

Chantilly Academy

**Engineering & Scientific Technology
Health and Human Services**

Positioning Your Self for Success:
Creating an Attention Getting Resume
&
Winning Interview Skills

Career Experience Program
2008 - 2009

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The First Impression: The Cover Letter

ALWAYS include a cover letter with your resume.

The cover letter:

- introduces you to an prospective employer,
- sum up what you have to offer,
- highlights your key skills, and
- if well written, it encourages the reader's interest in your resume.

How to Build it...

- Create a master cover letter, but customize the details for each position you are seeking.
- Avoid language that might be perceived as inappropriate (i.e. aggressive, familiar, cute, or humorous)
- Address the cover letter to a specific person or the human resources department
- Your cover letter should match your resume's font, and font size (11 or 12).
- Three paragraphs:
 - ✓ **1st Paragraph** - States your interest in a specific position. (How you learned of the position). Keep it to the point - about 2 sentences long.
 - ✓ **2nd Paragraph** - 3 to 5 short sentences that state why you are interested in the position, your major skills and strengths that apply directly to the position's requirements. Show interest in the company by including a reference to something you know about it. (current business news or the organization's mission statement often found at their website.)
 - ✓ **3rd Paragraph** - Ask for an interview. Include your contact information (home phone number, email address) and a time that you can best be reached. Remember to thank the person for his/her consideration of your resume.

Example Cover Letter

Full Legal Name

Street Address

City, State Zip

Date

Name of Contact Person

Business Title

or

Human Resources Department

Organization Name

Street Address

City, State Zip

Dear Mr. /Ms. _____:

I am writing to state my interest in applying for the position of _____.
I learned of this [internship or employment opportunity] from _____
[my teacher at the Chantilly High School Academy or job announcement source
(i.e. The Washington Post).]

The enclosed resume details the skills, experience and coursework that qualify me for consideration. I have a variety of technical, communication and interpersonal skills; [Offer a high value example or two from your resume.].
[Add one or two additional sentences that explain why you are interested in this opportunity – i.e. relevance to your career goal.

I would sincerely appreciate an opportunity to meet with you to explore how my qualifications meet the requirements for _____ [employment or selection].
I may be reached at [telephone number OR email address] between the hours of _____.

Thank you for your consideration of my candidacy.

Sincerely yours,

Your Name

Resume: Promoting Your Education, Skills & Experience

Contents

1. Contact Information

- Contact information should be centered at the top of the resume.
- Use legal name – avoid nicknames.
- Use a permanent address and telephone number (include area code) and may include a “professional” email address.

2. Objective

- An objective tells potential employers the sort of work you are seeking.
- Is specifically targeted to the opportunity and employer [Review the job description and qualifications needed to help you.]

3. Summary of Skills

- Use bullets and list the strongest skills/accomplishments you have gained through your course(s) at the Academy
- Include any special project participation. [Individual or Academy class projects]
- Technical skills or competencies.
- Other skills, i.e., technical, communications, and interpersonal skills.

4. Awards, Certifications, Honors, Memberships

- Academic, athletic or community service activities
- School clubs, groups or memberships
- Special Awards or Honors

5. Relevant Employment, Internship Experience, and/or Volunteer Work

- Brief overview of experience and skill sets that are relevant to the opportunity and support your objective.
- Use Action words (verbs) to describe duties.
- Work experience; list the most recent experience first. For each experience include the following: title of position, name of organization, location of work (town, state), dates of employment, and description of work responsibilities with emphasis on specific skills.
- If you have held unrelated jobs to your resume objective: stress transferable skills that you have obtained through previous work experience.

6. Education

- The most recent education information is listed first. Remember to include your Academy as well as your base high school.
- Include your overall or individual course(s) grade point averages (GPA), if they are higher than 3.0.

References

- Identify individuals a prospective employer may contact to validate your education, skills and character, i.e., teachers, coaches, counselors, community leaders and former employers.
- Be sure to notify references before including their names.
- Prepare a list of at least 3 references on a separate piece of paper. Include their name, occupational or business title, employer, preferred address, and telephone number.

Assuring the “positive first impression...”

