

Moving On

A Guide for Career Planning and Job Search
2010-11



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CAREER COURSES

Giving you the tools to find your way

UNIV 200: Major and Career Decision Making

A 2-credit course designed for sophomore students and above (freshmen are eligible if they have completed UNIV 100). Identify and confirm a major and career choice that is just right for you using assessment tools and career research strategies.

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A 1-credit course designed to help third-year and transfer students confirm their major and career choices and pursue internships or other career-related experience through self-assessment and job search strategies.

UNIV 400: College to Graduate School

A 1-credit course for second-semester juniors and seniors. Create strong application materials, learn testing strategies and options, enhance interviewing skills, and explore budgeting, financial-planning options, and career development.


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Our Mission

University Career Services prepares Mason students to achieve careers that are compelling, satisfying, and meaningful.

Our expert career advisors help you

- Navigate challenging career transition points throughout your college life.
- Gain clarity in your career options and confidence in your career decisions.
- Achieve a satisfying career.



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UNIVERSITY LIFE LIVING • LEARNING • LEADING



Choose a Major or Career

WHILE SOME STUDENTS ARRIVE on campus for the first time with their major and career mapped out, many students have yet to decide on a major, let alone a career. Choosing a major or a career can be a daunting task, especially as new technology and new fields of study broaden the opportunities in today's world.

University Career Services can help you explore the myriad options, discover and confirm your skills and interests, and gain career-related experience. University Career Services can also help you hunt for jobs effectively by identifying job openings and potential employers; write resumes, cover letters, and portfolios; and learn interview skills. It can also help you explore graduate school.

Career Success Plan

Knowing what to do and when to do it can make choosing a major or career a bit easier. Following the steps listed below will lead you to success.

Freshman Year—Explore Majors and Careers

- Learn about University Career Services programs and services. Ask for an orientation of the Career Library and use the resources to explore majors and career fields.
- If undecided about which major to choose, refer to the “Choosing a Major and Career” section in this book and see a career counselor designated for undeclared students.
- Use O*NET (online.onetcenter.org) to explore occupational information.

Sophomore Year—Explore Opportunities to Gain Career Experience

- Meet with a career counselor for help with deciding on or confirming your choice of a major. Consider taking the 2-credit course UNIV 200 Making Major/Career Decisions.
- Use the HireMason listings to research and identify career-related internships and part-time jobs.
- Attend the internship and job fairs and other career events to make initial contacts with employers and learn about their career opportunities.
- Set up information interviews or shadowing experiences with Mason alumni using Career Network Online (careers.gmu.edu/cn).
- Join campus organizations and consider taking on leadership positions to gain experience and develop skills.

Junior Year—Evaluate Decisions and Recommit to Goals

- Obtain experience through internships, co-ops, or part-time jobs.
- Take the 1-credit course UNIV 300 Junior Transition to prepare to search for career opportunities.
- Network with alumni and professionals in your field of interest. Use Career Network Online to identify contacts.
- Develop a resume that highlights your skills, knowledge, and experience as they relate to your future goals and have it reviewed by your career counselor. Import your resume into HireMason.
- Attend the job and internship fairs and other career events to speak to employers recruiting for internships, co-ops, and seasonal job opportunities.

