

SMCC Career Guide



Are you career ready?

Learn how to:

- Evaluate your career readiness skills
- Create a best practice resume and cover letter
- Search for jobs and internships
- Prepare for an interview
- Create a LinkedIn profile

Career Readiness Checklist



This checklist is designed to measure your career readiness competencies as defined by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). Employers across all industries say they look for these eight NACE Career Readiness competencies when making hiring decisions. Learning how to talk about these abilities in your resume/cover letter and during interviews will best prepare you for landing a job or internship!

COMMUNICATION

The ability to clearly and effectively express yourself in writing and/or in person.

Where do you rank?

- ☐ Need Improvement
- ☐ Currently Developing
- ☐ Proficient
- ☐ Strength

How have you demonstrated?

How can I develop this skill?

- Take leadership role in a club
- Attend employer networking events
- Practice customer service skills on job
- Conduct an informational interview

CRITICAL THINKING & PROBLEM-SOLVING

The ability to identify and solve problems quickly and efficiently; the ability to analyze a situation and respond appropriately based on an understanding of the context and relevant information.

Where do you rank?

- ☐ Need Improvement
- ☐ Currently Developing
- ☐ Proficient
- ☐ Strength

How have you demonstrated?

How can I develop this skill?

- Practice active listening skills
- Ask questions/avoid assumptions
- Step out of comfort zone
- Read widely for different perspectives

CAREER & SELF-DEVELOPMENT

The ability to actively work on personal awareness and career development. Ongoing efforts to gain awareness of strengths and weaknesses, and seek opportunities to develop professional skills.

Where do you rank?

- ☐ Need Improvement
- ☐ Currently Developing
- ☐ Proficient
- ☐ Strength

How have you demonstrated?

How can I develop this skill?

- Take online self-assessments
- Talk with faculty about career options
- Explore MyCareers:
<https://smccme.mymajors.com/careers/>
- Register on Handshake Job Board

EQUITY & INCLUSION (GLOBAL/INTERCULTURAL FLUENCY)

The ability to demonstrate an awareness, respectful attitude, curiosity and knowledge, and cultural humility in engaging and including people from different backgrounds and cultures than yourself.

Where do you rank?

- ☐ Need Improvement
- ☐ Currently Developing
- ☐ Proficient
- ☐ Strength

How have you demonstrated?

How can I develop this skill?

- Attend campus intercultural event
- Practice empathy
- Question own bias and assumptions
- Show curiosity in other people

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LEADERSHIP

The ability to recognize and capitalize on personal and team strengths to achieve goals.

Where do you rank?

- ☐ Need Improvement
- ☐ Currently Developing
- ☐ Proficient
- ☐ Strength

How have you demonstrated?

How can I develop this skill?

- Create or lead a campus club
- Supervise work/volunteer project
- Practice listening and including others
- Organize, plan, and lead meeting/event

PROFESSIONALISM

Knowing work environments differ greatly, demonstrating effective work habits, communicating respectfully and appropriately, and acting in the interest of the larger community and workplace.

Where do you rank?

- ☐ Need Improvement
- ☐ Currently Developing
- ☐ Proficient
- ☐ Strength

How have you demonstrated?

How can I develop this skill?

- Demonstrate dependability (be on time)
- Wear proper attire for work setting
- Complete an internship or summer job
- Be present and prepared (not on phone)

TEAMWORK

Build and maintain collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals, while appreciating diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities.

Where do you rank?

- ☐ Need Improvement
- ☐ Currently Developing
- ☐ Proficient
- ☐ Strength

How have you demonstrated?

How can I develop this skill?

- Join a club or group and stay involved
- Actively participate in class group projects
- Volunteer for community activity
- Manage emotions/self-regulate

TECHNOLOGY

Understand and leverage technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.

Where do you rank?

- ☐ Need Improvement
- ☐ Currently Developing
- ☐ Proficient
- ☐ Strength

How have you demonstrated?

How can I develop this skill?

