

SMCC Resume Guide

CREATING A BEST PRACTICE PROFESSIONAL RESUME

What is the purpose of a resume?

The purpose of a resume is to get an interview. Create a clear, well-formatted document that shows how your education, experience, and skills match a specific job. Even if you have limited experience, you can still emphasize transferable skills developed through course projects, part-time jobs, or extracurricular activities.

Formats & Length: Common Résumé Formats

- **Chronological** (most common): Best for younger students, steady work history, or early careers. List jobs in reverse chronological order (most recent first). Include employer, title, location, dates, and bullet points (skills used, relevant tasks, achievements).
- **Functional/Combination**: Best for career changers, gaps in work histories, or those entering a new field. Highlight skills and relevant responsibilities first by bullets under different skill categories. Then list jobs, employers and dates after the skills category section to show employment history (employers, dates).
- **Length: 1–2 pages**. Only use 2 pages if you have at least 1½ pages of meaningful content. No fluff.

Master Resume Versus Targeted Resume

Begin by creating a “Master Resume” template that features all of your work experience, skills, and certifications. The Master Resume is a place to store all information about all your experiences including course projects, jobs or internships, or extracurricular/volunteer activities. Continue to add to this “Master Resume” throughout college (and beyond) as you acquire new skills and experiences so you have captured everything in one place.

Then, when you apply for different jobs/internships, “save as” to create a duplicate copy of the “Master Resume” and edit and this new “Targeted Resume” towards a specific job application. This “Targeted Resume” highlights skills, qualities, or experiences most relevant for the role/job position as listed in the job description.

For example, you might include a SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS section at the top of a targeted resume that speaks directly to the key skills or experiences listed in a job description to create a good match.

Core Sections (*What to Include*)

Contact (Header):

- Name (16-18 pt. font; larger than body text), phone, email (keep professional, nothing cutesy)
- Address is optional (just use city, state).
- LinkedIn URL (optional) or portfolio URL (if relevant).
- Do not include photos, headshots, or other graphics.

Summary of Qualifications

- Alternative names for this section: Career Profile, Highlight of Qualifications, or Resume Summary
- Optional section, but helpful to put at top of a targeted resume to highlight key words from job description
- Use 3–5 bullets or 2–3 sentences tailored to the job. Mirror keywords from the job description
- Don’t list skills alone—put them in context (e.g., “Communication — delivered friendly, accurate service in a high-volume retail environment”)

Education *(most recent first, so for example start with SMCC and then backwards to high school/adult ed)*

- School name & location
- Degree spell out: “Associate Degree in ____” or “Associate Degree in Communications & New Media”
- Major/Minor (as applicable)
- Graduation date or expected graduation date (Month, Year)
- Relevant Coursework or Key Coursework – list titles of courses in your major (not course numbers)
- Include any additional certifications/licensure, scholarships/honors/awards
- Include GPA (usually if 3.0 or higher)
- Include other college coursework from other schools. High school should be removed after two years.

Work Experience *(reverse chronological order by skill area)*

For each role (job, internship, project, volunteer, leadership):

- Title, organization, city/state, and dates (be consistent in date style)
- Bullets that start with action verbs; show skills used and results achieved.
- Prioritize relevant, transferable skills over listing every task or job duty from former job.
- Use past tense for past roles; present tense for current.
- Use metrics if possible (numbers, percentage, dollar amounts or anything else that shows achievement). Not always possible but quantify outcomes when possible.
- Be sure to highlight transferable skills that could be used at another job (for example: “Developed customer service and communication skills working with the public.” **OR** “Demonstrated friendly, courteous, and professional customer services skills.”

Skills *(Optional but recommended. Actionable skills you know how to do)*

- Technical/Software/Tools (e.g., Excel, Photoshop, POS systems)
- Laboratory/Technical (if applicable)
- Languages (with proficiency level)
- Certifications/Training (with expiration dates if applicable)

Other Optional Sections *(Use as Relevant)*

- Relevant Projects / Course Projects (show applied skills and outcomes). **Note: Sometimes your schoolwork and class projects may be the most relevant experience geared towards a specific job!)*
- Training & Certifications
- Computer & Technical Skills / Lab Skills
- Volunteer & Community Engagement
- Leadership Experience
- Clubs & Organizations / Campus Activities / Athletics
- Military Experience
- Professional Associations
- Awards & Honors
- Portfolio / GitHub / Behance (for creative/technical roles)

Tips for a Best Practice Resume: The Basics

Avoid Fancy Resume Templates

Some downloadable templates found online that use columns, graphics, boxes or tables, or fancy designs can be difficult to edit and won't be picked up by Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS). Create your resume in Microsoft Word or Google doc or find SMCC downloadable resume templates on the SMCC Career Development Brightspace course, found under the “Resources” tab on any Brightspace course page.

Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) & Customization

Many companies use ATS systems, robots that scan resumes and parse information. Use key words in your resume that mirror words found in the job description to create a stronger ATS match. You also want to explain how and where you developed or applied skills in the context of a job or experience. Don't just list a bunch of words under a SKILLS section. Always tell the truth—anything on a resume can be asked about in an interview!