Senior Year—Prepare for the Transition to Career

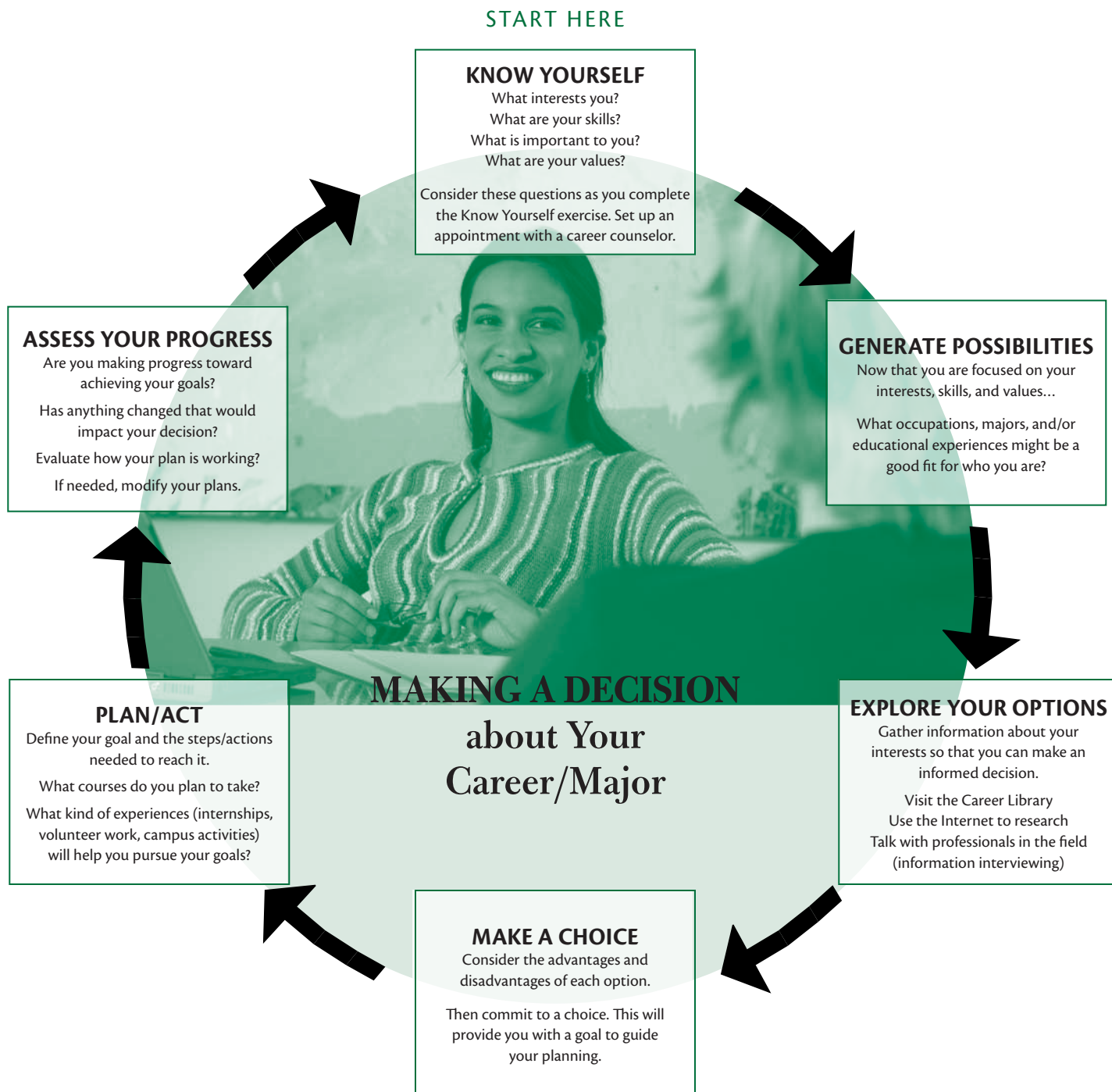
- Visit your career counselor to discuss job search or graduate school preparation.
- Update your resume and have it reviewed by your career counselor.
- Find out about the On-Campus Interviewing (OCI) Program and other employer events.
- Attend appropriate employer presentations and receptions.
- Use the career-related Internet sites to identify and research employers and locate job openings, including co-ops and internships.
- Develop a job search action plan. Prepare for your job interviews. Attend a workshop on interviewing skills and view the interviewing videos.
- Take the 1-credit course UNIV 400 Senior Transition to Graduate School or Senior Transition to the Workplace.
- Consider joining an appropriate professional or trade association.
- Identify faculty or work supervisors who will provide a favorable reference.
- Participate in local and regional job fairs and other career events in the area.

Graduate Students—Continue to Move toward Your Career Goals

- Follow the same steps as indicated for seniors.
- Join and actively participate in professional or trade associations and clubs. Assume a leadership position.
- Network with key faculty members. Assist faculty with their research.

Know Yourself Exercises

The following exercises will help you start the career-planning process. Through exploration, you begin to discover important information about yourself and your options so you can make informed, satisfying choices. These exercises are just a start; University Career Services offers many additional resources to help you plan.



Career counselors are available to help as you go through this decision-making process. Call 703-993-2370 to set up an appointment. Another option is to take University 200, a 2-credit course designed to help you choose or confirm a major and career.

