



# AN INTRODUCTION TO RESUMES, COVER LETTERS & REFERENCES

**Office Hours:**  
Monday – Friday  
8:00 am – 4:30 pm

**Walk-In Hours:**  
Mon, Tues, & Wed  
2:00 - 4:00 pm  
or call 319-399-8260 for an  
appointment



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# The Importance of Your Resume and Cover Letter

The first step in your search for an internship, career opportunity or graduate school is to complete a compelling resume and cover letter. Resumes and cover letters are marketing tools to represent your personal brand to future employers and others.

## Here are some things to keep in mind:

- There is no one right way to write your resume and cover letter. Both documents must be customized and personalized to fit you, and they must evolve over time as you progress through your career.
- Spelling, grammar and punctuation must be flawless.
- Each resume and cover letter that you submit should be customized for the particular internship, job or graduate school opportunity that you are seeking.
- Your resume and cover letter must be well-organized and clearly written. When seeking a position, it is important to remember that it is not about your need for an internship or a job.
- The resume and cover letter should be clean and easy-to-read, making it as visually appealing as possible.
- It is important for you to demonstrate a path of interest and experience leading to the position you are seeking.
- Clearly state what you believe makes you a distinctive candidate for the particular position you are seeking.

Candidates who present themselves in distinctive ways with a well-written resume and cover letter will be chosen to move to the next step in the process - the interview.

# Sample Resume #1

## Name:

Mailing address:

City, State, Zip Code:

Phone number: (set up your voicemail- stating your full name)

Email address: (use professional email address- full name @gmail.com)

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## Education:

Bachelor of Arts, Coe College, Cedar Rapids, IA, May 20XX  
recent grads)

GPA: X.XX (for current students or

Majors: Philosophy and Communication Studies

Certifications and/or Licensures

Study Abroad/Off Campus Study

Experiences

## Relevant Coursework: (optional)

Educational Foundations

Theories of Human Nature

## Related Experience:

Teaching Assistant, Learning and Behavior, Coe College, Cedar Rapids, IA  
Present

20XX-

- Prepared weekly assignments and assisted teaching a course of 30 psychology students
- Coordinated five guest lecturers

Camp Counselor, Charlie Kohawk Sports Camp, Coe College, Cedar Rapids, IA Summer 20XX

- Aided in developing speed, agility, and conditioning drills for over 100 junior high school athletes
- Prepared arrival/departure information, organized game schedules, and managed team rosters for ten co-educational volleyball, basketball, and track teams

## Other Experience:

Clerk, St. Luke's Hospital, Cedar Rapids, IA

20XX-Present

- Updated hospital-wide database with employee medical history in a one-month period
- Distributed bi-weekly paychecks to all divisions of pediatric staff

Treasurer, Alpha Sigma Alpha Sorority, Coe College, Cedar Rapids, IA

August 20XX-20XX

- Maintained a balanced budget of \$128,000 and wrote checks for organization expenses
- Assisted in the development of cooperative relationships with 12 local businesses

## Campus and Community Involvement:

Writing Center Consultant

Women's Chorale

Student Activities Committee

Polk Elementary School

## Skills:

- Computer Skills: Adobe PageMaker, Photoshop, Illustrator; Microsoft Publisher, Word, Excel, PowerPoint
- Language Skills: Proficient Spanish (written and spoken)
- Interpersonal Skills: Counseling, communication, peer advising

# SAMPLE RESUME #2

**JANET TIFFANY**

4401 Fifth Avenue, Sioux City, IA 51101

jiffany@hotmail.com

(712) 4XX-12XX

## Education

Bachelor of Arts, Coe College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa  
Double Major: Managerial Accounting and Business Administration

Expected graduation: May 20XX

## Relevant Coursework

Intermediate Accounting  
Principles of Accounting I and II  
Auditing

Macroeconomics  
Statistics  
Principles of Marketing

## Work Experience

### Jones Clothing

Merchandise Lead (promoted September 20XX)  
Sales Associate and Stylist

Marion, Iowa  
September 20XX – Present  
January 20XX – September 20XX

- Communicate clear priorities and productivity goals to the sales team, with accountability for reaching sales goals
- Provide management with frequent productivity updates and associate performance issues
- Train and coach floor team members, with an emphasis on store merchandising
- Hold the merchandise team responsible for maintaining a customer-focused environment

### Makeover and Beyond

Beauty Advisor

Marshalltown, Iowa  
January 20XX - March 20XX

- Assist customers with testing make-up to promote sales
- Stocked shelves to replenish inventory
- Responsible for cash register transactions

