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## **Career Guidance for Transfer and Degree Completion Students**

Resume  
Development

Professional  
Cover Letters

References

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# RESUME

## RESUME TIPS FOR CAREER CHANGERS AND NON- TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

### TOP TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Interpersonal

Teamwork

Research  
Analytics

Communication

Listening  
Verbal  
Written

Flexibility  
Versatility  
Adaptability

Initiative  
Drive  
Work Ethic

Innovation

Organization  
Time Management

Leadership

Technology

There are a number of considerations when applying for job in a new field, if you have a gap in your work history, or if your work history does not demonstrate a clear path to your desired job. Some tips:

Avoid listing every job you have ever held.

- A good rule of thumb is to list the previous **10 years of professional work history**. However, that approach may not work for everyone. Review the job description, and then select the top 3-5 jobs from your work history that you think best demonstrate the skills necessary to be successful in the job.
- These may not be directly related skills, but that is okay—**transferable skills are also highly valued by employers**. For example, if you worked in the hospitality industry for many years and are now applying for an administrative role in an office, focus on your excellent customer service and communication skills.

If you have a gap in your work history, think about a way to tell your story.

- That could mean a brief explanation in your cover letter “After a brief break to be a home with my family, I am excited to apply for this full-time position....”
- Try to fill the gaps with volunteer and education, demonstrating that while you may not have been working, you were still busy and productive.

Use a Summary of Skills/Qualifications section at the top of the page.

- Carefully review the job description and identify skill requirements that you match.
- Write strong statements that highlight your transferable and job related skills.
- Use this section to bring together your skills and present them cohesively, even if they come from a variety of sources throughout your work and education history.
- Use industry lingo wherever possible. Talk the talk and demonstrate your understanding of the field by speaking in the common terms that have been used in your coursework, on the company website, and in the job description.

Get creative in the way you present your story.

- A typical resume is a reverse chronological list of previous work experience. However, that rule does not work for everyone. Could you include volunteering or academics as part of that “experience?” Instead of calling the section “Employment History,” consider creating a “Summary of Qualifications” that brings in your experience from a variety of settings.
- You do not have to list full details for every job you have held. Sometimes the best reason for listing an unrelated job is to simply demonstrate a long and dedicated work history. You can separate those jobs from your qualifications section and list them in a Work History. See the resume sample on the following page for an example.

Believe in yourself and your skills.

- No job is filled by a candidate who is perfect or has 100% of the desired skills. All jobs require training. Apply for jobs that you believe that you can do, and do not allow fear to hold you back. Be enthusiastic and brave—employers will note it and respond well to it.
- If your resume is not resulting in interviews, change it. Try new layouts, tweak your cover letter, and re-word your skills until you find a combination that works.
- Ask yourself this question: Why do I think I can do this job? Use your answers to guide your resume, highlighting the skills and experience that you think are most relevant and will be of interest to the employer.

# RESUME EXAMPLE

## BOB SMITH

121 Main Street, Glassboro, NJ 08043  
856-476-1122 [bob.smith@yahoo.com](mailto:bob.smith@yahoo.com)

### SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Experience in security and detention center settings
- Strong understanding of problem solving and conflict management techniques
- Physically fit and able to work in a variety of settings
- Detail oriented, with experience preparing reports
- Outstanding communication skills and ability to work as a member of a team
- Clear Criminal Record Check; Valid Driver's License with clear driving record

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING

**Bachelor of Arts in Law and Justice Studies**, Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ

- Expected May 2024
- Cumulative GPA 3.89
- Final Seminar Research Project "Education Programs in Juvenile Detention Centers"

**First Aid and CPR (Level C)**, American Red Cross, Expires December 2026

**Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Certificate**, Crisis Prevention Institute, 2021

### RELATED EXPERIENCE

**Youth Services Intern**, Burlington County Corrections Department, Mount Holly NJ, 2023

- Assisted to develop and implement educational programs and activities
- Participated in training seminars for new detention officers
- Learned about the corrections system and operations of a facility

