



Career Connections

Guidebook to Resume & Cover Letter Writing



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Introduction

This Guidebook to Resume & Cover Letter Writing was made for you, our students, to assist you in your resume and cover letter writing. We hope that your resume will open doors for you and give you the best possible chance of landing a job interview.

A **resume** is a one to two page working document (not including your reference page). It is referred to as a working document, because it is never final. Individuals are always joining new organizations and gaining new employment opportunities. It is forever being updated and changed. Your resume will be a summary of your skills, abilities, work experience, education, and accomplishments. A resume is designed to provide a detailed summary of an applicant's qualifications for a particular job—it is not usually meant to provide a complete picture. It is a quick advertisement of who you are. It is a "snapshot" of you with the intent of capturing and emphasizing your best professional attributes to get you past the first screen and into an interview.

Keep in mind that designing your resume requires you to match your transferable skills to the job description you are applying to. Employers give you a job description, so you can utilize it to build your resume. This means your resume may vary depending on which positions you are applying to.

Included in this Guidebook to Resume & Cover Letter Writing are two sample resumes. These give you an example of resume format; however, you should know there are multiple formats in which you can choose. There is not just one or two that are appropriate. Be sure to choose a style that you feel comfortable with. You should choose a format that is aesthetically pleasing and easy to read. The moment a(n) recruiter/employer/hiring manager is trying to determine what you are trying to say is the moment he or she moves on to the next candidate.

Put yourself in a recruiter's shoes. You are reviewing hundreds of resumes day in and day out, and you *just* want to find a few candidates who jump out at you on paper in the best possible way. You are looking for candidates with unique, yet professional skills that will be vital for success in the position.

Prospective employers may receive hundreds of resumes for any one job, and their time is limited. Therefore, you want to make sure your resume will help you stand out among all the other applicants as a good fit for the position by tailoring the information you include to your audience and to the position description. Your integrity is important; so, make sure that anything you include on your resume is accurate and will stand up to questioning in an interview.

Keep in mind just about everyone you speak with has a different opinion on how to write a resume; our goal is to help you create your own resume based on core principles. We want you to make it to the top of the stack!

For resume assistance, please feel free to make an appointment with a Career Connections staff member. Our office is located in Sandel Hall Room 139. We are open Monday through Thursday 7:30 am to 5:00 pm and Friday 7:30 am to 11:30 am. You may call us at 318.342.5338 to schedule your appointment.

Why do I need a Resume?

A well-crafted resume will accomplish several outcomes for you:

- 1) Highlight who you are and demonstrate how you can meet your hiring manager's needs in a simple, yet dynamic language.
- 2) Create interest from an employer to offer you an interview.
- 3) Communicate your brand or what your competitive advantage is compared to other candidates.
- 4) Demonstrate motivation and professionalism through commitment to creating a high quality marketing tool.
- 5) Create a structure to help prepare you and the hiring manager for the interview.

Are there other applications where a professional resume is important? Yes!

- 1) Applications for graduate or professional school, fellowships, scholarships, proposals, grants, and other academic merit awards.
- 2) Promotions or other performance based programs with your current employer.
- 3) Appointments to boards, panels, committees, etc.



Where Do I Begin?

Start by gathering as much information as possible. Do not worry about a specific format at this point. We want you to just get it all out on paper.

To help you, we have included a Career Profile Sheet. This will help you collect as much factual information about yourself as possible!

See the next two pages, pages 7 and 8, to complete your Career Profile Sheet.



| Complete a Career Profile

The idea of a career profile is to gather as much content as possible for use in crafting your resume. Don't worry with any format/design concerns and don't focus on your word choice for now. Just work on collecting as much factual information about yourself as possible.

1.1 | Contact Information

Name (as it will appear on the resume): _____
Mailing Address (Street and Number): _____
City, State, Zip: _____
E-mail Address (needs to be professional): _____
Phone Number (needs to have some type of voice mail): _____

1.2 | Branding Section

Career/Education Summary (Usually 3-5 sentences or bullet statements that show core areas of expertise, indicate a career direction, and begin to describe unique qualifications that meet your hiring audience's needs. Start by reviewing 3-5 job postings that interest you and then highlight the core areas of expertise you have that are required by these jobs. Use these terms as a foundation for your branding section):

Key Skills/Knowledge/Expertise (Again, using real job listings, develop a list of key terms of additional skills, knowledge, and/or expertise that fit your career goals and direction. Shoot for a list of 9-15 items):

1.3 | Education Credentials

Exact Degree Title: _____
Exact Major(s): _____ **Exact Minor(s):** _____
Projected Date of Graduation: _____
Cumulative GPA: _____ **Major GPA:** _____
Achievements (Honors, Awards, Scholarships, Research): _____

Leadership/Activities (Leadership roles, Activities, Significant Projects): _____

Study Abroad/Fellowship/Internships: _____
Most Relevant Coursework (9-15 courses): _____

Licenses/Certifications/Training: _____

*repeat above as needed for additional degrees

1.4 | Work Experience

For each position, first think of your duties and responsibilities. Then, begin to list your skills and the results you achieved with the group or organization. The more you can focus on skills and results, the more effective your experience section will be. Also, stay focused on your hiring audience’s needs.

Company Name: _____

Company Location: _____

Brief Description of Company (Size, Industry, Products/Services): _____

Job Title and Location: _____

Dates of Employment: _____

Description (Describe your role in one to two sentences): _____

Accomplishments (List your accomplishments. Focus on the skills you used, the results you achieved, and any projects you completed along with key problems you solved. Ask yourself if you did anything to increase revenue, reduce expenses, or make anything more efficient. Were you commended for doing anything well? Take a look at any annual performance reviews for positive feedback about your results.): _____

Company Name: _____

Company Location: _____

Brief Description of Company (Size, Industry, Products/Services): _____

Job Title and Location: _____

Dates of Employment: _____

Description (Describe your role in one to two sentences): _____

Accomplishments: _____

Company Name: _____

Company Location: _____

Brief Description of Company (Size, Industry, Products/Services): _____

Job Title and Location: _____

Dates of Employment: _____

Description (Describe your role in one to two sentences): _____

Accomplishments: _____

*repeat above for each position

Format and Design

The format of your resume will focus on the way your information is organized. The design deals with the elements that will give your resume visual appeal.

