



OCS

# RESUMES & COVER LETTERS



## ***Undergraduate Resource Series***

Office of Career Services | 54 Dunster Street  
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[www.ocs.fas.harvard.edu](http://www.ocs.fas.harvard.edu)

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# CREATE A STRONG RESUME

**A** resume is a concise, informative summary of your abilities, education, and experience.

It should highlight your strongest assets and skills, and differentiate you from other candidates seeking similar positions. Although it alone will not get you a job or internship, a good resume is an important element toward obtaining an interview.

Tailor your resume to the type of position you are seeking. This doesn't mean that all of your work history must relate directly, but your resume should reflect the kind of skills the employer would value.

## GETTING STARTED

- Draft a resume using one of the **templates on the OCS website**.
- **Attend a Resume Workshop** to learn the nuts and bolts of getting started. See the OCS website for dates.
- View the OCS **Online Resume Workshop**.
- **Come to drop-ins**. Monday-Friday, 1:00-4:00pm—get any quick career question answered and have an adviser look at your resume.
- **Look for industry specific resume review clinics**, listed on the Employers on Campus Calendar.

## RESUME TIPS

### RESUME LANGUAGE SHOULD BE:

- Specific rather than general
- Active rather than passive
- Written to express not impress
- Articulate rather than “flowery”
- Fact-based (quantify and qualify)
- Written for people who scan quickly

### DON'T:

- Use personal pronouns (such as I)
- Abbreviate
- Use a narrative style
- Use slang or colloquialisms
- Include a picture
- Include age or gender
- List references
- Start each line with a date

### TOP 6 RESUME MISTAKES:

1. Spelling and grammar errors
2. Missing email and phone information
3. Using passive language instead of “action” words
4. Not well organized, concise, or easy to skim
5. Not demonstrating results
6. Too long

### DO:

- Be consistent in format and content
- Make it easy to read and follow, balancing white space
- Use consistent spacing, underlining, italics, bold, and capitalization for emphasis
- List headings (such as Experience) in order of importance
- Within headings, list information in reverse chronological order (most recent first)
- Avoid information gaps such as a missing summer
- Be sure that your formatting will translate properly if converted to a .pdf

### PLAN TO WORK INTERNATIONALLY?

Resume guidelines can vary from country to country. Check out Going Global at <http://ocs.fas.harvard.edu/online-tools>

## ACTION VERBS FOR YOUR RESUME

**LEADERSHIP**

Accomplished	Achieved	Administered	Analyzed	Assigned	Attained	Chaired	Consolidated
Contracted	Coordinated	Delegated	Developed	Directed	Earned	Evaluated	Executed
Handled	Headed	Impacted	Improved	Increased	Led	Mastered	Orchestrated
Organized	Oversaw	Planned	Predicted	Prioritized	Produced	Proved	Recommended
Regulated	Reorganized	Reviewed	Scheduled	Spearheaded	Strengthened	Supervised	Surpassed

**COMMUNICATION**

Addressed	Arbitrated	Arranged	Authored	Collaborated	Convinced	Corresponded	Delivered
Developed	Directed	Documented	Drafted	Edited	Energized	Enlisted	Formulated
Influenced	Interpreted	Lectured	Liaised	Mediated	Moderated	Negotiated	Persuaded
Presented	Promoted	Publicized	Reconciled	Recruited	Reported	Rewrote	Spoke
Suggested	Synthesized	Translated	Verbalized	Wrote			

**RESEARCH**

Clarified	Collected	Concluded	Conducted	Constructed	Critiqued	Derived	Determined
Diagnosed	Discovered	Evaluated	Examined	Extracted	Formed	Identified	Inspected
Interpreted	Interviewed	Investigated	Modeled	Organized	Resolved	Reviewed	Summarized
Surveyed	Systematized	Tested					

**TECHNICAL**

Assembled	Built	Calculated	Computed	Designed	Devised	Engineered	Fabricated
Installed	Maintained	Operated	Optimized	Overhauled	Programmed	Remodeled	Repaired
Solved	Standardized	Streamlined	Upgraded				