EXERCISE 1: INTEREST THEMES

According to John Holland's *Theory of Vocational Choice*, people generally search for work and leisure environments that allow them to express their personality and interests. People with similar traits tend to congregate in similar occupations. The more compatible a person's interests are with the work environment, the greater success and satisfaction the individual is likely to experience. Complete the Interest Checklist to identify your preferred Holland Interest Themes. Then, link your interests to occupations.

Directions

1. Circle the activities in the columns below that appeal to you whether you have done them or not. Do not consider your skills, only your interest in the activity.
2. Add up the number of activities you circled in each column. Record them under FIRST, SECOND, and THIRD highest at the bottom of the page. This score indicates your Holland Code.
3. Read the descriptions of each theme that follow.

Interest Themes and Activities Checklist

REALISTIC "DOERS"	INVESTIGATIVE "THINKERS"	ARTISTIC "CREATORS"	SOCIAL "HELPERS"	ENTERPRISING "PERSUADERS"	CONVENTIONAL "ORGANIZERS"
Use carpentry tools to build items with wood.	Solve math problems or quizzes.	Design posters, flyers, or brochures.	Take a course in interpersonal relations.	Make a speech or presentation.	Fill out income tax forms.
Plant a garden.	Work with a chemistry set.	Take photographs.	Provide care for children.	Meet influential people.	Take the minutes of a meeting.
Repair stereos, computers, or small appliances.	Read and solve mysteries.	Work independently in an unstructured environment.	Belong to clubs or attend conferences and networking meetings.	Lead a work project or committee.	Keep the books or records for a club.
Refinish antique furniture.	Read scientific books or magazines; watch scientific TV shows.	Conceptualize new ways to solve problems or accomplish tasks.	Help someone new become acquainted with others and make friends.	Sell items or services.	Reorganize a filing system to make it more efficient.
Hunt or fish.	Work in a laboratory.	Sketch, draw, paint, or sculpt.	Teach a class.	Participate in a political campaign.	Write business letters, memos, or reports.
Raise or train animals.	Use or discuss computers and software.	Read or write poetry.	Meet and get to know new people.	Help settle disputes.	Work with numbers and financial data.
Work independently, solving concrete, practical problems.	Compare and analyze budget figures.	Dance or act in a play.	Learn about different cultures and groups of people.	Be a member of the debate team.	Collect and organize items, such as stamps, coins, or baseball cards.
Develop film in a darkroom.	Observe behavioral or scientific phenomena.	Write a creative story for fun or publication.	Listen to your friends' personal problems and try to solve them.	Own or operate a small business or service.	Operate computers and other business machines.
Spend time browsing in a hardware store.	Develop a survey questionnaire for a research project.	Read articles or watch movies with an artistic or musical theme.	Volunteer to work with the elderly, needy, or sick.	Manage a fund-raising campaign for an organization.	Balance a checkbook or manage personal finances.
Serve in the military.	Use a microscope or telescope.	Attend a play, opera, or concert.	Entertain friends in your home.	Entertain business clients.	Make charts and graphs.
Repair bikes, cars, or motorcycles.	Play chess or other strategy games.	Visit an art museum.	Chaperone a youth group dance.	Serve as a club officer.	Take or keep an inventory of supplies.
Operate a sewing machine.	Analyze and solve abstract problems.	Play a musical instrument.	Lead a discussion group on social justice.	Supervise a staff of people.	Organize items in your room, garage, or attic.
Drive a bus or truck or operate large machines.	Collect data for an experiment.	Design a dress or a piece of jewelry or furniture.	Work on group projects.	Persuade others to accept your ideas.	Develop and follow efficient work routines.

YOUR HOLLAND CODE: FIRST _____ SECOND _____ THIRD _____

Holland Interest Themes

Realistic (*Expresses interests and solves problems by doing*)

Enjoys working with machines, tools, objects, and animals. Practical, reserved, and physical. Likes to work outdoors on concrete problems and see tangible results. Student activities that may be appealing include ROTC, intramural and club sports, the Geo Club, and event production activities.

Investigative (*Expresses interests and solves problems by thinking*)

Enjoys researching, exploring ideas, collecting data, analyzing, inquiring, and using instruments. Methodical, original, and logical. Student activities that may be appealing include Honors Committee, Biology Club, student engineering organizations, and student government.

