

Résumés and Curriculum Vitae

OBJECTIVE

An objective or summary line tells the employer/HR dept. exactly what you are applying for and who to send your résumé along to. Always include this at the top. What are you looking for? Why are you sending this résumé to this company/person? In a summary, include the skills or experience you have that make you different.

EDUCATION

List in reverse chronological order (most recent first). Only include high school education if you went to a particularly prestigious or arts-centered high school. Include pre-college or summer college programs, your degree and concentration, and a (prospective) graduation date.

SKILLS

This section can be very useful for younger students who may not have a lot of professional experience. Sub-categorize large skills sections (2D skills, 3D skills, computer, etc.). This section can become shorter as you need more room for examples of professional experience. Computer and organizational skills are very important. Only include skills that are relevant to the job you are applying to.

EXPERIENCE

Include the location and name of the organization/company you worked for as well as the title of your position and a description of your responsibilities there. Always start descriptions with a verb (taught, designed, coordinated, etc.) rather than “My responsibilities included...” Vary the verbs and use the correct tense (present for current jobs; past for past jobs). Consider breaking down experience into subcategories (internships, volunteer, studio, freelance, etc.). List in reverse chronological order (most recent first), but highlight more relevant jobs by making those descriptions longer.

AWARDS + EXHIBITIONS

Consider breaking this section down into subcategories (grants, residencies, academic awards, exhibitions). Always include the year received, the title of the award/exhibition, the awarding organization’s name, and its location.

Tips

A résumé is part of the entire body of supporting work (website, cover letter, business card, etc.) and should share a similar graphic standard.

Your name is your “brand”— give its presentation (font, size, etc.) careful consideration.

Be sure to include a physical address (ideally one close to the location of the job/internship).

Only include one e-mail address and phone number.

Include your website address.
(If you don’t have one, make one.)

Create a clear and concise portrait of your experience and what sets you apart from other candidates.

List résumé categories (education, experience, etc.) in hierarchical order, which depends on stage of experience and employer concerns.

Limit to one page. (Exceptions: teaching CVs and exhibition listings).

Think about white space. Is there enough for the reader to take notes?

Cover Letters

Paragraph #1: Why

Tell the employer who you are and your current level. Acknowledge who this employer is with phrasing that shows your attention to and interest in this particular company; is it a small firm? A proactive designer? A renowned cultural institution? Include your reason for contacting them, naming the specific position or your open inquiry.

Paragraph #2: Them

Research the company to learn as much as you can about what they do. Show that you understand their products, size, attitude, ethics, aesthetics, etc. Make bridges between what they do/need and who you are. Use one or two concrete examples/details.

Paragraph #3: You

Argue that you are the candidate for the job. Describe your experience, qualifications, and skills as they relate to the position. Adapt language directly from the listing. Show what you will bring from your work/studios that will add to the productivity and culture of the firm.

Paragraph #4: Thanks

Thank the reader for their time. State your availability for an interview — especially if you will be traveling to the company's location from out of town. Include how much you look forward to speaking with them further about this position/firm/work.

Tips

Limit your cover letter to one page in a professional format that coordinates with your résumé.

Make sure you would want to read your cover letter. Think about your tone — professional yet unique, concise, action-based.

If you are sending a letter of interest to a company that does not have a job opening, explain the origin of your interest. Perhaps suggest an informational interview.

What you note here becomes material for your interview. Use the cover letter to guide what they will focus on and leave out details you aren't fully familiar with.

When e-mailing an application, include a full or nearly full cover letter in the e-mail, then attach a bundled PDF with your full cover letter and résumé.

Use "RISD," your name, and the job title in the e-mail subject line and file name when attaching documents.

Think about white space. Is there enough for the reader to take notes?