Professionalism & Soft Skills Development

# Assignment: cover letter & resume

**Assignment Description:**

**Assignment Environment:** The students should have access to the internet, SkillsFirst, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/ as well as the textbook and workbook.

### **Exercise 1**

Read WetFeet Killer Cover Letters and Resumes! 2014. Accessible from your institutions online library or https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/

* Chapter 5, Writing and Formatting Your Resume
* Chapter 6, Writing a Tasty Cover Letter

### **Exercise 2**

Upload your resume and cover letter to SkillsFirst, label it appropriately, and share it with your instructor and the entire class. Pair up and critique your partners cover letter and resume with the provided review forms below.

## What to Submit

Submit your cover letter and resume along with your assessment of another student (assigned by your instructor) using the attached review forms for cover letters and resumes.

**Cover Letter Review Form**

**Student**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Reviewer:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**For each item, say Yes or No, and provide comments on the back or by email.**

**Introduction**

* Does the cover letter have a strong opening paragraph, communicating the job target and key strengths within the first few lines of text? \_\_\_\_\_\_
* Does the cover letter conform to standard business letter format (dated, full address provided, line breaks between paragraphs, room for signature at the end)? \_\_\_\_\_\_
* Is the cover letter addressed to a specific individual, if the name is available? (If not, does it say something like “Dear Sir or Madam” or “Dear Hiring Committee”?) \_\_\_\_\_\_
* Does the writing style and design coordinate with the resume, such as by using the same font and layout style? \_\_\_\_\_\_

**The Body**

* Does the body of the cover letter express how they would benefit the employer if they were hired? \_\_\_\_\_\_
* Do they avoid starting every sentence with “I” or “my” so the focus is more on the employer’s requirements and not their own? \_\_\_\_\_\_
* Do they demonstrate their expertise by using industry-specific language? \_\_\_\_\_\_
* Do they include examples of [accomplishments](https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/resume-dig-deep-accomplishments) so the employers can see you a proven track record? \_\_\_\_\_\_
* Is the content engaging and relevant to [the company’s needs](https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/customize-cover-letter-to-the-ad)? \_\_\_\_\_\_
* Is the cover letter succinct, containing just enough information to entice the reader to review the resume? \_\_\_\_\_\_
* Did they include all information that was requested, such as a job reference number, and employment availability date? \_\_\_\_\_\_
* Is the content unique? Did they avoid copying text from the resume and/or just listing their qualifications? \_\_\_\_\_\_
* Does the cover letter sound genuine? Does it reflect their personality and make them seem likeable and approachable? \_\_\_\_\_\_
* Did they proofread the cover letter to ensure that it’s free of spelling, grammar, syntax and formatting errors? \_\_\_\_\_\_

**Closing paragraph**

* Did they provide an easy way for employers to follow up, such as a direct phone line and email address, or a reference to their availability? \_\_\_\_\_\_
* Does the cover letter have a call to action, confidently request an interview? \_\_\_\_\_\_
* Did they remember to thank the employer for their time or consideration? \_\_\_\_\_\_
* Did they remember to sign their letter (especially if mailing a hard copy)? \_\_\_\_\_\_

*Adapted from Monster Worldwide, Inc.*

**Resume Review Form**

**Student**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Reviewer:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Mark each item: E = Excellent, A = Adequate, N = Needs improvement. Provide comments on the back or by email.**

**Overall Appearance/Format**

\_\_\_\_ Utilized bold, italics, and capitalization consistently to produce a visually attractive document.

\_\_\_\_ Font style and size is appropriate, consistent, and easy to read. No more than 2 fonts are used.

\_\_\_\_ Margins and line spacing are used appropriately to keep the page from looking crowded.

\_\_\_\_ Sections are arranged so that the most important information is listed first (top to bottom, left to right).

\_\_\_\_ Length of resume is appropriate given your experience. One page preferred. If two pages, needs to be a full-page document and have your name & page number located on it.

**Contact Information**

\_\_\_\_ Name and contact information is located at the top of your resume. Name should be in a large font size.

\_\_\_\_ Only one email address is provided. Email address should be simple and professional looking.

\_\_\_\_ Only one phone number is provided, with area code. (That number should have voicemail set up with a simple, professional voicemail message.)

\_\_\_\_ Permissible to use either 1 or 2 addresses (home and/or school).

