




# Writing Job-Application Materials

- Understanding the Job-Application Process** 386
- Establishing Your Professional Brand** 386
  - UNDERSTANDING WHAT EMPLOYERS WANT** 387
    - **GUIDELINES: Building the Foundation of Your Professional Brand** 388
  - CRAFTING YOUR PROFESSIONAL BRAND** 389
    - **GUIDELINES: Presenting Your Professional Brand** 389
    - TUTORIAL: Building Your Professional Brand with LinkedIn, Twitter, and More** 
    - **ETHICS NOTE: Writing Honest Job-Application Materials** 391
- Planning the Job Search** 391
- Understanding Four Major Ways To Look for a Position** 393
  - **GUIDELINES: Using LinkedIn's Employment Features** 396
- Writing Résumés** 397
  - ELEMENTS OF THE CHRONOLOGICAL RÉSUMÉ** 398
    - **GUIDELINES: Elaborating on Your Education** 399
  - ELEMENTS OF THE SKILLS RÉSUMÉ** 405
  - PREPARING A PLAIN-TEXT RÉSUMÉ** 405
    - **GUIDELINES: Formatting a Plain-Text Résumé** 406
    - **DOCUMENT ANALYSIS ACTIVITY: Preparing a Résumé** 410
    - **DOCUMENT ANALYSIS ACTIVITY: Blane C. Holden's Online Portfolio** 411 and 
- Writing Job-Application Letters** 411
- Preparing for a Job Interview** 411
  - **GUIDELINES: Preparing for a Job Interview** 413
- Writing Follow-up Letters or Emails After an Interview** 414

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**WRITER'S CHECKLIST** 416

**EXERCISES** 416

**CASE 15:** Identifying the Best-of-the-Best Job-Search Sites 418 and 

**GETTING HIRED** has always involved writing. Whether you apply online through a company's website, reply to a post on LinkedIn, or send a formal letter and résumé through the mail, you will use words to make the case that the organization should offer you a position.

You will probably make that case quite a few times. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2012), the typical American worker holds more than 11 different jobs while he or she is between the ages of 18 and 40. Obviously, most of those jobs don't last long. Even when American workers begin a new job between the ages of 40 and 46, a third of those workers will no longer be with that company at the end of one year, and two-thirds will no longer be there in five years.

For most of you, looking for professional work is the first nonacademic test of your technical-communication skills. And it's an important test. Kyle Wiens, CEO of two tech companies, iFixit and Dozuki, requires all new employees to pass a writing test. His reason? "If it takes someone more than 20 years to notice how to properly use 'it's,' then that's not a learning curve I'm comfortable with" (Bowers, 2013).

## Understanding the Job-Application Process

Preparing job-application materials requires weeks and months, not days, and there is no way to cut corners. The Focus on Process box (on page 387) presents an overview of the process.

## Establishing Your Professional Brand

One way to look at the process of looking for work is to keep in mind that, except for those times when you don't want to be in the workforce, you are *always* looking for work. That doesn't literally mean you're always applying for jobs; it means you're always open to the possibility that a job that interests you will come along. In other words, you are a *passive* applicant. When employers have an opening, they seek out the best

## FOCUS ON PROCESS

In writing job-application materials, pay special attention to these steps in the writing process.

### PLANNING

Learn as much as you can about the organizations to which you will apply. See Chapter 6 for help with research.

### DRAFTING

Decide whether to write a chronological or skills résumé, and use traditional sections and headings. In your job-application letter, elaborate on key points from your résumé.

### REVISING

### EDITING

### PROOFREADING

You want these documents to be perfect. Ask several people to review them. See the Writer's Checklist on page 416.

candidates—regardless of whether those candidates are looking actively or passively (Cohen, 2013).

Being a successful job seeker requires a particular frame of mind. Think of yourself not as a student at this college or an employee of that company but rather as a professional with a brand to establish and maintain. For instance, say your name is Amber Cunningham, and you work as a human-resources officer for Apple. Don't think of yourself as an Apple human-resources officer. Instead, think of yourself as Amber Cunningham, a human-resources specialist who has worked for several companies (including Apple) and who has a number of marketable skills and a substantial record of accomplishments. Your *professional brand* (sometimes referred to as a "personal brand") is Amber Cunningham. Your challenge is to attract employers successfully—even if you're happy with your current position at Apple and are not looking to change jobs.

To present your professional brand successfully, you need to understand what employers are looking for, and then you need to craft the materials that will present that brand to the world.

## UNDERSTANDING WHAT EMPLOYERS WANT

There is really no mystery about what employers want in an employee. Across all fields, employers want a person who is honest, hard-working, technically competent, skilled at solving problems, able to work effectively alone and in teams, willing to share information with others, and eager to keep learning.

You need to find the evidence that you can use to display these qualities. Begin by thinking about everything you have done throughout your college

## WRITING JOB-APPLICATION MATERIALS

career (courses, projects, service-learning experiences, organizations, leadership roles) and your professional career (job responsibilities, supervision of others, accomplishments, awards). And don't forget your volunteer activities; through these activities, many people acquire what are called *transferable skills*—skills that are useful or even necessary in seemingly unrelated jobs. For instance, volunteering for Habitat for Humanity says something important not only about your character but also about your ability to work effectively in a team and to solve problems. Even if you will never swing a hammer on the job, you will want to refer to this experience. Make a list—a long list—of your experiences, characteristics, skills, and accomplishments that will furnish the kinds of evidence that you can use in establishing your professional brand.

### GUIDELINES Building the Foundation of Your Professional Brand

Follow these six guidelines in developing your professional brand.

- ▶ **Research what others have done.** What kinds of information do they present about themselves online? On which social-media sites are they active? What kinds of comments and questions do they post? How do they reply to what others have posted?
- ▶ **Tell the truth.** Statistics about how many people lie and exaggerate in describing themselves in the job search vary, but it is probably between a third and a half. Companies search online themselves or hire investigators to verify the information you provide about yourself, to see if you are honest.
- ▶ **Communicate professionally.** Show that you can write clearly and correctly, and remember that it is inappropriate (and in some cases illegal) to divulge trade secrets or personal information about colleagues.
- ▶ **Describe your job skills.** Employers want to see that you have the technical skills that the job requires. They look for degrees, certifications, speeches and publications, and descriptions of what you do in your present position and have done in previous positions.
- ▶ **Focus on problem-solving and accomplishments.** The most compelling evidence that you would be a good hire is a solid record of identifying problems and devising solutions that met customers' needs, reduced costs, increased revenues, improved safety, and reduced environmental impact. Numbers tell the story: try to present your accomplishments as quantifiable data.
- ▶ **Participate actively online.** One way to show you are a professional who would generously and appropriately share information and work well in a team is to display those characteristics online. Participate professionally through sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter.




## CRAFTING YOUR PROFESSIONAL BRAND

With your long list of characteristics, experiences, skills, and accomplishments in hand, it's time to start creating the materials—primarily online materials—that will display your professional brand.

### GUIDELINES Presenting Your Professional Brand

The following six guidelines can help you display your professional brand.

- ▶ **Create a strong online presence.** The best online presence is your own website, which functions as your online headquarters. All your other online activities will link back to this one site, the only site on the Internet that is all about you. Register a site and try to name it *yourname.com* (you will be required to pay a small fee to secure the domain name). If you aren't experienced designing and creating sites, try a drag-and-drop site builder like Weebly or Squarespace, or use a template from a free blogging site such as WordPress. Upload to your site everything you want potential employers to see: contact information, a professional history, work samples, documents, and links to your accounts on social-media sites. If you don't have a website, take advantage of all the features on LinkedIn.
- ▶ **Participate on LinkedIn.** LinkedIn is the major social-media site used by employers to find employees. Set up a LinkedIn account and create a profile that includes the keywords that will attract potential employers. Rather than calling yourself a "programmer at ADP," which describes your current situation, call yourself "an experienced programmer in various programming languages (Java, C, C++, and PHP) and scripting languages (JavaScript, Perl, WSH, and UNIX shells) who understands interactive web pages and web-based applications, including JavaServer Pages (JSP), Java servlets, Active Server Pages (ASP), and ActiveX controls." Including keywords makes it easier for potential employers to find you when they search for employees. In addition, remember to list specific skills in the "Skills and Abilities" section of your profile. Potential employers searching for specific skills can then locate you more easily, and colleagues who know your work can endorse you for various skills. And don't merely set up an account—participate actively on LinkedIn; when you read a good article or see a useful video, link to it so others can find it. Participate in forum discussions. Make connections and endorse people who you know have good qualifications.
- ▶ **Participate on Facebook.** You probably already have a Facebook account and use Facebook's Timeline feature. Within your account, you also have the option of creating separate Pages for specific interests. Create a public Facebook Page and use it only for professional activities. Share information that will be interesting and useful to other professionals.
- ▶ **Participate on Twitter.** Follow influential people in your industry on Twitter to see the kinds of activities, conferences, and publications that interest them. Comment on and retweet useful tweets, link to the best items you see in the media, and reply when others send you messages.