**TEACHING**

Adapted	Advised	Clarified	Coached	Communicated	Coordinated	Demystified	Developed
Enabled	Encouraged	Evaluated	Explained	Facilitated	Guided	Informed	Instructed
Persuaded	Set Goals	Stimulated	Studied	Taught	Trained		

**QUANTITATIVE**

Administered	Allocated	Analyzed	Appraised	Audited	Balanced	Budgeted	Calculated
Computed	Developed	Forecasted	Managed	Marketed	Maximized	Minimized	Planned
Projected	Researched						

**CREATIVE**

Acted	Composed	Conceived	Conceptualized	Created	Customized	Designed	Developed
Directed	Established	Fashioned	Founded	Illustrated	Initiated	Instituted	Integrated
Introduced	Invented	Originated	Performed	Planned	Published	Redesigned	Revised
Revitalized	Shaped	Visualized					

**HELPING**

Assessed	Assisted	Clarified	Coached	Counseled	Demonstrated	Diagnosed	Educated
Enhanced	Expedited	Facilitated	Familiarized	Guided	Motivated	Participated	Proposed
Provided	Referred	Rehabilitated	Represented	Served	Supported		

**ORGANIZATIONAL**

Approved	Accelerated	Added	Arranged	Broadened	Cataloged	Centralized	Changed
Classified	Collected	Compiled	Completed	Controlled	Defined	Dispatched	Executed
Expanded	Gained	Gathered	Generated	Implemented	Inspected	Launched	Monitored
Operated	Organized	Prepared	Processed	Purchased	Recorded	Reduced	Reinforced
Retrieved	Screened	Selected	Simplified	Sold	Specified	Steered	Structured
Systematized	Tabulated	Unified	Updated	Utilized	Validated	Verified	

Always use your @college email account and check it frequently, even if you have enabled forwarding.

# RESUME SAMPLE

**Roberta Josephina Maddox**

17 Rodeo Road • Irvine, CA 92720 • maddox@college.harvard.edu • (714) 558-9857

If an employer asks for your SAT scores or GPA, include in your Education section.

## Education

### HARVARD UNIVERSITY

A.B. Honors degree in History. GPA 3.73.  
Relevant Coursework: International Political Economics and the European Community.  
Commit 25 hours per week to Harvard Varsity Field Hockey Program.

Cambridge, MA  
May 2017

### UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Study abroad coursework in European History and Econometrics.

London, UK  
May - August 2015

### IRVINE HIGH SCHOOL

Graduated with high honors. SAT I: M:780 V:760.  
National Honor Society. Member of Varsity Field Hockey Team.

If including coursework, be sure it's relevant to the position to which you're applying.

Irvine, CA  
June 2013

## Experience

### PEPSI-COLA NORTH AMERICA BEVERAGES

#### Marketing Analyst Intern

Examined profitability of foreign market for new fruit drink using analysis of comparable brands. Managed focus groups and consumer surveys gathering over 500 data points. Created ideas for niche marketing campaigns including use of social networks and viral marketing. Presented findings to senior managers using quantitative analysis and creative visuals in combined PowerPoint presentation.

New York, NY  
May - August 2016

### THOMAS WILCK ASSOCIATES

#### Assistant Account Executive

Researched and assembled requests for proposals for medium-sized public relations and communications firm. Actively participated in staff meetings and brainstorming sessions. Generated correspondence with top executive officers.

London, UK  
May - August 2015

### TECH HILLS

#### Technology Intern

Implemented new web site, including back end database storage system and dynamic web pages.

Note that relevant interests and skills can be demonstrated through campus and volunteer activities as well as through previous employment.

Laguna Hills, CA  
May - August 2014

## Leadership

### HARVARD UNDERGRADUATE WOMEN IN BUSINESS (WIB)

#### Executive Committee Member

Organized marketing and advertising campaign to increase membership. Coordinated business conference and networking reception for 50 business professionals and 500 students.