**Objective/Summary (optional!)**

\_\_\_\_ If objective is used, presents your career or job goal as specifically as possible, indicating key skills you possess.

\_\_\_\_ If summary is used, present key skills, characteristics and/or qualifications you possess relevant to the job.

**Education**

\_\_\_ Lists the degree you’re currently earning, and any other post-secondary degree previously obtained, listing month and year of graduation for each.

\_\_\_\_ Degree(s), Major(s), Minor(s), listed are named appropriately and listed in reverse chronological order.

\_\_\_\_ School name and location (city, state) are provided.

\_\_\_\_ Overall GPA is included - if it is 3.0 or higher. (Otherwise, leave it off.)

\_\_\_\_ If desired, academic honors and/or study abroad experiences can be included in this section, briefly.

\_\_\_\_ Relevant courses (if included) should be a short list of upper-level classes related to the position/career field.

**Experience/Skills**

\_\_\_\_ Experience is separated into appropriate sections, if applicable, such as Relevant Experience, Internships, etc.

\_\_\_\_ Experiences are listed in reverse chronological order, most recent. (Includes PT, FT, internship, research.)

\_\_\_\_ Emphasizes your experiences that are the most related to the position or career field.

\_\_\_\_ Provides position title, organization/company name, location (city, state), and dates for each position.

\_\_\_\_ Uses bullet points to describe job tasks, responsibilities, and accomplishments, listed in order of importance.

\_\_\_\_ Begins each bullet point with an action verb (supervised, created, designed, etc.).

\_\_\_\_ Provides numbers to present percentages/results/information when appropriate (i.e. Supervised 10 students.)

\_\_\_\_ Illustrates skills relevant to the position, using the language of the employer, industry, or profession.

**Activities/Volunteering/Memberships**

\_\_\_\_ Provides names of organizations (community/campus) you’ve been involved with and year(s) of involvement.

\_\_\_\_ Indicates leadership positions held and/or recognitions received from organizations, if applicable.

\_\_\_\_ Can include bulleted description of accomplishments and responsibilities, but not required

\_\_\_\_ Does not include high school activities and awards unless you are a first/second year student.

**Skills**

\_\_\_\_ Illustrates skills relevant to the position, using the language of the employer, industry, or profession.

\_\_\_\_ Lists “hard skills” such as language, software, technical skills or certifications.

\_\_\_\_ May include a few “soft skills” (i.e. leadership) or personal qualities (i.e. responsible). Not too many.

**Other Optional Sections**

\_\_\_\_ Honors/Awards: includes academic, athletic, and/or community honors, with names and month/year received.

\_\_\_\_ Study Abroad: name of program, sponsoring university or organization, and dates. Bullet points are optional.

\_\_\_\_ Skills: includes listings of language, computer/technical, and research/lab skills, and certifications/licenses.

**Grammar/Spelling**

\_\_\_\_ Does not contain any misspellings or grammatical mistakes.

\_\_\_\_ Utilized appropriate verb tense throughout resume. (Past experiences in past tense, current experiences may be in either past or present tense.)

\_\_\_\_ Avoided personal pronouns and completed sentences. Does not use the same words repetitively.

**Printing Quality**

\_\_\_\_ Printed resumes should be printed on only 1 side of the page.

\_\_\_\_ Used high quality white or off-white paper.

\_\_\_\_ Printing is good quality with no faint letters, stray marks, or blurry words.

**Comments:**

**Avoid These Common Mistakes:**

1. **Too long:** One page is preferred in most fields for internships and entry level positions. May be up to two pages if your experience warrants it, and only if you can fill the second page fully.
2. **Disorganized or inconsistent:** Your formatting should be neat, well-aligned, and easy to read. If your resume is too difficult to make sense of, the reader will stop trying very quickly.
3. **Too many words to say too little:** Using full sentences or long, complicated phrases does not work on resumes.Use incomplete sentences and pithy phrases in order to say as much as possible with fewer words.
4. **Grammatical or spelling errors:** This should be obvious, but these errors communicate carelessness to the reader and lead to your resume in the wastebasket. Proofread it and have it read by others, multiple times.
5. **Poor description of experiences:** Not including enough detail about your tasks and accomplishments means you’re not going to be as persuasive. Sufficient detail is what makes it interesting! Don’t be too modest.