 To watch a tutorial on crafting your professional brand, go to Ch. 15 > Additional Resources > Tutorials: [macmillanhighered.com/launchpad/techcomm11e](http://macmillanhighered.com/launchpad/techcomm11e).

(continued)

- ▶ **Create a business card.** Having a business card if you're a student might seem odd, but a card is the best way to direct people to your website when you meet them in person. Your card should have your contact information, a few phrases highlighting your skills, and the URL of your website. Some people add a QR code (a Quick Response code, the square barcode that smart phones can read) to allow others to link to their websites instantly. (Search for "QR code generator" to find free sites that will help you generate a QR code.)
- ▶ **Practice an "elevator pitch."** An elevator pitch is a brief oral summary of your credentials. At less than 20 seconds long, it's brief enough that you can say it if you find yourself in an elevator with a potential employer. After the pitch, you hand the person your business card, which contains all the information he or she needs to get to your website, which links to everything else you want that person to see about you.

In making their job offers, employers today use the information they learn about potential new employees on the Internet. According to a 2012 study commissioned by CareerBuilder of more than 2,000 hiring managers, 40 percent of companies research job applicants on social media (Balderrama, 2012). The good news: 19 percent of those companies report that they found positive information that motivated them to seek out an applicant. The bad news: 43 percent found information that made them reject an applicant. (The percentage of companies reporting that they reject an applicant for unprofessional online information is growing: from 34 percent in 2012 to 43 percent in 2013. This statistic suggests that more people are posting unprofessional content, companies are looking more closely, or both.)

According to Balderrama, the employers who rejected applicants cited the following six problems most often:

1. Provocative or unprofessional photos or text (49 percent of employers who mentioned problems mentioned this one)
2. Photos or text showing drug or alcohol use (45 percent)
3. Poor writing (35 percent)
4. Negative comments about current or former employers (33 percent)
5. Discriminatory comments about race, gender, or religion (28 percent)
6. Lies about the candidate's credentials (22 percent)

Start by searching online for your own name. Look at what potential employers will see and ask yourself whether your online personal brand is what you want to display. If it isn't, start to change it.

**ETHICS NOTE****WRITING HONEST JOB-APPLICATION MATERIALS**

Many résumés contain lies or exaggerations. Job applicants say they attended colleges they didn't and were awarded degrees they weren't, give themselves inflated job titles, say they were laid off when they were really fired for poor performance, and inflate their accomplishments. A CareerBuilder survey found that 38 percent of employees have embellished their job responsibilities at some point, and 18 percent have lied about their skills (Lorenz, 2012). Economist Steven D. Levitt, co-author of *Freakonomics*, concludes that more than 50 percent of job applicants lie on their résumés (Isaacs, 2012).

Companies take this problem seriously. They hire agencies that verify an applicant's education and employment history and check for a criminal record. They do their own research online. They phone people whose names the candidate has provided. If they find any discrepancies, they do not offer the candidate a position. If the person is already working for the company when discrepancies arise, they fire the employee.

## Planning the Job Search

Once you have constructed your personal brand online—a process that can take weeks or months—you can start to plan the job search. Planning calls for thinking about the type of work you want, learning about employers, and preparing the materials you will need.

- **Do a self-inventory.** Before you can start thinking of where you want to work, you need to answer some questions about yourself:
  - **What are your strengths and weaknesses?** Are your skills primarily technical? Do you work best with others or on your own?
  - **What subjects do you like?** Think about what you have liked or disliked about your jobs and college courses.
  - **What kind of organization would you like to work for?** For-profit or nonprofit? Government or private industry? Small or large? Startup or established?
  - **What are your geographical preferences?** If you are free to relocate, where would you like to live? How do you feel about commuting?
- **Learn about potential employers.** Once you've identified a company of interest—maybe because you have seen an ad for a position, know someone who works there, or have always thought about working there—start learning about the company by studying its website. But don't stop there. Conduct informational interviews with people who have worked there or who know people who have; ask your professors if they can help you identify people to interview. Search the company's name; the results will point you to articles in newspapers and magazines, as well as to blogs, discussion boards, and podcasts. Search for the company on LinkedIn. Many companies use LinkedIn as a hiring portal. Figure 15.1 shows a

*For more about interviewing, see Ch. 6, p. 136.*

### FIGURE 15.1 One Agency's Portal on LinkedIn

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/157336>.

Many companies and other organizations use LinkedIn as a hiring portal. A typical portal includes descriptions and videos about the organization, lists of all open positions (and links to the organization website, where you can apply online), and profiles of employees. Because organizations want to attract the best candidates, they put real effort into presenting the information you will need to decide whether to apply.

## WRITING JOB-APPLICATION MATERIALS

The screenshot shows the LinkedIn profile for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The profile header includes the CDC logo, the name 'Centers for Disease Control and Prevention', and '56,274 followers'. Below the header is a 'Home' tab and a banner image with the text 'Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CDC 24/7. Saving Lives. Protecting People.'. The 'How You're Connected' section shows '32 second-degree connections' and '12,268 Employees on LinkedIn'. The profile also includes a 'Specialties' section, a 'Website' link, and a 'Featured Groups' section with the CDC Office of Public Health.

portion of the LinkedIn portal for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Learn about the organization through other means as well:

- **Attend job fairs.** Your college and your community probably hold job fairs, where employers provide information about their organizations. Sometimes, a single organization will hold a job fair to find qualified candidates for a wide variety of jobs.
- **Find out about trends in your field.** Read the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, published by the U.S. Department of Labor, for information about your field and related fields. Talk with professors and with the staff at your job-placement office.
- **Prepare a résumé and (perhaps) a job-application letter (a cover letter).** You will need a résumé, a one- or two-page document that describes your most important credentials. In most cases, you will upload a résumé to a job board such as Monster or to a company's website; in some cases, you enter the information on a company's web-based form. Some companies also request a job-application letter. Start planning early by obtaining materials from the career-placement office at your college. Talk with friends who have gone through the process successfully; study their application materials. Read books and visit websites about different aspects of the job search.
- **Put your portfolio items online.** A *portfolio* is a collection of your best work, including your résumé, letters of recommendation, transcripts and professional certifications, and reports, papers, websites, slides of oral presentations, and other types of documents you have written or



created as a student or an employee. You should put your portfolio on your website and other online locations, such as your LinkedIn account. The more items you have online, the more likely it is your name will appear when a potential employer searches for applicants.

If you wish to apply for a position in another country, keep in mind that the conventions of the process vary—sometimes quite a bit. You will need to adapt your résumé and letter to the expectations of employers in the country in which you would like to work. For instance, résumés in the United States do not include information such as the writer's height, weight, date of birth, and marital status; federal legislation prohibits organizations from asking for this information. In some other countries, however, personal information is expected on a résumé. Consult one of the following sources for advice on drafting résumés when applying for international positions:

- Goingglobal.com: [www.goingglobal.com](http://www.goingglobal.com)
- Monster Global Gateway: [www.monster.com/geo/siteselection.aspx](http://www.monster.com/geo/siteselection.aspx)
- OverseasJobs.com: [www.overseasjobs.com](http://www.overseasjobs.com)
- The Riley Guide: International Job Opportunities: Resources Covering Multiple Countries and/or Regions: [www.rileyguide.com/internat.html](http://www.rileyguide.com/internat.html)

## Understanding Four Major Ways To Look for a Position

Once you have done your planning, you can start to look for a position. There are four major ways to find a job.

- **Through an organization's website.** Most organizations list their job offerings in a careers section on their websites and explain how to apply. If you are interested in a particular organization, start with its own site.
- **Through a job board on the Internet.** Job boards are sites sponsored by federal agencies, Internet service providers, and private organizations. Some sites merely list positions; you respond to such listings by email. Other sites let you upload your résumé electronically, so that employers can get in touch with you. Some job boards offer resources on how to prepare job-application materials; others do not. Among the biggest job boards are the following:
  - AfterCollege
  - CareerBuilder
  - CareerMag
  - CareerOneStop (sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor)
  - Indeed.com (a metasearch engine for job seekers)
  - Monster

One caution about using job boards: once you upload your résumé to an Internet site, you probably have lost control of it. Here are four questions to consider before you post to a job board:



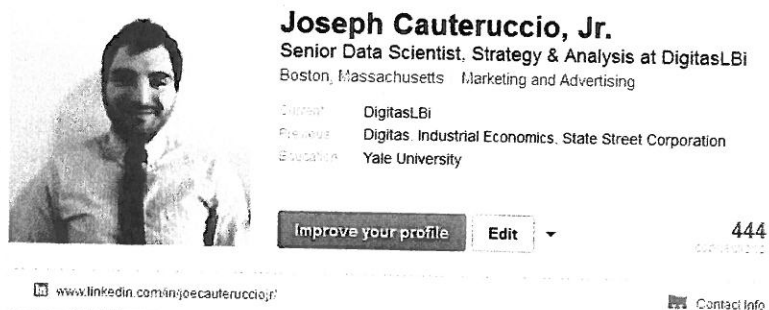
## WRITING JOB-APPLICATION MATERIALS

- Who has access to your résumé? You might want to remove your home address and phone number from it if anyone can view it.
  - How will you know if an employer requests your résumé? Will you be notified by the job board?
  - Can your current employer see your résumé? If your employer discovers that you are looking for a new job, your current position could be in jeopardy.
  - Can you update your résumé at no cost? Some job boards charge you each time you update your résumé.
- **Through your network.** A relative or an acquaintance can exert influence to help you get a job, or at least point out a new position. Other good contacts include past employers and professors. Also consider becoming active in the student chapter of a professional organization in your field, through which you can meet professionals in your local area. Many people use Twitter, Facebook, and—in particular—LinkedIn to connect with their contacts, as well as to try to identify hiring officers and other professionals who can help them apply. Figure 15.2 shows an excerpt from one professional's LinkedIn profile.

Everything in this excerpt from Joseph Cauteruccio's LinkedIn profile makes the argument that he is talented, hard-working, and ambitious.

Although the photograph was not taken by a professional, Joseph dressed professionally and looks as if he's eager to get into the office and get to work.

The summary statement includes a paragraph describing his major responsibilities and a summary of his educational credentials. Note that Joseph also includes a number of keywords categorized under "Specialties" and "Programming Languages." These keywords will help potential employers locate his profile more easily.



**Joseph Cauteruccio, Jr.**  
Senior Data Scientist, Strategy & Analysis at DigitasLBI  
Boston, Massachusetts Marketing and Advertising

Current DigitasLBI  
Previous Digitas Industrial Economics, State Street Corporation  
Education Yale University

Improve your profile Edit

444

www.linkedin.com/in/joecauterucciojr/ Contact Info

## Background



## Summary

Senior Data Scientist on the Advanced Analytics team at DigitasLBI, a global marketing and technology agency. Responsible for developing and deploying machine learning algorithms that optimize the efficiency of marketing campaigns while directly managing client relationships and deliverables.

B.A. in Economics from Bates College. M.A. in Statistics from Yale University.

Specialties: Machine Learning, Statistical Analysis, Data Mining, Process Automation

Programming Languages: R, Python, SAS, SQL, FORTRAN (77, 95) Shell Scripting (BASH/KSH) Hive, Fig, C, C++, MatLab

I routinely blog about data science issues, techniques, and solutions and post examples of projects in progress on my Web site: [www.joecjr.com](http://www.joecjr.com).

**FIGURE 15.2** Excerpts from a Professional's LinkedIn Profile

Reprinted by permission of Joseph Cauteruccio. Image Credit: © 2014 Macmillan, Photo by Regina Tavani.



## Experience

**Senior Data Scientist, Strategy & Analysis - Advanced Analytics**  
DigitasLBi

July 2012 – Present (1 year 8 months) | Greater Boston Area

Proven track record for improving the efficiency of marketing campaigns through the design and deployment of custom analytics solutions. Managerial responsibilities include helping to establish practice area methodologies, delegation of project work, management of deadlines and workflow, production and presentation of client deliverables, and training of junior staff.

Design, manage, and execute projects including:

- ◆ Propensity and response models
- ◆ Advanced customer base and prospect segmentations
- ◆ Attribution analysis
- ◆ Customer CLTV estimation
- ◆ Mixed media and cross-channel models
- ◆ Model scoring and implementation
- ◆ Process automation
- ◆ Dashboard development and data visualization
- ◆ Prediction using social data (Twitter, Facebook)
- ◆ High value site behavior analysis
- ◆ Recommendation systems

Methods utilized include:

- ◆ Regression Analysis (Multiple variants of Logistic, OLS, Poisson, and Beta)
- ◆ Cluster Analysis
- ◆ Factor Analysis
- ◆ Other Non-parametric methods
- ◆ Analysis of stochastic processes through multiple methods
- ◆ Natural Language Processing
- ◆ Bayesian Inference
- ◆ Support Vector Machines and other kernel classification methods

▼ 1 project

**Cookie data processing system for Attribution**

The process of collecting user level cookie data is a crucial piece to any attribution system. Most daily impression files are 20gb or more. We built a distributed system leveraging AWS's EMR offering to process our cookie files and run the model... [View](#)

The description of Joseph's current position is unusually full, with details about his managerial responsibilities, specific types of projects he's completed, and methodologies he's employed to do so. All of this detail not only increases his chances of attracting potential employers but also makes clear that he loves his job and has energy to burn. You get the clear impression he'll be the first one in the office in the morning and the last one to leave at night.



## Skills &amp; Endorsements

## Top Skills

- 19 SAS
- 14 Analytics
- 12 Statistics
- 11 R
- 10 Data Analysis
- 11 Predictive Analytics
- 7 Segmentation
- 8 Data Mining
- 7 Quantitative Analytics
- 6 Microsoft Excel

## Joseph also knows about...

- 5 SQL
  - 6 Statistical Modeling
  - 4 Predictive Modeling
  - 4 VBA
  - 4 PowerPoint
  - 3 Econometrics
  - 3 Quantitative Analysis
  - 3 Python
  - 3 Analysis
  - 3 Stata
  - 3 Logistic Regression
  - 3 Linear Regression
  - 3 Database Marketing
  - 2 Data Visualization
  - 2 Shell Scripting
- See 20+ >

Joseph also listed a number of specific skills in the "Skills & Endorsements" section of his profile. Many LinkedIn users have endorsed his skills, not only affirming Joseph's abilities but also suggesting that he is an active LinkedIn user who probably endorses his colleagues, as is appropriate, in return.

Joseph also follows a number of LinkedIn influencers and companies within his industry, signaling to potential employers his dedication to his field and desire to grow professionally.

## WRITING JOB-APPLICATION MATERIALS

- **Through a college or university placement office or professional placement bureau.** College and university placement offices bring companies and students together. Student résumés are made available to representatives of business, government, and industry, who arrange on-campus interviews. Students who do well in the campus interviews are then invited by the representatives to visit the organization for a tour and another interview. A professional placement bureau offers essentially the same service but charges a fee (payable by either the employer or the person who is hired for a job). Placement bureaus cater primarily to more-advanced professionals who are changing jobs.

**GUIDELINES** Using LinkedIn's Employment Features

In 2013, 77 percent of employers used social media to recruit. Among those employers, 94 percent said they used LinkedIn (Society for Human Resource Management, 2013). The following five guidelines can help you take advantage of the employment features on the world's most influential networking site for professionals.

- ▶ **Use the profile section fully.** The profile section includes information from your résumé, but unlike a résumé, which needs to be concise and contains only words, the profile section can include any kind of digital file, such as presentation slides or videos. Describe your education and professional jobs in detail; remember that the keywords in your descriptions will enable potential employers to find you as they search for employees. If you add "skills" to your profile, others have an opportunity to "endorse" those skills, adding credibility to your profile.
- ▶ **Include a picture.** A picture increases by sevenfold the chances that a reader will read your profile (Halzack, 2013).
- ▶ **Post updates.** Post information about interesting articles you have read, conferences you are attending, and other professional activities. Be generous in praising co-workers and others you follow on the Internet. Mention your volunteer activities. Nicole Williams, a career expert at LinkedIn, writes that posting an update once a week makes you 10 times more likely to have your profile viewed by a hiring manager (Halzack, 2013).
- ▶ **Write unique invitation requests.** You can ask one of your connections to introduce you to someone who is not one of your connections. In doing so, explain why you want to be introduced ("I plan to relocate to Bill's city later this year and want to describe the services I offer"), give your connection the opportunity to say no gracefully ("Would you be willing to help me make this introduction? If not, I understand"), and thank your connection ("I really appreciate your taking the time to consider my request").
- ▶ **Write unique invitations to connect.** When you want to connect with another LinkedIn member, especially one whom you do not know well in person, avoid the template invitation, "I'd like to add you to my professional network." Explain how you know the other person: "As a fellow Aggie who's admired your company's strategy for some time, I'd like to connect."

## Writing Résumés

Although you will present your credentials on LinkedIn and other sites, you will also need to create a résumé, which you will upload to a job board or a company's website, email to the company, or paste into a web-based form.

Many students wonder whether to write their résumés themselves or use a résumé-preparation agency. It is best to write your own résumé, for three reasons:

- **You know yourself better than anyone else does.** No matter how professional the work of a résumé-preparation agency is, you can do a better job communicating important information about yourself.
- **Employment officers know the style of the local agencies.** Readers who recognize that you did not write your own résumé might wonder whether you are hiding any deficiencies.
- **If you write your own résumé, you will be more likely to adapt it to different situations.** You are unlikely to return to a résumé-preparation agency and pay an additional fee to make a minor revision.

Because most companies use résumé-application software to scan résumés into databases and search for keywords, a good résumé includes the right keywords. Only after a résumé has made it through that initial electronic pass will it be read by a person. Résumé consultant Ramsey Penegar puts it this way: "If your résumé doesn't have the keywords that match their job requirements, your résumé may hit the 'no' pile early in the process" (Auerbach, 2012).

The best way to be sure you have the appropriate keywords in your résumé is to study the job description in the actual job posting you want to respond to. Then find ten other ads for similar positions and identify the terms that come up frequently. Think in terms of job titles, names of products, companies, technologies, and professional organizations. For instance, if the job is to develop web pages, you will likely see many references to "web page," "Internet," "XHTML," "HTML5," "Java," "W3C," and "CSS." Also include keywords that refer to your communication skills, such as "public speaking," "oral communication," and "communication skills."

But don't just list the keywords. Instead, integrate them into sentences about your skills and accomplishments. For instance, a computer-science student might write, "Wrote applications for migrating data between systems/databases using C#, XML, and Excel Macros." A chemical engineer might write, "Worked with polymers, mixing and de-gassing polydimethylsiloxane."

How long should a résumé be? It should be long enough to include all pertinent information but not so long that it bores or irritates the reader. Although some hiring consultants have guidelines (such as that a student's résumé should be no longer than one page, or that applicants who are vice presidents at companies can write two-page résumés), the consensus is that length is unimportant. If an applicant has more experience, the résumé will be longer; if an applicant has less experience, it will be shorter. If all



## WRITING JOB-APPLICATION MATERIALS

the information in the résumé helps make the case that the applicant is an excellent fit for the position, it's the right length.

The information that goes into a résumé is commonly ordered either chronologically or by skills. In a *chronological résumé*, you use time as the organizing pattern for each section, including education and experience, and discuss your responsibilities for each job you have held. In a *skills résumé* (sometimes called a *functional résumé*), you merely list your previous jobs but include a skills section in which you describe your talents, skills, and achievements.

A chronological résumé focuses on the record of employment, giving an applicant the opportunity to describe the duties and accomplishments related to each job. The skills résumé highlights the skills (such as supervising others, managing a large department, reducing production costs) that the candidate demonstrated at several different companies. The skills résumé is a popular choice for applicants who have a gap in their employment history, who are re-entering the workforce, or who have changed jobs frequently.

In both types of résumé, you use reverse chronology; that is, you present the most recent jobs and degrees first, to emphasize them.

**ELEMENTS OF THE CHRONOLOGICAL RÉSUMÉ**

Most chronological résumés have five basic elements: identifying information, summary of qualifications, education, employment history, and interests and activities. Sometimes writers include a sixth section: references. In filling in these basic sections, remember that you want to include the keywords that will attract employers.

**Identifying Information** If you are submitting your résumé directly to a company, include your full name, address, phone number, and email address. Use your complete address, including the zip code. If your address during the academic year differs from your home address, list both and identify them clearly. An employer might call during an academic holiday to arrange an interview.

However, if you are posting your résumé to an Internet job board, where it can be seen by anyone, you will be more vulnerable to scammers, spammers, and identity thieves. Don't include a mailing address or phone number, and use an email address that does not identify you.

**Summary Statement** After the identifying information, add a summary statement, a brief paragraph that highlights three or four important skills or accomplishments. For example:

**Summary**

Six years' experience creating testing documentation to qualify production programs that run on Automated Test and Handling Equipment. Four years' experience running QA tests on software, hardware, and semiconductor products. Bilingual English and Italian. Secret security clearance.



**Education** If you are a student or a recent graduate, place the education section next. If you have substantial professional experience, place the employment-history section before the education section.

Include at least the following information in the education section:

- **Your degree.** After the degree abbreviation (such as BS, BA, AA, or MS), list your academic major (and, if you have one, your minor)—for example, “BS in Materials Engineering, minor in General Business.”
- **The institution.** Identify the institution by its full name: “Louisiana State University,” not “LSU.”
- **The location of the institution.** Include the city and state.
- **The date of graduation.** If your degree has not yet been granted, add “Anticipated date of graduation” or a similar phrase.
- **Information about other schools you attended.** List any other institutions you attended beyond high school, even those from which you did not earn a degree. The description for other institutions should include the same information as in the main listing. Arrange entries in reverse chronological order: that is, list first the school you attended most recently.

### **GUIDELINES** Elaborating on Your Education

The following four guidelines can help you develop the education section of your résumé.

- ▶ **List your grade-point average.** If your average is significantly above the median for the graduating class, list it. Or list your average in your major courses, or all your courses in the last two years. Calculate it however you wish, but be honest and clear.
- ▶ **Compile a list of courses.** Include courses that will interest an employer, such as advanced courses in your major or courses in technical communication, public speaking, or organizational communication. For example, a list of business courses on an engineer’s résumé might show special knowledge and skills. But don’t bother listing required courses; everyone else in your major took the same courses. Include the substantive titles of listed courses. Employers won’t know what “Chemistry 450” is; call it by its official title: “Chemistry 450. Organic Chemistry.”
- ▶ **Describe a special accomplishment.** If you completed a special senior design or research project, present the title and objective of the project, any special or advanced techniques or equipment you used, and, if you know them, the major results: “A Study of Shape Memory Alloys in Fabricating Actuators for Underwater Biomimetic Applications—a senior design project to simulate the swimming styles and anatomy of fish.” A project description makes you seem more like a professional: someone who designs and carries out projects.
- ▶ **List honors and awards you received.** Scholarships, internships, and academic awards suggest exceptional ability. If you have received a number of such honors, or some that were not exclusively academic, you might list them separately (in a section called “Honors” or “Awards”) rather than in the education section. Decide where this information will make the best impression.

