility means, ask about it in your networking, or get a detailed overview of what it means using online research or an AI tool.

Step 2: Engage in strategic networking

Spend time speaking with people in your target career fields, particularly alumni, to gain insights into their roles, the skills they use, and the language they employ to describe their roles. Conduct informational interviews to ask about the most valuable skills for specific roles. Listen carefully to how they describe their experiences, and the skills required, then try to use similar language to describe your own relevant experiences. This type of networking can make it much easier for you to create compelling narratives about your experiences when you work on creating a customized resume for a specific opportunity.

Step 3: Develop a comprehensive "master resume"

You can create a master resume that includes a record of everything you have done. This document serves as a central repository of your experiences, skills, accomplishments, and any relevant details (tools used, project outcomes, challenges faced, etc.). Don't worry about formatting this document; focus on capturing important insights that can be leveraged for resume writing, cover letters, and interviews. When tailoring your resume for a specific job, you can then draw the most relevant information from your master resume.

Step 4: Define your key takeaways

Before you start writing, determine what you want the reader to take away from your resume. What are the core experiences, skills, and themes you want to communicate? If you don't know what the main takeaways are, the reader will have much more trouble figuring this out. These takeaways should ideally align with the job and organization you are applying for. Consider what a recruiter might say about you to their team after reading your resume and when they are deciding who they should interview.

Step 5: Simplify and focus your resume content

Consider deprioritizing any information from your resume that is not relevant to the specific job you are applying for. Including irrelevant details can dilute your narrative and make it harder for the reader to identify your key qualifications. Focus on the experiences and skills that directly align with the requirements outlined in the job description. The first few words after each bullet point should highlight the relevant skills you are illustrating. Make sure you touch on 'people' (communication and collaboration), 'project' (managing and juggling different priorities), and 'problem-solving' skills.

Step 6: Optimize formatting for readability and ATS compatibility

Ensure your resume has a clean, consistent, and professional format. Use standard fonts (e.g., Calibri), font sizes (10-12 point) and margins (0.5-0.7 inches). Think carefully about how you can use the white space on the page, bolding, and capitalization to draw attention to the most important information. Take care, though, as overuse of formatting techniques (e.g., bolding every keyword) can make the resume harder to read. Avoid stock templates, graphics, text boxes, and unusual fonts that can interfere with ATS. Save your resume as a PDF to preserve formatting. Consider using a single-column format for better readability and ATS compatibility.

Step 7: Read your resume aloud and proofread meticulously

Read your resume out loud to catch awkward phrasing, inconsistencies, and areas that don't sound natural. This can help you identify areas for improvement and ensure your message is clear and impactful. Proofread your resume very carefully for any typos, grammatical errors, or inconsistencies in formatting and punctuation. Don't rely solely on spell check, as it may not catch all errors. Ask someone else, such as a career advisor, to review your resume for a fresh perspective. When there are lots of similarly qualified candidates applying for a role, hiring managers will use poor attention to detail as one criteria to take candidates out of contention when it comes to choosing who to interview.

Step 8: Seek feedback and utilize resources from Career Services

Connect with Career Services for personalized feedback on your resume. Schedule appointments with career advisors to review your resume and discuss strategies for improvement. Make sure to share the specific job description with the advisor so they can provide targeted feedback. Utilize the various resources offered by Career Services, such as [resume samples](#), [action verb lists](#), and online platforms like [Targeted Resume](#), [Beyond Graduate School](#) (Master's), [the PhD Career Training Platform](#) (PhD students and postdocs), [Vault](#), and [Big Interview](#), to enhance your resume writing skills. They can provide valuable insights and help you refine your resume to effectively target your desired roles.

Resume blindness and typos in your teeth

After staring at your resume for hours, it's easy to develop "resume blindness." When you've reviewed the same document over and over, your brain fills in the gaps and skips right over mistakes. This makes it tough to spot typos and formatting errors, even for the most detail-oriented graduate students and postdocs. Typos on your resume are like spinach in your teeth in that everyone else notices but you! That's why it's so helpful to have someone else review your resume before you send it out. A fresh set of eyes can catch errors, awkward wording, or inconsistencies you might have missed, no matter how many times you've proofread. Set up an appointment with advisors at Penn Career Services to get helpful feedback to make your resume clear, polished, and professional. Whether you're working on a first draft or a final version, scheduling a review with a Career Services advisor can make all the difference. Even if you're confident in your editing skills, don't skip this step, as every great scholar needs a peer reviewer. Let Career Services be yours.

General Format

Key conclusions:

1. Consistency and simplicity are critical: maintain uniform formatting, spacing, and font choices throughout your resume to create a polished, professional appearance that keeps the focus on your content.
2. Use a single-column layout with strategic white space and clear section breaks to enhance readability and direct attention to your most important qualifications early in the document.
3. Choose standard, professional fonts (such as Calibri or Aptos), use bolding judiciously for emphasis, and avoid italics or decorative elements that could hinder quick scanning.
4. Place dates consistently (preferably right-aligned) to emphasize your accomplishments over chronology, and always save your resume as a PDF to preserve formatting.
5. Avoid graphical elements, icons, or background images, as these can disrupt ATS parsing and distract from your qualifications.

Overall consistency and simplicity

The primary goal of resume formatting is to ensure that the document looks clean and professional, allowing the content to take center stage. You don't want your readers to notice the formatting at all, and so the goal is for the formatting to help the reader see your relevant experiences quickly and effortlessly. Formatting should be consistent throughout the document, with no distracting design elements or inconsistencies that might detract from the reader's focus. Over-designed resumes with excessive embellishments can appear unprofessional and can sometimes make it harder for Applicant Tracking Systems to extract information from your document. Attention to detail in formatting is critical, as inconsistencies can signal a lack of precision or care, and these are qualities that hiring managers often value highly.

Layout and structure

A single-column format is recommended for resumes as it allows for better control of the narrative flow and ensures the reader navigates through the document as intended (e.g., top to bottom, seeing the most important information first). Strategic use of white space, line breaks, and spacing between sections makes the resume easier to read and helps the reader process information efficiently. Larger spaces between major sections (such as Education and Experience) and smaller spaces within each section create a helpful visual distinction, making the document more organized. Key information should be prioritized in the first half or first page of your resume since this is where recruiters typically focus during their initial review. As an international student or postdoc, remember to resize your resume to fit the US letter-size format if needed – this is especially important for resumes that have been formatted to fit A4 size paper.

Font and text

Choosing appropriate fonts and text styles is essential for creating a professional-looking resume. Use standard font sizes (10 to 12 point) and professional, sans-serif font types such as Calibri or Aptos, and avoiding unprofessional fonts. Bolding can be used strategically to emphasize important information like your degree or institution, but italicizing should be avoided as it can be harder to read quickly. Your name should be the largest text on the page to make it stand out. Additionally, consistency in stylistic choices for section headers, organization names, and titles reinforces a polished appearance.

Dates

Dates should be formatted consistently throughout your resume to maintain a cohesive look. Whether you use hyphens or slashes, ensure that spacing and style remain uniform across all entries. Consider positioning dates on the right side of the page to emphasize what you accomplished rather than when you did it. This approach helps readers focus on your achievements and skills rather than just chronological details.

Graphical elements

Graphical elements such as photos, icons, logos, images, expertise scales, or background designs should be avoided in resumes. These elements may interfere with Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS), which primarily analyze text-based content. Additionally, they do not add significant value to your resume's substance and can detract from its professionalism. Background images or colored backgrounds are also discouraged as they can consume unnecessary ink if someone has to print your resume, and distract from the content.

Proofread

Recruiters don't have a lot of time to review each submitted resume, and so obvious spelling and formatting mistakes can easily send your resume to the "no" pile quickly. Spellcheck and AI tools are good ways to do a first review, but always have a human review it as well!

Saving your resume

To preserve formatting across different systems, always save your resume as a PDF file. PDFs ensure that your document appears exactly as intended regardless of what device or software is used to open it. When saving your file, label it clearly with your name (e.g., "Jane Doe Resume") to make it easily identifiable for recruiters.

ATS & formatting quick tips

DO	DON'T
• Use standard fonts (Calibri, Aptos) • Save as PDF • Use clear, consistent section headings • Align keywords with job description	• Use graphics, tables, or columns • Use unusual fonts or colors • Over-format with bold/italics • Add photos or icons

Name and Contact Information

Key conclusions:

1. Make your name the most prominent text on the page, adding advanced degrees if relevant (e.g., "Jane Smith, PhD") to immediately communicate your credentials.
2. Present your contact information concisely in one or two lines, including your phone number, professional email address, city and state (not full address), and optional links to LinkedIn, GitHub, or a portfolio site if relevant.
3. Avoid unnecessary labels (such as "Phone" or "Email") and ensure all contact details are up-to-date and professional.
4. Do not include personal information like photos, marital status, or full address; mention citizenship or visa status only if it is advantageous or requested by the employer.

Name

Your name should stand out as the largest text on the page, ensuring it is immediately noticeable. If you hold an advanced degree, such as a PhD, consider including it after your name (e.g., John Smith, PhD) to highlight your educational qualifications. This simple addition communicates your level of expertise and can leave a strong impression on recruiters.

Contact information

The contact information section of your resume should be concise and professional, ideally taking up no more than 2 lines. Include your name on the top line, and then your phone number, email address, city/state, and optionally a LinkedIn URL or other relevant links, on the second line. It is no longer necessary to include your full street address; listing just your city and state is now standard practice.

Phone number and email address

When listing your phone number, there is no need to label it with the word "Phone," as this is universally understood. Similarly, your email address should be professional in tone and does not require the word "Email" before it. Avoid using overly casual or outdated email addresses; instead, opt for one that includes your name or initials for a polished appearance.

LinkedIn profile and other links

Including a LinkedIn profile URL is optional but highly recommended, as it allows you to provide additional context about your skills and experiences. Be sure that your LinkedIn profile is up-to-date and consistent with the themes in your resume. Customize your LinkedIn URL for a cleaner, more professional look (e.g., linkedin.com/in/yourname). If applicable, you may also include links to a GitHub profile or personal website to showcase technical projects or design portfolios relevant to the job.