**Security Officer**, Cambridge Security Services, Cherry Hill NJ, 2022 – Present

- Monitor security cameras and perform foot patrols at various sites
- Prepare reports, document events and ensure protocols are followed
- Assist with crowd control and identification checks at large events

**Volunteer**, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, Camden NJ, 2021 – Present

- Mentor a little brother, providing guidance and encouragement
- Plan visits and activities 1-2 times per week
- Attend volunteer training and personal development sessions

### EMPLOYMENT AND VOLUNTEER HISTORY

**Deli Department Manager**, Shoprite, Marlton NJ, 2014-2020

**Soccer Coach**, Marlton Youth Soccer Club, Marlton NJ, 2012-2019

# RESUME

## GENERAL RESUME ADVICE

- Tailor your resume for each and every job you apply to.
- Objective statements are not recommended—it is best to address your employment goals and objectives in a cover letter.
- Use bold, italics and underline to highlight sections, job titles and important information.
- Use bullets to highlight key statements and accomplishments.
- Select a legible and common font and use 10-12 point font size.
- Make it your own and avoid the use of templates.
- Use a consistent format to make your resume pleasing to the eye.
- Be honest and accurate.
- Remember that there are many variations on a resume—find what works for you and your skill set.
- Avoid the use of I, my or me.
- Do not include personal information, such as date of birth or a photo.
- Do include dates; they are important and employers want to see them.
- Have another person **review your resume** and check for spelling and grammar.
- Be concise and to the point. Keep your resume to one or two pages (one page is usually best).

## RESUME SECTIONS

### HEADING

- Your contact information must be clear and easy to read.
- Ensure your phone number and e-mail address are up to date. Use a phone number that has call answer with a professional outgoing message and ensure that your e-mail address is professional.
- Be creative; use bold, underline, italics and shading to create your own letterhead.
- Use the same heading for your cover letter, references and portfolio.
- Include:
  - Your Name
  - Phone Number
  - Mailing Address (optional)
  - E-mail Address
  - Link to LinkedIn profile / website / portfolio (optional)

### SKILLS

#### *Alternate Titles*

Highlights of Qualifications  
Key Competencies  
Professional Qualifications  
Summary of Key Abilities

- List your technical skills, related experience and educational qualifications in bullet form. Focus on job-related, hard skills.
- Cross reference with the job posting and use industry terminology.
- Use strong language / action verbs (see page 4).
- List any unique selling features such as foreign languages, professional associations or computer skills.
- **Your 3-6 strongest qualifications for the job should be presented here**

### EDUCATION

#### *Alternate Titles*

Academic Background  
Academic Training  
Professional Education  
Professional Development  
Certifications

- Include when you will graduate, when you did graduate, or which year of your program you are in.
- Include highlights of studies or examples of courses you have taken if you believe they will help enhance your ability to complete the job.
- Mention special projects, accomplishments and/or a strong GPA (3.0 or higher).
- Include any awards you have received.
- Include any specialized training or certificates you have achieved.
- If job relevant, include safety training, certifications, or required licenses.

# RESUME

## RELATED EXPERIENCE

### *Alternate Titles*

Additional Experience  
Professional Background  
Professional Experience  
Relevant Experience

Related Experience Includes:

- Internships, Field Experience, and Volunteer Experience
- Academic Projects and Activities
- Related Work History

Include details such as:

- |                         |            |
|-------------------------|------------|
| · Job Title             | · Location |
| · Business/Organization | · Dates    |

List 3-5 **Accomplishment Statements** for each related experience.

## CREATING ACCOMPLISHMENT STATEMENTS

When listing the details of your Related Experience, use powerful language, numbers, and specific examples to really sell this experience as beneficial to potential employers. Instead of simply listing your tasks, tell the story of what you learned from the experience.

To write Accomplishment Statements

1. Start by asking yourself these questions:

What was the problem/task/project? What were the skills you gained or used? What was the outcome?

What did you accomplish? What were you noted for in this job?