## WRITING JOB-APPLICATION MATERIALS

The education section is the easiest part of the résumé to adapt in applying for different positions. For example, a student majoring in electrical engineering who is applying for a position requiring strong communication skills can emphasize communication courses in one version of the résumé and advanced electrical engineering courses in another version. As you compose the education section, emphasize those aspects of your background that meet the requirements for the particular job.

**Employment History** Present at least the basic information about each job you have held: the dates of employment, the organization's name and location, and your position or title. Then add carefully selected details. Readers want to know what you did and accomplished. Provide at least a two- to three-line description for each position. For particularly important or relevant jobs, write more, focusing on one or more of the following factors:

- **Skills.** What technical skills did you use on the job?
- **Equipment.** What equipment did you operate or oversee? In particular, mention computer equipment or software with which you are familiar.
- **Money.** How much money were you responsible for? Even if you considered your data-entry position fairly easy, the fact that the organization grossed, say, \$2 million a year shows that the position involved real responsibility.
- **Documents.** What important documents did you write or assist in writing, such as brochures, reports, manuals, proposals, or websites?
- **Personnel.** How many people did you supervise?
- **Clients.** What kinds of clients, and how many, did you do business with in representing your organization?

Whenever possible, emphasize *accomplishments*. If you reorganized the shifts of the weekend employees you supervised, state the results:

Reorganized the weekend shift, resulting in a cost savings of more than \$3,000 per year.

Wrote and produced (with Adobe InDesign) a 56-page parts catalog that is still used by the company and that increased our phone inquiries by more than 25 percent.

When you describe positions, functions, or responsibilities, use the active voice (“supervised three workers”) rather than the passive voice (“three workers were supervised by me”). The active voice highlights action. Note that writers often omit the *I* at the start of sentences: “Prepared bids,” rather than “I prepared bids.” Whichever style you use, be consistent. Figure 15.3 lists some strong verbs to use in describing your experience.

administered	coordinated	evaluated	maintained	provided
advised	corresponded	examined	managed	purchased
analyzed	created	expanded	monitored	recorded
assembled	delivered	hired	obtained	reported
built	developed	identified	operated	researched
collected	devised	implemented	organized	solved
completed	directed	improved	performed	supervised
conducted	discovered	increased	prepared	trained
constructed	edited	instituted	produced	wrote

**FIGURE 15.3** Strong Action Verbs Used in Résumés

Here is a sample listing of employment history:

June–September 2014: Student Dietitian

Millersville General Hospital, Millersville, TX

Gathered dietary histories and assisted in preparing menus for a 300-bed hospital.

Received “excellent” on all seven items in evaluation by head dietitian.

In just a few lines, you can show that you sought and accepted responsibility and that you acted professionally. Do not write, “I accepted responsibility”; instead, present facts that lead the reader to that conclusion.

Naturally, not all jobs entail professional skills and responsibilities. Many students find summer work as laborers, sales clerks, and so forth. If you have not held a professional position, list the jobs you have held, even if they were unrelated to your career plans. If the job title is self-explanatory, such as restaurant server or service-station attendant, don’t elaborate. If you can write that you contributed to your tuition or expenses, such as by earning 50 percent of your annual expenses through a job, employers will be impressed by your self-reliance.

If you have held a number of nonprofessional as well as several professional positions, group the nonprofessional ones:

Other Employment: cashier (summer 2010), salesperson (part-time, 2011), clerk (summer 2012)

This strategy prevents the nonprofessional positions from drawing the reader’s attention away from the more important positions.

If you have gaps in your employment history—because you were raising children, attending school, or recovering from an accident, or for other reasons—consider using a skills résumé, which focuses more on your skills and less on your job history. You can explain the gaps in the job-application letter (if you write one) or in an interview. For instance, you could say, “I spent 2010 and part of 2012 caring for my elderly parent, but during that time I was

## WRITING JOB-APPLICATION MATERIALS

able to do some substitute teaching and study at home to prepare for my A+ and Network+ certification, which I earned in late 2012.” Do not lie or mislead about your dates of employment.

If you have had several positions with the same employer, you can present one description that encompasses all the positions or present a separate description for each position.

### PRESENTING ONE DESCRIPTION

**Blue Cross of Iowa**, Ames, Iowa (January 2006–present)

- *Internal Auditor II (2010–present)*
- *Member Service Representative/Claims Examiner II (2008–2010)*
- *Claims Examiner II (2006–2008)*

As Claims Examiner II, processed national account inquiries and claims in accordance with . . . . After promotion to Member Service Representative/Claims Examiner II position, planned policies and procedures . . . . As Internal Auditor II, audit claims, enrollment, and inquiries; run dataset population and sample reports . . . .

This format enables you to mention your promotions and to create a clear narrative that emphasizes your progress within the company.

### PRESENTING SEPARATE DESCRIPTIONS

**Blue Cross of Iowa**, Ames, Iowa (January 2006–present)

- *Internal Auditor II (2010–present)*  
Audit claims, enrollment, and inquiries . . .
- *Member Service Representative/Claims Examiner II (2008–2010)*  
Planned policies and procedures . . .
- *Claims Examiner II (2006–2008)*  
Processed national account inquiries and claims in accordance with . . .

This format, which enables you to create a fuller description of each position, is effective if you are trying to show that each position is distinct and you wish to describe the more-recent positions more fully.

**Interests and Activities** The interests-and-activities section of the résumé is the appropriate place for several kinds of information about you:

- participation in community-service organizations, such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters or volunteer work in a hospital
- hobbies related to your career (for example, electronics for an engineer)
- sports, especially those that might be socially useful in your professional career, such as tennis, racquetball, and golf
- university-sanctioned activities, such as membership on a team, work on the college newspaper, or election to a responsible position in an academic organization or a residence hall



Do not include activities that might create a negative impression, such as gambling or performing in a death-metal rock band. And always omit such activities as meeting people and reading. Everybody does these things.

**References** Potential employers will want to learn more about you from your professors and previous employers. These people who are willing to speak or write on your behalf are called *references*.

Some applicants list their references on their résumé. The advantage of this strategy is that the potential employer can contact the references without having to contact the applicant. Other applicants prefer to wait until the potential employer has asked for the list. The advantage of this strategy is that the applicant can assemble a different set of references for each position without having to create different résumés. Although applicants in the past added a note stating “References available upon request” at the end of their résumés, many applicants today do not do so because they think the comment is unnecessary: employers assume that applicants can provide a list of references—and that they would love to do so.

Regardless of whether you list your references on your résumé, choose your references carefully. Solicit references only from those who know your work best and for whom you have done your best work—for instance, a previous employer with whom you worked closely or a professor from whom you received A’s. Don’t ask prominent professors who do not know your work well; they will be unable to write informative letters.

Do not simply assume that someone is willing to serve as a reference for you. Give the potential reference writer an opportunity to decline gracefully. The person might not have been as impressed with your work as you think. If you simply ask the person to serve as a reference, he or she might accept and then write a lukewarm letter. It is better to ask, “Would you be able to write an enthusiastic letter for me?” or “Do you feel you know me well enough to write a strong recommendation?” If the person shows any signs of hesitation or reluctance, withdraw the request. It may be a little embarrassing, but it is better than receiving a weak recommendation.

In listing their references, some applicants add, for each reference, a sentence or two describing their relationship with the person, as shown in this sample listing for a reference.

Dr. Dale Cletis  
Professor of English  
Boise State University  
Boise, ID 83725  
208.555.2637  
dcletis@boisestate.edu

Dr. Cletis was my instructor in three literature courses, as well as my adviser.



## WRITING JOB-APPLICATION MATERIALS

**Other Elements** The sections discussed so far appear on almost everyone's résumé. Other sections are either optional or appropriate for only some job seekers.