### Smith Clothing Store

Customer Service Representative and Cashier

Marshalltown, Iowa  
March 20XX - January 20XX

- Handled customer service including in-store pickup, exchanges and returns, on-line purchases and complaints
- Promoted purchase protection plans and processed applications for store credit cards
- Responsible for cash register transactions, as well as for cashiers working at checkout

### Greenfield Golf

Server

Geneseo, Illinois  
August 20XX-Present

- Took orders, served food and handled transactions
- Served golfers by registering them to play and renting golf carts
- Checked food orders from wholesale suppliers and restocked food in the club house kitchen

## Activities

Gamma Sigma Delta Pi - Coe College

September 20XX-Present

- Volunteered to assist with philanthropy event

Varsity Cheerleader - Coe College

September 20XX-Present

# Sample Header Styles for Resumes and Cover Letters

Nathan Reed  
1220 First Avenue NE  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52402  
319-399-8844 / nreed@MCHSI.com

Elizabeth Betz

1220 First Avenue NE ♦ Cedar Rapids, IA 52402 ♦ 319-399-8844 ♦ [ebetz@gmail.com](mailto:ebetz@gmail.com)

**Andrew L. Markuson**  
slmarkus@coe.edu  
GMU# 111      1220 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue NE      Cedar Rapids, IA      319.721.5555

*Kailani Damaso*

*1220 First Avenue NE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52402, (319) 399-8844, [kdamaso@cox.com](mailto:kdamaso@cox.com)*

EVA HENDERSON  
1220 First Ave. NE ❖ Cedar Rapids, IA 52402 ❖ (319) 360-9999 ❖ [elhender@yahoo.com](mailto:elhender@yahoo.com)

**Garmai Nichols**  
1220 First Avenue NE • Cedar Rapids, IA 52402 • (319) 399-8844 • [gnich@gmail.com](mailto:gnich@gmail.com)

**Mar’Kainen Thompson**  
[mjthomp@aol.com](mailto:mjthomp@aol.com)

**Current Address:**  
1220 First Avenue NE  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52402  
(319) 399-8840

**Permanent Address:**  
643 E. Franklin Street  
Rockton, IL 61072  
(815) 624-4XXX

# Sample Education Sections

## EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

### **Bachelor of Arts, Coe College, Cedar Rapids, IA**

Major: English                      Minor: Mathematics  
May, 20XX                              GPA: 3.6

### Study Abroad

El Colegio Universitario, Cuenca, Ecuador

## **Education**

Bachelor of Arts, Coe College, Cedar Rapids, IA  
Double Major: Computer Science and Business Management  
Minor: Mathematics  
Anticipated Graduation Date: December 20XX

## **Academic Training**

### **Bachelor of Music**

Coe College, Cedar Rapids, IA

- Major: Music Education
- Expected Graduation: May 20XX

## **Education:**

Bachelor of Arts, Coe College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa  
Major: Business Administration                      Minor: Economics  
Anticipated Graduation Date: May 20XX  
GPA: 3.5  
  
Associate of Arts, Graduated August 20XX, Kirkwood Community College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa  
GPA 3.3

## **Education**

### ***Bachelor of Arts, Coe College, Cedar Rapids, IA***

Major: General Science                      GPA: 3.8  
Minor: Chemistry                              Expected Graduation: May 20XX

## **Honors and Scholarships**

Coe College Presidential Scholarship  
Science Scholarship  
Dean's list: Fall 20XX, Fall 20XX, Fall 20XX  
Academic All-Conference Varsity Volleyball 20XX, Varsity Basketball 20XX-20X

## Formatting Your Resume – Paper

### **Paper**

8-1/2 x 11; white; nice quality

### **Margins**

no smaller than .5

### **Font size**

**Name:** 16 pt.

**Headings:** 14 pt.

**Content:** 12 or 11 pt. recommended, but no smaller than 10 pt.

### **Font type**

Times New Roman, Calibri, Arial, Verdana, Garamond, Cambria, Book Antiqua, or Trebuchet MS

### **Layout & graphics**

use bolding, underlining to separate text and pull reader's eye

### **Number of pages**

try to stick to one, but two can be acceptable depending on breadth of experience

## Formatting Your Resume – E-mail

Follow the organization's directions

Email subject line

Document file name

JobtitleXYZCompanyRES\_Doe,Sue

JobtitleXYZCompanyCL\_Doe,Sue

File type = pdf



## Making Your Narratives Distinctive

- Be as descriptive as possible when writing about your achievements.
- Well-stated descriptions provide a more in-depth view of what you have accomplished.

### Use results-oriented phrases:

#### Minimal description ✗

Helped run student blood drive.