Artistic (*Expresses interests and solves problems by creating*)

Enjoys being original, independent, introspective, self-expressive, innovative, and unstructured. Develops skills in music, art, drama, language, and writing. Student activities that may be appealing include Program Board, student publications, the *Broadside*, GM View, Mason Cable Network, Storytellers Club, and Music Educators National Conference.

Social (*Expresses interests and solves problems by helping*)

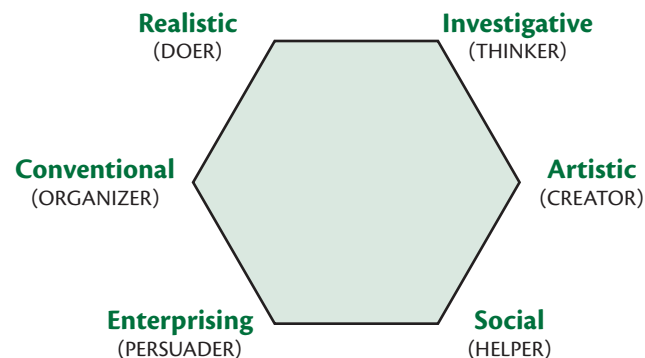
Enjoys working with people to inform, train, enlighten, or cure. Perceptive, responsible, empathic, and patient. Student activities that may be appealing include sororities and fraternities, campus ministry, peer advisors, Mason ambassadors, orientation leaders, resident advisors, and activist clubs.

Enterprising (*Expresses interests and solves problems by persuading*)

Seeks to use mind, words, and feelings in dealing with people to motivate, persuade, manage, and sell things or promote ideas. May like taking personal or financial risks. Assertive, sociable, ambitious, enthusiastic, influential, and goal oriented. Student activities that may be appealing include Student Funding Board, Debate Team, Model United Nations, American Marketing Association, Society for the Advancement of Management, and activist clubs.

Conventional (*Expresses interests and solves problems by organizing*)

Enjoys activities that permit organization of information in a clear, orderly manner. Likes structured settings. Detail-oriented, responsible, and conforming. Student activities that may be appealing include Accounting Club, Student Government, DMIS Club, and Student Elections Commission.



Link Your Interests to Occupations

To learn more about your Holland Code and how to use this information when considering a major or occupation

- Schedule an appointment with a career counselor at University Career Services, 703-993-2370, or the School of Management Career Services, 703-993-1880, if you are a business or pre-business major.
- Refer to the *Dictionary of Holland Occupational Codes* or the Occupations and Interest Themes Binder in the Career Library to identify occupations that relate to your Holland Code.

EXERCISE 2: VALUES

Work Values

For your work to be satisfying, it must be compatible with your values. For some people, money, power, and status make a job rewarding. Others must experience meaning or purpose in the work for a job to be satisfying. The following exercises contain lists of work and personal values that could form the basis of your career planning decisions.

Rate each work value using the following scale:

- 1 = Very important to have in my work
- 2 = Somewhat important to have in my work
- 3 = Unimportant to have in my work

A. Work conditions may permit or require the following:

- ___ **Independence/autonomy**—doing what you want to do without much direction from others
- ___ **Time flexibility**—arranging your own hours, working according to your own time schedule
- ___ **Change/variety**—performing varying tasks in a number of different settings
- ___ **Change/risk**—performing new tasks or leading new programs that challenge the established order and may be initially resisted
- ___ **Stability/security**—working in a secure job that pays you reasonably well
- ___ **Physical challenge**—performing dangerous tasks that challenge your physical capabilities
- ___ **Physical demands**—performing physically strenuous but relatively safe activities
- ___ **Mental challenge**—performing demanding tasks that challenge your intelligence and creativity
- ___ **Pressure**—performing in a highly critical environment with constant deadlines
- ___ **Precise work**—performing prescribed tasks that leave little room for error
- ___ **Decision making**—choosing what to do and how to do it

B. Individuals work for the following purposes:

- ___ To pursue **truth and knowledge**
- ___ To acquire **expertise and authority**

- ___ To use **creativity and innovativeness**
- ___ To foster **aesthetic appreciation**
- ___ To make **social contributions**
- ___ To acquire **material gain**
- ___ To seek **recognition**
- ___ To promote **ethics and morality**
- ___ To seek **spiritual and transpersonal gain**

C. Relationships at work may involve the following:

- ___ **Working alone**—doing assignments by yourself, with minimal contact with other people
- ___ **Public contact**—interacting in predictable ways with a continuous flow of people
- ___ **Developing close friendships** with coworkers
- ___ **Group membership**—belonging to a group with a common purpose or interest
- ___ **Helping** others
- ___ **Influencing** others
- ___ **Supervising** others
- ___ **Influencing** outcomes

Personal Values

Every time you choose to do one thing over another, you make a value judgment. Choosing between two or more conflicting values that are of major importance to you can be extremely difficult (e.g., career values may conflict with family and friendship values). You can make these decisions more effectively if you know your most important values. When your actions are in harmony with your values, you will feel more in control of your life and more satisfied with your decisions. The following exercise will help you better understand your personal values and their priority.