Personal information and visa status

Don't add photos or personal information like marital status, as these are not appropriate for resumes in the United States. You don't have to add your nationality/citizenship or visa status, but if you want to state that you are a US Citizen, or if you want to share that you have 3 years of OPT, then you can certainly add this information to this section. Just know that it is optional.

Examples of how this can look

Here are a few examples of how your Name and Contact Information section could be formatted:

John A. Smith

123-456-7890 | jsmith@email.com | Philadelphia, PA | [linkedin.com/in/johnasmith](https://www.linkedin.com/in/johnasmith) | github.com/JS56xy

Ramesh Kumar

111-222-3333 | email@email.com | Philadelphia, PA | US Citizen

Roberta Lee, MPH

roberta.lee@techmail.com | (215) 111-2222 | San Francisco, CA | [linkedin.com/in/robertalee](https://www.linkedin.com/in/robertalee)

WEI ZHANG, MCP

Name@email.com | 000-222-3333 | Philadelphia, PA | [Portfolio.com](https://www.portfolio.com) | 3 years US work permission (OPT)

Summary Section

Key conclusions:

1. A summary section is optional but valuable, especially for longer resumes, candidates with extensive experience, or candidates making a pivot into a new career field; it provides a focused introduction to your core skills, themes, and professional identity.
2. Use this section to proactively frame your narrative by highlighting 4-5 key strengths or themes that align with the job description and organizational goals, ensuring each point is supported by evidence elsewhere in your resume.
3. Customize your summary for every application, using language and priorities that mirror those in the job posting.
4. Avoid generic or unsupported claims; instead, make your summary a concise, compelling invitation to read further, with the final point optionally expressing your enthusiasm for the specific role or field.

The "Summary" section of a resume, also known as a "Summary of Qualifications," "Summary of Skills," or "Professional Summary," is an optional but potentially valuable addition. While it is not essential for shorter, one-page resumes, it can be particularly useful for two- to three-page resumes or for individuals with extensive experience, such as PhDs and postdocs. The purpose of this section is to highlight key takeaways, core skills, and overarching themes that you want the reader to remember about you right at the beginning of your resume. By framing your narrative proactively, the summary helps make your most relevant qualifications immediately apparent and sets the tone for the rest of the document.

Typically placed at the top of your resume, directly below your name and contact information, the summary section should consist of broad and thematic statements that combine different experiences and skills into a cohesive narrative. It is important to tailor the content of your summary to each specific job application, ensuring it aligns with the job description and organizational goals. Any claims made in this section must be supported by evidence in the main body of your resume. For example, if you describe yourself as an "innovative leader," this should be backed up by examples in your experience section where you led a team or spearheaded a new initiative. Additionally, forward-looking statements expressing career goals or passions can be included if they align with the role you're applying for.

Even if you decide not to include a summary section in your final document, especially for 1-page resumes, the exercise of writing one can be helpful to clarify your main themes. Crafting summary statements allows you to identify key takeaways and ensure that these themes are evident throughout the rest of your resume. However, it is crucial to avoid generic statements like "great education and experience" that lack tangible relevance or specificity.

What a generic, less-impactful “Summary of Skills” section often looks like:

- Strong research and analytical skills developed through coursework and independent study across multiple projects in academic program
- Excellent written and verbal communication abilities
- Experience working both independently and as part of a team in academic and applied projects
- Well-developed organizational and time management skills gained from balancing academic responsibilities, research deadlines, and extracurricular activities
- Adaptable and eager to learn

Here is a more effective and contextual “Summary of Skills” that feels more tangible:

- Advanced research and problem-solving skills applied over 3 separate multi-institutional studies involving academic and industry stakeholders across 3 time zones.
- Effective communicator with experience translating technical findings into clear messages for audiences ranging from interdisciplinary collaborators to non-specialists, through scientific writing, presentations, and stakeholder meetings.
- Collaborative leader and team contributor, skilled at building productive relationships, mentoring peers, and facilitating group progress in research labs, cross-functional project teams, and in executive leadership roles in student government.
- Highly organized project manager adept at setting priorities, with recognition from both clients and collaborators for the positive energy I bring to fast-paced projects.
- Committed to continuous learning and professional growth through trainings, mentoring, and hands-on projects through student-led consulting projects.

Unsupported claims that are not demonstrated with concrete examples elsewhere in your resume can undermine credibility. Additionally, keep this section concise. Aim for 4-5 bullet points that quickly convey your qualifications without overwhelming the reader. You might find it easier to write the summary section once you have already customized the main part of your resume for a specific job/internship. AI tools can be helpful here, for example:

AI prompt

- "Using this job description [paste job description] and this resume [paste resume], identify 5 key conclusions that highlight the overlap between my experience and the skills the hiring manager seeks. Ensure each conclusion is specific, compelling, and encourages further reading by providing enough context to avoid generic statements."

The last bullet point in the summary section can even be a little future-focused by incorporating language that mentions the role you're applying for or highlights your passion or interest in the field. A future-focused summary provides a forward-looking perspective, aligning your career goals and enthusiasm with the specific position or organization. This approach demonstrates not only your qualifications but also your motivation and commitment to contributing to the role.

Examples of how a summary section can look:

Example 1:

SUMMARY OF SKILLS

- Highly analytical and detail-oriented researcher with 5+ years of experience in data analysis and statistical modeling.
- Proficient in Python, R, and SQL, with a proven track record of extracting actionable insights from complex datasets.
- Strong communication skills to audience of varied technical expertise demonstrated through presentations at national conferences and collaborative projects.
- Seeking to leverage these skills as a Data Analyst at [Company Name].

Example 2:

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- PhD candidate in Biomedical Engineering with expertise in biomaterials design and tissue engineering.
- Proven ability to lead research projects from conception to execution, resulting in over 15 peer-reviewed publications.
- Adept at collaborating in multidisciplinary teams and presenting complex information to diverse audiences.
- Seeking a Research Scientist position at [Company Name] to contribute to the development of innovative therapeutic solutions.

Example 3:

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

- Dynamic and results-oriented project manager with a strong background in leading cross-functional teams and implementing strategic initiatives.
- Expertise in developing project plans, managing budgets, and ensuring on-time delivery.
- Proven ability to effectively communicate with stakeholders at all levels and across functional areas, including research, marketing, communications, and design.
- Seeking a Project Manager role at [Company Name] to drive successful project outcomes.

Example 4:

SUMMARY

- Advanced research and critical analysis skills developed through archival research and close reading across multiple literary traditions.
- Experienced writer and editor, with a portfolio of published articles, conference presentations, and grant proposals.
- Effective communicator, skilled at translating complex concepts for diverse audiences through teaching, public talks, and outreach events.
- Collaborative team member, having worked with subject matter experts and community partners on interdisciplinary projects and public humanities initiatives.
- Passionate about leveraging storytelling and cultural analysis to support mission-driven organizations in the arts and education sectors.

Example 5:

SUMMARY

- Enthusiastic and adaptable professional with proven ability to synthesize complex information, develop engaging narratives, and communicate effectively with diverse audiences through teaching and presentations
- Deep knowledge of multiple disease systems and cutting-edge research tools, with a strong foundation in data analysis
- Extensive experience working on multiple projects at the same time, and getting up to speed on new content quickly from 5 successful lab rotations.
- Eager to apply collaborative mindset and dynamic communication skills as a Science Writer at [Organization Name].

Example 6:

RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- Strong background in mixed-methods research, including survey design, interviews, and statistical analysis using SPSS and R.
- Demonstrated ability to synthesize large volumes of qualitative and quantitative data to inform evidence-based recommendations.
- Skilled in stakeholder engagement, having facilitated focus groups and community forums for nonprofit and government partners.
- Experienced project manager, coordinating multi-institutional studies direct reports.
- Eager to apply analytical, organizational, and communication skills to advance social impact as a {job title}.

Education

Key conclusions:

1. List your degrees in reverse chronological order, including degree name, major, full institution name, (optional) location, and graduation or expected graduation date; omit start dates.
2. Add relevant coursework and selected honors or awards to demonstrate fit and optimize for ATS, but avoid excessive detail or unrelated information.
3. Include GPA only if it is strong (3.5+), you are early in your career, or it is requested by the employer.
4. Place Education above Experience if you are a current student; for postdocs or those with significant experience, move Education below Experience but always include your highest degree after your name at the top of the resume.
5. Do not list postdoctoral appointments in Education, as these belong in Relevant Experience.

If you are still a student, the Education section is usually placed above the "Relevant Experience" section. For individuals with more professional experience (especially post-graduation), or who are in a postdoctoral role, the Education section can be placed below the "Relevant Experience" section. Just remember to include PhD (or similar academic credentials such as MPH, MPA) after your name at the top of the resume so that the reader immediately knows what your academic background is.

List your education in reverse chronological order, with your most recent degree listed first. For each degree, include the following information:

- Degree Name: (e.g., PhD, EdD, MSc, MPH, BA).
- Major/Program of Study: Be specific (e.g., Biomedical Engineering, English Literature, Computer Science). You can also include your concentration or specialization.
- University Name: Include the full name of the institution (School or Department is optional).
- Location: You can include the city and state of the university, although this is less critical when applying within the US.
- Graduation Date: Include the year you graduated. If you haven't graduated yet, list your expected graduation date (e.g., Expected May 2024). You don't need to include the year you started the degree.

List only the most relevant coursework under each degree as these act as valuable keywords for ATS and show your expertise in areas that matter to employers. This is particularly useful if your degree title doesn't fully convey your specific skills or areas of expertise. Prioritize courses that align with the job description. The title of your thesis can also add keywords, but since you probably didn't name your thesis in a way that makes it relevant to hiring managers in different industries, you can also just summarize the topic or leave it out altogether if it really isn't relevant to the person who will be reading your resume. Consider excluding details like your advisor or thesis committee members unless they are very well-known and name-dropping them would be genuinely beneficial in the specific context of the job you are applying for. If they are not relevant outside of academia, you do not need to list them.