#### Well-stated description ✓

Coordinated student-run blood drive and assisted in the recruitment of more than 100 donors.

#### Minimal description ✗

Started landscaping business, growing from two to eight customers over a two-year period.

#### Well-stated description ✓

Started landscaping business, growing business by 400% over a two-year period. Designed and completed projects for customers to transform their yards and gardens into attractive, park-like areas.

### Use powerful action verbs:

#### Minimal description ✗

Responsible for drawing pictures for children's books.

#### Well-stated description ✓

Illustrated award-winning children's book that sold 800,000 copies in the first two weeks of print.

### Quantify your achievements:

#### Minimal description ✗

Did props for theater productions.

#### Well-stated description ✓

Directed acquisition of props for more than 10 theater productions each year, using a \$5,000 annual budget with an average of 175 props per production.

# Distributing Your Resume Online

Most employers request resumes to be sent via email or submitted through an online application process. These resumes are typically formatted differently than a hard-copy resume. It is important to submit your document in the format requested.

## Submitting your resume by email

- Cut and paste your cover letter into the body of the email and indicate that you are including your resume. Cut and paste the text version of your resume into the email below the cover letter.
- You can also attach your resume as a document; most prefer a PDF document (recommended) or a Microsoft Word document. Some companies will not accept email attachments because of viruses, so you should provide options. By sending your resume in both forms (text and attachment), the employer can elect to read it in the body of the email or open and view the attached version.

*Example of saved document file name: 20XX MarketngRes\_Doe,Jane.pdf*

- Your resume must be in plain text format before you paste it into the email (see below for formatting tips).
- Use an appropriate subject line; otherwise your email may get deleted before it is opened. Use the job title or job code cited in the ad, or use a few words stating your career objective if you are “cold contacting” the employer. If you are contacting a Coe alum, use the word “Coe” in your subject line. If referred by a mutual acquaintance, use that person’s name.
- Follow the application instructions exactly. Whatever format the employer wants, whether it is an attachment or a text resume in the body of an email, is what you need to send.

## To include your resume in the body of an email or cut it and paste it into a web-based form, follow these steps:

- Remove all special formatting, including **bold**, *italics*, underlines, bullets, tabs, lines, etc. Use ALL CAPS in section headings to distinguish different sections of your resume. If you have used bullet pointed lists in your resume, replace the bullets with a hand-entered asterisk (\*).
- Align all text to the left margin.
- When saving this version of your resume in Word, select “File => Save As => Other Formats” and change the “file type” to “Plain Text (\*.txt)”. Name this resume version something that you will remember, such as “Resume Text Version”.
- Re-open your text version and view the differences. This text version is now ready to copy and paste into an email or into a web-based text box.

## Tips for Handling References

- Always provide your references on a separate page from your resume. If you are sending your resume electronically, give your reference list a different filename.
- Provide your references only when asked and the number they have asked for.
- You do not need a line on your resume that states “References Available Upon Request.” References are a given. If an employer is interested in you, they will do a reference check on you one way or another, so there is no need to state the obvious.

- Unless otherwise stated, provide no fewer than 3 and no more than 5 good references.
- Your references should consist of individuals who can speak to your work: current and former employers, professors and people who run organizations where you have performed volunteer work. Family members, friends and people who know you on a personal level (your dentist or your hairstylist, for example) are not appropriate references. If character references are requested, you may be able to use other people (such as clergy) who know you better personally than professionally.

- Always ask someone to be your reference before including them on a reference list. Ask their permission (i.e. never send an email stating “I am putting you on my reference list, is that OK?”), make sure they know you well enough to speak to the skills needed for the job or program you are applying for, and make sure it will be a positive reference.
- Stay in touch with your references as you move forward in your career. As you grow professionally, your reference list will change. Be sure to occasionally touch base with people who can still be good references but with whom you no longer work. Re-connect with references every time you embark on a new job search if you will be using them again.
- You can list your references in alphabetical order or in order of priority or strength of the recommendation.

# Reference List Examples

## References for Tammy Carlson

3.4567

[tac@coe.edu](mailto:tac@coe.edu)

Frank Smith  
Director of Marketing  
Running Wild  
589 North Ruby Drive  
Sioux City, IA 51095  
(712) 255-0000  
[FSmith@running.com](mailto:FSmith@running.com)

Colin Jones  
General Manager  
George's Clothing Store  
1896 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Sioux Falls, SD 55667  
(605) 448-1234  
[Colin.Jones@george.net](mailto:Colin.Jones@george.net)

Sally Jampa  
Human Resources Administrator  
Snowflower Graphics  
4304 Elm Street  
Sergeant Bluff, IA 51199  
(712) 445-6543  
[SallyJampa@snowflower.com](mailto:SallyJampa@snowflower.com)