Cambridge, MA  
February 2014 - Present

### HARVARD COLLEGE MARATHON CHALLENGE

#### Training Program Director

Developed training program for 25 charity runners. Raised over \$25,000 to support Phillips Brooks House Association and The Cambridge Food Project.

Cambridge, MA  
January - May 2014

## Skills & Interests

**Technical:** Microsoft Excel and Access, Stata, SQL, Java and HTML.

**Language:** Fluent French and Conversational Spanish. Traveled extensively in Europe.

**Interests:** Ultimate Frisbee, Bhangra dance, and European films.

Be consistent presenting data. Use either numerals or words but not both.

## OPTIONAL CATEGORY EXAMPLES

You may wish to adopt these categories if relevant to your experience or the opportunity you are applying for. If you have significant experience in a specialized category, consider using that as your primary “Experience” section. While both paragraph and bulleted formats are shown as options, be sure to be consistent with your formatting within your resume.

### Leadership Experience

#### HARVARD SOCIETY OF BLACK SCIENTISTS & ENGINEERS

Cambridge, MA

##### President

September 2015 - May 2016

Provided strategic direction and developed annual goals for this 90 member student group. Organized board and general meetings. Oversaw existing activities, programs, and collaborations with other student organizations. Represented group in Black Community Leaders Organization.

#### HARVARD COMPUTER SOCIETY

Cambridge, MA

##### Membership Coordinator / Board Member

January - May 2015

Organized marketing and advertising campaign, resulting in 20% increase in membership. Coordinated tech conference and networking reception for 30 professionals and 75 students. Upgraded and enhanced website.

### Public Service Experience

#### CAMBRIDGE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Cambridge, MA

##### Intern

September 2014 - Present

- Conduct site visits to local social service agencies to assist in evaluating effectiveness of service delivery. Observe experienced counselors and social workers in private settings with clients.
- Analyze data to determine trends in service usage.

#### PHILLIPS BROOKS HOUSE ASSOCIATION

Dorchester, MA

##### Summer Urban Program Senior Counselor

June – August 2015

- Organized activities at summer camp encouraging academic achievement among inner city and under-resourced children. Managed \$500 activities budget.
- Produced and implemented curriculum for girls ages 11-12 exposing campers to female leaders in community, community service, and health education.

### Technical Skills

**Programming:** .NET, C, C++, C#, PHP/MySQL, Scheme, Perl, Python, MATLAB, JavaScript, OCaml.

**Operating Systems:** Windows 8 / 7 / Vista / XP, MAC OS X and Linux.

**Web Design:** Designed [www.abc.com](http://www.abc.com), [www.xyz.com](http://www.xyz.com)

### Research Experience

#### STANFORD NANOTECH RESEARCH CENTER

Palo Alto, CA

##### Research Intern

June – Aug 2015

Project: Microfabrication of Thin-film Heaters to Simulate Hotspots.

- Fabricated devices for testing effectiveness of nanoscale patch used to cool down hotspots on microprocessors.
- Utilized cleanroom facilities to create devices that contain hotspot heater and temperature sensors to simulate heat generation.

### Performing Arts Experience

#### MAINLY JAZZ DANCE COMPANY

Cambridge, MA

##### Dancer / Choreographer

October 2014 – Present

Perform traditional jazz, lyrical, hip hop, funk, and modern dance at performances open to public throughout the year. Teach dance routines to 20+ students at local elementary school.

### Activities

#### LOWELL HOUSE COMMITTEE

Cambridge, MA

Member. Collaborate on social and community service activities.

September 2014 - Present

#### MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL

Boston, MA

Hospital Volunteer. Commit 5 hours per week greeting patients.

January – May 2015

To help you design a strong resume, OCS offers formatted templates. On the OCS website, search “templates” and click on OCS Guides and Templates. Choose bulleted or paragraph style, fill in your information, and then bring your draft to drop-ins for editing and feedback.