Appearance & Formatting *(Make It Easy to Read)*

- 1–2 pages; meaningful content (no fluff)
- Clean layout: ½"–1" margins; leave white space. Not cluttered
- Font: 11–12 pt body; common fonts (Calibri, Arial, Times New Roman, Cambria)
- Consistency: alignment, bold/italics, punctuation, date formats, abbreviations
- Top half of page = your most important info
- No first person ("I") statement. Start bullets with action verbs.
- Use correct verb tenses in your bullets (past tense verbs for past roles; present tense for current jobs)
- ATS-friendly (no tables/text boxes that break parsing; mirrors job keywords honestly)
- Grammar/spelling proofread; file name professional (Name_Resume.pdf)
- Save File name: FirstName_LastName_Resume.pdf. Save as PDF before uploading or emailing.

Two Format Examples on How To Write Experiences:

Either layout is fine, just BE CONSISTENT!

Sales Cashier, Target — South Portland, ME (Sept. 2023–Present)

Boys and Girls Club, Volunteer / Biddeford, Maine / October 2024-May 2026

Writing Strong Bullets *(How to Show Impact)*

Formula: Action Verb + What + How + Result *(use numbers where possible)*

- Start with strong verbs: coordinated, managed, created, developed, analyzed, presented, supported, trained, assisted, demonstrated ability to..., developed skills in....
- Be brief, specific, and relevant.
- Use metrics: **numbers, hours, percentages, \$, frequency.**

Action Verbs (Trimmed, High-Impact Set)

Communication/People: collaborated, presented, communicated, facilitated, supported, advised

Leadership/Initiative: led, coordinated, mentored, trained, organized, delegated, spearheaded

Technical/Creative: designed, built, configured, debugged, illustrated, prototyped, implemented

Analysis/Results: analyzed, evaluated, audited, optimized, improved, verified, tested

Operations/Service: assisted, processed, resolved, maintained, monitored, operated

Achievements: increased, reduced, exceeded, improved, delivered, completed, recognized

Do / Don't Examples

- **DON'T:** "Talked to people at front desk"
- **DO:** "Demonstrated communication and customer service by assisting 30–50 walk-in visitors daily and answering multi-line phone system."
- **DON'T:** "Good team player"
- **DO:** "Collaborated with team to process orders online and by phone, increasing order time by 15%."
- **DON'T:** "Closed the cash register"
- **DO:** "Assisted shift supervisors with register close; recognized for accuracy and attention to detail."

Achievement-style bullets

- “Employee of the Month (Oct 2023) for leadership and teamwork.”
- “Promoted to Associate Lead based on work ethic and efficiency; increased sales by 10%.”
- “Assisted manager in mentoring and training 5 new employees on job functions.”

Helpful Online Tools

- [Cultivated Culture](#) – [Bullet Analyzer](#): improve bullet clarity and impact
Resume Bullet Point Analyzer: <https://cultivatedculture.com/resume-bullet-analyzer/>
- Cultivated Culture – [Resume Scanner](#): check keyword alignment
Resume Scanner: <https://cultivatedculture.com/resume-scanner/>
- [Jobscan](#): match resume to job description <https://www.jobscan.co/>
- [O*NET Online](#): research job rules and review job tasks/skills to describe roles accurately
O*NET Online: <https://www.onetonline.org/>
- WordClouds such as [classic word clouds](#) or [wordcloud generator](#) help signal keywords
Word Cloud tool: <https://classic.wordclouds.com/>
- If you use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to review or support resume development, help with writing bullets, or simplify writing, be sure everything is 100% accurate and you could talk about it in an interview. Also be sure it sounds like you! Employers can spot a generic AI voice in resumes. For privacy, be careful of sharing personal information (name, phone) in online AI resume tools.

Sample Mini-Outline

Name (*Large*)

Phone • Email • LinkedIn • Portfolio (optional)

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- 3–5 tailored bullets highlighting hard/soft skills and achievements relevant to the target job.

EDUCATION

Southern Maine Community College — South Portland, ME

Associate Degree in [Major], [Month Year] (or “Expected [Month Year]”)

- Key Coursework: [Course 1], [Course 2], [Course 3] (optional)
- Honors/Awards (optional)

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE (*Internships, SMCC course projects, relevant jobs*)

Role/Project — Organization/Course, City, ST | [Dates]

- Action + skill + context + result/metric.
- Action + tool/tech + outcome.

WORK EXPERIENCE (*reverse chronological*)

Title — Company, City, ST | [Dates]

- Action + skill + result.
- Action + responsibility + outcome.

SKILLS

Technical/Software • Tools/Lab • Languages (with proficiency) • Certifications

OPTIONAL SECTIONS

Leadership • Volunteer • Clubs/Organizations • Athletics • Awards • Associations • Portfolio

Sample Resume 1

Jane Doe

(555) 555-5555 • janedoe2@gmail.com • www.linkedin.com/in/janedoe2

SUMMARY OF SKILLS

Customer Service: Developed communication and customer service skills and demonstrated professional phone and email communication etiquette as intern at insurance company.