## How to Write a Cover Letter

- Include the date on the upper left hand side of the page. Under that, enter your contact information which will include your physical address, phone number, email address, and LinkedIn url.
- Under your personal information, enter the company's information, including to whom you are writing the letter, Mr. or Ms. Employer's-Last-Name when you can find the information, "Madam or Sir" if you have looked exhaustively and cannot find a name. Do NOT write "To whom it may concern" which gives the impression that you did not try at all.
- The first paragraph of your cover letter contains the position for which you are applying, and how you heard about the opening.
- Your second paragraph contains substance. Outline your strongest qualifications that match the position requirements. As much as possible, provide evidence of your related experiences and accomplishments. Make references to your enclosed resume.
- Write something about the company that indicates that you have done your homework on them. Convince the employer that you have personal qualities and motivation to perform well in the position. Sell yourself!
- Finally, establish a professional follow-up procedure, and *follow through* with it.

# Cover Letter Example #1

Structure your application letters with three or four paragraphs:

Date (enter 3X)

Your Street Address  
City, State, Zip Code  
(Area code) Phone Number  
E-Mail Address  
LinkedIn url (enter 2X)

Mr. or Ms. Employer  
Title  
Organization/Company name  
Street Address  
City, State, Zip Code (enter 2X)

Dear Mr. or Ms. Employer -OR *Madam/Sir if name not known*: (enter 2X)

I am applying for the position of Systems Analyst, advertised through Coe College's Coe Connections website. My education, experience, and career interests will allow me to make an immediate and substantial contribution to XYZ Company.

Your position requires experience in computer systems, financial applications software, and end-user consulting. With a major in management information systems, I have training on mainframes, minicomputers, and microcomputers as well as with a variety of software programs and applications. My practical experience in my college's computer center as a programmer and as a student consultant for system users gave me valuable exposure to complex operations. Additionally, I worked as a cooperative education student in computing operations for a large bank where I gained knowledge of financial systems. My enclosed resume provides more details on my qualifications.

Your company has an excellent reputation for customer service, and my experiences working with many different types of end-users will enable me to give your customers complete satisfaction and leave them with a positive lasting impression of XYZ Company. I know I would be a valuable addition to your team.

I am eager to talk with you further regarding my qualifications and to learn more about this opportunity. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,  
Lisa Watson

## Cover Letter Example #2

**Joe Kohawk**

PO Box 548 • Coe College • Cedar Rapids IA 52402 • 319-399-0XXX • [jkohawk@coe.edu](mailto:jkohawk@coe.edu)

March 12, 20XX

Jonathan Murphy  
Save Our Children  
1212 33<sup>rd</sup> Street, Suite #1  
Bloomington, DE 80080

Dear Mr. Murphy:

I am writing in reference to the Program Coordinator position (NY-02) listed recently on the AmeriCorps website. This position appeals to me because of my strong interest in service as a career, assisting to create a positive environment for all members of a community. Through my internship with Save Our Children, I believe I will bring what I learned to this internship which is the value of serving all children through care, love, and support; the same attributes of AmeriCorps.

In May 20XX, I will graduate from Coe College with my Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology. Some of my strengths include being self-motivated, organized, and able to work with a variety of people. As a college student I am often required to do group projects allowing me to be a part of a productive team. I enjoy working with people in order to complete a common goal. My internship as a youth care worker gave me the opportunity to do this with a team of professionals. We often worked in groups to strategize new, more effective ways to work with each client. This team approach taught me to see things from different perspectives while learning new ways to help my clients achieve independence and attain goals. In addition, I am able to successfully maintain a good grade point average while remaining involved as a campus leader. These skills, combined with my educational background in psychology, make me an ideal candidate for this Program Coordinator position.

Enclosed you will find a copy of my resume. If you should have any questions regarding how my skills fit with your organization, please give me a call at 319-399-0XXX. I may also be reached by e-mail at [jkohawk@coe.edu](mailto:jkohawk@coe.edu).

Thank you for considering me for this position. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,  
Joe Kohawk

# Additional Job Search Correspondence

There are many different letters you may write throughout your job search process. You may use the same format as in the cover letter example, but the content of the letter will vary. Below you will find the most common letters.

## Networking Letter – Informational Interview

The networking letter is designed to generate informational interviews – not job interviews. Informational interviews allow you to meet individuals who can provide specific information about your intended career. Networking is a viable way to conduct research on jobs, refine your career goals, and uncover information about unposted job openings.