You might choose to list some academic honors and awards either within the Education section or in a separate "Honors & Awards" section, depending on their significance to the roles you are targeting. Whether you want to include your GPA is context-dependent. Generally, if it is strong (e.g., 3.5 or above), you can include it, especially if you are early in your career or the employer requests it. However, once you have more significant professional experience, GPA becomes less relevant. It is generally not advisable to include non-U.S. GPAs on resumes for American employers because grading systems vary significantly between countries, making direct comparisons difficult and often misleading. Most U.S. recruiters and hiring managers are unfamiliar with international grading scales, so listing a non-U.S. GPA without clear context can create confusion or even lead to negative assumptions about your academic performance. Furthermore, converting international GPAs to a U.S. 4.0 scale is not straightforward, and inaccurate conversions can misrepresent your achievements or raise questions about credibility. Instead, focus on highlighting your degree, relevant coursework, and academic honors, and be prepared to provide transcripts or additional context if requested.

What to avoid in the education section:

Avoid listing irrelevant coursework or extensive details that are not relevant to the jobs you are applying for. It is helpful to include your transferable experience as a student (the skills you used to do your research, complete your courses, etc.) in one of the Experience sections of your resume. The Education section can be seen as the degree you are getting (or those you already have). The Relevant Experience section is what you actually did to get the degrees! If you are a postdoc, you would not list your postdoctoral appointment in the Education section – you would include this as the first experience in your Relevant Experience section. It is generally not advisable to include non-U.S. GPAs on resumes for American employers because grading systems vary significantly between countries, making direct comparisons difficult and often misleading. Most U.S. recruiters and hiring managers are unfamiliar with international grading scales, so listing a non-U.S. GPA without clear context can create confusion or even lead to negative assumptions about your academic performance. Furthermore, converting international GPAs to a U.S. 4.0 scale is not straightforward, and inaccurate conversions can misrepresent your achievements or raise questions about credibility. Instead, focus on highlighting your degree, relevant coursework, and academic honors, and be prepared to provide transcripts or additional context if requested.

Here are a few examples of how your Education section could be formatted:

Example 1 (recent PhD graduate):

EDUCATION

PhD in Biomedical Engineering, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA Expected 20XX

- Dissertation: *Novel Biomaterials for Tissue Regeneration*
- Relevant Coursework: Advanced Biomaterials, Cell Biology, Biomechanics, Drug Delivery

M.S. in Chemical Engineering, Fudan University, Shanghai, China 20XX

- Relevant Coursework: Statistics, Organic Chemistry

B.S. in Chemistry, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China 20XX

Example 2 (current Master's student):

EDUCATION

M.A. in Public Policy, University of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA Expected December 20XX

- Relevant Coursework: Policy Analysis, Quantitative Methods, Urban Governance, Program Evaluation

B.A. in Political Science, Example University, Example Town, USA May 20XX

Example 3 (including honors within education):

EDUCATION

PhD in History, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 20XX

- Dissertation topic: The Social Impact of Technological Change
- Award: Dean's Fellowship for Outstanding Research

BA in History and Political Science, Liberal Arts College, Smallville, USA 20XX

- Magna Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa

Relevant Experience

Key conclusions:

1. Prioritize experiences that directly demonstrate the skills and accomplishments most relevant to the target job, using the Skill-Context-Outcome (SCO) approach to structure each bullet point.
2. Quantify your impact with numbers, data, or specific results, and tailor both the content and language of this section for each application by incorporating keywords from the job description.
3. Present academic roles (such as PhD or postdoc positions) as professional experiences, explicitly highlighting transferable skills like project management, leadership, and communication.
4. Arrange bullet points within each role to showcase your most significant and relevant achievements first, and avoid generic or overly academic language that doesn't translate to the employer's needs.

The "Relevant Experience" section is at the heart of your resume and should focus on showcasing experiences that directly support your candidacy for the specific job you are applying for. This section should highlight skills and accomplishments that align with the job description, ensuring every detail is relevant to the role. A broad definition of experience is encouraged – this can include paid work, research, teaching, internships, volunteer roles, or participation in student groups, as long as these engagements demonstrate relevant, transferable skills. By expanding beyond traditional "work experience," you can present a more comprehensive picture of your qualifications.

When describing your experiences, prioritize skills over tasks. Employers outside academia are generally more interested in what you can do rather than a list of responsibilities. Use strong action verbs to start each bullet point and avoid passive language such as "assisted with" or "participated in." To make your accomplishments stand out, implement the Skill-Context-Outcome (SCO) approach: clearly state the skill you used, the context in which it was applied, and the outcome or result of your actions. Whenever possible, quantify outcomes using numbers, data, or specific results to make your impact more concrete and credible. Hiring managers want to see not only that you have experience in a given area, but that you were successful at it. They are looking for evidence that you added value to the whatever role you were playing. As you think about your different roles, reflect on what you accomplished that someone else in the same role might not have accomplished.

How to write a great resume bullet using the Skill-Context-Outcome formula

- **Skill:** What did you do? (Using action verbs from the job description where possible)
- **Context:** Where/when/with whom? (When the context is less relevant to the job you are applying for, keep this concise, and focus more on how you used the skill)
- **Outcome:** What happened as a result? (What can you point to as an outcome that demonstrates how effective the skill you used was)

Examples:

- **Before:** "Worked with fellow interns to put on a conference."
 - **After:** "Facilitated collaboration among a 5-person intern team to organize a 200-attendee conference, delivering all sessions on schedule and under budget."
-
- **Before:** "Assisted with organizing a literary festival."
 - **After:** "Coordinated logistics for a 200-attendee literary festival, recruiting 15 volunteers and securing \$3,000 in sponsorships."
-
- **Before:** "Tutored students in sociology."
 - **After:** "Used extensive knowledge of quantitative research methods to tutor 20+ undergraduates in sociology, leading to a 15% average improvement in exam scores."

Tailoring this section for each job application is essential. Incorporate keywords from the job description and use industry-specific language to ensure relevance. You can also group similar experiences under broader categories (e.g., "Research Experience," "Leadership & Project Management") to emphasize specific skill sets that align with the role. For academic roles such as being a PhD student or postdoc, frame these experiences as professional engagements by detailing transferable skills like project management, data analysis, communication, and leadership. Explicitly state these skills rather than assuming the reader will infer them from your academic background.

Same role – different descriptions

Your experiences can be tailored to different types of roles – here is one experience described in 3 different ways for 3 different career fields

- **Academia:** "Taught undergraduate biology labs, designing curriculum in collaboration with two faculty members, and grading assignments."
- **Industry:** "Developed and delivered hands-on training for 30+ students, providing 1:1 feedback to students on complex experimental procedures, and increasing percentage of successfully completed experiments."
- **Science Communication:** "Developed new 1-page overviews and detailed lab books for experimental topics across the fields of genetics, microbiology, and bioinformatics, for a class of 60 students with diverse backgrounds that have been used for the last 3 years."

To maximize impact, arrange bullet points within each experience section so that the most relevant and significant accomplishments for the position you are applying for appear first. Steer clear of overly academic language that focuses on the nature of research without emphasizing practical skills. If an experience does not showcase relevant skills for the job, consider reframing it to make it more relevant, or even omitting it to maintain a focused narrative. Finally, provide sufficient detail in each bullet point to illustrate your skills in action. Vague or overly general statements can weaken your case. Short, half-line bullet points often lack enough detail for the reader to understand your skills in action. Your goal is to create an image in the mind of the reader of you using the skills they are looking for. If your bullet point could apply to anyone in your role, it's probably too generic. Make it specific to you!

As you review the bullet points you have written for a specific internship or job opportunity, ask yourself these 3 questions:

1. What do you want the reader to walk away with having read the bullet point?
2. Is this takeaway relevant to the job/internship you are applying for?
3. Have you actually used the words necessary to ensure that the reader will walk away with that takeaway, or is your brain filling in the gaps?

Remember, when you read your resume, your brain will fill in a lot of the gaps for you, because you will remember everything that happened in each experience (you were there, after all!). The reader only has the words you provide and won't have any additional context to fill in the gaps. Make sure each bullet point paints a very clear picture of your skills in action without the reader needing any additional information, insight, or context.

It is essential that your bullet points address the skills relevant in the job description. It is also going to be important to demonstrate your ability to work with people, projects, and problems, and to show how you have the skills necessary to add value to an organization.

- **People:** People skills include collaboration, working with different types of people (e.g., different roles and backgrounds), leadership, communication, mentoring, and training. These skills are always valued, and so make sure to include bullet points that demonstrate how you have used these skills successfully.
- **Projects:** Many PhD students and postdocs often talk about their research in their resumes, but not necessarily as specific projects. However, leading, managing, and juggling different projects are great transferable skills to demonstrate. There is an opportunity to talk about meeting deadlines, and providing updates and reports, which are also important skills.
- **Problems:** Every role in every industry has problems that need to be resolved. If you can demonstrate a track record of being able to identify and solve problems in the work you have done, then this is great evidence that you will bring value to a new role. You can talk about developing novel or innovative approaches that you used to address a problem, or how you leveraged collaborations to do so.

Sample formats for Relevant Experience:

Example 1 (PhD student applying for a research scientist role):

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

PhD Student Researcher, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

20XX-Present

- Led an independent research project investigating novel therapeutic targets for [Disease Name], designing experimental protocols and managing a \$50,000 budget.
- Analyzed large-scale genomic datasets using R and Python to identify statistically significant biomarkers, resulting in 2 peer-reviewed publications.
- Collaborated with a multidisciplinary team of biologists and clinicians to develop and optimize in vitro assays, streamlining the testing process by 15%.
- Presented research findings at 3 national and 2 international conferences, effectively communicating complex scientific information to diverse audiences.

Example 2 (PhD in the social sciences):

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

PhD Student, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

20XX-Present

- Used extensive knowledge of quantitative research methods to tutor 20+ undergraduates in sociology, leading to a 15% average improvement in exam scores.
- Conducted in-depth interviews with 30 community members for a study on urban housing policy, analyzing qualitative data to inform a policy brief presented to city council.
- Designed and administered a community survey on public health needs, collecting responses from over 250 residents and presenting findings to local policymakers.
- Collaborated with a team of five graduate students to develop recommendations for a nonprofit client, resulting in the adoption of a new outreach strategy.