- **Computer skills.** Classify your skills in categories such as hardware, software, languages, and operating systems. List any professional certifications you have earned.
- **Military experience.** If you are a veteran, describe your military service as if it were a job, citing dates, locations, positions, ranks, and tasks. List positive job-performance evaluations.
- **Language ability.** A working knowledge of another language can be very valuable, particularly if the potential employer has international interests and you could be useful in translation or foreign service. List your proficiency, using terms such as *beginner*, *intermediate*, and *advanced*. Some applicants distinguish among reading, writing, and speaking abilities. Don't overstate your abilities; you could be embarrassed—and without a job—when the potential employer hands you a business letter written in the language you say you know, or invites a native speaker of that language to sit in on the interview.
- **Willingness to relocate.** If you are willing to relocate, say so. Many organizations will find this flexibility attractive.

Among the issues that can pose challenges for applicants who are preparing their résumés are questions of race, religion, and sexual orientation and questions about criminal records.

Many applicants wonder whether to include information—about jobs, colleges, associations, and other topics—that a potential employer might use against them. For instance, if you attend Brigham Young University, most people will know that you are likely a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Being president of the LGBT association on campus probably signals something about your sexual identity.

You are not obligated to reveal anything you do not wish to reveal (although you can't hide the name of your college or university). If you want, you can write that you are the president of a campus student organization and not specify the name of that organization. If the potential employer wants to talk about it in more detail in an interview, you can decide how forthcoming you want to be.

Many applicants don't bother trying to conceal factors unrelated to the job. If a potential employer is going to discriminate based on religion, sexual orientation, or race, these applicants reason, there's no sense wasting time trying to get that job because they wouldn't want to work there, anyway.

The question of a criminal record is more challenging for applicants. An applicant with a criminal record probably has a gap in his or her employment record, but a skills résumé can make that gap less obvious. An appli-

cant is under no obligation to mention a criminal record in a résumé or letter, but if the potential employer asks in the application itself or in an interview, it is best to tell the truth. Lying would be cause for dismissal—and employers are very likely to discover a criminal record during a background check. Some applicants with criminal records try to delay divulging that information until the interview, at which point they can explain the circumstances directly: they made a mistake, paid the penalty, and now are working hard to contribute positively. Some applicants even figure out ways to discuss skills they acquired—or lessons they learned—that have made them better employees.

## ELEMENTS OF THE SKILLS RÉSUMÉ

A skills résumé differs from a chronological résumé in that it includes a separate section, usually called “Skills” or “Skills and Abilities,” that emphasizes job skills and knowledge. In a skills résumé, the employment section becomes a brief list of information about your employment history: companies, dates of employment, and positions. Here is an example of a skills section.

### **Skills and Abilities**

#### *Management*

Served as weekend manager of six employees in a retail clothing business. Also trained three summer interns at a health-maintenance organization.

#### *Writing and Editing*

Wrote status reports, edited performance appraisals, participated in assembling and producing an environmental impact statement using desktop publishing.

#### *Teaching and Tutoring*

Tutored in the university writing center. Taught a two-week course in electronics for teenagers. Coach youth basketball.

In a skills section, you choose the headings, the arrangement, and the level of detail. Your goal, of course, is to highlight the skills an employer is seeking.

## PREPARING A PLAIN-TEXT RÉSUMÉ

Most companies use computerized *applicant-tracking systems*, such as RESU-Mate, Bullhorn, or HRsmart, to evaluate the dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of job applications they receive every day. The information from these applications is stored in databases, which can be searched electronically for keywords to generate a pool of applicants for specific positions. Once a pool of candidates has been generated, someone at the company reads their résumés. Prepare a plain-text résumé so that you can survive this two-stage process.

## WRITING JOB-APPLICATION MATERIALS

A *plain-text résumé*, also called a *text résumé*, *ASCII résumé*, or *electronic résumé*, is a résumé that uses a very limited character set and has little formatting so that it can be stored in any database and read by any software. It will not be as attractive as a fully formatted document created with a word processor, but if you prepare it carefully it will say what you want it to say and be easy to read.

### GUIDELINES Formatting a Plain-Text Résumé

Start with the résumé that you prepared in Word or with some other word-processing software. Save it as "Plain text" and then paste it into Notepad or another text editor. Revise the Notepad version so that it has these five characteristics:

- ▶ **It has no special characters.** It uses only the letters, numbers, and basic punctuation marks visible on your keyboard. That is, it *does not* use boldface, italics, bullets, or tabs.
- ▶ **It has a line length of 65 or fewer characters.** Use the space bar to break longer lines or, in Notepad, set the left and right margins (in File/Page Setup) to 1.5 inches.
- ▶ **It uses a non-proportional typeface such as Courier.** (A non-proportional typeface is one in which each letter takes up the same amount of space on the line; narrow letters are surrounded by a lot of space, whereas wider letters are surrounded by a smaller space.) Using a non-proportional typeface makes it easier to keep the line length to 65 characters.
- ▶ **Most of the information is left justified.** If you want, you can use the space bar (not the Tab key) to move text to the right. For instance, you might want to center the main headings.
- ▶ **It uses ALL UPPERCASE or repeated characters for emphasis.** For example, a series of equal signs or hyphens might signal a new heading.

You might want to create two versions of your plain-text résumé: a version using Word Wrap (in Notepad's Format tab) to be attached to an email, and a version *not* using Word Wrap to be pasted into the body of an email.

Check each new version to be sure the information has converted properly. Copy and paste the version not using Word Wrap into an email and send it to yourself, and then review it. Attach the new file using Word Wrap to an email, open it in your text editor, and review it.

Figures 15.4 and 15.5 show a plain-text chronological résumé and a plain-text skills résumé.

<p>CARL OPPENHEIMER •                  3109 Vista Street                  Philadelphia, PA 19136                  (215) 555-3880                  coppen@dragon.du.edu</p>	<p>The writer provides his contact information, including his email address.</p>
<p>+++++                  SUMMARY                  Recent BSEE graduate with experience as an electrical engineer intern for RCA Advanced Technology Laboratory. Analytical, technical, and communication skills for laboratory and customer-facing applications. Strong understanding of large-scale integrated systems and CMOS applications.</p>	<p>This plain-text résumé uses only plus signs to signal new headings. Notice that all information is left-justified.</p>
<p>+++++                  EDUCATION                  BS in Electrical Engineering 6/2015                  Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA                  Grade-Point Average: 3.67 (on a scale of 4.0)                  Senior Design Project: "Enhanced Path-Planning Software for Robotics"                  +++Advanced Engineering Courses •</p>	<p>The writer presents a summary statement. Some applicants find it awkward to praise themselves, describing their skills, but it is important to have keywords such as "analytical skills" in the résumé, particularly if the job ad mentioned them.</p>
<p>Digital Signal Processing                  Computer Hardware                  Introduction to Operating Systems I, II                  Systems Design                  Digital Filters                  Computer Logic Circuits I, II</p>	<p>The writer chooses to emphasize his advanced engineering courses. For another job, he might emphasize other courses.</p>
<p>+++++                  EMPLOYMENT                  6/2012-1/2013 Electrical Engineering Intern II                  RCA Advanced Technology Laboratory, Moorestown, NJ                  Designed ultra-large-scale integrated circuits using VERILOG and VHDL hardware description languages. Assisted senior engineer in CMOS IC layout, modeling, parasitic capacitance extraction, and PSPICE simulation operations.</p>	<p>The writer wisely creates a category that calls attention to his academic awards and his membership in his field's major professional organization.</p>
<p>+++6/2011-1/2012 Electrical Engineering Intern I                  RCA Advanced Technology Laboratory, Moorestown, NJ                  Verified and documented several integrated circuit designs. Used CAD software and hardware to simulate, check, and evaluate these designs. Gained experience with Mathcad.</p>	<p>The writer does not include his references or write "References available upon request." If the reader invites him to proceed to the next step in the process, Carl will send a list of references, with their contact information.</p>
<p>+++++                  HONORS AND ORGANIZATIONS •                  Eta Kappa Nu (Electrical Engineering Honor Society)                  Tau Beta Pi (General Engineering Honor Society)                  IEEE</p>	

FIGURE 15.4 Chronological Résumé of a Traditional Student



WRITING JOB-APPLICATION MATERIALS

Alice P. Linder  
 1781 Weber Road  
 Rawlings, MT 59211  
 (406) 555-3999  
 linderap423@gmail.com

SUMMARY

Biotechnology major with broad laboratory experience at Glaxo-SmithKline, analyzing molecular data and writing C# programs. Working toward Certification in laboratory specialty through ASCP. Strong written and oral communication skills. Extensive volunteer experience in physical therapy for children. Experience managing business office.