A networking letter establishes a connection between you and the reader. For example, when writing to Coe alumni, indicate you are a Coe student. Your purpose should be stated without placing pressure on the reader. Briefly explain your situation. The closing section should specify that you would like to speak with the person and how you will be in contact to make arrangements.

## Acceptance Letter

Use this letter to officially accept a job offer and to confirm the terms of your employment (salary, starting date, medical examinations, etc.) Most often, an acceptance letter follows a telephone conversation during which the details of the offer and the terms of employment are discussed. The letter confirms your acceptance, expresses your appreciation for the opportunity, and positively reinforces the employer's decision to hire you.

## Reply to Not Having Been Chosen

It is best to write a thank you email or letter, even in situations where you were not chosen for the job. You will be tempted not to respond (and most people don't). Thank employers for their time and consideration. Reinforce the positive aspects of the company. Ask to be kept in mind for future positions with them or with colleagues. Wish them well. If you were the second-choice candidate and the first choice turns down the job offer, writing the thank you note can put you in an excellent position to obtain the job, or get the next one that comes up in the organization.

## Thank You Letter

Within 24 hours of any type of interview (informational, employment, internship), it is extremely important to send a follow-up email or letter to the person or people with whom you interviewed. In your thank you communication, you should include:

### Introduction

- Indicate why and when you met the individual, and thank them for their time.
- Reiterate your enthusiasm and continued interest in the field or position.

### Body

- Remark on unique aspects of your discussion. This is a key element!
- Relate your qualifications (education, experience, and skills).

### Closing

- Highlight any important information which was not discussed in the interview.
- Note follow-up action regarding his/her suggestions.
- Convey your appreciation for his/her time and consideration.



## Power Verb List

Select applicable words to describe your Functional Skills

Achieved	Compiled	Explained	Lectured	Reasoned
Acquired	Composed	Explored	Located	Recorded
Acted	Computed	Facilitated	Logged	Received
Adapted	Conceived	Fashioned	Maintained	Reduced
Addressed	Conducted	Financed	Managed	Referred
Administered	Conserved	Fixed	Manipulated	Related
Advertised	Consulted	Formulated	Mapped	Reported
Advocated	Contributed	Fostered	Modeled	Researched
Aided	Converted	Founded	Modified	Responded
Allocated	Cooperated	Gained	Monitored	Restored
Analyzed	Coordinated	Gathered	Narrated	Reviewed
Anticipated	Defined	Generated	Negotiated	Scheduled
Applied	Delegated	Handled	Observed	Spoke
Appraised	Delivered	Headed	Obtained	Stimulated
Approved	Designed	Helped	Operated	Strategized
Arranged	Detected	Identified	Ordered	Streamlined
Assembled	Determined	Illustrated	Organized	Strengthened
Assessed	Developed	Influenced	Oversaw	Studied
Assisted	Directed	Initiated	Participated	Succeeded
Attained	Discovered	Inspected	Performed	Summarized
Audited	Displayed	Instituted	Persuaded	Supervised
Cared	Documented	Integrated	Planned	Supported
Charged	Drafted	Interpreted	Practiced	Surveyed
Chartered	Edited	Interviewed	Prepared	Symbolized
Classified	Eliminated	Introduced	Presented	Taught
Coached	Enabled	Invented	Prioritized	Trained
Collaborated	Enforced	Inventoried	Produced	Translated
Collected	Enlisted	Investigated	Publicized	Upgraded
Communicated	Ensured	Judged	Published	Utilized
Compared	Expedited	Launched	Purchased	Validated
Completed	Experimented	Learned	Raised	Verified

Note: Use the present tense for things you are currently working on, and past tense for things you have completed.

## Power Adjective List

Select applicable words to describe your Strengths.

Adaptable	Dependable	Experienced	Objective	Resourceful
Adept	Determined	Fair	Open-minded	Self-confident
Analytical	Diligent	Firm	Outgoing	Self-motivated
Assertive	Diplomatic	Honest	Personable	Self-reliant
Broad-Minded	Discreet	Independent	Pleasant	Sensitive
Committed	Effective	Innovative	Positive	Sharp
Competent	Efficient	Instrumental	Practical	Sincere
Conscientious	Energetic	Keen	Productive	Strong
Cooperative	Enterprising	Loyal	Receptive	Tenacious
Creative	Enthusiastic	Mature	Reliable	Tactful
Dedicated	Exceptional	Methodical	Resilient	Well-organized

### Notes

# Resume Drafting Worksheet

**Name:**

**Mailing address (city, state, zip code):**

**Phone number:**

**Email address:**

**LinkedIn url:**

**Education:**

**Relevant Coursework (optional):**

**Experience:**

**Other Experience:**

**Campus and Community Involvement:**