Example 3 (postdoc applying for a project manager position):

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

20XX-Present

- Managed a portfolio of 3 concurrent research projects focused on [Research Area], coordinating the efforts of 5 research assistants and ensuring adherence to project timelines and deliverables.
- Developed strategic partnerships with two external research laboratories, fostering collaborative research efforts and expanding the scope of ongoing projects.
- Secured \$100,000 in grant funding through the successful preparation and submission of a compelling research proposal.
- Mentored 2 junior researchers in experimental design, data analysis, and scientific writing, improving their research productivity and presentation skills.

Example 4 (Master's student with internship experience):

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Data Analyst Intern, XYZ Company, City, State

Summer 20XX

- Analyzed customer behavior data using SQL and Excel to identify key trends and generate actionable insights for marketing campaigns.
- Developed interactive dashboards in Tableau to visualize key performance indicators (KPIs) and communicate findings to project stakeholders.
- Collaborated with the marketing team to implement data-driven strategies, resulting in a 10% increase in customer engagement.

Master's Student, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

20XX-present

- Designed and implemented a behavioral intervention that increased survey response rates by 25% among participants in a public health study, using principles of social norms and framing effects.
- Conducted statistical analysis using R to evaluate the impact of cognitive biases on decision-making, resulting in actionable recommendations for a client organization's marketing strategy.
- Collaborated with a team of 5 graduate students to develop nudging strategies that improved employee engagement by 15% in a corporate setting, presenting findings to senior leadership.
- Led the design of an experimental study on consumer behavior, collecting and analyzing data from 300 participants to identify patterns in purchasing decisions influenced by anchoring bias.
- Presented research findings at the Behavioral Science Conference attended by 150 industry professionals, demonstrating how network analysis can predict the spread of behaviors within organizations.

Research Assistant, University of Example, City, State

20XX-20XX

- Conducted literature reviews of over 100 scientific papers and synthesized research findings to support a project on [Research Topic].
- Collected and managed survey data in Excel, ensuring data integrity and accuracy.

AI Prompts:

Customizing Your Resume to a Job Description Prompts:

- "Given this job description for a [job title] at [company name] [paste job description here], identify the top 5-7 skills and keywords I should highlight in my resume, and explain why each is important for this role."
- "Compare my current resume bullet points for [specific experience] [paste your bullet points here] with this job requirement: '[paste requirement]'. Suggest improved bullet points using the Skill-Context-Outcome (SCO) approach to better align with the requirement."
- "Based on the following job description [paste job description here] and my experience in [describe relevant experience], draft 3-5 resume bullet points that clearly demonstrate my ability to [specific skill or responsibility], using quantifiable results where possible."
- "This job description for a [job title] highlights [key theme/skill]. Review my resume [paste content here], identify specific examples where I have demonstrated this skill, and recommend how to make these examples more prominent and relevant to the employer."
- "First, summarize the employer's key needs and expectations based on this job description [paste job description here]. Then, review my resume [paste resume content here] and evaluate how well my resume addresses these needs, suggesting specific improvements where there are gaps."
- "Analyze this job description [paste job description here] to identify key language and terminology used in the field. Then, suggest specific ways I can incorporate this language into my resume to better resonate with the hiring manager."
- "Given this bullet point from my master resume: '[paste bullet point]', and this job description for a [job title] at [company] which emphasizes [relevant skill], rewrite the bullet point to explicitly highlight [the skill] and align with the job's requirements."
- "For each resume bullet point below [paste bullet point(s)], do the following: Identify if there is an explicit outcome or result. If yes, evaluate whether the outcome is realistic and relevant to the job/industry, and suggest improvements if needed. If no outcome is present, ask 2-3 probing questions that could help me recall or define a measurable result, and then draft 5 examples of a revised bullet point that incorporates a plausible, tangible outcome."

Leadership and Community Engagement Experience

Key conclusions:

1. Use this optional section—titled appropriately for your experiences—to showcase leadership, teamwork, communication, and initiative gained through roles outside formal employment or academia, focusing on those most relevant to your target job.
2. Structure each bullet with action verbs and the Skill-Context-Outcome approach, emphasizing measurable outcomes and the specific impact of your contributions.
3. Tailor descriptions to the job audience, highlighting aspects that best demonstrate your fit for the position, and be explicit about your role rather than relying on titles alone.
4. Avoid generic or passive statements; instead, make clear how your engagement added value to the organization or community.

The "Leadership & Community Engagement" section of your resume is an optional opportunity to showcase transferable skills gained outside of formal work or academic roles. This section highlights experiences that demonstrate leadership, teamwork, communication, organization, problem-solving, and initiative. It serves as a way to present your engagement beyond professional or academic pursuits while emphasizing skills relevant to the job you are applying for. Relevance is still important. While the context of the roles you have may not be connected to the job (e.g., Chair of the Penn Squash Club), you can still prioritize transferable skills that align with the job description. And remember, you don't have to be the leader of a group to demonstrate leadership experience.

Like the "Relevant Experience" section, this part should focus on the skills you utilized and developed rather than simply listing responsibilities. Use strong action verbs to start each bullet point and structure your descriptions using the Skill-Context-Outcome (SCO) approach. Clearly state the skill you employed, the context of the activity, and the impact or result of your involvement. For example, instead of vaguely stating "Participated in community service," specify your role, such as "Took initiative to organize a food drive that collected over 500 pounds of donations for local families." Quantifying achievements adds credibility and helps demonstrate the scale of your contributions.

Explicitly articulate transferable skills gained from these experiences. For instance, serving as vice president of a student club reflects leadership, strategic thinking, and collaboration, while participating in community outreach highlights communication, empathy, and organizational skills. Tailor these descriptions to your audience by focusing on aspects most relevant to the role you are applying for. Sometimes, leadership or volunteer experiences can be helpful because they make you memorable to a hiring manager (e.g., "oh yes, that was the candidate who wrote that food blog"), even if the experiences themselves don't translate to the role you are applying for. Standing out from others in the candidate pool can have benefits. However, even the most memorable experiences can still demonstrate transferable skills, too!

It's important to avoid common pitfalls when crafting this section. Merely listing activities without describing the skills employed or impact achieved can weaken your narrative. Stating that you were president of a club doesn't automatically communicate that you were an effective leader. Don't assume that your reader will be able to infer your skills and accomplishments from titles alone. Similarly, including irrelevant experiences without thinking about how they can support your strategy to help hiring managers see your value may dilute your overall message.

Example 1 (VP of a student organization):

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Vice President, Penn Environmental Group

20XX-Present

- Led a team of five students in developing and executing three campus-wide sustainability initiatives, increasing student participation in environmental awareness events by 20%.
- Managed the club's \$5000 budget, allocating resources effectively to support project goals and activities.
- Collaborated with university administrators and external organizations to advocate for sustainable practices on campus.

Example 2 (volunteer experience):

LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Volunteer Tutor, XYZ Community Center

20XX-20XX

- Mentored and tutored 10 high school students in mathematics and science, improving their understanding of key concepts and raising their average grades by one letter grade.
- Developed individualized learning plans to address specific student needs and learning styles, demonstrating strong instructional and problem-solving skills.
- Communicated regularly with students and parents to provide feedback and track progress.

Example 3 (PhD student):

LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Vice-President, Academic Programs,
Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GAPSA)**

20XX-20XX

- Led a team of 5 committee members to organize over 30 events annually, increasing graduate student participation by 50% across Penn's 12 schools.
- Advocated for graduate student needs by presenting policy recommendations to university administrators, securing \$100,000 in funding for wellness and professional development initiatives.

Volunteer Coordinator, Penn Science Outreach Initiative

20XX

- Recruited and trained 25 graduate student volunteers to deliver STEM workshops to over 500 K-12 students in the Philadelphia area.
- Developed interactive lesson plans that increased student engagement in STEM topics by 40%, as measured by post-event surveys.
- Secured \$5,000 in grant funding to expand outreach efforts to underserved schools in the region.

Editor-in-Chief, Penn Interdisciplinary Research Journal

20XX-20XX

- Reviewed and edited over 100 submissions from graduate students across disciplines, maintaining rigorous academic standards while reducing review time by 30%.
- Launched a digital platform for the journal that increased readership by 60% within one year.
- Organized editorial board meetings and training sessions to improve team efficiency and streamline the publication process.

Example 4 (Master's student):

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Leadership Practicum Participant, MS in Nonprofit Leadership Program

20XX-present

- Partnered with the executive director of a local nonprofit organization to develop a strategic fundraising plan that increased donor contributions by 25% over six months.
- Designed and implemented a volunteer recruitment campaign that expanded the organization's volunteer base by 30%, directly enhancing program capacity.

Vice President, SP2 Student Government

20XX-20XX

- Managed a \$5000 annual budget to fund student-led projects, ensuring equitable allocation of resources across SP2's diverse student organizations.
- Collaborated with university administrators to introduce new wellness initiatives for graduate students, resulting in a 20% increase in participation in mental health programs.

Co-Chair, Students for Criminal Justice Advocacy (SCJA)

20XX

- Coordinated monthly workshops on restorative justice practices attended by over 100 students and community members.
- Led a team of 10 students in organizing a conference on systemic inequities in the criminal justice system, attracting over 300 attendees from academia and advocacy organizations.

Peer Mentor, SP2 Mentor Collective

20XX-20XX

- Provided one-on-one mentorship to five first-year SP2 students, offering guidance on coursework, field placements, and career planning.
- Developed a series of resource guides on navigating field placements, which were adopted by SP2's academic advising team for future cohorts.

AI Prompt:

- "Review my resume [paste resume content here] and identify any bullet points where my leadership skills could be better emphasized. For each, suggest alternative phrasing that more clearly demonstrates leadership impact and outcomes."

Skills

Key conclusions:

1. Highlight objective, measurable hard skills, such as technical expertise, software proficiency, and languages, using keywords from the job description to maximize ATS compatibility.
2. Group related skills into logical categories for clarity and readability, and prioritize those most relevant to the position.
3. Demonstrate your proficiency in key skills by referencing them in action within your experience section, rather than relying on subjective scales or graphics.
4. Only list skills you can confidently discuss in an interview, and avoid including irrelevant or outdated skills that dilute your qualifications.