Using the following scale, rank each personal value according to its importance to you and place the number that corresponds to your rating in the appropriate space to the left of each personal value.

- 1 = Very important
- 2 = Somewhat important
- 3 = Not important

- ___ Good health
- ___ Close friendships
- ___ A family
- ___ A fulfilling career
- ___ A stable marriage
- ___ Financial comfort
- ___ Independence
- ___ Creativity
- ___ Organized religion
- ___ Having children

- ___ A variety of interests and activities
- ___ Freedom to create my own lifestyle
- ___ Owning a house
- ___ A happy love relationship
- ___ Fulfilling careers for my partner and me
- ___ Contributing to my community
- ___ Abundance of leisure time
- ___ Flexibility to choose geographic location
- ___ A stable life
- ___ A life without stress
- ___ Strong religious values
- ___ A chance to make social changes
- ___ Be remembered for my accomplishments
- ___ Helping those in distress
- ___ Freedom to live where I wish
- ___ Time to myself
- ___ Enjoyment of arts, entertainment, and cultural activities
- ___ A life with many challenges
- ___ A life with many changes
- ___ Opportunity to be a leader
- ___ Good physical appearance
- ___ Opportunity to establish roots in one place
- ___ Opportunity for physical activities
- ___ An exciting life
- ___ A chance to get into politics
- ___ Live according to strong moral values
- ___ Opportunity to teach others
- ___ Write something memorable
- ___ A chance to become famous
- ___ Help others solve problems
- ___ Make lots of money

Now ask yourself the following questions and note your answers.

- Does your life right now reflect your values? Is the way you spend your time consistent with your priorities?
- If the way you spend your time is inconsistent with your priorities, how can you make it more consistent?
- Are there parts of your life that you would like to change but cannot right now? If so, what is your timetable for bringing your life-style more into harmony with your values?
- How do you think your most important personal values will affect your career choice?

Adapted for use from *Training for Life: A Practical Guide to Career and Life Planning*, seventh edition (2000), with permission from the authors, Bernadette M. Black and Fred J. Hecklinger.

EXERCISE 3: SKILLS

Every job requires certain skills. Skills are acquired through life experiences, education, and work experiences. Your skills, combined with your interests and values, are key to career success.

There are three main categories of skills:

- **Functional skills**, which relate to the functions of a task and can be transferred from one career to another. Examples include communicating, problem solving, supervising, and organizing.
- **Content skills**, which result from specific knowledge gained about a subject, procedure, or vocabulary. Examples include speaking in Spanish, programming in Java, and applying the rules of parliamentary procedure.
- **Self-management skills**, which are the personality strengths you bring to a situation. Examples include efficiency, trustworthiness, and accuracy.

This exercise is designed to help you recognize skills that come to you easily and you especially enjoy using. These skills are the foundation on which you are likely to build your career. As you learn which skills are required for success in specific occupations, you can better evaluate how well these occupations make use of your strongest skills.

Functional Skills

On a separate sheet of paper, describe 10 experiences that made you feel proud or satisfied. The experiences may be academic, work-related, or personal. Examples include developing skill in a sport, teaching a friend a skill or subject, organizing an event, setting up a new filing system, running for officer of a club, writing a story or poem, or designing a database.

- Review the lists of skills on the following pages.
- Place a checkmark beside the skills you used in each of your 10 satisfying experiences. For some skills, you may have several checkmarks.
- Circle those skills you most enjoy using.

Realistic Skills: Involve the use of objects, tools, machines, animals, or your body. Realistic skills are required in activities such as tuning a car, planting a garden, competing in sports, building a bookcase, or repairing a sewing machine.

- ___ **Constructing**—putting together parts, assembling, building
- ___ **Cultivating**—raising or growing things such as plants or animals
- ___ **Designing**—creating furniture, models, patterns
- ___ **Handling**—lifting, balancing, carrying, loading, moving
- ___ **Inspecting**—appraising, examining
- ___ **Installing**—positioning for use
- ___ **Maintaining**—preserving optimal condition
- ___ **Manual coordination**—dexterity
- ___ **Motor coordination**—agility, endurance, strength
- ___ **Operating**—controlling a tool, machine, vehicle, equipment
- ___ **Repairing**—fixing, refinishing
- ___ **Sensing**—smelling, tasting, seeing, hearing

Investigative Skills: Involve exploring, investigating, examining, and analyzing ideas and phenomena. Examples include playing thought-provoking word and number games, reading technical reports, researching a topic, reading science fiction, and passing a course in calculus.

- ___ **Analyzing**—critically examining, studying, appraising
- ___ **Conceptualizing**—getting a general idea based on what you have learned
- ___ **Diagnosing**—investigating and analyzing the course of nature or a phenomenon
- ___ **Evaluating**—assessing or judging information and alternatives
- ___ **Examining**—looking over, exploring
- ___ **Informing**—presenting information through oral or written communication, assigning meaning, translating into familiar terms
- ___ **Predicting**—anticipating or foreseeing future events
- ___ **Problem solving**—identifying possibilities and alternatives, developing solutions
- ___ **Questioning**—interrogating, interviewing, challenging
- ___ **Researching**—gathering data and information, systematically investigating
- ___ **Synthesizing**—combining and integrating information
- ___ **Thinking**—using logic and reason, formulating creative possibilities
- ___ **Understanding**—perceiving meaning, learning

Artistic Skills: Involve creating art forms or products through materials, music, drama, or writing. Examples include writing a poem or short story, preparing a special meal, performing in a one-act play, exhibiting your photographs, designing a piece of jewelry, and attending a concert.

- ___ **Appreciating**—being critically and emotionally aware of aesthetic value
- ___ **Composing**—arranging or forming by uniting parts and elements
- ___ **Creating**—bringing into being from thought or imagination, originating, inventing
- ___ **Decorating/consulting**—advising others on artistry, color, form, arrangement of interiors, clothing, accessories
- ___ **Designing**—conceiving and planning jewelry, graphics, models, patterns for self or others to produce
- ___ **Drawing**—portraying people, scenes, or events by sketching, painting, illustrating
- ___ **Entertaining**—performing before an audience, diverting, amusing
- ___ **Exhibiting**—displaying, demonstrating
- ___ **Exploring**—seeking new experiences, showing perpetual curiosity
- ___ **Expressing**—conveying thoughts and feelings through an artistic medium
- ___ **Imagining**—visualizing, forming mental images
- ___ **Producing**—making a product in art or craft form, writing, performing
- ___ **Speaking/singing**—using voice to entertain, inform, tell a story, dramatize

— **Writing**—using words to tell a story, describe a product, critique an artistic event

Social Skills: Involve working with people to help, teach, inform, train, and lead. Examples include facilitating a personal growth group, counseling runaway teenagers, interviewing job applicants, supervising playground activities, teaching an adult education class, and caring for a sick person.

— **Advising**—giving information, consulting, aiding decision making

— **Collaborating**—working on a team, maintaining cooperation and support

— **Communicating**—exchanging thoughts and information, interviewing

— **Coordinating**—acting as a liaison, putting others in touch with useful resources

— **Counseling**—guiding or mentoring others

— **Empathizing**—understanding and acknowledging the feelings of others

— **Encouraging**—motivating and developing the capabilities of others

— **Facilitating**—assisting the progress of a person or group

— **Giving feedback**—conducting appraisal of others, asking for and giving supportive and helpful feedback

— **Listening**—attending to others actively and accurately and with openness and concern

— **Planning**—arranging meetings, social occasions, activities

— **Rehabilitating**—restoring to healthy functioning

— **Relating**—meeting and associating easily with all kinds of people, developing trust and rapport

— **Serving**—anticipating and attending to the needs of others

— **Teaching**—instructing, tutoring, coaching, training others

— **Valuing**—making decisions that will maximize individual and collective goods

Enterprising Skills: Involve persuading and leading people and organizations to attain goals or economic gains. Activity examples include campaigning, organizing a fund raiser, starting a business, or lobbying.