Your answers to these questions can help you to develop your accomplishment statements.

2. Lead with an Action Verb (see list on next page).

3. Quantify and Qualify whenever possible.

When you Quantify and Qualify, you add proof and value to your statements.

**Quantify** – Use figures and numbers that further explain the accomplishment. These could include percentages, duration, financials, scope, and/or frequency.

**Qualify** – Describe and identify specific experience and qualifications. Examples include specific tasks or responsibilities; technology or software; and/or industry standards, processes or techniques.

**For example:**

Instead of...

· Put together data for department

Use...

· Analyzed data using advanced Excel functions and increased efficiencies based on findings

## EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

### *Alternate Titles*

Additional Experience

If unrelated to your career, use this optional section to demonstrate your history as a steady and reliable employee.

Does not have to include a list of responsibilities. Include key details such as:

- |                         |            |
|-------------------------|------------|
| · Job Title             | · Location |
| · Business/Organization | · Dates    |

## OPTIONAL SECTIONS

Professional Associations	Community Involvement	Publications
Activities and Interests	Conferences Attended	Related Activities
Presentations	Honors and Awards	Academic Projects

# Action Verbs

## FINANCIAL

administered  
adjusted  
allocated  
analyzed  
appraised  
balanced  
budgeted  
calculated  
computed  
conserved  
corrected  
determined  
**developed**  
estimated  
forecasted  
managed  
marketed  
measured  
planned  
prepared  
programmed  
projected  
reconciled  
reduced  
researched  
retrieved

## RESEARCH

analyzed  
clarified  
collected  
compared  
critiqued  
determined  
**diagnosed**  
evaluated  
examined  
experimented  
extracted  
gathered  
formulated  
inspected  
interviewed  
**invented**  
investigated  
located  
organized  
researched  
**solved**  
summarized  
surveyed  
tested

## TEACHING

adapted  
advised  
clarified  
coached  
communicated  
**coordinated**  
developed  
enabled  
encouraged  
evaluated  
facilitated  
guided  
instructed  
motivated  
persuaded  
simulated  
stimulated  
taught  
tested

## TECHNICAL

**adapted**  
applied  
assembled  
built  
calculated  
computed  
conserved  
constructed  
converted  
debugged  
**designed**  
determined  
developed  
engineered  
fabricated  
fortified  
installed  
maintained  
operated  
overhauled  
printed  
programmed  
rectified  
regulated  
restored  
**solved**  
specialized  
standardized  
upgraded  
utilized

## CREATIVE

acted  
combined  
composed  
conceptualized  
condensed  
created  
customized  
designed  
developed  
directed  
displayed  
drew  
entertained  
established  
fashioned  
formulated  
founded  
illustrated  
initiated  
instituted  
integrated  
introduced  
invented  
modeled  
modified  
originated  
performed  
photographed  
planned  
revised  
revitalized  
shaped

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

achieved	improved	spearheaded
attained	pioneered	succeeded
completed	reduced	surpassed
<b>expanded</b>	resolved	transformed
exceeded	restored	won

## ORGANIZATION / DETAIL

arranged	implemented	reserved
catalogued	incorporated	responded
categorized	inspected	reviewed
charted	logged	routed
classified	maintained	scheduled
coded	monitored	screened
collected	obtained	set up
compiled	operated	submitted
corrected	organized	supplied
corresponded	prepared	standardized
distributed	processed	systematized
executed	provided	updated
<b>expedited</b>	purchased	validated
filled	recorded	verified
generated	registered	

## MANAGEMENT / LEADERSHIP

administered	emphasized	managed
appointed	<b>enhanced</b>	motivated
approved	<b>established</b>	organized
assigned	executed	oversaw
<b>attained</b>	generated	planned
authorized	handled	produced
chaired	hired	reorganized
consolidated	hosted	replaced
coordinated	<b>improved</b>	scheduled
decided	<b>increased</b>	selected
delegated	<b>initiated</b>	<b>strengthened</b>
directed	<b>instituted</b>	supervised