Once the resume has been written, take the time to have it reviewed for:

- **Content -**
 - ✓ Spelling
 - ✓ Grammar, i.e., verb tense must be consistent (past tense for previous jobs/ present tense for currently held jobs).
 - ✓ Optimal use of action verbs for description of previous work experience.
 - ✓ Relevant skills
 - ✓ Appearance - Consistency in formatting/layout features (headings, spacing, font, ink, and typeface).
 - ✓ All information given is relevant to your objective.
- **Design -**
 - ✓ use white or off-white paper.
 - ✓ use 8 1/2 X 11 inch paper.
 - ✓ Print on one side of the paper.
 - ✓ Font Style and size.
 - ✓ Minimize use of horizontal or vertical lines.
 - ✓ If the resume will be mailed, place flat in a 9"x13" envelope with your cover letter.

EXAMPLE

Jon Smith
3400 Academy Road
Chantilly, Virginia 20151
(703) 222-7400
Jon09@aol.com

OBJECTIVE

To obtain an entry-level position in information technology where I can utilize acquired technical skills and gain knowledge of new skills in order to grow in the field.

SUMMARY OF SKILLS

TECHNICAL SKILLS

- Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP)
- Configure, monitor, manage, and troubleshoot computer networks
- Install, replace, and maintenance of peripherals and hardware/software
- Microsoft Windows 2000 Server
- TCP/IP

SPECIAL SKILLS

- Bi-lingual (fluent in Spanish, Portuguese, and English)
- Motivated, enthusiastic, committed and team oriented
- Ability to think analytically and problem solve

AWARDS, HONORS, MEMBERSHIPS

- Computer Science Club and Yearbook Staff – Chantilly High School
- Future Business Leaders of America

EMPLOYMENT, INTERNSHIP AND VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

June 2007 to Present

Information Technology Assistant Logis Tech Corporation

Alexandria, Virginia

Serve as an assistant in the Information Technology department. Duties include: configure and manage information networks, configure company laptops and user workstations of various platforms, install software on individual computers, and connect client computers to the network.

September 2006 to June 2007

Customer Service/Cashier Best Buy

Fairfax, Virginia

Provided quality customer service in the computer technology department and worked as a cashier in a fast-paced, customer focused environment. Gained valuable experience in communicating with customers, problem solving, training new employees, and working on a team.

September 2005 to February 2006

Volunteer Tutor

Mondloch House

Alexandria, Virginia

Served as a volunteer tutor for children ages 8-12 years in basic reading, and mathematics.

EDUCATION

- ❖ September 2008 to Present, **Network Administration (pursuing Microsoft Certified Systems Administrator (MCSA) and Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) certifications**, Chantilly Academy, Chantilly, Virginia
- ❖ September 2006 - Present, Centreville High School, Advanced Studies Diploma, June 2009. GPA - 3.3

Example Reference Sheet

Legal Name
Street Address
City, State Zip
(703) Phone Number
E-mail Address (*Business Appropriate*)

Mrs. Janice Jones
Department Supervisor
H.G. Whittier, Inc.
25 East Street
Reston, Virginia 20194
(703) 356-1111

Mr. Bob Jones
Technology Instructor
Chantilly High School Academy
4201 Stringfellow Road
Chantilly, Virginia 20151
(703) 222-7460

Robert Lee
Minister
United Church
400 Hope Road
Chantilly, Virginia 20151
(703) 444-2222



Winning Interview Skills

Congratulations! Your effective cover letter and resume have earned you an interview. Consider it an opportunity to present your qualifications and unique personality.

Preparing for your Interview

- Research the position that you are applying for – and KNOW the key responsibilities
- Review – read your resume and be able to summarize, especially your strengths. Know a few details about the company/position; practice answers aloud to possible interview questions; create a list of appropriate questions you would like to ask the employer.
- Know the name(s) of the persons conducting the interview.
- Attitude – be positive.
- Dress appropriately.
- Appearance
 - Cleanliness
 - Body Scent - Too much perfume or aftershave can be offensive.
 - Hair – neatness counts.
 - Breath
- Copies – have several copies of your resume and reference sheet
- Portfolio – bring samples of your work, accomplishments (pictures, portfolio)

Self-knowledge

- How do your education, training, knowledge, skills, and abilities relate to the specific opportunity?
- What makes you different and better than others (strengths)?
- What are your goals and objectives, including what you are looking for in an opportunity or career?

- What is your previous work experience and how does it relate to the current opportunity you are seeking?
- What are the reasons you gave up or lost your previous positions?
- What were the elements of your past experiences that you liked best/least and why?