- 1) 9-12 point font (Ariel, Calibri, Verdana, Franklin Gothic)
- 2) Black Ink
- 3) 8 ½" x 11" WHITE paper – You may use resume paper if you have it; however, it is not required
- 4) 1-2 pages – This does not include your reference page.
- 5) Use bold, underlined, or italicized fonts and indent in your text in consistent ways to add emphasis and improve the readability of your resume.
- 6) All caps, horizontal lines, borders, and tables can also be used to highlight your content. Keep in mind when using all CAPS in word, spell check will not work, so double and triple check spelling.
- 7) Your resume should be divided into clearly labeled sections that allows your prospective employer to skim through and learn about your relevant experience. The following sections should be included:
 - Contact Information
 - Summary of Qualifications
 - Education
 - Experience/Work Experience
- 8) The remaining sections included are up to you. Each person has their own journey, experiences, and accomplishments; so, the remaining sections should highlight your best self.
- 9) Examples may include:
 - Research
 - Internships
 - Laboratory Skills
 - Publications
 - Professional Memberships
 - Presentations
 - Leadership Roles and Involvement
 - Campus Involvement
 - Awards and Honors
 - Achievements
 - Awards
 - Community Involvement
 - Volunteer Work
 - Extracurricular Activities
 - Certifications and Licensees
 - Certifications
 - Study Abroad
 - Conference Attendance
 - Intercollegiate Athletics (For examples on how to lay out your collegiate sport, see page 20).

Keep in mind, this is not a complete list. There may be others specific to your field, or others that reflect your strengths that are relevant for a particular job; so, make sure to get advice from advisors, faculty, staff, Career Connections, and/or other professionals about what sections to include.

- 10) For each section of your resume, put the most recent information first, and proceed in reverse chronological order (oldest information last), indicating each item with a start-year to end-year range (including the months is optional).
- 11) This is the one time it is good to brag. It is great to be a modest, unassuming person in your daily life, but on your resume, you have to be the champion of your accomplishments. If it helps, imagine you are writing the resume for someone else—someone whom you respect and admire.

How Important are Keywords from the Job Description?

- 1) One important strategy for attracting the interest of an employer is to try to include in your resume, whenever possible, some of the keywords from the job description in which you are applying. Many employers use search engines to find candidates with resumes containing certain keywords. Even if you submit a resume directly to a prospective employer, your audience will likely glance over the document, scanning it for certain keywords from the job description.
- 2) When you are tailoring your resume to fit a specific job, make sure you spend some time identifying the keywords in the job description, which include specific skills or tasks the job requires. We also recommend consulting with someone in your field about keywords in your specific area. Then, when possible, make sure to include those keywords in your resume.
- 3) If the company has a specific position opening where the qualifications, requirements, skills, etc. they are looking for are listed in the job posting, pick the skills that you possess that they have identified and add them to your resume.

Below you will find an example job description:

“Looking for recent graduate with BA in economics. Excellent research, time management and problem solving skills. Highly organized with the ability to manage multiple projects and consistently meet deadlines.”

From the example above, you might notice that there are several skills listed. Which skills should you include?

The answer is simple. Thoroughly read the job description or ad. While reading, there are several keywords one comes across that this employer is seeking.

These include:

- A recent graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics
- Someone who has research skills
- A person who is able to prioritize and manage multiple tasks in a timely manor
- Someone who has excellent problem solving skills
- A critical thinker
- An individual who is able to stay organized and on task while meeting deadlines regularly

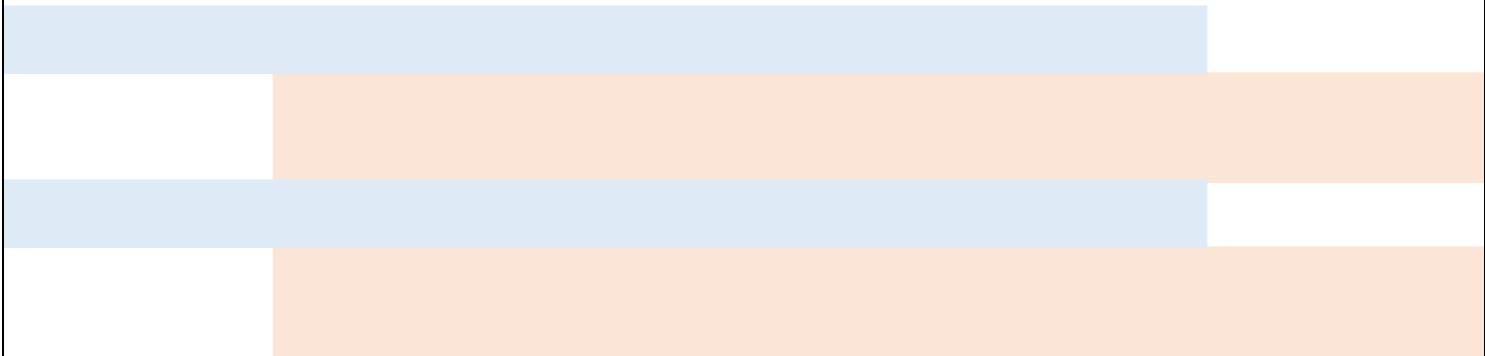
See, you determined many skills/qualifications an employer was looking for just from reading the job description. So, if you possess these skills/qualifications, you are going to want to be sure to include them on your resume.

You may be wondering, what if I am not responding to a specific job description or do not quite know exactly what job I want?

If this is the case, take a few minutes to search job boards online. Look at 2-3 job descriptions for some jobs in industries you are considering and make a list of the common skills that appear.

Make sure that your summary includes the skills they have listed. Of course, only list skills that you actually have. If you do not have all the skills, then only include the ones you do have. If you do not have any of the skills listed, you probably should think twice about applying to the position.

Having the exact same skills an employer is looking for displayed at the top of your resume will give you the best chance of getting noticed by the recruiter.