The Skills section of a resume is critical for showcasing your objective, measurable capabilities relevant to the job you are applying for. This section helps employers and Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) quickly identify whether you possess the technical proficiency required for the role.

When crafting this section, focus more on objective, measurable hard skills, such as technical expertise, software proficiency, programming languages, laboratory techniques, data analysis tools, and foreign languages. These skills can be readily assessed and are more impactful than just listing subjective soft skills such as "leadership" or "communication". For example, instead of listing "teamwork" as a skill, show it in action as a bullet in the experience section for your different roles: "Collaborated across time zones with a 5-person team to deliver a project 2 weeks early."

It is essential to tailor your skills to the job description by prioritizing those mentioned in the listing. Using similar keywords and terminology increases the likelihood of your resume being flagged by ATS and noticed by human readers. If specific skills are listed in the job description, and you have some experience with those skills, then make sure to list those specific skills in the Skills section. If the job description mentions 'Excel,' list 'Excel' specifically, as 'Microsoft Office' alone won't get picked up by keyword scans.

For better readability, consider categorizing your skills into logical groups, such as "Technical Skills," "Software Proficiency," or "Programming Languages". When listing the skills, start with the ones that are mentioned in the job description, so they are easier for the hiring manager to spot quickly. In most cases, knowledge of Microsoft Office won't be your most exciting or relevant skill (if this is not mentioned specifically in the job description), and so you don't need to list this first.

While listing your skills within the "Skills" section is important, it is equally crucial to demonstrate the most relevant ones in your experience section using the Skill-Context-Outcome (SCO) framework. For example, instead of simply stating "SPSS" as one of your skills, also include a bullet point in the "Relevant Experience" section like: "Analyzed survey data using SPSS to identify key trends in customer satisfaction, resulting in a 15% increase in positive feedback."

Avoid subjective scales or graphics (e.g., proficiency bars) to indicate skill levels. Let your experience speak for itself. The placement of the Skills section depends on the role; for technical positions, you can consider placing it near the top of your resume, while for other roles, it can appear towards the bottom. A Skills section at the end of the resume provides a good reminder to the reader of all the skills you have, and many of the skills that you illustrated in action in the Experience section.

If you have some experience or knowledge of a skill, then you can consider listing it. However, a hiring manager may ask you about your experience with any skills you have listed on your resume, and so make sure to list those skills that you can confidently elaborate on during an interview.

Sample skills sections:

Example 1 (Research role):

SKILLS

Programming Languages: Python, Pandas, NumPy, Scikit-learn, R, SQL, MATLAB
Data Analysis & Visualization: Tableau, Power BI, SPSS, Excel (Pivot Tables, VBA), Statistical Modeling, Regression Analysis
Laboratory Techniques: Cell Culture, PCR, Western Blotting, Microscopy
Software & Tools: Git, Docker, Linux, Microsoft Office Suite

Example 2 (Policy/Social Science role):

SKILLS

- **Research & Analysis:** Qualitative Data Analysis (NVivo, Atlas.ti), Quantitative Data Analysis (SPSS, R), Survey Design, Policy Analysis, Literature Reviews
- **Communication & Presentation:** Public Speaking, Report Writing, Grant Writing, Data Visualization
- **Software & Tools:** Statistical Software (STATA), Microsoft Office Suite (Word, PowerPoint, Excel), Google Workspace
- **Languages:** English (Native), Spanish (Fluent)

Example 3 (Engineering):

SKILLS

Technical Skills: MATLAB, SolidWorks, AutoCAD
Programming Languages: Python, C++
Data Analysis Tools: SPSS, Tableau
Laboratory Techniques: Spectroscopy, Circuit Design
Software Proficiency: ANSYS, Revit

Example 4 (PhD in Anthropology):

SKILLS

Research Skills: Ethnographic Fieldwork, Archival Research

Data Analysis Tools: NVivo, MAXQDA

Languages: Spanish (Fluent), Swahili (Conversational)

Specialized Skills: Oral History Collection

Technical Writing: Academic Publishing, Grant Proposal Writing

Example 5 (Architecture Master's student):

SKILLS

- Design Software: AutoCAD, Revit, SketchUp
- 3D Modeling Tools: Rhino, Adobe Creative Suite
- Sustainable Design: LEED Standards, Energy Modeling
- Construction Documentation: Building Information Modeling (BIM), Accessibility Design
- Technical Skills: Site Planning, Schematic Design

Example 6 (Postdoc in Genetics)

SKILLS

Laboratory Techniques: CRISPR-Cas9 Editing, PCR Optimization

Bioinformatics Tools: BLAST, RStudio

Data Analysis Skills: Genomic Sequencing Analysis, Statistical Modeling (SPSS; STATA)

Research Specialization: Epigenetics Mechanisms, Gene Expression Profiling

Honors and Awards

Key conclusions:

1. Use this optional section to highlight significant recognitions that reinforce your qualifications for the target role, placing it within Education or as a separate section based on the number and relevance of awards.
2. For each entry, include the award name, granting institution, year, and a brief note on selectivity or significance if not self-evident.
3. Focus on major or competitive awards that demonstrate excellence or leadership; avoid listing minor recognitions or unexplained acronyms.
4. Tailor this section for each application, emphasizing awards most relevant to the job's requirements

The Awards section of your resume is designed to showcase significant recognition of your achievements, skills, and potential. Including this section provides tangible evidence of your excellence and can help you stand out to employers. You have flexibility in where to place this section, or whether to have one at all. Honors and awards can be combined with your "Education" section, especially if your awards are primarily academic (e.g., Dean's List or scholarships), or you can create a separate "Honors & Awards" section. A separate section might be preferable if you have several noteworthy awards or if the recognitions extend beyond academics. A final approach to highlighting awards is to integrate them into the Relevant Experience section as a tangible outcome of transferable skills that are sought in the job you are applying to (see examples below). Where you highlight the awards in a resume will depend on the relevance of these awards to the role you are applying to.

When listing awards, include the official name of the award, the granting institution or organization, and the year received. For awards that may not be widely known or whose prestige isn't immediately obvious, it's helpful to briefly explain their significance or the criteria for receiving them. For example, you might note if it was a competitive award or mention selection statistics, such as "One of three selected from among 2,000 graduating chemists nationally." This type of detail adds weight to your achievements. For positions outside academia or research, you can often summarize the achievement that led to the recognition, such as "Awarded for significant contributions to research on..." or "Recognized for outstanding presentation at..."

As you tailor your resume for different positions, edit the Awards section to focus on those recognitions that best demonstrate skills or achievements aligned with the job requirements. For instance, a research award would be highly relevant for a research-intensive role but less so for a non-research position. Don't list every minor award or recognition, spell out any acronyms unless they are very well known, and keep descriptions concise.

Examples of how the awards section can look:

Example 1 (combined with education):

EDUCATION

PhD in Bioengineering, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA Expected 20XX

- President's Scholar, 20XX-20XX (Awarded to the top 5% of graduate students)
- Biomedical Engineering Graduate Research Award, 20XX

BS in Bioengineering, University of California, Berkeley 2019

- Dean's List with Honors, 20XX-20XX

Example 2 (separate "Honors & Awards" section):

HONORS & AWARDS

- **First Place, Penn Biotech Group Case Competition**, 20XX (Led team to develop a novel market entry strategy)
- **National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship**, 20XX-20XX (Highly competitive fellowship supporting outstanding graduate researchers)
- **Sigma Xi Research Honor Society Inductee**, 20XX

Example 3 (emphasizing competitiveness):

AWARDS

- **Dr. Andy Binns Award for Outstanding Service to Graduate & Professional Student Life**, University of Pennsylvania, 2024 (Given to students who have significantly impacted graduate and professional student life through outstanding service)
- **City Year Merit Scholarship**, University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, 20XX (One of two annual \$15,000 scholarships awarded to City Year AmeriCorps alumni for full-time master's study, based on merit and service)

Example 4 (integrated into Relevant Experience)

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

PhD Student, University of Pennsylvania 20XX-present

- Led team of 5 students on the Penn Biotech Group Case Competition to develop a novel market entry strategy for a healthcare startup, resulting in First Place recognition among 20+ competing teams.
- Secured \$138,000 in external funding by writing and presenting a successful proposal for the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, demonstrating advanced research communication and project management skills.
- Designed and launched a university-wide mentorship initiative for graduate students by collaborating with faculty and student groups, earning the President & Provost's Honor for Developing New Initiatives in Graduate & Professional Student Life

Publications

Key conclusions:

1. Include a dedicated Publications section for research-oriented roles, listing citations in a consistent bibliographic format and prioritizing the most relevant or high-impact work.
2. For non-research positions, summarize publication achievements as outcomes within your Experience section to demonstrate research productivity and communication skills.
3. Place the Publications section after Education and Experience, or higher for research-heavy roles, and consider categorizing or limiting to “Selected Publications” if you have an extensive record.
4. Always use a standard citation style and bold your name in author lists to highlight your contributions.

A dedicated Publications section on your resume is generally most useful for research-oriented positions. If you are applying for roles outside of direct research, it's important to consider whether a full list of publications is necessary or if a concise summary would be more effective. For non-research roles, a bullet in the Experience section such as “Co-authored five peer-reviewed publications on [your field], demonstrating strong research and communication skills” can demonstrate research productivity and communication skills without overwhelming the reader.

The typical placement for a Publications section is after your Education and Relevant Experience sections. When listing publications in detail, always use a standard bibliographic format for your field, and maintain consistency in your chosen citation style, such as APA, MLA, or IEEE. This ensures clarity and professionalism.

For research roles, include full citations of your published work, listing all authors, the year of publication, the title of the article, the journal or conference name, volume, and page numbers where applicable. It's helpful to bold your name in the author list to make your contributions easily identifiable. Publications should be listed in reverse chronological order. You do not have to list all your publications, and can select those that demonstrate your knowledge of a certain field, or your ability to publish work in high-impact journals. You can highlight publications in the relevant experience (e.g., Published 3 papers on...) and also have a Publications section in your resume, as they address the same information in slight different ways.