# RESUME TEMPLATE I

Your Name

Home Street Address • City, State Zip • name@college.harvard.edu • phone number

## Education

### HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Degree, Concentration. GPA [Note: Optional]

Relevant Coursework or Thesis: [Note: Optional. Awards and honors can also be listed here.]

Cambridge, MA

Graduation Date

### STUDY ABROAD [Note: If Applicable]

Study abroad coursework in \_\_\_\_\_.

City, Country

Month Year – Month Year

### NAME OF HIGH SCHOOL

[May include GPA, SAT scores, or academic honors an employer may want to know]

City, State

Graduation Date

## Experience

### ORGANIZATION

#### Position Title

Beginning with your most recent position, describe your experience, skills, and resulting outcomes in bullet or paragraph form. [Note: Begin each line with an action verb and include details that will help the reader understand your accomplishments, skills, knowledge, abilities, or achievements. Quantify where possible. Do not use personal pronouns; each line should be a phrase rather than a full sentence.]

City, State

Month Year – Month Year

### ORGANIZATION

#### Position Title

With your next-most recent position, describe your experience, skills, and resulting outcomes in bullet or paragraph form. [Note: Begin each line with an action verb and include details that will help the reader understand your accomplishments, skills, knowledge, abilities, or achievements. Quantify where possible. Do not use personal pronouns; each line should be a phrase rather than a full sentence.]

City, State

Month Year – Month Year

## Leadership and Activities

### ORGANIZATION

#### Role

[Note: This section can be formatted similarly to the Experience section, or you can omit descriptions for activities. If this section is more relevant to the opportunity you are applying for, consider moving this above your Experience section.]

City, State

Month Year – Month Year

### ORGANIZATION

#### Role

[Note: This section can be formatted similarly to the Experience section, or you can omit descriptions for activities. If this section is more relevant to the opportunity you are applying for, consider moving this above your Experience section.]

City, State

Month Year – Month Year

## Skills & Interests [Note: Optional]

**Technical:** List computer software and programming languages

**Language:** List foreign languages and your level of fluency

**Laboratory:** List scientific / research lab techniques or tools [If Applicable]

**Interests:** List activities you enjoy that may spark interview conversation

# RESUME TEMPLATE II (WITH BULLET POINTS)

Your Name

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Home Street Address • City, State Zip • name@college.harvard.edu • phone number

## Education

### HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Degree, Concentration. GPA [Note: Optional]

Thesis [Note: Optional]

Relevant Coursework: [Note: Optional. Awards and honors can also be listed here.]

Cambridge, MA

Graduation Date

### STUDY ABROAD [Note: If Applicable]

Study abroad coursework in \_\_\_\_\_.

City, Country

Month Year – Month Year

### NAME OF HIGH SCHOOL

[Note: May include GPA, SAT scores, or academic honors an employer may want to know]

City, State

Graduation Date

## Experience

### ORGANIZATION

#### Position Title

City, State

Month Year – Month Year

- Beginning with your most recent position, describe your experience, skills, and resulting outcomes in bullet or paragraph form.
- Begin each line with an action verb and include details that will help the reader understand your accomplishments, skills, knowledge, abilities, or achievements.
- Quantify where possible.
- Do not use personal pronouns; each line should be a phrase rather than a full sentence.

### ORGANIZATION

#### Position Title

City, State

Month Year – Month Year

- With your next-most recent position, describe your experience, skills, and resulting outcomes in bullet or paragraph form.
- Begin each line with an action verb and include details that will help the reader understand your accomplishments, skills, knowledge, abilities, or achievements.
- Quantify where possible.
- Do not use personal pronouns; each line should be a phrase rather than a full sentence.

## Leadership and Activities

### ORGANIZATION

#### Role

City, State

Month Year – Month Year

- This section can be formatted similarly to the Experience section, or you can omit descriptions for activities.
- If this section is more relevant to the opportunity you are applying for, consider moving this above your Experience section.

