Alliance
for International Educational and
Cultural Exchange

Preparing an American Style Resume

Before you begin applying for internships in the United States, you should prepare an American style resume. American resumes follow a specific format. If your resume does not follow that format, the hiring manager may view it as poorly prepared. Even the best resume or CV in your country may not be appropriate for an employer in the United States, just as an American resume may need to be altered for an employer in a different country.

Structure and Content of a Resume

- Limit the length of your resume to one page, single-sided.
- Create your resume on 8.5 x 11 inch paper with 0.5 – 1-inch margins on all sides. This is the standard size for an American resume. If you are sending your resume via post, print it on quality paper that is the same color as your cover letter.
- Do not include personal information such as age, gender, height, weight, marital status, photos, etc. **It is illegal** for U.S. employers to make employment decisions based on certain attributes or preferences of applicants. If you share this kind of information in your resume, you may actually discourage an employer from contacting you out of fear of future legal problems.
- The names of post-secondary schools and companies should be written in your native language, while everything else should be written in English.
- Do not use abbreviations.
- Align text with tabs instead of spaces to ensure all formatting remains consistent.
- Order your education and work experience chronologically with the most recent at the top.
- Educational experience should include the name of all post-secondary institutions attended, the degree or certificate received, the dates of attendance, and any honors or awards that you received. You may also briefly mention specific courses or projects that you completed if they are relevant to the requirements of the internship for which you are applying.
- For your work and volunteer experience, list the company or organization name and location on the first line. On the second line, list your title and department (if applicable). On the following lines, using action verbs to briefly describe your duties and accomplishments, such as *managed*, *directed*, *achieved*, *organized*, or *prepared*.
- Include a short section at the end of your resume that includes a description of any special skills you have such as knowledge of computer programs and foreign languages.
- Spell check the resume at least two times, using an English spell check program. Once you have completed your own edits and corrections, have someone else review your resume for mistakes.
- Save your resume as both Microsoft Word and text only formats, as some employers and job sites accept only one of these. If you have the ability to save your resume as a PDF, this can be a better format to use when sending email attachments because compatibility issues can sometimes arise with other file types.
- **Tailor your resume to the job**. When you are responding to an internship announcement, it is a good idea to make your resume specific to the position you are seeking. To do this, present your educational and professional experience in a way that matches the requirements and duties of the position.

Remember that your resume is a reflection of you. It is a picture of your skills and experience, and can determine whether or not a company will interview you. It is important to present a well-formatted and highly informative document.

Writing an Effective Cover Letter

While a resume gives a clear picture of your education and past experience, a cover letter should give a more personal and specific view of your background, strengths, and goals.

Your cover letter should help explain exactly why you are a good fit for the position for which you are applying. It should highlight key points from your resume, but not repeat any part of your resume word for word. And since it is typically the first document read by a prospective hiring manager, it should be interesting enough to make him or her want to read your resume.

Below are some suggestions for writing an effective cover letter:

- Whenever possible, address your letter to an individual and include his or her title and address. If you don't know whom the recipient is, address the letter generally to "Hiring Manager," followed by the company name.

- Write your cover letter on 8.5 x 11 inch paper with 1-inch margins on all sides. If you are sending your cover letter via post, it should be printed on quality paper that is the same color as your resume.

- Make sure your English is proper, your sentences are complete, and your spelling is accurate.

- Each paragraph should contain an introductory sentence, a closing sentence, and one to three supporting sentences in between.

- Insert a blank line between each paragraph, but do not indent the first line of the paragraphs.

- Mention your education, any experience you have that is relevant to the position (even if it is not on your resume), personal strengths (i.e., hard worker, organized, cooperative), and skills that specifically relate to the position. You can also include personal goals, goals for the internship (what you hope to learn), and long-term career goals.

- Spell check the cover letter at least two times, using an English spell check program. Once you have completed your own edits and corrections, have someone else review your letter for mistakes.