Contact Information

- 1) Your contact information should be listed at the top of your resume.
- 2) This information should include: full name, address, phone number, and professional email address. It may also include your LinkedIn account URL.
- 3) Your name should be bigger and bolder than anything on your resume.
- 4) PROFESSIONAL EMAIL ADDRESS
 - Use your full name, your first name and last initial, or your first initial and last name. Do not use numbers, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, or other parts of speech.
 - Bad examples: robbyyy5, deanman, christinata89, truetitan, princesspeach4u
 - Resume experts recommend using Gmail, Outlook, or a private or academic domain (e.g. firstname.lastname@mcgill.ca).
- 5) If you want the company to contact you, make it easy for them! Provide your full address, one phone number, and an email address in a prominent place (usually right under your name at the top). By the way, do not include "Address," "Phone," or "Email" before each item; the reader will be able to identify these without your help.
 - Keep in mind, employers are not sending much information by mail these days; so, if you are more comfortable listing just your city and state, that is okay too. Remember we want you to feel comfortable with your resume. It is in fact a direct reflection and brand of you!

Examples Include:

Name

Address

City, State Zip Code

Primary Phone Number Including Area Code • Professional Email

Name

City, State

Primary Phone Number Including Area Code • Professional Email

LinkedIn Account URL

Name

Address

City, State Zip Code

Primary Phone Number Including Area Code • Professional Email

Summary of Qualifications

Today, your resume should start with a Summary of Qualifications. This section spotlights your most impressive and relevant accomplishments, skills, and experience and follows immediately after your contact information.

Your resume summary can go by any of several names, such as Summary of Qualifications, Summary, Highlights, Professional Summary, Personal Summary, Qualifications Summary, Executive Summary, Profile Statement, or Profile. You might even want to title it with your own personal headline. The important thing is that the summary gives a quick overview of the value you offer the employer.

This area used to be for the “Objective” statement. Although it is not wrong for you to have an “Objective”, employers are now leaning towards and looking for you to have a Summary of Qualifications, Qualifications Summary, etc.

Q. Why has the objective statement become outdated?

A. It is very easy to get resume objective statements wrong. That is probably why they have received such a bad reputation—people just write them poorly. Something like, “Objective: To obtain a position as a public relations specialist at an innovative and impactful company that utilizes my skills and experience” is literally just wasting space—every single company in the world likes to think of itself as “innovative and impactful,” and it is not clear what “skills and experience” this person brings to the job. The top of your resume is prime real estate; so, you do not want to squander it by using vague filler material. Plus, what new graduate does not want to utilize his or her skills and experience?

Q. Why do I need a summary?

A. Hiring managers get dozens or hundreds of resumes for each job opening, so they tend to decide within about 10 seconds whether a resume goes in the *Yes, No, or Maybe* pile for interviews.

If they cannot see your qualifications quickly and easily, your resume will not pass the 10-second test. So, a Summary of Qualifications that shows your credentials at a glance greatly increases your chance of landing in the *Yes* pile.

Q. What should the summary say?

A. Your summary should be a little different for each job you apply for, since each employer’s requirements and terminology will be different even for similar jobs.

To figure out what you should include, go back to the job description. Do your research, check the employer’s website, and pick out the most important qualifications they are seeking. When you write your summary, focus on showing that you possess skills and attributes that employers need.

When writing your “Summary of Qualifications” think about the following: What do you offer that is different? Who are you and what are you about on paper? Be specific. Express why you would be the best candidate for the position honing in on your great skills and abilities. This is describing what you have to offer and what YOU bring to the table. Cover your greatest achievements, presenting you as a well-rounded candidate with diverse talents.

Tip: Focus on what the employer wants and needs in an employee—not what you want or need.

Tip: Some jobs do not have a job description/position announcement to pull keywords and qualifications from. In this case, look at the company's mission/vision statement to pull key characteristics, qualifications, and traits the employer values.

Q. How long should my summary be?

A. It is typically about 4 to 5 sentences. Bullets are also fine.

Q. What does a summary look like?

A. The summary can be written in a bulleted list or a paragraph format. It is not necessary to use full sentences. Here are some examples:

Example 1: Registered Nurse

- 12 years' experience as a Registered Nurse, including clinical research and coordination of cardiology clinical trials
- 9 years' experience in direct patient care, including pre-and post-op, and pediatric cardiology
- Led 4-person team that studied and restructured nursing shift scheduling, reducing absenteeism 26% and cutting overtime costs in half
- Outstanding communicator with both management and patients
- Thorough knowledge of federal and state healthcare regulations

Example 2: Marketing Communications Associate

- 2.5 years as Marketing Coordinator for mid-size communications firm producing flyers, newspaper advertisements, brochures, and online content
- 2 years' blogging experience promoting and reviewing on-campus social events
- Committed to building expertise in web communications, social media, and search engine marketing through exceptional work ethic and ability to quickly absorb and apply new information

Example 3: Facilities Maintenance Technician

HVAC-certified maintenance technician with more than 7 years of experience in building and grounds maintenance in multi-unit residential and healthcare facilities. Expertise includes painting and wall coverings; apartment make-ready services; general electrical and plumbing repairs; coordinating and assisting licensed vendors; power and hand tool use. Committed to safety, customer service, and clear communication with management residents.

More Examples:

- Exceptional interpersonal communication skills, both written and verbal
- Strong ability to effectively multi-task in a fast-paced office environment
- Motivated towards achieving set goals and deadlines in a timely manner
- Experienced in customer service and warranty claims
- Professional and energetic work attitude
- Functioned effectively within a team
- 6 years progressive experience in _____
- Successfully led team to _____ in sales
- Skillfully implemented key time management skills in high demand setting

- Effectively measured results
- Skillfully prepared ...
- Actively prepared ...
- Had sustainable impact on ...
- 3 years of experience working in the _____ industry
- Competent at managing responsibilities in a high-volume atmosphere
- Skilled at interacting with customers of all socioeconomic backgrounds
- Hard worker, quick learner, and ability to assume responsibility
- Ability to elicit confidence and build rapport
- Talented in problem solving and office system design



Education

- 1) Your Education section should include: degree, major, minor (if applicable), concentration (if applicable), graduation date/anticipated graduation date, university name, city the university is located in, state the university is located in, and GPA (optional).
- 2) Make sure you have your exact degree title, major, minor, and concentration (if applicable) listed correctly.
- 3) If you are an upcoming or recent college graduate, you may not have a substantial body of work experience to highlight. If that is the case, focus on developing your educational content as much as possible.
 - Include your GPA if it is a 3.0 or higher
 - List scholarships, awards, and academic achievements
 - List research and presentations
 - Include campus leadership and involvement
 - Include study abroad experiences
 - Include class projects
- 4) Keep in mind, if you have extensive content in one or more of the areas above, you may want to consider creating a separate section for this content.

Examples of Education layout:

Education

Degree – Major –GPA

Anticipated Graduation Date/Month Year Graduated

University Name - City, State

Education

Degree –Major, Minor, Concentration, Anticipated Graduation Date/Month Year Graduated

University Name – City, State

Senior Capstone Project:

- 5) Your most recent degree should always come first. Remember all sections of your resume should be in reverse chronological order.
- 6) Adding Relevant Courses as a subheading under your Education section is not wrong; however, this will not make your resume stand out. Many times, a(n) recruiter/employer/hiring manager knows the course curriculum associated with a particular degree program.
- 7) A subheading that may make your resume stand out is including a final project within your curriculum. Think about what you researched, developed, and/or implemented. What is it that you found/discovered?
- 8) Another subheading that may make your resume stand out is including where you may have studied abroad.

For Example:

Education

Bachelor of Science—Hospitality Management and Tourism, Minor in Communication, 3.63 May 2014

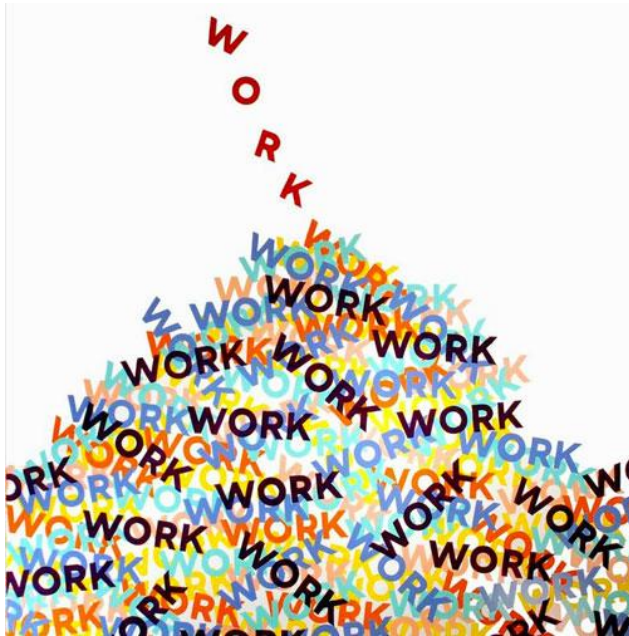
University Name — City, State

Study Abroad: Cartagena, Colombia (November 2013)

France, Greece, Turkey, Italy, Austria (June 2012)

Experience/Work Experience

- 1) When thinking about your Experience/Work Experience you want to be sure you only include the relevant experience you have.
- 2) Ask yourself these questions
 - What problems did I solve?
 - What revenue did I generate?
 - What expenses did I reduce?
 - What projects did I complete?
 - Did I make any improvements to operations?
 - Did I develop any new ideas that were successfully implemented?
 - What was I commended for doing well?
- 3) Under each position that you list under Experience/Work Experience you want to be sure you have bullet points.
- 4) You want to be sure you read the job description carefully and highlight keywords and skills they are looking for.



5) Forget the bullets that everyone in that sort of role performed. Only include ones where you had great results (“Increased ticket sales by 200%”) or the context is impressive (“Worked the door for a 500+ person event”)

6) You want the bullets to make you really stand out. You want them to show what you achieved for that company.

7) Focus on what you accomplished for that company and what impact you had instead of listing your job responsibilities in a “laundry list”/task format.

8) If you think your customer service experience is not relevant, think again! Employers want to see any area/position/job you held that was customer service related. There are not

many jobs on the market today that do not incorporate customer service in some way. Hint: Client relations is a great alternative way to speak of customer service.

- 9) Employers love numbers, statistics, and percentages. Employers are looking at how specific candidates stand out. They are looking to see how you accomplished specific tasks and went above and beyond. Your bullet points should quantify information and demonstrate results where possible.

Examples Include:

Instead of:

“I am an innovative problem solver who leads by example.”
(First, do not ever write in first person, and second, prove it.)

Write:

“Demonstrated innovative problem solving skills by introducing a new billing system which cut company cost by 18% and increased office productivity by 35%.”

Instead of

“I answered the phones.”

Write

“Monitored and managed more than 1,500 weekly telephone calls from customers, vendors, media, and contractors for 750 staff members for largest architectural firm in New Jersey.”

Instead of:

“Hired, managed, and trained sales representatives”

Write:

“Recruited, hired, managed, mentored, and motivated more than 120 sales representatives to develop customer service and sales skills resulting in more than \$1.5 million in sales revenue.”

Instead of:

“Successfully managed a store with a team of employees”

Write:

“Optimized store operations to increase sales by 10% and customer return rates by 1.3 times the annual average.”

Example Formats:

Work Experience

Company Name – City, State

Position Title (Month Year-Month Year)

- Developed and conducted surveys to measure current attitudes towards personal financial planning
- Evaluated reliability of online and offline information sources for inclusion in research study
- Met weekly editorial deadlines as Sports Editor for university newspaper
- Managed detailed project plan to coordinate activities among team members for final group presentations

Experience

Position Title

Month Year-Month Year

Company Name – City, State

- Developed and conducted surveys to measure current attitudes towards personal financial planning
- Evaluated reliability of online and offline information sources for inclusion in research study
- Met weekly editorial deadlines as Sports Editor for university newspaper
- Managed detailed project plan to coordinate activities among team members for final group presentations

References

- 1) Leave out “References available upon request”
 - In fact, most employers prefer that you do not waste valuable resume space with a line that says “References available upon request.” The truth is, references should be available on request and if the employer wants a list, you should be ready to provide one—on a separate sheet of paper.
- 2) References get their own page.
 - Be sure to add your contact information at the top of the reference page, just as it is listed on the first and second page (if applicable) of your resume.
 - Your references are going to be professors, instructors, advisors, previous bosses, current bosses, mentors, etc. These are people who can speak to your professional skills and know your work ethic.
 - You want these individuals to be people who speak about you in a positive light.
 - Be sure to let your references know you listed them as a reference!
 - You want to list 3 to 4 references.
- 3) Your reference page is provided to an employer separately. Once they have received your resume submission and want to see your references, they will ask you to send them a copy of your references. This is when you submit your reference page to them.

Example:

REFERENCES

Name

Position

Company/University Name

City, State

Phone Number Including Area Code

Email Address

Name

Position

Company/University Name

City, State

Phone Number Including Area Code

Email Address

Name

Position

Company/University Name

City, State

Phone Number Including Area Code

Email Address



How do I Incorporate My College Athlete Experience on My Resume?

When developing your resume, you want to include your athletic participation. Your athletic participation may be incorporated in many different ways.

You want to make sure you include:

- 1) The sport, years you played, accomplishments, time devoted to training, academic honors/awards.
- 2) If you received a full athletic scholarship, you may choose to include that as one of your accomplishments
- 3) Use action words to describe skills you have gained from participating in collegiate athletics (leadership skills, teamwork, time management, communication skills, commitment, etc.).

Examples:

INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

Division II Women's Soccer Team

Month Year - Present

University Name—City, State

- Received full athletic scholarship
- Team Captain: 2015 – Present
- Devoted 20 hours per week to athletics while carrying a full course load
- Gained valuable leadership and team-building experience

HEALTH & WELLNESS EXPERIENCE

Smith College Basketball Team—Northampton, MA

Aug. 2012 - Present

Co-Captain

- Developed communication plan regarding team nutrition and hydration goals
- Committed 15 hours per week to training and competitive play while maintaining course load

VARSITY ATHLETICS

Duke University Varsity Women's Rowing Team (awarded full grant-in-aide)

August Year-Present

- Selected to participate at the US Rowing Association's training camp for gifted freshman rowers at the ARCO Olympics
- Training Center, Chula Vista, CA Summer 2000
- Junior Class Team Representative/Leader
- All ACC Rowing Team 2014, 2015
- All South Region Team 2015
- First Team All American 2015
- 40 + hours per week of training, practice, and competition



How Do I Send My Resume an Employer's Way?

- 1) First, make sure you proofread it! Find two or three people and have them review your resume before you send the final version to an employer or contact. Think about scheduling an appointment with Career Connections.
- 2) Save your final copy as a Word Document; but, do not submit this to an employer or contact unless specifically requested to do so. Instead, save another copy as a PDF file.
 - Employers want to see PDF resumes 99% of the time, so unless the application specifically says to submit it as a Word Document, you should save it as a PDF. You never know if the formatting will change on the recruiter's computer, making it look sloppy. Submit a PDF so you know exactly what they will see when they open it.
 - Microsoft Word is notorious for rendering documents differently across platforms. In Word format (doc/docx), your resume will hardly ever look exactly the same on the hiring manager's computer as it does on yours. Use Word's "Save as type: PDF" option or "File", "Export" option.
- 3) **DO NOT send any documents individuals cannot open.** Specifically, do not send Mac-specific files or any files that cannot be opened with universally-accepted software such as Adobe Reader or Microsoft Word. If asked to convert them and you do not know how to do it, you lose even more points. That is just part of life these days.



Resume Don'ts

- 1) If you are a college graduate, or currently enrolled, do not mention high school.
- 2) **AVOID ABBREVIATIONS** (Unless they are common and well-known in your field, spell things out for the reader or they might not know what you are talking about. This is especially true for proprietary, company-specific language (e.g. "Managed CAT for the ECLU department" ...you did what?))
- 3) Do not lie and/or embellish the truth. Remain ethical!
- 4) Do not include periods after each of your bullet points. Many times your bulleted accomplishments are not complete sentences and that is okay!
- 5) Refrain from misspelling words. Do not rely on spell check. Have an extra set of eyes read it.
- 6) Do not have an unprofessional email address listed. Have your email address be a variation of your first and last name (see Contact Information on page 12).
- 7) Do not use a template. These come across as cookie cutter. Recruiters, employers, and hiring managers can spot these from a mile away. They do not show critical thought or creativity. Additionally, templates are restrictive in what an individual can do.
- 8) No clip art or photos of you should be on your resume or paired with it.
- 9) Failing to include a cover letter if the company asks for one could result in your resume being tossed in the trash.
- 10) Do not have a resume that is 4, 5, and/or 6 pages long.
- 11) Failing to be consistent with your font and layout will result in your resume ending up in the trash pile. Remember, the moment an employer is trying to figure out what is going on is the moment he or she will move on to the next candidate. You want your resume to be clear, concise, and easily identifiable.
- 12) **Proficient in Microsoft Word**
 - Your Microsoft Office skills may have swiveled heads a couple decades ago, but now that everyone regularly utilizes these tools, adding this to your resume is a waste of space. On your resume, you want to list the things that will set you apart – not help you blend in with the crowd. Although it can handicap a job seeker to not use (or own) Microsoft Office Suite, mentioning this software on a resume will not give you an edge/leg up.
 - **However, there is one exception. If the company you are applying to requests this skill in their job requirements/qualifications area of the job posting, be sure to list it!**
- 13) The pronoun “I” has no place in a resume—and for logical reason: Who else would you be talking about if not yourself? If you are having problems eliminating the word I, please see below.
 - **Instead of:** I demonstrated professionalism, tact, and diplomacy while I worked with our customers in high-pressure situations
Write: Demonstrated professionalism, tact, and diplomacy while working with customers in high-pressure situations
 - **Instead of:** I managed a department whose chief responsibility was to oversee safety audits. I wrote all audit reports and conducted management briefings
Write: Managed a department whose chief responsibility was to oversee safety audits. Wrote audit reports and conducted management briefings

10 Tips for Making It to the Top of the Resume Pile

- 1) **Attractive Layout**
 - Consistency
 - Dates are all the same format and font
 - Bold section titles
 - No color (a VERY minimal pop of color is okay)
 - Attractive yet professional
- 2) **Justified Text**
 - Spaced so the left and right sides of the text block both have a straight edge
- 3) **Common Font**
 - Ariel, Calibri, Verdana, and Franklin Gothic are all great
 - Times New Roman is okay, but not the preferred font
- 4) **Diversify Your Verbs**
 - Effectively measured
 - Efficiently ...
 - Skillfully prepare
 - Actively...
- 5) **Customized Cover Letter**
 - Specific
 - Addresses the particular company
 - Lists specific title of position in which you are applying to
- 6) **Power in Proofreading**
 - Cannot rely on spell check
 - Print a hard copy, read it
 - Have another person look at it
 - Schedule an appointment with Career Connections
- 7) **Eliminate anything that will age you**
 - Degree received date if more than 10 years ago
 - Old software
- 8) **Deactivate Links**
 - Sometimes software is not compatible
 - Right click to do this
- 9) **Be consistent**
 - May — Present
 - May to Present
 - Pick one and stick with it
- 10) **Focus on Accomplishments, NOT TASKS**
 - What impact you had in that particular role



Checklist for Resume Quality

- Is your resume visually appealing and easily readable in just a few seconds on the first pass/glance?
- Are you clearly communicating who you are and your core skills relative to your hiring audience's needs?
- Review actual job posting of interest one more time.
- Is there any important content that is missing?
- Is there any content that needs to be deleted or reorganized?
- Is the design consistent and the format well-organized?
- Is the Experience/Work Experience section focused on skills and results rather than job duties?
- Is the resume specific and descriptive while still being concise?



Cover Letter Tips

- 1) Stay within 1/2 to 2/3 page
- 2) Remember, a cover letter is ultimately looking for what is not communicated in your resume
 - a. Your story
 - b. Why you want the job
 - c. What you can specifically bring to the company
- 3) Skip the generic paragraphs..."I am writing to apply for the position of [title] at [company name]. I possess relevant administrative experience and I am eager to contribute to [organization], which makes me an excellent candidate for this position." "My references are available upon request. Please let me know if I may provide any additional information."

- a. **Do Not Use a Weak Opening**—Job seekers frequently struggle with how to begin a cover letter. This often results in a feeble introduction lacking punch and failing to grab the reader's interest. Consider the example below.

Weak: Please consider me for your sales representative opening.

Better: Your need for a top-performing sales representative is an excellent match to my three-year history as a #1-ranked, multimillion-dollar producer.

- 4) Instead of thinking about what you would classically write to bookend your cover letter, imagine you were giving an enthralling speech. You would be more likely to open with a story or a statistic and close with a call to action.
- 5) Demonstrate your love for the company and sell your skills in a positive way!
 - a. Write your cover letter in a tone that matches the organization's communication. Discuss a recent initiative or event or something you have noticed that you find particularly appealing.
- 6) Steer clear of using the word "I" too many times.
- 7) Elaborate on your accomplishments. Do not just say I have accomplishments, without giving the proof to back it up.
- 8) Make sure you explain how all of the things you have done/are doing now really fit with the job posting.
- 9) Speak to the common values, mission, and vision of that particular company/organization—connect it with you—they need to align.
- 10) Think about how you phrase your final paragraph. Tell them that you will follow up with them! Be bold and put your future in your own hands. Example: "I will follow up with you in a few days to answer any preliminary questions you may have. In the meantime, you may reach me at (555) 555-5555."
- 11) Thank them at the end for their time and consideration.
- 12) Make sure you leave a spot on your cover letter for you to sign it if you are submitting a hard copy of your letter.
- 13) At times, it may be appropriate to copy and paste your cover letter into the body of an email making it a cover email as well, so the recruiter/employer/hiring manager is almost forced to read it instead of inserting it just as an attachment.

5 Steps to an Incredible Cover Letter

STEP 1: MAKE IT PERSONAL

- Do your absolute best to find out the name of the recruiter/employer/hiring manager/individual who will be reading your Cover Letter. Perhaps look on social media sites, Google, the company's news page, the company's website, their LinkedIn, or pick up the phone.
 - For Example:
 - Dear Jane Doe:
 - Dear John Doe:
- Keep in mind, no one wants to receive a letter that states, "To Whom It May Concern:"
- If you absolutely cannot find the person who will be reading your letter, make who you address the letter to as specific as possible.
 - For Example:
 - Dear Hiring Manager for Event Coordinator Position:

STEP 2: TELL THEM WHY YOU PICKED THEM

- Tell them what job/position you are applying for.
- Do not start talking about you and how fabulous you are. Tell them why you picked them.
- If you want an employer to feel interested in you, make them feel like you are genuinely interested in them.
- Think about a social setting...Just like in a social setting where there may be an individual that constantly talks about themselves and you think to yourself how you cannot wait for that particular conversation to be over, that is how you will potentially make a(n) recruiter/employer/hiring manager feel. WE DEFINITELY DO NOT WANT THAT!
- DO NOT make them feel like you are sending it out to 100 plus people. Make them feel like they are the only person at the moment that you want to work for even if that is not the case.
- Give them a real reason!
 - NOT "Seem like a professional company"
 - OR "Seem like an exciting company"
- Buzzwords like professional and exciting are NOT what they are looking for; so, give them a real reason! Go online and read their news page. Do they do the race for life every year? Do they get involved in a national committee? Do you have a relationship with that charity as well? Whatever it is PICK SOMETHING...The three directors, what was their background? Tell them about a real emotional attachment you have with them.
- Be REAL and GENUINE if you want to make an impact and really make the recruiter/employer/hiring manager feel special.

STEP 3: TELL THEM WHY THEY SHOULD PICK YOU

- While looking at the job description, think about your personal brand. Look at the attributes you want to promote about yourself. Think about the things you want employers to perceive you as.
- Pick 2 or 3 things in that job description and tell them HOW you can add value to that business.
- DO NOT just tell them you will add value. TELL THEM HOW! GIVE THEM EXAMPLES!
- If you want to throw in a line from a reference you have to back all that up, please feel free!

STEP 4: SHOW PASSION

- Show them how much you want it! We all want to work with people we feel want to be there.
- Instead of saying, “I would LIKE the opportunity to discuss this application” use the word LOVE instead. It will open a lot more doors.
- LOVE is a much more powerful word than like; however, you must use language you feel comfortable with.
- Maybe you feel more comfortable with, “Given the opportunity, I would live and breathe this role.” You want the recruiter/employer/hiring manager to say, “Goodness, this person really wants it!”
- If you really want it, tell them how much you really want it!

STEP 5: SHOW KINDNESS

- “I would like to wish you the best with hiring for this role/with this piece of recruitment”
- “I know recruiting is quite a stressful time and I really hope it is going as well as you had hoped.” WOW! That is amazing. The employer does not know you and this shows that you are again thinking of them. You are applying for a job, yet thinking about the recruiter/employer/hiring manager and his or her feelings.
- Ultimately, employers want to hire people that make their lives easier, that are a pleasure to be around, and are considerate.
- This one line says so much about your character and what you would be like as part of a team than anything else in your application.