## Skills & Interests [Note: Optional]

**Technical:** List computer software and programming languages

**Language:** List foreign languages and your level of fluency

**Laboratory:** List scientific / research lab techniques or tools [If Applicable]

**Interests:** List activities you enjoy that may spark interview conversation



# WRITE AN EFFECTIVE COVER LETTER

Your cover letter is a writing sample and a part of the screening process. By putting your best foot forward, you can increase your chances of being interviewed. A good way to create a response-producing cover letter is to highlight your skills or experiences that are most applicable to the job or industry and to tailor the letter to the specific organization to which you're applying.

	Date of Letter
Use complete title and address.	Contact Name Contact Title Company Name Street Address City, State, Zip Code
Address to a particular person if possible and remember to use a colon.	<b>Dear _____:</b> <b>Opening paragraph:</b> Clearly state why you're writing, name the position or type of work you're exploring and, where applicable, how you heard about the person or organization. A summary statement may work well here by including three reasons you think you would be a good fit for the opportunity.
Make the addressee want to read your resume. Be brief, but specific.	<b>Middle paragraph(s):</b> Explain why you are interested in this employer and your reasons for desiring this type of work. If you've had relevant school or work experience, be sure to point it out with one or two key examples; but do not reiterate your entire resume. Emphasize skills or abilities that relate to the job. Be sure to do this in a confident manner and remember that the reader will view your letter as an example of your writing skills.
Remind the reader of what you can do for the organization.	<b>Closing paragraph:</b> Reiterate your interest in the position, and your enthusiasm for using your skills to contribute to the work of the organization. Thank the reader for his/her consideration of your application, and end by stating that you look forward to the opportunity to further discuss the position.
	Sincerely,  Your name typed

## Some general rules about letters:

- Address your letters to a specific person if you can.
- Tailor your letters to specific situations or organizations by doing research before writing your letters.
- Keep letters concise and factual, **no more than a single page**. Avoid flowery language.
- Give examples that support your skills and qualifications.
- Put yourself in the reader's shoes. What can you write that will convince the reader that you are ready and able to do the job?
- Don't overuse the pronoun "I".
- Remember that this is a marketing tool. Use lots of action words.
- Have an OCS adviser provide feedback on your letter.
- If converting to a .pdf, check that your formatting translates correctly.
- Reference skills or experiences from the job description and draw connections to your credentials.
- Make sure your resume and cover letter are prepared with the same font type and size.

# SAMPLE COVER LETTER

September 20, 2016

Ms. Ellie Wells  
Senior Manager  
Wallaby Yogurt Company  
110 Mezzetta Court  
American Canyon, CA 94503

Dear Ms. Wells:

I am a senior at Harvard University and am writing to apply for the Manager in Training opportunity at the Wallaby Yogurt Company posted in Harvard's Crimson Careers database. I'm very interested in the field of digital marketing and would welcome the opportunity to contribute my research, writing skills, and experience to your growing business.

I am excited about Wallaby's commitment to organic, all-natural ingredients in its products. As a varsity field hockey player, I'm very aware of the importance of healthy food as the foundation for a healthy life. Your emphasis on "learning by doing and leading by serving" is also consistent with the training I received as an athlete. Whether on the field learning new drills in the worst weather conditions or patiently working with a new team member, I am most fulfilled when contributing to the team effort.

In addition to my concentration in History, I have completed advanced coursework in Economics. My academic work has strengthened my research and writing skills as well as my understanding of the economics of business growth and development. Working with Harvard Undergraduate Women in Business (WIB) over the last two years gave me the experience and confidence to work in a dynamic, fast-paced organization where learning quickly and pitching in are instrumental to success. As a member of the Executive Committee, for example, I managed campus advertising and social media campaigns that increased overall membership and attracted more than 500 students from 12 different schools to our annual Intercollegiate Fall Conference.

Thank you for your consideration. I very much look forward to the opportunity to speak with you in person about my interest in this position.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith