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CAREER LAB
ON DEMAND



VIEWS TO
YOUR FUTURE



LAND YOUR
DREAM JOB



GIRL TALK



GIRL

TALK

Welcome to the Career Lab Virtual Campus

How do you prepare for life after college? Get started today by checking out the [videos and podcasts](#) from our Career Lab Events. In [Views to Your Future](#), hear firsthand from leading business women [what it's really like to be them](#). In our [discussion forum](#), you can share stories, ask questions, and swap ideas on careers, getting your MBA, you name it. And don't miss out on the [great tips](#) for landing your dream job!



NOW PLAYING

in CAREER LAB ON DEMAND

College Webinar: Liberal Arts to Business
November 21, 2008

Hosted by Forté companies, a panel of women executives who graduated with a liberal arts degree describe how they positioned their skill set and experience to successfully enter the business world.



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by [emd209](#) | 4/23/09 7:30pm
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by [lesirianni](#) | 3/19/09 2:16pm
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by [abdullahkm@vcu.edu](#) | 2/11/09 5:24pm
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In today's competitive job market, getting a job can feel nearly impossible. But a dream career may be closer than you think. The first step is to figure out what kind of job would best fit your skills and your interests. Then, start networking with everyone, from your neighbors to your hairstylist. You'll also need a resume that emphasizes your real-world experience. If you haven't had an internship, get one; if you're not a member of a professional organization, join one.

Every step of the way, show the business world what you can do for them. Employers want to know you can work independently, write well and fit into their culture (without the help of mom and dad). Express your passion in the interview, and save any salary, benefits or "work/life balance" questions for later discussions when they're ready to make an offer. Focus on getting the job first, and the perks will follow!

For even more career advice, check out this blog from Lindsey Pollak, author of "Getting from College to Career":

LINDSEY POLLAK BLOG →



Resume Tips

WRITE IT RIGHT! →

Interview Tips

WIN THEM OVER →

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LAND YOUR
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GIRL TALK

RESUME TIPS

- Step 1. Know Yourself
- Step 2. Do Your Homework
- Step 3. Fill in the Blanks
- Step 4. Make it Perfect
- Step 5. Complete the Package

STEP 1 Know Yourself

To create a successful resume—one that helps get you in the door for an actual interview—you need a clear picture of yourself. What are your strengths and weaknesses? What type of job feels right for you? Here are some things to consider:

✿ YOUR SKILLS.

Think about how you've spent your college days (outside of parties and social events). What kinds of group projects did you do? What organizations were you involved in? Any leadership activities? Let your mind wander and jot down everything—from part-time jobs to awards or honor societies. The format isn't important. This is your time to figure out your accomplishments and what makes you unique.

✿ YOUR INTERESTS.

Spend some time thinking about your dream job. What kinds of things are you passionate about? Could you make a career out of one of your hobbies? You'll be more satisfied in a job that aligns with your interests. Make a list of the types of jobs that might support your passions. Don't forget to consider non-profit organizations, government agencies and small businesses.

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STEP 2 Do Your Homework

Think you're ready to write your resume? Not so fast. In addition to knowing your own skills and interests, you should go online to see how to best "sell" yourself for a particular job opportunity. Take some time to:

RESEARCH.

Of course, your goal is to get a dream job, but your resume should be tailored to a specific position. By referring to actual job descriptions, you can be sure to use the language that fits the industry. Get familiar with the qualities you need to highlight, as well as key phrases to use. Take the time to read about your prospective field, so your enthusiasm and knowledge can shine through in your resume. Learn more about what to include in your resume by visiting:

- ➔ **CareerTV** has employer videos and hiring tips from recruiters
- ➔ **WetFeet** offers company profiles and industry profiles
- ➔ **The Wall Street Journal** has the latest business news
- ➔ **Pink Magazine** provides articles on advancing your career
- ➔ **Forté Foundation Sponsors** lists companies committed to women in business

FIND EXAMPLES.

While you're not going to copy anyone else's resume, it doesn't hurt to get ideas from others. Does your college's career center have examples? Do you have friends or mentors who might share their resume with you? This is a good way to figure out how to describe your qualifications. Your work history may be entirely different, but someone else's sorority experiences could spark ideas for how to write about your time as a Resident Assistant (RA). For more information, visit:

- ➔ **CareerTV** for videos with resume tips from recruiters
- ➔ **Women for Hire** for chronological and functional resume templates
- ➔ Your college's career center website for resume tips and templates

PREPARE ONLINE.

Once you wow employers with your resume, they will need a good way to contact you. Set up a professional email address—one that uses your full name—for job-seeking purposes. This is not the time for a cutesy nickname or a school address that might expire. Also, what happens if you Google yourself? From MySpace to Facebook to your personal blogs, be sure that you've presented yourself appropriately online. Don't disqualify yourself from a job before you even walk in the door.



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STEP 3 Fill in the Blanks

Although hiring managers respect creativity, they also expect for your resume to include all the basics. Be sure to lead with your most impressive qualifications. If your degree and class projects are related to the job, place your education before your work experience. However, if you had an internship in your field, your work experience should come first.