Your Name
Your Address
Your City, State, Zip Code
Your Phone Number
Your Email

SAMPLE

COVER LETTER

Date

Name
Title
Organization
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. _____:

Paragraph #1 (Purpose)-

State why you are writing and the type of position or field of work in which you are interested. Indicate how you learned of this position. If there is not a specific position available, indicate how your interest originated. Demonstrate briefly your knowledge of the company.

Paragraph #2 (Background & Qualifications)-

Refer the employer to an enclosed resume. If you have had related experience or specialized training, elaborate on the details that would be of special interest to the employer. Be as specific as you can about your qualifications and skills. Provide examples on how you obtained/honed these skills. Your goal here is to match your skills to the employer's needs. Explain how you would fit into the position and the organization. This paragraph can get lengthy; break it into two paragraphs to make it more readable.

Paragraph #3 (Request for Action)-

Close your letter by briefly restating how your qualifications match the position. Express your interest in further discussing your background and the position with the employer. Write when you will be contacting them to ensure your application materials were received. Finally, include a statement expressing your appreciation for the employer's consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Signature (hard copy letter)

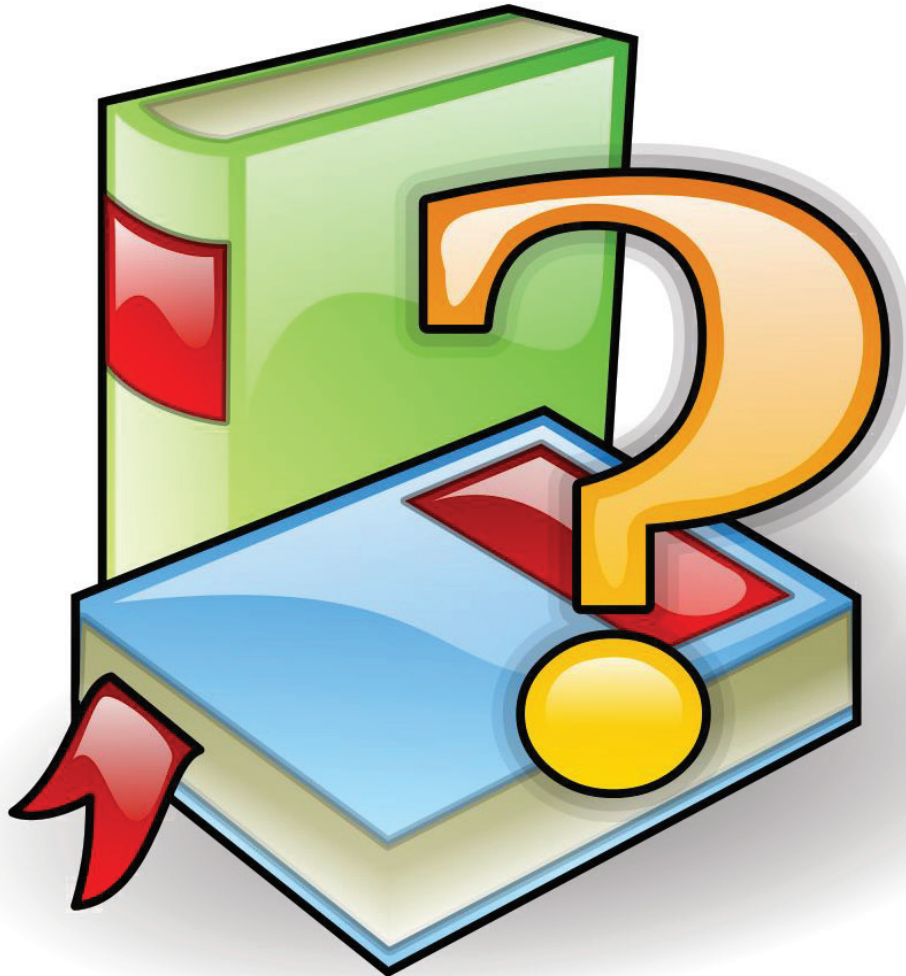
Your Typed Name



Career Connections

Word Help

- 1) Beginning most of your sentences with action verbs may not have been standard practice when you were writing term papers, but this practice is accepted and recommended in resumes. So, use action words! Try words and phrases like: achieved, improved, trained, mentored, managed, created, influenced, increased, decreased, negotiated, launched, under budget, etc.
- 2) For help diversifying your vocabulary, please see pages 30 through 32!



POWERFUL ACTION VERBS

for your resume

You Led a Project:

Chaired
Controlled
Coordinated
Executed
Headed
Operated
Orchestrated
Organized
Oversaw
Planned
Produced
Programmed

You Brought in Partners, Funding, or Resources:

Acquired
Forged
Navigated
Negotiated
Partnered
Secured

You Envisioned and Brought to Life a Project:

Administered
Built
Charted
Created
Designed
Developed
Devised
Founded
Engineered
Established
Formalized
Formed
Formulated
Implemented
Incorporated
Initiated
Instituted
Introduced
Launched
Pioneered
Spearheaded

You Saved the Company Time or Money:

Conserved
Consolidated
Decreased
Deducted
Diagnosed
Lessened
Reconciled
Reduced
Yielded

You Supported Customers:

Advised
Advocated
Arbitrated
Coached
Consulted
Educated
Fielded
Informed
Resolved

POWERFUL ACTION VERBS

for your resume

**You Increased Efficiency,
Sales, Revenue, or
Customer Satisfaction:**

Accelerated
Achieved
Advanced
Amplified
Boosted
Capitalized
Delivered
Enhanced
Expanded
Expedited
Furthered
Gained
Generated
Improved
Lifted
Maximized
Outpaced
Stimulated
Sustained

**You Changed or Improved
Something:**

Centralized
Clarified
Converted
Customized
Influenced
Integrated
Merged
Modified
Overhauled
Redesigned
Refined
Refocused
Rehabilitated
Remodeled
Reorganized
Replaced
Restructured
Revamped
Revitalized
Simplified
Standardized
Streamlined
Strengthened
Updated
Upgraded
Transformed

You Managed a Team:

Aligned
Cultivated
Directed
Enabled
Facilitated
Fostered
Guided
Hired
Inspired
Mentored
Mobilized
Motivated
Recruited
Regulated
Shaped
Supervised
Taught
Trained
Unified
United