- Take a tech. class or online certificate
- Reach what tech skills needed in career
- Use online tools for goal setting/tracking
- Create digital portfolio/personal website

Tips for Writing a Resume



The Basics: Appearance & Format

- **Length 1-2 pages**
- **Be wary of templates found online.**
Many are poorly formatted (columns, chunked, colorful fonts, graphics, photos). Stick to a Word or Google document you create using a template found on the SMCC Career Development BrightSpace course, found under a course "Resources" tab.
- **Don't use "I" in a resume**
- **Use bullets** - focus on transferable skills (not just every irrelevant job task you did in a former job)
- **Don't use long paragraphs.** People skim resumes and read quickly (15 seconds or less!)
- **Focus on transferable knowledge, skills and abilities** (including what you learned and did in classes). Review course syllabi and turn learning objectives into resume bullet points.
- **List your experiences in reverse chronological order** (start with most recent and work backwards). Do this for school, work, and activities.
- **Use standard font and font size** (Times New Roman, Calibri, Arial) and font size 12 or 11, with ½ to 1 inch margins
- **Be consistent** with how you use bold fonts, italics, and abbreviations. Your resume should be consistent and error-free.
- **Use AI to screen your resume** but be accurate and honest. [View AI resume support prompts.](#)
- **Proofread! Proofread! Proofread!**

Include, In Order

Contact information

- Your name (larger, 16 point font to stand out), professional email (nothing cutesy), mobile phone
- Address (this is optional but not really used as often for privacy reasons)
- Optional: LinkedIn profile (customized with your name)
- Optional but recommended: web portfolio/website

Education

- Present at SMCC to past
- Don't include high school after two years from graduating
- Name of school and location, expected graduation date
- Degree and Major spelled out (Associates Degree in _____), don't abbreviate
- GPA optional (usually if over 3.0)
- Academic achievements (Dean's List or honors)
- Key coursework: List names of relevant classes (not course numbers) relevant to major/pathway

For more information contact:

SMCC Career Development & Partnerships Director
Donna Gaspar Jarvis
smcccareerpartnerships@maineccc.edu
(207) 741-5994

Tips for Writing a Resume



Include Related Experience

- **Customize Related Experience Info on Your Resume by Field** e.g. "Related Marketing Experience" "Related Horticulture Experience"
- **List any course projects and** things you've learned or done in classes that have to do with job to which applying for
- **List jobs, internships, and volunteer experiences** related to your major/job focus
- **Be consistent with layout:** title/ project, name of place (business or dept.), town, state and dates
- **Use bullets that start with strong action verbs:** coordinated, assisted with, managed, created, developed skills in, helped, participated in, supported, facilitated, collaborated with, taught, etc.
- **Focus on knowledge, skills, and abilities** that matter to the job
- **Highlight outcomes and accomplishments:** numbers, hours, percentages, dollar amounts
- **How to write a related/relevant class project experience:** Graphic Design Project, Southern Maine Community College, South Portland, ME (April 2024)

Other Resume Headers: Choose 1-3 other categories depending on your experience: Leadership Experience, Awards, Licenses & Certifications, Computer & Technical Skills, Clubs & Organizations, Training & Professional Workshops, Professional Associations, Volunteer & Community Engagement, Laboratory Skills, Fieldwork Experience, Research Experience

Include Other Work Experience

List Other Jobs, Seasonal Work, Part-Time Positions Not Related to Job

- **Include course projects, internships, or other more targeted experiences** in the "Related Section" before.
- **Use this "Other Work Experience" section to focus on jobs to make money** (retail, restaurant) that may not be related to your major or future career goal.
- **Focus on transferable skills used** in the role that could be applied in another setting.
 - Example: "Developed friendly, courteous and professional customer service and communication skills assisting customers with orders and answering questions."
 - Example: "Assisted manager in training and mentoring new hires due to demonstrated work ethic and reliable resourcefulness on the job."
- **Be consistent with layout:** title/position/ project, name of business (org. or dept.), town, state and dates
- **Use bullets that start with strong action verbs** and focus on transferable knowledge, skills, and abilities
- **Example of how to write a job experience:** Cashier, Hannaford Supermarkets, Saco, ME (Jan. 2023- Present)

Sample Resume Template



Name
Phone Number | Email Address
LinkedIn (Customize link with Name)

HIGHLIGHTS OF QUALIFICATIONS

- A bulleted list or short paragraph statement of your key achievements, skills, traits, and experiences that are relevant to the position for which you are applying.
- Usually 2-3 bullets (no more than 5), or 2-3 sentences. This assists the employer in knowing you are qualified for the job, at first glance

EDUCATION

Southern Maine Community College, South Portland, ME
Associate Degree in Name of Major
GPA: (include if 3.0 or better) List any honors such as Dean's list

Expected Graduation: Month Year

Previous Institution or High School (remove HS after 2-3 years graduated), City, State Month, Grad Year

RELEVANT COURSEWORK: List courses in major that display knowledge learned from classes related to job

Name of class; Name of class; Name of class ; Name of class; Name of class; Name of class
Name of class; Name of class; Name of class ; Name of class; Name of class; Name of class

RELATED EXPERIENCE (Could also be called Course Projects.)