Leadership & Collaboration: Able to work independently with minimal supervision as well as part of a team; named Employee of the Month for assisting supervisor with training new employees in retail position.

Computer Proficiency: Microsoft Office (Word, intermediate Excel, Powerpoint)

EDUCATION

Southern Maine Community College, South Portland, Maine

Expected Graduation: May 2026

Associate Degree in Applied Science Major: **Business Administration**

GPA: 3.2

Key Coursework: Introduction to Business; Financial Accounting; Macroeconomics; Microeconomics; Human Resource Management; Marketing; Statistics; Entrepreneurship; Quantitative Reasoning

RELATED BUSINESS EXPERIENCE

Disability Benefit Specialist Intern, UNUM, Portland, ME

June-August 2025

Served as full-time intern/part-time employee at Fortune 500 insurance company as assistant disability claims specialist conducting customer service for in-bound and out-bound calls.

Helped process primarily maternity claims; confirmed and gathered information from customer, healthcare professionals, employers, and other stakeholders.

Learned process of approving or denying claims based on company policy with attention to detail.

Macroeconomics Group Presentation, Southern Maine Community College, South Portland, ME, Oct. 2025

- Learned economics concepts of supply and demand including business language and terminology and concepts of aggregate demand and aggregate supply and how to analyze macroeconomic issues.
- Discussed other topics such as role of scarcity, major goals of fiscal and monetary policy, the role of money and credit and relation to the U.S. banking system; overview of Federal Reserve.
- Collaborated on course project with team of three to research macroeconomic policies on international trade and created presented concepts and findings to class using Powerpoint and public speaking skills.
- Demonstrated career competencies in communication (oral and written), teamwork, and research.

Marketing Plan Course Project, Marketing Class, SMCC, South Portland, ME, April 2026

- Worked with two classmates to create a mock marketing/branding promotional campaign for a fictitious beverage client demonstrating all aspects of creating a marketing plan including market analysis, competitive analysis, organizational description, summary of growth strategies, and financials.
- Participated in class project on Point of Sale (POS) strategies to determine marketing strategies.
- Created and pitched concepts for marketing including logos, product shots, and premiums.

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

Merchandise Associate, TJ Maxx, South Portland, ME, May. 2025-Present

- Work part-time in retail setting providing sales and customer service, and answering product questions.
- Developed attention to detail in the organization and accuracy of handling money at register

CAMPUS ATHLETICS

SMCC Women's Soccer Team, Southern Maine Community College, Sept. – Dec. 2024/2025

Developed organization and time management skills managing practice and games with academics.

Sample Resume 2

JOHN DOE

(207) XXX-XXXX / john.doe22@gmail.com

EDUCATION

Southern Maine Community College (SMCC), South Portland, ME
Associates Degree in *Information Technology*

Graduated: May 2025

RELEVANT COURSEWORK

Linux System Administration
Fundamentals of Network Security
Introduction to Discrete Mathematics
Project Management
Windows Server and Active Directory
Microsoft Client Operating Systems

Virtualization Fundamentals
Network Fundamentals
Computer Forensics
Scripting for IT
Routing and Switching Fundamentals

RELATED EXPERIENCE

Information Technology skills and qualifications developed in SMCC classes, labs, and course projects:

- Installed Windows and Linux operating systems and configured to specifications including updating and backing up software in remote environment.
- Learned to build and trouble shoot network and hardware as part of Network Fundamentals class.
- Developed ability to support IT help functions through course labs including configuring user names, passwords, tracking employee use, providing access points, opening and closing ports, creating Windows accounts, creating group policies, and other computer help functions.
- Developed a mock step-by-step online tutorial to walk clients through how to use PowerShell to use event logs and set up windows forwarding.

Senior Capstone IT Project, Southern Maine Community College, South Portland, ME

April 2025

- Built a mock virtual lost and found website to help businesses in the City of Portland promote lost items and for people to search lost items.
- Learned how to work with a client on a project. Practiced project management and client relations skills with faculty conducting a mock “kick off meeting” to determine real-life work problem.
- Participated in brainstorming sessions with peers (and faculty mentor) to problem-solve how to address the work issue.
- Developed milestones and created break down structure for key steps and tasks.
- Learned and practiced project management steps: planning, setting up website, determining risk management, quality assurance (Q/A testing), and advertising (designing business cards and flyers).
- Learned coding and web design to create original website for use and functionality and aesthetics.
- Developed problem-solving and communication skills as a team, troubleshooting issues in creating a search engine and database.
- Demonstrated teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills and ability to flexible.

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

Clerk, Shaws, South Portland, Maine

June 2024– December 2025

- Developed customer service, communication, multitasking skills working in food prep department.
- Demonstrated leadership abilities helping managers train, support, and mentor new co-workers in learning essential job functions.