POWERFUL ACTION VERBS

for your resume



You Were a Research Machine:	You Wrote or Communicated:	You Oversaw or Regulated:	You Achieved Something:
Analyzed	Authored	Authorized	Attained
Assembled	Briefed	Blocked	Awarded
Assessed	Campaigned	Delegated	Completed
Audited	Co-authored	Dispatched	Demonstrated
Calculated	Composed	Enforced	Earned
Discovered	Conveyed	Ensured	Exceeded
Evaluated	Convinced	Inspected	Outperformed
Examined	Corresponded	Itemized	Reached
Explored	Counseled	Monitored	Showcased
Forecasted	Critiqued	Screened	Succeeded
Identified	Defined	Scrutinized	Surpassed
Interpreted	Documented	Verified	Targeted
Investigated	Edited		
Mapped	Illustrated		
Measured	Lobbied		
Qualified	Persuaded		
Quantified	Promoted		
Surveyed	Publicized		
Tested	Reviewed		
Tracked			

Name

City, State

Primary Phone Number Including Area Code

Professional Email Address • LinkedIn Account URL

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

It is typically about 4 to 5 sentences or bullet points. Think about the following: What are you bringing about that is different? Who are you and what are you about on paper? Be specific. Express why you would be the best candidate for the position honing in on your great skills and abilities. This is describing what you have to offer and what YOU bring to the table. Cover your greatest achievements, presenting you as a well-rounded candidate with diverse talents. Tip: Focus on what the employer wants and needs in an employee—not what you want or need. Match keywords to the job description. Look at the company’s mission and vision statement.

EDUCATION

Degree – Major

Month Year Graduated/Graduating

University Name - City, State

WORK EXPERIENCE

Position Title

Month Year-Month Year

Company Name – City, State

- You will want to have bullet points
- These bullet points express your accomplishments/responsibilities while working under this role for this particular company
- Keep in mind when you are writing your bullet points to focus on what you accomplished for that company and what impact you had instead of listing your job responsibilities in a “laundry list”/task format
- FYI employers love numbers, statistics, and percentages. Employers are looking at how specific candidates stand out. They are looking to see how you accomplished specific tasks and went above and beyond
- Your bullet points should quantify information and demonstrate results where possible

LEADERSHIP ROLES AND INVOLVEMENT

Position Title

Month Year-Month Year

Organization Name– City, State

- You will want to have bullet points of your accomplishments in this role listed here
- Bullet points will continue here

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Volunteer

Month Year-Month Year

Organization Name– City, State

- You will want to have bullet points of your accomplishments in this role listed here
- Bullet points will continue

Possible Sections: Summary of Qualifications, Qualifications Summary, Personal Summary, Professional Summary, Profile, Certifications and Licenses, Certification and Licensure, Certifications, Work Experience, Experience, Professional Experience, Internships, Study Abroad, Leadership Roles and Involvement, Campus Involvement, Awards and Honors, Achievements, Accomplishments, Honors, Awards, Community Involvement, Volunteer Work, Extracurricular Activities, Professional Skills, Skills, Skills and Abilities, Conference Attendance, Intercollegiate Athletics, Varsity Sports, Health and Wellness Experience, etc. (There may be others specific to your field, or others that reflect your strengths that are relevant for a particular job; so, make sure to get advice from advisors, faculty, staff, Career Connections and/or other professionals about what sections to include).

Name

City, State

Primary Phone Number Including Area Code

Professional Email Address • LinkedIn Account URL

REFERENCES

Name

Position

Company/University Name

City, State

Phone Number Including Area Code

Email Address

Name

Position

Company/University Name

City, State

Phone Number Including Area Code

Email Address

Name

Position

Company/University Name

City, State

Phone Number Including Area Code

Email Address

Name

Address

City, State Zip Code

Primary Phone Number Including Area Code • Professional Email

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

It is typically about 4 to 5 sentences or bullet points. Think about the following: What are you bringing about that is different? Who are you and what are you about on paper? Be specific. Express why you would be the best candidate for the position honing in on your great skills and abilities. This is describing what you have to offer and what YOU bring to the table. Cover your greatest achievements, presenting you as a well-rounded candidate with diverse talents. Tip: Focus on what the employer wants and needs in an employee—not what you want or need. Match keywords to the job description. Look at the company’s mission and vision statement.

EDUCATION

Degree - Major, Month Year Graduated/Graduating
University Name - City, State

WORK EXPERIENCE

Company Name – City, State

Position Title (Month Year-Month Year)

- You will want to have bullet points
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- Keep in mind when you are writing your bullet points to focus on what you accomplished for that company and what impact you had instead of listing your job responsibilities in a “laundry list”/task format
- FYI employers love numbers, statistics, and percentages. Employers are looking at how specific candidates stand out. They are looking to see how you accomplished specific tasks and went above and beyond
- Your bullet points should quantify information and demonstrate results where possible

LEADERSHIP ROLES AND INVOLVEMENT

Organization Name

Position Title (Month Year-Month Year)

- You will want to have bullet points of your accomplishments in this role listed here
- Bullet points will continue here

AWARDS AND HONORS

- List Award (Year Received/Month Year Received)
- List Scholarship (Year Received/Month Year Received)
- List Scholarship (Year Received/Month Year Received)

Possible Sections: Summary of Qualifications, Qualifications Summary, Personal Summary, Professional Summary, Profile, Certifications and Licenses, Certification and Licensure, Certifications, Work Experience, Experience, Professional Experience, Internships, Study Abroad, Leadership Roles and Involvement, Campus Involvement, Awards and Honors, Achievements, Accomplishments, Honors, Awards, Community Involvement, Volunteer Work, Extracurricular Activities, Professional Skills, Skills, Skills and Abilities, Conference Attendance, Intercollegiate Athletics, Varsity Sports, Health and Wellness Experience, etc. (There may be others specific to your field, or others that reflect your strengths that are relevant for a particular job; so, make sure to get advice from advisors, faculty, staff, Career Connections and/or other professionals about what sections to include).

Name

Address

City, State Zip Code

Primary Phone Number Including Area Code • Professional Email

REFERENCES

Name

Position

Company/University Name

City, State

Phone Number Including Area Code

Email Address

Name

Position

Company/University Name

City, State

Phone Number Including Area Code

Email Address

Name

Position

Company/University Name

City, State

Phone Number Including Area Code

Email Address

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