Internship or Position Title, Business, City, State

Month Year – Month Year

- Start with strong action verb (Helped, Assisted, Managed, Coordinated etc.)
- Use past tense verbs (managed, organized) for things done in the past and current tense verbs for job you are still doing (manage, organize).
- Highlight any things that you learned or did that show skills or abilities useful for position.
- Don't just focus on every little task if not relevant. Instead think about transferable skills (for example: Developed customer service and communication skills in busy retail environment.)
- List any accomplishments or outcomes from projects you worked on if applicable.
- Include metrics such as numbers, number of hours, percentages etc. to show results, impact or outcome.

Course Project Title, Southern Maine Community College, Brunswick, ME

Month Year – Month Year

- See above for bullet tips but you can also focus on a class assignment or project that shows skills/knowledge!

(OTHER) WORK EXPERIENCE

Organization name, Job Title (if applicable), City, State

Month Year – Month Year

- See above for bullet tips

Organization name, Job Title (if applicable), City, State

Month Year – Month Year

- See above for bullet tips

SKILLS & QUALIFICATIONS (optional section to focus on any special skills or abilities. Choose as appropriate)

Trainings or Certifications: List any other special qualifications/skills

Computer: List any software, computer language, social media tools, or other skills related to field

Languages: List languages and level of proficiency

VOLUNTEER & EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES (Be sure to start with SMCC things first if you have any)

Club/Sport Name, Title (if applicable), City, State

Month Year – Month Year

- Include an specific skills, contributions and accomplishments or things you did if applicable

Cover Letter Format



Your Name
Address
Email
Phone Number

Month Date, Year

Name of Employer/HR Manager
Company Name
Employer Street Address
City, State Zip code

Your cover letter should be in a “business letter” format with all text aligned to the left for a clean, professional and polished look.

Dear Ms./Mr. and Last name of Addressee (if you don’t know then say “Dear Hiring Manager”:

Opening Paragraph:

Be sure to state the position to which you are applying and name of the company (so it’s clear exactly which position you are applying for). You may also include how you found out about the position and definitely include if you were referred by someone (for example someone you know who works at the company, or a company recruiter you met at a career fair or corresponded with via email). The first paragraph is also an opportunity to make a general statement summarizing what qualifies you most for the job (recent graduate from SMCC, in a particular pathway or major, or any key skills or experiences that highlight why they should consider you). You may also mention your enthusiasm for the position here.

2nd Paragraph:

In the second paragraph, you want to make a direct connection between the needs of the company (what they are looking for in a candidate) and how and why you are a good match for what they are looking for in a candidate based on your major, knowledge from coursework, specific skills or experiences. How or why are you a good fit? This is an opportunity to talk about your “personal brand” – who you are or what personal qualities you have that are a good fit for the position or company. Don’t focus on why this is good for you, stress on what you can do for them. Draw upon any coursework or specific projects, work or internship/clinical experiences or college involvement if it shows a direct connection to skills that would be relevant to the position. You don’t just want to repeat exactly what they will already see in your resume. This is a chance to expand upon a specific project or accomplishment and how that qualifies you for the job/or task to which you are applying.

3rd Paragraph:

This is an opportunity to show that you know something about their company (that you have researched their website or spoken to someone who works there) to show your interest in the role and company. Employers like to see that you know something about them and have done some research about the company or job. You mention what you admire about their mission or talk about a particular program or something new the company is doing. Include something as applicable to show you have done your homework about them.

Closing Paragraph:

End by restating your interest in the position and how your unique qualifications are a good fit for the position. Request an interview, and let the reader know you look forward to a response and hope to have an opportunity to meet. Thank the reader for their consideration.