Examples of how the Publications section can look:

Example 1 (For a research-relevant role – e.g., PhD student in economics applying for an economic consulting role):

PUBLICATIONS

- **Jane Q. Economist**, Michael Smith, and Priya Patel. (2024). The Impact of Residential Density on Vehicle Usage and Fuel Consumption: Evidence from National Samples. *Energy Economics*, 40, 196–206.
- Michael Smith, **Jane Q. Economist**, and Priya Patel. (2023). Credit Constraints and Small Business Growth: Evidence from U.S. Panel Data. *Proceedings of the Annual Conference on Applied Economics*, 112–125.
- **Jane Q. Economist** and Priya Patel. (2022). Behavioral Biases in Retirement Savings Decisions. In D. Acemoglu & E. Finkelstein (Eds.), *Advances in Behavioral Economics* (pp. 78–101). University Press.

Example 2 (integrating into relevant experience):

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, 20XX–Present

- Led a multidisciplinary project investigating the role of microglial activation in early-stage Alzheimer's disease, resulting in two first-author publications in *Neuron* and *Journal of Neuroscience*, and a presentation to industry professionals at the Society for Neuroscience Annual Meeting 20XX.
- Designed and implemented in vivo imaging experiments using two-photon microscopy to analyze synaptic changes in mouse models of neurodegeneration; findings were presented at the Gordon Research Conference on Neural Development (20XX).
- Collaborated with computational neuroscientists to develop a machine learning pipeline for analyzing large-scale calcium imaging data, culminating in a co-authored publication in *Nature Communications* (Lee, A., Smith, J.Q., et al., 20XX).
- Secured \$150,000 in pilot funding by authoring a successful grant proposal to the Brain Research Foundation, supporting ongoing research and resulting in a published methods paper in *eLife*.

Patents

Key conclusions:

1. The Patents section is optional but valuable for highlighting your innovation, problem-solving, and ability to translate research into practical applications, especially for R&D, engineering, or technology roles.
2. List granted and pending patents relevant to your target positions, including patent number or application number, title, inventors (with your name bolded), and date granted or filed.
3. Place this section after Education and Experience, or higher if patents are a major qualification, and reinforce your role in patent development within your experience descriptions.

The Patents section of your resume is designed to showcase your innovative contributions and ability to generate intellectual property. Including this section signals to employers that you have a proven track record of developing novel ideas and translating research into practical, real-world solutions. This is particularly valuable for roles in research and development, engineering, and technology-focused industries, where innovation and problem-solving are highly sought after.

You can consider including a dedicated Patents section if you have one or more granted or pending patents that are relevant to the types of positions you are seeking. The typical placement for this section is after your Education and Relevant Experience, similar to where you might list publications. However, if your patents are a major qualification for the role, consider placing this section higher on your resume, even before your publications. You can also reinforce the skills connected with the patent in the descriptions of your related experiences in the Relevant Experience section.

For each patent entry, provide the official patent number (or application number if pending), the full title of the invention, and a list of all inventors as they appear on the patent document-making your name bold for emphasis. Clearly specify the date the patent was granted or the application was filed.

Examples of how the patents section can look:

Example 1 (separate Patents section):

PATENTS

- US Patent No. 12,258,379: **Sortase Immune Receptors and Sortase Chimeric Antigen Receptors (CARs)**. Inventors: **Jane Q. Researcher**, Mauro Castellarin, Carl June. Granted: March 20XX. (Engineered immune cell receptors for targeted cancer immunotherapy, enabling more precise and effective treatment of hematological malignancies.)
- US Patent Application No. 2025/0090018: **Portable Pupillometer for Concussion Assessment**. Inventors: Kristy B. Arbogast, Christina L. Master, **Jane Q. Researcher**. Filed: September 20XX. (Developed a handheld device for rapid, objective evaluation of concussion risk in clinical and sports settings.)

Example 2 (combined with Relevant Experience):

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Postdoc, Department of Bioengineering, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 20XX–Present

- Led the development of a portable pupillometer for concussion diagnosis, resulting in a pending patent application.
- Collaborated with immunotherapy research teams to design next-generation CARs, leading to a granted patent (US Patent No. 12,258,379, **Jane Q. Researcher** et al., March 20XX).

Interests

Key conclusions:

1. The Interests section is entirely optional and should be included only if you have space and believe it adds value by showcasing your personality, cultural fit, or providing interview talking points.
2. Place this section at the bottom of your resume, keep it brief and specific (2-4 interests), and choose items that reflect positively on you or subtly connect to your field.
3. Avoid generic, controversial, or overly detailed interests, and remember that soft skills are best demonstrated through your experience, not just listed as interests.
4. If in doubt, omit this section and focus on strengthening your core qualifications.

The Interests section on a resume is an optional addition, unlike core sections such as Education or Experience. While more common on undergraduate resumes, it can still play a small role for some graduate students and postdocs as you apply for roles at mission-driven organizations, or where highlighting aspects for your personality might be important. If you choose to include it, the Interests section can add a personal touch to your resume, provide natural talking points for interviews, and help build rapport with interviewers. It can also showcase your well-roundedness and, in some cases, highlight soft skills or demonstrate a cultural fit with the organization—especially if your interests align with the company's mission or values. However, it's important to note that soft skills are best demonstrated through your professional experience rather than simply listing them as interests.

If you decide to add an Interests section, it should appear at the bottom of your resume, following your Skills and any other optional sections like Publications or Patents. When listing your interests, keep the section brief and genuine, aiming for two to four items. Be specific without going into excessive detail; for example, instead of simply stating "reading," you might write "reading contemporary fiction and science magazines." Consider whether your interests might subtly relate to your field or demonstrate positive attributes, such as teamwork or technical curiosity, but avoid making this the primary focus.

Choose interests that are positive, professional, and active, steering clear of anything controversial, highly personal, or that could raise concerns about your commitment to work. Avoid generic or clichéd interests like "movies" or "spending time with friends" unless you can add a unique and engaging detail. Keep in mind that this section should be concise, and so only provide a brief list rather than lengthy explanations. Think of the Interests section like dessert during a meal – it is great if you have room, but don't let it push the main course (your relevant skills and experiences) off the table!

Ultimately, the Interests section is truly optional. If you are unsure whether to include it, or if you need to save space, it can be omitted without negatively impacting your application. Focus on making your Education, Experience, and Skills sections as strong and relevant as possible, and consider the Interests section only if it adds meaningful value to your resume.

Examples of how the Interests section can look:

Example 1 (simple list):

SKILLS AND INTERESTS

Research Skills: Ethnographic Fieldwork, Archival Research

Data Analysis Tools: NVivo, MAXQDA

Languages: Spanish (Fluent), Swahili (Conversational)

Interests: Hiking, Photography, playing the guitar, volunteer work at a local animal shelter

Example 2 (slightly more specific):

SKILLS

Programming Languages: Python, Pandas, NumPy, Scikit-learn, R, SQL, MATLAB

Data Analysis & Visualization: Tableau, Power BI, SPSS, Excel (Pivot Tables, VBA), Statistical Modeling, Regression Analysis

Interests: Reading science fiction and fantasy novels, Competitive cycling, Attending live music performances, Board game enthusiast.

Example 3 (subtly highlighting potential soft skills):

INTERESTS

Captain of amateur soccer league, active member of a community garden project, following developments in renewable energy technologies.

Summary of key AI prompts to help you refine your resume

Keyword and skills extraction

- "Given this job description for a [job title] at [company name] [paste job description here], identify the top 5-7 skills and keywords I should highlight in my resume, and explain why each is important for this role."

Bullet point alignment

- "Compare my current resume bullet points for [specific experience] [paste your bullet points here] with this job requirement: '[paste requirement]'. Suggest improved bullet points using the Skill-Context-Outcome (SCO) approach to better align with the requirement."

Targeted bullet point generation

- "Based on the following job description [paste job description here] and my experience in [describe relevant experience], draft 3-5 resume bullet points that clearly demonstrate my ability to [specific skill or responsibility], using quantifiable results where possible."

Highlighting specific skills

- "This job description for a [job title] highlights [key theme/skill]. Review my resume [paste content here], identify specific examples where I have demonstrated this skill, and recommend how to make these examples more prominent and relevant to the employer."

Employer needs alignment

- "First, summarize the employer's key needs and expectations based on this job description [paste job description here]. Then, review my resume [paste resume content here] and evaluate how well my resume addresses these needs, suggesting specific improvements where there are gaps."

Industry language adaptation

- "Analyze this job description [paste job description here] to identify key language and terminology used in the field. Then, suggest specific ways I can incorporate this language into my resume to better resonate with the hiring manager."

Leadership emphasis

- "Review my resume [paste resume content here] and identify any bullet points where my leadership skills could be better emphasized. For each, suggest alternative phrasing that more clearly demonstrates leadership impact and outcomes."

Summary section tailoring

- "Using this job description [paste job description] and this resume [paste resume], identify 5 key conclusions that highlight the overlap between my experience and the skills the hiring manager seeks. Ensure each conclusion is specific, compelling, and encourages further reading by providing enough context to avoid generic statements."