"Nailing your Interview"

- Be on time for the interview (arrive 10 minutes early). Never be late. Practice getting there on time the day before the interview.
- Prepare mentally; be confident, stay calm
- Introduce yourself, make eye contact, smile and shake hands firmly.
- Do not immediately sit down; wait to be invited to sit.
- Take time to think through your responses before answering questions. If you do not understand a question ask the interviewer to repeat it.
- Speak clearly and use appropriate language.
- Maintain eye contact with the interviewer; sit up straight.
- Tell the interviewer why you want to work for the company and give a good reason why he/she should select you.
- Do not discuss your personal or financial matters, or speak poorly of former employers.
- Be positive and enthusiastic; show interest in what the interviewer is saying. Ask questions.
- At the end of the interview, summarize why you are perfect for the position in one or two sentences.
- Thank the interviewer(s) for his/her time.

Typical Interview Questions – Be prepared with your answers

- **What kind of opportunity are you interested in?**

Tell something about the position you are seeking and relate it to the opportunity that is available.

- **Please tell me something about yourself.**

Take a little time and think up a brief “me” commercial that includes your positive points and work history (know your resume). Talk about your skills, abilities, experience, background, and goals that you have accomplished – anything that qualifies you for the opportunity. Do not discuss family, hobbies, or anything not directly related to the job.

- **Do you have personal references?**

Be sure to call your references to be sure that they will be available to give you a reference and also suggest some strengths that they could emphasize to the employer. Offer a copy of your Reference sheet to the employer

- **What do you want to be doing five years from now?**

One answer might be that you would like to be working for a company in a position of responsibility.

- **Why did you leave your last job?**

Always answer this question as positively as you can. Never say anything bad about your last employer. Why did you leave? – Career change? Trying something different? Be careful of saying you left due to a personality difference, because employers are hesitant to hire someone who cannot get along with others. Some employers feel that someone who can discuss their former employer positively, even though they may have been released, is worth hiring.

- **What would your teacher/last employer say about you?**

List all of your transferable skills that pertain to the opportunity.

- **What are some of your strengths?**

You should have your strengths in mind and provide some positive examples to prove them.

- **What is your biggest weakness?**

Never admit a weakness; turn a weakness into strength whenever possible (example: I tend to take on more responsibility than time allows).

- **Why should I select you?**

Emphasize your strengths and that you really want to work for the organization. Also, know what the employers needs are so you can mention that you can meet those specific needs (hardworking, committed, eager to learn knowledgeable and skillful in _____).

Sample Questions to ask an Employer – Show that you are interested

- What are you looking for in the person you hire for the position?
- What are the possibilities for advancement in this organization?
- What are the job duties and responsibilities?
- Is there anything else you need to know about me in order for me to be fully considered for the opportunity?
- When will a selection decision be made?

Following-up on Your Interview

Your Thank You Letter

- Write this the day after your interview.
- Express appreciation to the interviewer for taking the time to see you. Comment on a key issue mentioned during your interview and your unique qualifications for the opportunity.
- Type neatly; font 11-12 point; use Arial or Times New Roman font; proofread for spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- If you do not hear from the interviewer within two weeks, do not give up! Call or write to express your continued interest in the opportunity. Request information on the timeline for the selection decision and notification process.

Example Thank You Letter

Legal Name
Street Address
City, State Zip
Telephone: (703) 222-2222
Email Address

November 3, 2008

Interviewer's Name
Job Title
Name of Business
Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear Mr. or Ms. _____:

Thank you for the opportunity to interview for the position of [_____] at [name of organization] on [date].

During the interview, you stressed the necessity for accuracy in the computer programming process. My experience at Computer Networks Corporation as a summer intern, demonstrates my ability to meet this important work requirement.

[Name of organization] _____ will be the ideal organization to further my skills and career interests in computer programming. If selected, I would be available to begin work immediately.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Your Name

High value Skills for Today's Workplace

Analytical Thinking

The ability to generate and weigh a number of alternative solutions and to make a sound decision regarding a plan of action.

Researching

The ability to search for needed data and to use references to obtain appropriate information.

Organizing

The ability to arrange systems and routines to maintain order.

Speaking

The ability to express oneself fluently and intelligently.

Writing

The ability to use proper spelling and grammar to express ideas.

Human Relations and Interpersonal

The ability to relate well to persons from varied backgrounds.

Quantitative and Scientific Reasoning

An understanding of the basic concepts and principles of mathematical and scientific processes.

Personal Ethics

The ability to apply moral standards and appreciate values in the work setting.

Understanding of Technology

The ability to apply basic principles of technology, including keyboarding and data manipulation.

Career Planning

The desire for ongoing self improvement, including a willingness to learn.

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