CONTACT INFORMATION.

Your name should be at the top of your resume, highlighted in a large, bold typeface. Then, include your mailing address, email address and phone numbers. Confirm that your voice mail messages sound professional. If you include your cell phone number on your resume, try to answer the job-related calls in a quiet setting, even if you receive them after-hours.

OBJECTIVE.

An objective is optional for your first resume. Instead, you can use a cover letter to address your particular interest in a position. However, if you decide to include one, keep it simple, specific and brief. Within two or three lines, you should highlight what you have to offer the company. For example: "To utilize my strong analytical and interpersonal skills in an entry-level account management position."

EDUCATION.

Naturally, the name of your college, your degree and expected date of graduation are important, as well as any coursework related to your desired profession. Definitely include your GPA if it's above a 3.0, or simply provide the GPA for your major. Special seminars or workshops can be listed here, as well as any semesters abroad. In addition, you can include class-specific projects. For example, if you're a journalism major, describe the major articles you've written and the interviewing, research and legwork that was involved.

WORK HISTORY.

Internships, part-time jobs or unpaid work—it all counts as experience for your first job! Summarize your role in 4–5 bullets, putting the strongest elements first. Start each bullet with an action verb and be specific about your accomplishments. For example, if you worked in retail, you learned valuable techniques for interacting with the public, demonstrated dependability and accountability, worked as part of a team and managed money. As a full-time babysitter, you coordinated schedules, handled finances, marketed your services and demonstrated extreme responsibility. Be sure to explain if the job was a way to fund your schooling and how much you financed.

ACTIVITIES.

Here's where you'll list more of your unique strengths and leadership skills. Did you volunteer for an organization, serve as an assistant to a professor or tutor other students? Consider how your roles in a campus club or sorority helped prepare you for "real world" business scenarios, such as planning events or working within a budget. Also, be sure to highlight the results of your work. For example, if you increased the number of donations for the Special Olympics on your campus, state by how much or the total amount donated.

AWARDS/HONORS.

Good grades are one thing, but how else have you been recognized? This can be combined with your Activities section or included as a separate section. Don't forget to mention any scholarships.



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STEP 4 Make it Perfect

Hiring managers may spend only 10–15 seconds on your resume, so every line needs to make a good impression. You can't afford to have any typos or vague wording. Otherwise, your resume could end up at the bottom of the stack—or even in the trash. To fine-tune your resume:

✿ CHECK AND DOUBLE-CHECK EVERYTHING.

Your resume needs to be grammatically perfect. Spell-check the document and read it out-loud. This can help you eliminate mistakes and outshine the competition. Is your phone number correct? Don't let an error in your contact information disrupt your job search. In addition, have a friend, family member or career coach read the resume. Revise anything that's confusing.

✿ BE SPECIFIC.

Employers need to know what you've accomplished and how you'll deliver results for them. Use strong action verbs—words like created, developed, organized, motivated, managed and produced. Also, be sure to include tangible details, such as "Developed three fundraising events for campus organization and supported them with 45 volunteers" or "Reorganized 10 years' worth of archived production files, making them easily accessible to the entire department."

✿ SELL YOURSELF WITH PROPER FORMATTING.

In addition to being clear and concise, your resume must be easy to read. Use bullets to organize information into manageable nuggets. Select a standard font, keep the font size no smaller than 10 point, and allow for enough white space. Be consistent in your spacing and formatting choices. Using too many different styles can look like a mistake.

✿ STICK TO THE RULES.

Remember that your first resume should be one page only—no exceptions. Unless you're applying for a position in a very creative industry, such as advertising or entertainment, stick with traditional formats as well — no colored backgrounds, and little, if any, colored type. Do not include pictures of yourself. When sending your resume electronically, always use a PDF format unless specifically asked to do otherwise. Most importantly — never, ever lie on your resume. Misrepresentations will come back to haunt you.

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STEP 5 Complete the Package

When applying for a job, your resume should always be included with a cover letter. The right references can also make a difference. Here are some tips for creating these elements.

✿ COVER LETTER.

Got the job description handy? Your cover letter should explain why your skills are the perfect fit for the position. This is your chance to show your passion for the field, along with your writing abilities and attention to detail. No typos or spelling errors allowed! Include the exact name of the job and how you heard about it. Don't just repeat your resume. Rather, pick out key accomplishments and elaborate on them. Mention details about the company to help personalize the tone. For more information, visit:

- ✦ [CareerTV](#) for videos with hiring tips from recruiters
- ✦ [Women for Hire](#) for cover-letter templates and follow-up tips

✿ LIST OF REFERENCES.

At some point in the hiring process, you will be asked to provide at least three references. These need to be people who know you and can vouch for your quality of work, such as your professor, former supervisor and coach. If your references include a respected person in the field or the prospective employer's region, by all means, attach the list to your resume! The right names can open doors, and you never know whom the hiring manager may know. Be sure to get permission before using anyone as a reference, and give them a copy of your resume for background.

Creating a resume package that's attractive and attention-getting can be a challenge. But when it results in an interview for your dream job, it's certainly time well-spent. Good luck.