Complete Resume Samples with Example Content

Master's samples

1. **Resume 1:** Master's Student - Biomedical Engineering (STEM) (Alice Chen)
1. **Resume 2:** Master's Student - Public Policy (Non-STEM) (John Smith)

PhD student/postdoc samples

1. **Resume 1:** Postdoc - Chemistry (STEM) (Emily Carter)
1. **Resume 2:** PhD Student - History (Non-STEM) (Daniel Williams)

Sample resume: Master's Student - Biomedical Engineering (STEM) (Alice Chen)

Alice Chen

215-555-1234 | alice.chen@upenn.edu | Philadelphia, PA | [linkedin.com/in/alicechen](https://www.linkedin.com/in/alicechen) | github.com/alicechen

SUMMARY

- Experienced in designing and executing in vitro experiments, analyzing biological datasets with MATLAB and Python, and collaborating in Penn's interdisciplinary research teams
- Strong record of presenting research at national conferences and contributing to peer-reviewed publications
- Demonstrated leadership through student organization management and professional development initiatives
- Eager to apply technical and analytical expertise to drive innovation in medical device development, with a focus on implantable biomaterials

EDUCATION

Master of Science in Biomedical Engineering, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA Expected May 20XX
Concentration: Biomechanics and Mechanobiology, GPA: 3.8/4.0

- Relevant Coursework: Advanced Biomechanics, Biomaterials Science, Tissue Engineering, Finite Element Analysis, MATLAB Programming for Engineers, Biological Transport Phenomena, Biostatistics

Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering, University of California, Berkeley, CA May 20XX
Minor: Bioengineering | Dean's List: Fall 2021, Spring 2022, Fall 2022

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Graduate Research Assistant, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA Aug 20XX – Present

- Designed and executed in vitro cell culture experiments to assess biocompatibility and degradation kinetics of novel hydrogels for drug delivery.
- Analyzed large datasets from cell viability assays and material characterization using MATLAB and Python (NumPy, SciPy), identifying correlations between material properties and cellular response.
- Developed a computational model in COMSOL Multiphysics to simulate mechanical loading and stress distribution in orthopedic implant prototypes for Penn Medicine collaborations.
- Collaborated with a multidisciplinary team of five, including postdocs and PhD candidates, to optimize protocols and prepare a manuscript submitted to *Biomaterials*.
- Presented findings at bi-weekly lab meetings and the 2024 Biomedical Engineering Society (BMES) annual conference as a representative of Penn Engineering.

Teaching Assistant: Intro to Biomechanics, University of Pennsylvania Philadelphia, PA Jan 20XX– May 20XX

- Used extensive knowledge of complex biomechanical concepts to facilitate weekly interactive sessions and hands-on demonstrations for 25 undergraduate students to foster a collaborative learning environment.

LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

President, Biomedical Engineering Society Student Chapter, University of Pennsylvania June 20XX – Present

- Directed a team of 10 officers to organize six professional development workshops and two industry networking events, increasing student participation by 20%.
- Represented the chapter at monthly Penn Bioengineering departmental meetings, advocating for graduate student resources and curriculum enhancements.

SKILLS

Technical: MATLAB, Python (NumPy, SciPy, Matplotlib), COMSOL Multiphysics, SolidWorks, AutoCAD, ImageJ, Cell Culture, Polymer Synthesis, Mechanical Testing (Instron), Confocal and SEM Microscopy

Data Analysis: Statistical Modeling (ANOVA, Regression), Experimental Design, Finite Element Analysis (FEA), Computational Modeling, Quantitative Research

Communication: Technical Writing (reports, publications), Scientific Presentations, Team Collaboration, Mentoring

Leadership: Project Management, Event Planning, Strategic Planning, Fundraising, Meeting Facilitation

Sample resume: Master's Student - Public Policy (Non-STEM) (John Smith)

JOHN SMITH

321-654-0987 | john.smith@email.com | Philadelphia, PA | [linkedin.com/in/johnsmith](https://www.linkedin.com/in/johnsmith) | johnsmithportfolio.com

SUMMARY

- 4 years of advanced training in policy analysis, program evaluation, and urban policy.
- Experienced in conducting rigorous qualitative and quantitative research, synthesizing complex policy issues, and communicating actionable recommendations to researchers and government officials
- Proven ability to develop and evaluate community-focused policy initiatives, including hands-on research in West Philadelphia and collaboration with local organizations.
- Strong communication, stakeholder engagement, and project management skills demonstrated through leadership roles and public presentations.
- Eager to apply analytical, research, and communication strengths to support affordable housing policy and program development in the non-profit sector.

EDUCATION

Master of Public Administration, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA Expected May 20XX
Concentration: Urban Policy

- Relevant Coursework: Policy Analysis Methods, Quantitative Analysis for Public Policy, Qualitative Research Methods, Program Evaluation, Urban Economics, Housing Policy, Non-profit Management

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI May 20XX
• Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Policy Research Intern, Philadelphia Housing Action Coalition, Philadelphia, PA Jun 20XX – Aug 20XX

- Conducted in-depth research on best practices in affordable housing policy, analyzing local ordinances and national programs to inform the coalition's advocacy in Philadelphia.
- Synthesized data from HUD and city reports to prepare concise policy briefs and memos for senior staff and coalition members.
- Supported the development and implementation of a community outreach campaign that increased engagement in advocacy activities by 15%.
- Collaborated with policy analysts and community organizers to draft a report recommending improvements to tenant protection laws in Philadelphia.

Master's Student, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 20XX – Present

- Evaluated the impact of Philadelphia's Eviction Diversion Program on housing stability by conducting interviews with program participants and analyzing city-level housing data using regression analysis in R.
- Developed recommendations for program enhancements to improve long-term housing outcomes.
- Published 3 papers (1 first author, 2 in collaboration with city planning researchers) in affordable housing, with one paper under review.

Research Assistant, Urban Studies Lab, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA Sept 20XX – Dec 20XX

- Collected and analyzed qualitative data through semi-structured interviews with 20 low-income residents in West Philadelphia regarding their experiences with housing assistance programs.
- Developed interview protocols and coding schemes using NVivo to ensure data consistency and facilitate thematic analysis.
- Contributed to the writing and editing of a research report on barriers to accessing affordable housing, which was presented at a local policy forum hosted by Penn.
- Quickly learnt new financial database platform to gather data for research, and became point of contact within research group for training other researchers.

PUBLICATIONS

- **Smith, J., & Vance, E.** (2025). Evaluating the impact of Philadelphia's Eviction Diversion Program on housing stability. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 47(2), 145-162.
- **Smith, J., Patel, R., & Lee, S.** (2024). Community perspectives on affordable housing access in West Philadelphia. *Housing Policy Debate*, 35(4), 789-805.
- **Smith, J.** (2024). Policy brief: Enhancing tenant protection laws in Philadelphia. *Philadelphia Housing Action Coalition Policy Series*, Issue 3.
- **Vance, E. & Smith, J.** (under review). Barriers to housing assistance for low-income residents: A qualitative study in West Philadelphia. *Urban Policy Review*.

LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

President, Public Policy Student Association, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 20XX – Present

- Facilitated bi-weekly meetings, managed communication among 40 members, and led the execution of five events, including a policy debate on climate change and a career panel with Penn alumni and policy professionals.
- Organized a guest speaker event featuring a prominent urban policy expert, attracting over 60 students and faculty from Penn's School of Arts & Sciences and Fels Institute of Government.
- Partnered with the Netter Center for Community Partnerships to launch a volunteer initiative addressing food insecurity in West Philadelphia.

SKILLS & INTERESTS

Analytical & Research: Policy Analysis, Program Evaluation, Qualitative Research (Interviewing, Focus Groups), Quantitative Research (Regression Analysis, Statistical Inference), Data Analysis, Needs Assessment, GIS Mapping

Communication: Policy Briefs, Technical Writing, Public Speaking, Presentations, Facilitation, Negotiation, Stakeholder Engagement, Report Writing

Software & Technical: Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Excel – Advanced, PowerPoint), R, SPSS, NVivo, PolicyMap, JSTOR, Zoom, Microsoft Teams

Project & Teamwork: Project Management, Team Leadership, Community Organizing, Advocacy, Strategic Planning, Time Management, Organization, Grant Writing (basic)

Interests: Urban cycling, Philadelphia neighborhood history, documentary film, volunteering with local housing advocacy groups

Sample resume: Postdoc - Chemistry (STEM) (Emily Carter)

Emily Carter, Ph.D.

456-789-0123 | emily.carter@email.com | Philadelphia, PA
linkedin.com/in/emilycarterphd | researchgate.net/profile/emily_carter

SUMMARY

- Advanced expertise in organic synthesis, catalysis, and analytical chemistry, including hands-on experience with NMR, IR, HRMS, and chromatography.
- Demonstrated success managing multidisciplinary research projects from concept through publication, collaborating with pharmaceutical partners and Penn's Chemical and Nanoparticle Synthesis Core.
- Proven ability to troubleshoot and optimize complex synthetic pathways, deliver high-quality results under tight deadlines, and communicate findings to technical and non-technical audiences.
- Experienced in mentoring and laboratory management, and skilled in translating research outcomes into actionable solutions for industry applications.
- Eager to leverage technical and project management skills in a Senior Process Engineer role at Dow.

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA June 20XX – Present

- Lead a collaborative project with GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) through Penn's Chemical and Nanoparticle Synthesis Core, developing new catalytic methods for scalable synthesis of pharmaceutical intermediates, resulting in a 25% increase in yield and improved process safety.
- Manage a team of three graduate students and two research technicians, coordinating project timelines, training on advanced instrumentation, and ensuring compliance with laboratory safety regulations.
- Design and execute over 200 multi-step organic syntheses, utilizing air-sensitive and glovebox techniques to generate novel heterocyclic compounds with potential therapeutic applications.
- Implement data-driven optimization strategies using Design of Experiments (DoE) and statistical analysis in Origin and Excel, reducing reaction development time by 30%.
- Present project milestones and technical updates to GSK's R&D team and at Penn's annual Chemistry Research Symposium, facilitating knowledge transfer between academia and industry.

PhD Student, University of Delaware, Newark, DE August 20XX – May 20XX

- Developed and optimized transition metal-catalyzed C–C bond-forming reactions for the synthesis of biologically active heterocycles, leading to two first-author publications in *Journal of Organic Chemistry* and *ACS Catalysis*.
- Synthesized and characterized over 50 new organic compounds using NMR (^1H , ^{13}C), IR, HRMS, and chromatographic techniques, supporting preclinical drug development collaborations with Penn Medicine.
- Managed a \$50,000 research budget, sourced reagents, and maintained laboratory records in accordance with university and industry standards.
- Collaborated with Perelman School of Medicine and Chemical and Nanoparticle Synthesis Core on interdisciplinary projects involving nanoparticle functionalization for targeted drug delivery.
- Presented research at 2 American Chemical Society National Meetings and Penn Chemistry Department seminars, translating complex findings for diverse audiences.
- Mentored 2 undergraduate students by providing timely feedback on their experimental progress, leader a journal discussion group, and helping to connect students with university and industry contacts.