Sincerely,
Your signature

Your Printed Name

For more information contact: SMCC Career Development & Partnerships Director

Donna Gaspar Jarvis, smcccareerpartnerships@maineccc.edu, (207) 741-5994

Cover Letter Example



Sahra Bileton
43 Mitchell Drive
Biddeford, ME 04033
(207) 111 -7777
Jperkins27@smccme.edu

Sahra Bileton
43 Mitchell Drive
Biddeford, ME 04033
(207) 111 -7777
Jperkins27@smccme.edu

Ms. Alicia Johnston, Director of Human Resources
MaineHealth, Southern Maine Health Care
22 Hospital Drive
Biddeford, ME 04042

August 21, 2026

Dear Ms. Johnston,

Address a real person rather than
"To Whom It May Concern." When in
doubt, use "Dear Hiring Committee."

Please accept my application for the **Registered Nurse (RN) position at Southern Maine Health Care**. I am a recent graduate from Southern Maine Community College's Associate Degree in Nursing program. I had the opportunity to complete clinical rotations/practicums at Maine Medical Center under the supervision of Danielle McCallister, RN, MEd. I recently successfully passed my NCLEX-RN exam, and am excited to begin my career ideally working in a hospital setting in southern Maine with a diverse patient population.

Include personal
qualities, skills,
or experience
relevant to the job.

During my education at SMCC, I learned and demonstrated required basic nursing skills including patient assessment, monitoring, and implementation of care plans. I am organized, detail oriented and always follow protocol in regards to record-keeping, monitoring, and reporting on patient's progress and any changes. Through my clinical practicums, I further developed my skills in communication, listening skills, and teamwork to deliver compassionate patient-centered care. I have had the opportunity to work with patients from diverse cultural and language backgrounds, and enjoy working with a wide range of individuals and families.

As you can see from my resume, in addition to my direct care experience, I am a hardworking student, who worked part-time during college to help pay for my degree. I am interested in working for Southern Maine Health Care as I currently moved to the Biddeford area, and have heard great things about your staff and healthcare team from my nursing instructors and mentors in the field.

I would love the opportunity to interview with your hiring committee to further discuss the position and my qualifications for this role. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sahra Bileton

In closing, ask for an opportunity to interview
and if possible sign both a written signature (scan
an electronic signature) and typed formal name.

See Brightspace "Career Development" course for additional cover letter examples
by major/pathway.

Resources for Getting a Job or Internship



Networking

Networking is Relationship Building

Networking is simply making a connection or talking to people either in person or virtually. Treat any interaction with someone as a potential networking opportunity. Here are 10 ways to build your professional network.

1. **Create a LinkedIn profile** and make contacts with local people or companies of interest.
2. **Do a short 15-20 minute informational interview** with someone working in your field of interest. Possible questions: How did you get into this job? What skills or experience are needed in this field? What is the best part and most challenging part of your job? What advice do you have for me if I wanted to work in this field in the future. NOTE: Be sure to always send a thank you email!
3. **Attend any SMCC job and internship fairs or employer networking events** even if you are not currently looking for a position. Any time you have an opportunity to practice networking skills is valuable.
4. **Join professional associations, and attend conferences or company open houses.**
5. **Sign up for alerts and job postings on LinkedIn.**
6. **Create a personal website (on sites like Wix) or web portfolio.** Be creative in demonstrating what you can do (especially for things like graphic design, video production, writing, blogs, coding, or other skills).
7. **Volunteer** as time allows to learn more about organizations and build your resume.
8. **Sign up with a staffing or recruitment agency** to get part-time work that may be connected to field.
9. **Seek a professional mentor**, someone who can teach you and help you learn about a field.
10. **Practice professional etiquette.** Be sure to follow-up with a THANK YOU for all job/internship interview (or informational interviews) "Hello, Mr. or Ms. _____, Thank you so much for taking time to interview me today. I enjoyed learning more about the position and your company, and am really excited about the possibility of working with you. Please let me know if there is anything else you need from me at this time. Thank you again and look forward to hearing from you soon." (Sign your name.)

Elevator Speech

A Self-Introduction to the Question "Tell Me About Yourself."

Develop and practice your elevator speech for your introductions, career fairs, and networking events. Here are some key components.

1. Tell the person your Name, School and Major.
2. Mention any classes you have taken or experience connected to their work.
3. You may include brief info about any special skills or abilities, if you have them, or other things you have to offer.

EXAMPLE: My name is Eliza and I am student at Southern Maine Community College studying computer science.

I enjoy using technology to solve problems and also have good customer service and communication skills through my work at several retail jobs and waitressing.