## COMMUNICATION / PEOPLE

addressed	<b>developed</b>	judged
advertised	directed	marketed
arbitrated	discussed	mediated
arranged	drafted	moderated
articulated	elicited	negotiated
authored	enlisted	participated
clarified	explained	persuaded
collaborated	formulated	publicized
composed	incorporated	reconciled
<b>convinced</b>	influenced	reinforced
corresponded	interacted	reported
debated	interviewed	<b>resolved</b>
defined	involved	suggested
described	joined	summarized

# COVER LETTER

## WHY WRITE A COVER LETTER?

**Do not underestimate the importance of a cover letter.** There are some examples out there of hiring managers who do not read them and many job seekers make the mistake of thinking that a cover letter is not worth the effort. This is simply not true. Most managers do read them, and expect that they will be part of the application process.

Even more importantly, the cover letter is your way to **tell your story**. The resume provides brief statements: the cover letter allows you to fill in the details and **connect the dots**. This will allow you to explain why you are seeking to change careers, to move to the next level, or why you have a gap in your work history. As well, this is how you can let them know why you are truly interested in the job and why you believe you would be a great fit.

Each application must have a personalized, compelling cover letter. Yes, this is more time consuming, but it should result in more interviews, which is the goal of your job search. Better to send out ten well-written, well-thought out applications that have a strong chance of moving on to the next round, than 100 generic resumes and cover letters that are unlikely to catch a recruiter's eye. Sending out *more* applications does not increase your chances of getting hired—sending out **better** applications does.

## LAYOUT

Copy your header, font, and overall style from the resume.

A cover letter should be a one-page, professional business letter. Keep it brief and easy to read in a quick glance. Follow a three to four paragraph format (see the following pages for a template and an example).

**Address your cover letter to a person.** **Do not use** "Dear Hiring Manager" or "To Whom it May Concern." Demonstrate that you have done your research and have put thought and care into your application. You can typically find a name on the company website or on LinkedIn. Or, call the company and ask—usually the administrative staff will be able to provide you with a name.

## CONTENT

Avoid a repetition of your resume. Instead, review the job description, highlight the top three or four skills that you possess that are key to the job, and provide a description of how you gained those skills and how you could use them as a member of their team.

Be honest and genuine. Compelling, real stories can truly make an impact here.

Avoid anything too personal, anything negative, or any discussion of pay and/or benefits.

Don't undersell. Avoid stating that you don't have experience in the field. Focus on the skills you do have, rather than pointing out ones that you lack.

Try to answer the question "Why should we hire you?"

Proofread carefully.

# COVER LETTER TEMPLATE

Your Heading

Today's Date

Name of Employer / Contact  
Correct Title or Position  
Name of Company / Organization  
Street Address  
City, State, Zip Code

**Salutation:** Dear Mr. / Ms. (his or her last name):

**Opening Paragraph:**

State why you are writing. Is it in response to an advertisement? Were you referred by someone, and if so by whom? Have you been interested in working for this company or in this field for a long time? Are you studying related courses in school? It is important to change this paragraph for each position you apply to.

**Second (and Third) Paragraph(s):**

Relate your skills, interests, knowledge and abilities to the needs of the employer. Point out relevant training, education, and employment. Elaborate on your courses and experience if appropriate. Highlight extracurricular and volunteer experience. Highlight your special skills, achievements and qualifications that are relevant to the job you are applying for. ***Specify how your qualifications match specific requirements found in the job advertisement*** You should discuss your areas of expertise and job-related personal characteristics that set you apart from other applicants.

Explain why you are interested in working for the employer. Specify your reasons for wanting this position and try to convince the employer of your ability, suitability and interest in the position. Discuss specifics using examples. This section should be one to two paragraphs.

**Closing Paragraph:**

Close with a strong reminder of why you are a good match. Thank the receiver for reviewing your resume and considering you for the position. Ask for an interview or indicate that you will be following up.