SKILLS AND ABILITIES

Laboratory Skills

-Analyzed molecular data on E&S PS300, Macintosh, and IBM PCs. Wrote programs in C#.

-Have taken 12 credits in biology and chemistry labs.

Communication Skills

-Wrote a user's guide for an instructional computing package.

-Trained and consulted with scientists and delivered in-house briefings.

Management Skills

-Managed 12-person office in \$1.2 million company.

EDUCATION

Central Montana State University, Rawlings, MT

BS in Bioscience and Biotechnology

Expected Graduation Date: 6/2015

Related Course Work

General Chemistry I, II, III

Biology I, II, III

Organic Chemistry I, II

Calculus I, II

Statistical Methods for Research

Physics I, II

Technical Communication

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

6/2012-present (20 hours per week): Laboratory Assistant Grade 3  
 GlaxoSmithKline, Rawlings, MT

8/2009-present: Volunteer, Physical Therapy Unit  
 Rawlings Regional Medical Center, Rawlings, MT

6/2001-1/2004: Office Manager  
 Anchor Products, Inc., Rawlings, MT

HONORS

Awarded three \$5,000 tuition scholarships (2011-2013) from the Gould Foundation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Member, CMSU Biology Club, Yearbook Staff

Raising three school-age children  
 Tuition 100% self-financed

In a skills résumé, you present the skills section at the start. This organization lets you emphasize your professional attributes. Notice that the writer uses specific details—names of software, number of credits, types of documents, kinds of activities—to make her case.

The employment section contains a list of positions rather than descriptions of what the writer did in each position.

The volunteer position says something about the writer's character.

The writer believes that the skills required in raising children are relevant in the workplace. Other applicants might think that because a résumé describes job credentials, this information should be omitted.

FIGURE 15.5 Skills Résumé of a Nontraditional Student



Although fewer and fewer employers request a formatted résumé, some still do. Some applicants send formatted résumés in addition to their plain-text résumés. Figure 15.6 shows a formatted version of the résumé presented in Figure 15.5.

<b>Alice P. Linder</b>	1781 Weber Road (406) 555-3999 Rawlings, MT 59211 linderap423@gmail.com								
<b>Summary</b>	Biotechnology major with broad laboratory experience at GlaxoSmithKline, analyzing molecular data and writing C# programs. Working toward Certification in laboratory specialty through ASCP. Strong written and oral communication skills. Extensive volunteer experience in physical therapy for children. Experience managing business office.								
<b>Skills and Abilities</b>	<p><i>Laboratory Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyzed molecular data on E&amp;S PS300, Macintosh, and IBM PCs. Wrote programs in C#.</li> <li>Have taken 12 credits in biology and chemistry labs.</li> </ul> <p><i>Communication Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wrote a user's guide for an instructional computing package.</li> <li>Trained and consulted with scientists and delivered in-house briefings.</li> </ul> <p><i>Management Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managed 12-person office in a \$1.2 million company.</li> </ul>								
<b>Education</b>	<p>Central Montana State University, Rawlings, MT BS in Bioscience and Biotechnology Expected Graduation Date: June 2015</p> <p><i>Related Course Work</i></p> <table> <tr> <td>General Chemistry I, II, III</td> <td>Biology I, II, III</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Organic Chemistry I, II</td> <td>Statistical Methods for Research</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Physics I, II</td> <td>Technical Communication</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Calculus I, II</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	General Chemistry I, II, III	Biology I, II, III	Organic Chemistry I, II	Statistical Methods for Research	Physics I, II	Technical Communication	Calculus I, II	
General Chemistry I, II, III	Biology I, II, III								
Organic Chemistry I, II	Statistical Methods for Research								
Physics I, II	Technical Communication								
Calculus I, II									
<b>Employment Experience</b>	<p>6/2012–present (20 hours/week) GlaxoSmithKline, Rawlings, MT Laboratory Assistant Grade 3</p> <p>8/2009–present Rawlings Regional Medical Center, Rawlings, MT Volunteer, Physical Therapy Unit</p> <p>6/2001–1/2004 Anchor Products, Inc., Rawlings, MT Office Manager</p>								
<b>Honors</b>	Awarded three \$5,000 tuition scholarships (2011–2013) from the Gould Foundation.								
<b>Additional Information</b>	<p>Member, CMSU Biology Club, Yearbook Staff</p> <p>Raising three school-age children</p> <p>Tuition 100 percent self-financed</p>								

**FIGURE 15.6**  
Formatted Version  
of a Skills Résumé

You have many more formatting options when you present your résumé on paper.

This writer has used a two-column table to organize the information. The left column presents the headings; the right column presents the data. The advantage of using a table rather than moving text using tabs is that you can use different text attributes (for instance, the headings can be boldfaced, set in a different typeface, or set in a different size) without having to worry about whether the different attributes will alter the line spacing. In addition, if you use a table, you can easily revise and edit; with tabs, your editing will create awkward line breaks and alignment.

**DOCUMENT ANALYSIS ACTIVITY****Preparing a Résumé**

This résumé was written by a graduating college senior who wanted to work for a wildland firefighting agency such as the U.S. Bureau of Land Management or U.S. Forest Service. The writer plans to save the résumé as a .txt file and enter it directly into these agencies' employment databases. The questions below ask you to think about electronic résumés (as discussed on pp. 405–06).

1. How effectively has the writer formatted this résumé?
2. What elements are likely to be problematic when the writer saves this résumé as a .txt file?
3. What is the function of the industry-specific jargon in this résumé?
4. Why does the writer place the education section below the sections on career history and fire and aviation qualifications?

**BURTON L. KREBS**

34456 West Jewell St.  
Boise, ID 83704

208-555-9627  
burtonkrebs@mail.com

**Objective**

Lead crew position on rappel crew.

**Career History**

- Senior Firefighter, Moyer Rappel Crew, 05/14-present
- Senior Firefighter, Boise Helitack, 05/13-10/13
- Hotshot Crew Member, Boise Interagency Hotshot Crew, 07/12-09/12
- Helirappel Crew Member, Moyer Rappel Crew, 06/08-09/11

**Fire and Aviation Qualifications**

Crew Boss (T)  
Helicopter Manager  
Helicopter Rappeller  
Helirappel Spotter  
Helispot Manager  
Type 2 Helibase Manager (T)  
Incident Commander Type 4 (T)

**Education**

*Bachelor of Arts in Communication Training and Development*, Boise State University, Boise, Idaho, GPA 3.57, May 2015

**Skills**

- Excellent oral and written communication skills
- Proficient in Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
- Knowledgeable of helicopter contract administration
- Perform daily and cumulative flight invoice cost summaries

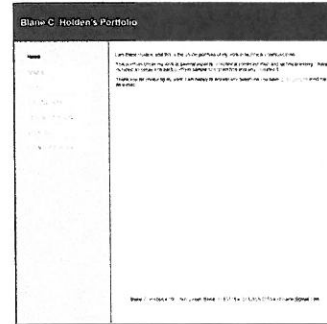
**Awards**

"Outstanding Performance" Recognition, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, 2013

"Outstanding Performance" Recognition, U.S. Forest Service, 2010, 2011, 2012

## DOCUMENT ANALYSIS ACTIVITY

To analyze an online professional portfolio, go to “Document Analysis Activities” under “Additional Resources” in Ch. 15: [macmillanhighered.com/launchpad/techcomm11e](http://macmillanhighered.com/launchpad/techcomm11e).



**Blane C. Holden's Online Portfolio**  
Used by permission of Blane Holden.

## Writing Job-Application Letters

Is the job-application letter (sometimes called a *cover letter*) obsolete? Résumé expert Tony Beshara surveyed over 3,000 hiring officers for their opinions. Some 86 percent said the letter is “not very important” (Hering, 2011). But many experts argue that a cover letter is still important. Applicants can explain more clearly in a letter than in a résumé how their qualifications match the employer’s requirements. They can explain their professional relationship with someone in the employer’s organization or gaps in their employment history. Perhaps most important, applicants can show that they can write well. In a survey by the professional staffing company Robert Half International, 91 percent of senior managers said that a letter is valuable, and 79 percent reported that they often receive cover letters from applicants even when they do not request them (OfficeTeam, 2011).