PUBLICATIONS

- Carter, E., Miller, J., et al. (20XX). Nickel-catalyzed C–C bond formation for the synthesis of pyridine-based pharmaceuticals. *Journal of Organic Chemistry*, 90(4), 1234–1248.
- Carter, E., Nguyen, L., & Miller, J. (20XX). Mechanistic insights into palladium-catalyzed heterocycle synthesis. *ACS Catalysis*, 14(2), 567–579.
- Carter, E., et al. (20XX). Functionalized nanoparticles for targeted drug delivery: A collaboration between Penn Chemistry and Perelman School of Medicine. *ChemMedChem*, 18(7), 1123–1135.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Laboratory Techniques: Organic Synthesis (multi-step, air-sensitive), Catalysis (homogeneous, heterogeneous), Spectroscopy (NMR, IR, UV-Vis, HRMS), Chromatography (TLC, flash column, HPLC), Schlenk and glovebox techniques, Nanoparticle synthesis, Reaction optimization

Software & Data Analysis: ChemDraw, MestReNova, SciFinder, Reaxys, Origin, Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint), Design of Experiments (DoE), Data visualization, Statistical analysis

Project & Process Management: Project planning, Cross-functional team leadership, Budget management, Laboratory safety compliance, SOP development, Process optimization, Industry collaboration

Communication: Scientific writing (journal articles, reports, patents), Oral presentations (conferences, industry meetings), Technical training, Stakeholder engagement, Mentoring

EDUCATION

PhD in Chemistry, University of Delaware, Newark, DE May 20XX

- Dissertation: Development of Novel Transition Metal Catalyzed C–C Bond Forming Reactions for the Synthesis of Biologically Active Heterocycles

BS in Chemistry, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Cambridge, MA May 20XX

- Dean's List: All Semesters | MIT Chemistry Department Award for Academic Excellence, 20XX

LEADERSHIP & SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

Mentor Co-Chair, Chemistry Student Association, University of Pennsylvania June 20XX – June 20XX

- Led a team of 12 representatives, organizing monthly meetings and facilitating communication between graduate students, faculty, and industry partners.
- Initiated a professional development series in partnership with Penn Career Services and local pharmaceutical companies, increasing student participation in career workshops by 40%.
- Advocated for policy changes to the graduate student handbook, successfully implementing new mentorship guidelines and wellness resources.

Teaching Assistant, University of Pennsylvania Sept 20XX – Dec 20XX; Jan 20XX – May 20XX

- Instructed and mentored 40+ undergraduate students per semester in organic synthesis, analytical methods, and laboratory safety, fostering a collaborative and inclusive learning environment.
- Developed and revised laboratory protocols, integrating real-world examples from Penn's research partnerships to enhance student understanding of reaction mechanisms and data interpretation.

Mentor, Penn Science Outreach Initiative, Philadelphia, PA 20XX – 20XX

- Designed and delivered interactive chemistry workshops for high school students in West Philadelphia, increasing STEM engagement and awareness of career opportunities in science.
- Trained and supervised 10 graduate student volunteers in effective science communication and outreach best practices.

Sample resume: PhD Student - History (Non-STEM) (Daniel Williams)

DANIEL WILLIAMS

123-000-4567 | daniel.williams@email.com | Philadelphia, PA | [linkedin.com/in/dwilliams](https://www.linkedin.com/in/dwilliams)

SUMMARY

- Passionate educator and historian with expertise in Early American History and Cultural Studies, developed through doctoral research and teaching at the University of Pennsylvania.
- Experienced in designing and delivering engaging lessons, fostering inclusive classroom environments, and supporting diverse learners.
- Skilled in curriculum development, primary source analysis, and student-centered instruction, with a proven record of mentoring and academic advising.
- Demonstrated leadership in organizing educational programs, community engagement initiatives, and interdisciplinary events.
- Eager to contribute to the intellectual and extracurricular life of independent schools by inspiring students and building a vibrant learning community.

EDUCATION

PhD in History, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA Expected May 20XX

- Relevant Coursework: Early American History, Colonial History, History of the Book, Cultural History, Historical Methods, Historiography, Digital History
- Dean's Award for Distinguished Teaching by Graduate Students, University of Pennsylvania, 20XX
- GAPSA-Provost Fellowship for Interdisciplinary Innovation, University of Pennsylvania, 20XX

Master of Arts in History, Brown University, Providence, RI 20XX

- Brown University Presidential Fellowship, 20XX–20XX
- Master's Award for Outstanding Academic Accomplishment, Brown University, 20XX

Bachelor of Arts in History, Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH 20XX

- Phi Beta Kappa, Oberlin College, 20XX

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant, HIST 101: Foundations of Western Civilization, University of Pennsylvania 20XX – 20XX

- Designed and facilitated weekly discussion sections for classes of 18–22 undergraduates, using inquiry-based strategies and primary source analysis to deepen historical understanding.
- Developed lesson plans and assessments aligned with course objectives, incorporating diverse perspectives and differentiated instruction for varied learning styles.
- Provided detailed, actionable feedback on essays and exams, resulting in a 20% improvement in student analytical writing scores over the semester.
- Held weekly office hours to support students' academic growth, addressing questions and offering individualized guidance on research projects and study skills.
- Led a classroom activity on "Philadelphia in the American Revolution," integrating local archives and Penn Libraries' digital collections to connect course content with students' lived environment.

Guest Instructor, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology 20XX –20XX

- Delivered interactive workshops to middle and high school students from Philadelphia public schools, introducing them to historical inquiry and artifact analysis.
- Collaborated with museum educators to adapt content for diverse audiences, promoting engagement and accessibility.
- Guided students in hands-on activities, such as analyzing colonial-era artifacts and creating their own "historical newspapers," fostering creativity and critical thinking.

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Graduate Research Assistant, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 20XX – Present

- Conducted archival research at the Library Company of Philadelphia and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, identifying and analyzing primary sources for faculty-led research projects.
- Synthesized complex historical data for digital humanities initiatives, including the creation of an online database of eighteenth-century newspaper advertisements.
- Prepared research reports and presented findings at Penn's McNeil Center for Early American Studies, demonstrating clear and effective scholarly communication.
- Supported undergraduate research assistants by providing training in archival methods and digital tools.

Co-Organizer, New Directions in Early American Studies Conference, University of Pennsylvania 20XX

- Collaborated with a team of five graduate students to plan and execute a national academic conference, attracting over 50 participants from 15 institutions.
- Managed logistics, including call for papers, abstract review, scheduling, and vendor coordination, ensuring a seamless event experience.
- Secured \$2,000 in funding through successful grant applications to Penn's Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GAPSA) and external sponsors.

Volunteer Tutor, Netter Center for Community Partnerships, University of Pennsylvania 20XX – Present

- Tutored middle and high school students in social studies and writing at local Philadelphia schools, adapting instruction to support individual learning needs.
- Organized a school supplies drive as a Dropsite Volunteer, collecting and distributing materials to underserved schools in West Philadelphia.
- Participated in Penn VIPS community events, fostering positive relationships between Penn and local families.

Peer Advisor, Penn History Club, University of Pennsylvania August 20XX – Present

- Mentored undergraduate student leaders in planning club activities, including historical debates, museum visits, and guest speaker events.
- Supported students in developing leadership, communication, and organizational skills through regular advising meetings.

SKILLS

Instruction & Curriculum: Lesson Planning & Curriculum Design | Differentiated Instruction | Inquiry-Based Learning | Assessment & Feedback | Classroom Management | Student Advising & Mentorship

Research & Analysis: Archival Research (Library Company of Philadelphia, Historical Society of Pennsylvania) | Primary & Secondary Source Analysis | Digital Humanities Tools (Omeka, Voyant Tools) | Qualitative Research | Literature Review

Communication: Academic & Creative Writing | Public Speaking & Presentation | Workshop Facilitation | Parent & Community Engagement

Technical: Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) | Zotero, JSTOR, Project Muse | Google Workspace | Basic HTML & Digital Exhibit Platforms

Interests: Local Philadelphia history and walking tours | Creative writing and historical fiction | School debate coaching | Community service and outreach through Penn VIPS

Resources

Take advantage of the following resources as you are working on your resumes for internships or jobs.

- One-on-One Advising Sessions: Students can schedule appointments with career advisors at Penn Career Services for personalized resume reviews and guidance. It is recommended to share the job description with the advisor for tailored feedback. Appointments can be scheduled through Handshake.
- Same-Day Advising (Virtual Drop-in Sessions): For quick resume reviews (15-minute sessions), students can utilize virtual drop-in advising. Information on same-day advising can be found on Handshake.
- Career Services Website: The website hosts a wealth of resources, including:
 - Learn how to write a CV/resume page: This page gathers relevant resources for resumes and other job application materials.
 - Resume samples for Master's students: Real resumes shared by Master's students from different academic fields
 - Resume sample for PhD students/postdocs: real resumes shared by PhD students from different academic fields
 - Action Verbs List: A list of strong action verbs to use in resume bullet points, but prioritize action verbs from the job/internship description.
- Penn Career Services YouTube Channel: take a look at the resume/cover letter playlist for additional videos on effective resumes

Online platforms and tools:

- Targeted Resume Tool: A tool that emulates an Applicant Tracking System (ATS).
- Vault Resume Guide: a guide offering illustrations of different resume styles and advice.
- Big Interview Platform: This platform offers a video curriculum on resume writing.
- LinkedIn Learning: As Penn students and postdocs, you have free access to LinkedIn Learning. You can find many resources of resumes on this platform.
- PhD Career Training Platform: Custom-made for doctoral students and postdocs, it has a section on professional careers that includes great resume and cover letter advice
- Beyond Graduate School Platform: internship and job search advice specifically for Master's students, with resources on resumes.
- Imagine PhD: This platform is particularly helpful for PhD students and postdocs in the social sciences and humanities. There are annotated resume samples for many of the career paths related to the humanities and social sciences.

Resources (cont.)

- [PhD Career Training Platform](#)
- [Beyond Graduate School](#)
- [How to write a resume page on CS website](#)
- [Schedule a resume review appointment](#)
- [Submit your resume for review \(undergrads only\)](#)
- [Resume playlist on the Penn Career Services YouTube Channel](#)
- [Vault Guide to resumes](#)
- [Targeted Resume](#)
- [Quick resume/cover letter content and formatting advice](#)
- [Career Services action verb list](#)



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