I have computer coding experience from my classes and am working towards my CompTIA A+ certification.

I am currently seeking a job or paid internship that will help me grow my skills in technical support.

Can you tell me about XYZ company and if you offer any internships or part-time jobs for students?

For more information contact: SMCC Career Development & Partnerships Director

Donna Gaspar Jarvis, smcccareerpartnerships@maineccc.edu, (207) 741-5994

Job Boards & Search Engines



Handshake

- Handshake is Southern Maine Community College's career platform connecting students with key employer partners, job and internship opportunities, and campus career events. Whether you're looking to discover internships or jobs matched to your program, connect directly with recruiters, build your resume, or learn about career events hosted by the SMCC Career Development Office, Handshake is an all-in-one resource.
- **Log in with your SMCC Student Email:**
- <http://smccme.joinhandshake.com/edu>

Indeed.com

- <https://www.indeed.com/>
- Indeed is a leading job site with millions of job listings from thousands of websites
- Explore Indeed's Job Search Academy:
- <https://www.indeed.com/job-search-services/academy>

LinkedIn.com

- [linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com)
- LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network on the Internet. Search for jobs, identify contacts, follow companies, get training, and more! Be sure to optimize your profile.

Maine Job Link

- <https://joblink.maine.gov>

Maine Career Centers

- www.maineccareercenter.gov

Live Work Maine/Job Board

- <https://www.liveandworkinmaine.com/>
- <https://careers.liveandworkinmaine.com/search>

Maine Association for Non-Profits

- <http://www.nonprofitmaine.org/connect/non-profit-job-board/>

BioScience Association of Maine (BioMe) Job Board

- <https://biomaine.org/job-board/>

Maine.gov Job Opportunities

- <https://www.maine.gov/portal/employment/jobs.html>

Jobs in Maine

- <https://www.jobsinme.com/>

State of Maine Government Jobs

- www.maine.gov/bhr/state-jobs

Google.com

- Type a search query into the Google search bar (e.g. marketing jobs in Southern Maine). You can narrow your search by type of job, location, company type, date posted, and more.
- Tips: <https://www.thebalancemoney.com/google-for-jobs-4140171>

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Preparing for an Interview

Interview Tips

Research the Job Opening & Company

Read the job description carefully. Review the company's purpose and product.

Write Down Your Strengths

Identify positive skills and abilities that match what the job description calls for.

Think about Weaknesses in Case Asked

Be truthful but don't share things that would be red flags.

Prepare a List of Questions for Interviewer

What does a successful person in this job mean, for you?

Practice Your Elevator Speech

Prepare your self-intro. How will you respond to "Tell me about yourself?" Include name, school, major, career interests, any key work, skills, or activities.

Prepare a List of Answers

Use "STAR" technique: situation, task, action, results. What was the situation? What did you do? What was the outcome?

Prepare Stories for Behavioral Questions

Review categories of questions and think about answers.

Dress for Success

Business attire appropriate for setting.

Relax Before the Interview

Remember it's a conversation to exchange info.

Arrive 15 Minutes Early

Give yourself time to park and relax.

First Impressions Count

Be polite to everyone. Turn off your mobile phone.

Send a Thank You Note

PRO TIPS: Try to keep stories and examples to topics that are not too personal or about interpersonal relationships/situations. Give a variety of settings or examples to answer behavioral questions (at a job, in class, sports team, club activity). Don't make answers too short or too long. Be professional and specific with the STAR technique. Show reflection and what you learned from situations. Send a Thank You email after the interview.

Behavioral Questions

Dealing with Conflict

Discuss a time you had to deal with a difficult co-worker. What happened and how did you handle it?

Taking Initiative

Give an example of when you had to go beyond an expected role.

Teamwork Skills

When have you had to work on a team and what was your role?

Handling Failure

Discuss a time you tried to accomplish something that failed.

Flexibility/Adaptability

Have you ever had to change plans unexpectedly? What happened?

Problem-Solving Skills

When have you had to take action to deal with a situation?

Organization & Planning

Tell about a time you had to juggle multiple tasks.

Response to Feedback/Criticism

Tell a time you received constructive feedback. What did you do?

Communication Skills

Discuss a time you had to explain something difficult to another person.

Commitment to Task

Tell a time you had to persevere with work/school task even if difficult.

Future Career Goals

Where do you hope to see yourself in 5 years?