Figure 15.7 shows a job-application letter.

*Many of the job boards listed on p. 393 include samples of job-application letters.*

## Preparing for a Job Interview

If your résumé is successful, you will be invited to a job interview, where both you and the organization can start to see whether you would be a good fit there. Job boards on the Internet can help you prepare for a job interview. They discuss questions such as the following:

- When should you arrive for the interview?
- What should you wear?

For information about letter formatting, see Ch. 14, p. 363.

Notice that the writer's own name does not appear at the top of his letter.

In the inside address, he uses the reader's courtesy title, "Mr."

The introductory paragraph identifies the writer's source of information about the job, identifies the position he is applying for, states that he wishes to be considered, and forecasts the rest of the letter.

In a letter, you can't discuss everything in the résumé. Rather, you select a few key points from the résumé to emphasize.

Note that both the education paragraph and the employment paragraph begin with a clear topic sentence.

The writer points out that he has taken two graduate courses, and he discusses his senior design project, which makes him look more like an engineer solving a problem than a recent graduate.

Notice how the writer makes a smooth transition from the discussion of his college education to the discussion of his internship experience.

A concluding paragraph usually includes a reference to the résumé, a polite but confident request for an interview, and the writer's contact information.

The enclosure notation refers to the writer's résumé. Do not use an enclosure notation unless you are literally enclosing something along with the letter in the envelope.

3109 Vista Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19136

January 20, 2015

Mr. Stephen Spencer, Director of Personnel  
Department 411  
Boeing Naval Systems  
103 Industrial Drive  
Wilmington, DE 20093

Dear Mr. Spencer:

I am writing in response to your advertisement in the January 16 *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Would you please consider me for the position in Signal Processing? I believe that my academic training in electrical engineering at Drexel University, along with my experience with the RCA Advanced Technology Laboratory, qualifies me for the position.

My education at Drexel has given me a strong background in computer hardware and system design. I have concentrated on digital and computer applications, developing and designing computer and signal-processing hardware in two graduate-level engineering courses. For my senior design project, I am working with four other undergraduates in using OO programming techniques to enhance the path-planning software for an infrared night-vision robotics application.

While working at the RCA Advanced Technology Laboratory, I was able to apply my computer experience to the field of DSP. I designed ultra-large-scale integrated circuits using VERILOG and VHDL hardware description languages. In addition, I assisted a senior engineer in CMOS IC layout, modeling, parasitic capacitance extraction, and PSPICE simulation operations.

The enclosed résumé provides an overview of my education and experience. Could I meet with you at your convenience to discuss my qualifications for this position? Please leave a message any time at (215) 555-3880 or email me at [coppen@dragon.du.edu](mailto:coppen@dragon.du.edu).

Yours truly,  
*Carl Oppenheimer*  
Carl Oppenheimer

• Enclosure (1)

FIGURE 15.7 Job-Application Letter



- How might interviewers interpret your body language?
- What questions are you likely to be asked?
- How long should your answers be?
- How do you know when the interviewer wishes to end the interview?
- How can you get the interviewer's contact information so you can write a follow-up letter?

## GUIDELINES Preparing for a Job Interview

For every hour you spend in a job interview, you need to spend many hours in preparation.

- ▶ **Study job interviews.** The hundreds of books and websites devoted to job interviews cover everything from how to do your initial research to common interview questions to how to dress. Although you can't prepare for everything that will happen, you can prepare for a lot of things.
- ▶ **Study the organization to which you applied.** If you show that you haven't done your homework, the interviewer might conclude that you're always unprepared. Learn what products or services the organization provides, how well it has done in recent years, what its plans are, and so forth. Start with the organization's own website, especially corporate blogs, and then proceed to other online and print resources. Search for the organization's name on the Internet.
- ▶ **Think about what you can offer the organization.** Your goal during the interview is to show how you can help the organization accomplish its goals. Think about how your academic career, your work experience, and your personal characteristics and experiences have prepared you to solve problems and carry out projects to help the organization succeed. Make notes about projects you carried out in courses, experiences on the job, and experiences in your personal life that can serve as persuasive evidence to support claims about your qualifications.
- ▶ **Study lists of common interview questions.** Interviewers study these lists; you should, too. You're probably familiar with some of the favorites:
  - Can you tell me about yourself?
  - Where do you see yourself in five years?
  - Why did you apply to our company?
  - What do you see as your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
  - Tell me about an incident that taught you something important about yourself.
  - What was your best course in college? Why?
- ▶ **Compile a list of questions you wish to ask.** Near the end of the interview, the interviewer will probably ask if you have any questions. The interviewer expects you to have compiled a brief list of questions about working for the organization.

*For more about research techniques, see Ch. 6.*

*For more about communicating persuasively, see Ch. 8.*

(continued)

Do not focus on salary, vacation days, or sick leave. Instead, ask about ways you can continue to develop as a professional, improving your ability to contribute to the organization.

- ▶ **Rehearse the interview.** It's one thing to think about how you might answer an interview question. It's another to have to answer it. Rehearse for the interview by asking friends or colleagues to play the role of the interviewer, making up questions that you haven't thought about. Then ask these people for constructive criticism.

*Many of the job boards listed on p. 393 include samples of follow-up letters for different situations that occur during a job search.*

## Writing Follow-up Letters or Emails After an Interview

After an interview, you should write a letter or email of appreciation. If you are offered the job, you also may have to write a letter accepting or rejecting the position.

- **Letter of appreciation after an interview.** Thank the organization's representative for taking the time to see you, and emphasize your particular qualifications. You can also restate your interest in the position and mention a specific topic of conversation you found particularly interesting or a fact about the position you found exciting. A follow-up letter can do more good with less effort than any other step in the job-application procedure because so few candidates take the time to write one.

Dear Mr. Weaver:

Thank you for taking the time yesterday to show me your facilities and to introduce me to your colleagues.

Your company's advances in piping design were particularly impressive. As a person with hands-on experience in piping design, I can appreciate the advantages your design will have.

The vitality of your projects and the good fellowship among your employees further confirm my initial belief that Cynergo would be a fine place to work. I would look forward to joining your staff.

Sincerely yours,

*Harriet Bommarito*

Harriet Bommarito

- **Letter accepting a job offer.** This one is easy: express appreciation, show enthusiasm, and repeat the major terms of your employment.

Dear Mr. Weaver:

Thank you very much for the offer to join your staff. I accept.

I look forward to joining your design team on Monday, July 19. The salary, as you indicate in your letter, is \$48,250.

As you have recommended, I will get in touch with Mr. Matthews in Personnel to get a start on the paperwork.

I appreciate the trust you have placed in me, and I assure you that I will do what I can to be a productive team member at Cynergo.

Sincerely yours,



Mark Greenberg

- **Letter rejecting a job offer.** If you decide not to accept a job offer, express your appreciation for the offer and, if appropriate, explain why you are declining it. Remember, you might want to work for this company at some time in the future.

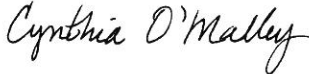
Dear Mr. Weaver:

I appreciate very much the offer to join your staff.

Although I am certain that I would benefit greatly from working at Cynergo, I have decided to take a job with a firm in Baltimore, where I have been accepted at Johns Hopkins to pursue my Master's degree at night.

Again, thank you for your generous offer.

Sincerely yours,



Cynthia O'Malley

- **Letter acknowledging a rejection.** Why write back after you have been rejected for a job? To maintain good relations. You might get a phone call the next week explaining that the person who accepted the job has had a change of plans and offering you the position.

Dear Mr. Weaver:

I was disappointed to learn that I will not have a chance to join your staff, because I feel that I could make a substantial contribution. However, I realize that job decisions are complex, involving many candidates and many factors.

Thank you very much for the courtesy you have shown me.

Sincerely yours,



Paul Goicochea