Yours truly,

*Your Signature*

Your name typed here

# COVER LETTER EXAMPLE

## BOB SMITH

121 Main Street, Glassboro, NJ 08043  
856-476-1122 [bob.smith@yahoo.com](mailto:bob.smith@yahoo.com)

May 8, 20XX

Jane Sanderson  
Human Resources Coordinator  
Abraxas  
1000 Atlantic Avenue  
Camden, NJ 08104

Dear Ms. Sanderson:

Please accept the attached resume as application for the **Juvenile Detention Officer** as advertised on your website. I would bring to the position a strong work ethic developed throughout my work history combined with a bachelor's degree in Law and Justice Studies from Rowan University.

In my recent experience as an intern with the Burlington County Corrections Department, I had the opportunity to work directly with youth in the criminal justice system. I pursued that internship because I believed that it would be strong fit for my communication and teamwork skills; the internship confirmed that belief, and I am now committed to pursuing a career in which I can help to make a difference in the lives of young people.

In my internship and my coursework, I have been trained in health, safety, and welfare protocols and have learned how to effectively counsel youth. In addition, in my current position as a Security Officer, I have the opportunity to communicate with members of the general public while adhering to important safety protocols and liaising with local law enforcement. In my previous positions, I have been noted by my supervisors for my excellent attention to detail and meticulous record keeping. I am mature, level headed, and able to make clear, rational decisions while working under pressure.

I am available to work a variety of shifts and would be a very reliable member of your corrections team. I would like to speak with you directly in order to further discuss a potential position with Abraxas. I will be in touch with you next week by telephone. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Kind Regards,

Bob Smith

# REFERENCES

## REFERENCE LIST

Many employers want to speak to references in order to verify their hiring decision before making an offer. As a job seeker, it is important to have a go-to list of people who can be contacted by a recruiter.

Online applications frequently ask for the inclusion of (typically 3) references. In addition, it is a great idea to create a one page reference list to leave behind after an interview. It can be a great closer to an interview: "Here is my reference list. I look forward to hearing from you after you have had a chance to contact them." Employers typically contact references just before they make an offer, so this is the right timing for providing them with the list.

Create a reference sheet that lists the three references, including their full contact information, employer, and job title. This information should correlate with your resume wherever possible. If necessary, briefly indicate how you know the person.

It is important to **contact your references** when you are actively job seeking **and ask for their permission and co-operation**. Ask them to support your job search by providing a positive reference. Send a copy of your resume and the job description to each reference so that they are prepared when the recruiter contacts them.

Once you land a job, remember to **say thank you**. Let them know how much you appreciate their time and assistance.

## POTENTIAL REFERENCES

Think of **three people** who can vouch for your good character and strong work ethic. Some possible references could include:

- Past employer/supervisor
- Family friend
- Teacher/Professor/Coach
- Former or current colleague
- Volunteer supervisor
- Field placement supervisor
- Advisor
- Connections from professional associations, activities and/or community involvement

Ensure that you select people you believe **will only say positive things** about you and your abilities.

## LETTERS OF REFERENCE

When you leave an employment, internship or volunteer position, ask for a **reference letter**. The letter should address the specific achievements and contributions you have made.

Make copies of your reference letters and include one or two along with your reference list for the interview.

You can also ask your contacts if they will include part of the reference letter in the Recommendations section of **LinkedIn**.

# REFERENCES EXAMPLE

## BOB SMITH

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121 Main Street, Glassboro, NJ 08043  
856-476-1122 [bob.smith@yahoo.com](mailto:bob.smith@yahoo.com)

## REFERENCES

### ROB JONES

Placement Coordinator  
Burlington County Corrections Department  
Mount Holly, NJ  
856-354-8889  
[rjones@njdoc.gov](mailto:rjones@njdoc.gov)

### PAT SMITH

Volunteer Coordinator  
Big Brothers Big Sisters  
Camden, NJ  
856-476-2222  
[psmith@bbbs.org](mailto:psmith@bbbs.org)

### ANN DONOVAN

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