— **Administering**—managing people and projects by setting standards, choosing priorities, assigning activities, evaluating progress

— **Delegating**—giving responsibility to others appropriately

— **Implementing**—establishing and executing policies and procedures

— **Leading**—taking initiative, advancing ideas, directing action

— **Motivating**—prompting action, providing incentive, inspiring and encouraging others

— **Negotiating**—promoting resolution of conflict, arbitrating, bargaining

— **Persuading**—winning acceptance and approval for ideas or products, selling, advocating, raising funds

— **Planning/forecasting**—designing long-range strategies based on predicted growth and opportunities

— **Risking**—hazarding change, promoting alternatives, troubleshooting

— **Speaking**—communicating publicly and persuasively, representing or acting as a spokesperson

— **Staffing**—recruiting, interviewing, selecting, placing, promoting, and transferring personnel

— **Supervising**—overseeing the performance of others, disciplining, setting priorities

— **Team building**—recognizing and using the skills of others, organizing and supporting cooperative efforts

Conventional Skills: Involve gathering, organizing, and evaluating numerical and written data. Also, attending to detail and systematic procedures, computing income taxes, serving as club treasurer, setting up a library system, and budgeting.

— **Auditing**—examining and verifying accounts and records

— **Calculating**—using numbers and performing accurate computations

— **Classifying**—cataloging information, coding, filing

— **Collecting**—gathering data and information

— **Developing**—designing systematic procedures

— **Evaluating**—assessing the effectiveness of procedures, accuracy of information, and compliance with standards

— **Following procedures**—attending to detail, following through on the details of a plan

— **Inventorying**—counting, listing, assigning value to articles

— **Keeping records**—carefully recording and listing, keeping books

— **Managing resources**—planning and managing finances, time, personnel, materials

— **Operating**—using business and data processing technology

— **Organizing**—organizing information, procedures, tasks

— **Preparing**—producing budgets, written reports, correspondence, maps, charts, and tables

— **Purchasing**—finding and buying resources and materials

— **Scheduling**—making and keeping a schedule

HireMason

Only for Mason students and alumni.

Convenient online access to hundreds of internships, co-ops, full-time positions, on-campus jobs, and volunteer positions.

Register online at

careers.gmu.edu/hiremason

Moving On

Self-Management Skills

Directions: Circle the self-management skills that you possess. Add others to the list as necessary. Put a checkmark next to those that are most descriptive of you.

Accurate Cheerful Cooperative Energetic Helpful Intelligent Meticulous Persevering Reflective Sensitive Thoughtful	Adaptable Clever Creative Enterprising Honest Kind Open-minded Polite Reliable Sincere Trustworthy	Adventurous Competent Curious Enthusiastic Humorous Logical Optimistic Practical Resourceful Sociable Understanding
Assertive Confident Dependable Fair-minded Imaginative Loyal Organized Precise Responsible Sympathetic Versatile	Calm Conscientious Determined Flexible Independent Mature Outgoing Purposeful Self-controlled Tactful Warm	Capable Considerate Efficient Friendly Ingenious Methodical Patient Reasonable Sensible Thorough Witty

Content Skills

- From work, school, leisure, or volunteer experiences, I have developed considerable knowledge about _____

- My favorite school subject(s) were/are _____

- I could teach someone else how to _____

- If I had a gift certificate for five books in a single field, the field would be _____

Know Yourself Summary

- My three main interest themes are (from Exercise 1)
Realistic Investigative Artistic
Enterprising Conventional Social
- My top work values and personal values are (from Exercise 2)

- My best functional skills include (from Exercise 3) _____

- My personality strengths (self-management skills) include _____

- I have considerable knowledge (content skills) in the following field(s): _____

- I want/need to further develop the following skills/qualities: _____

Now What?

Based on all of the self-assessment information you have gathered, write a brief paragraph in response to the frequently asked request, tell me about yourself. This information can also be used in your one-minute commercial for networking.

Top Ways to Explore Careers and Majors

Using the resources described below, gather the following information about major and career options available to you:

EXPLORING MAJORS

- Describe the program of study for the major you are considering.
- Identify course requirements and read descriptions of required courses.
- Identify graduate and professional school opportunities for this major.
- Identify opportunities for gaining career-related experience in this major.
- Identify and contact alumni who pursued this major to find out what they are doing.
- List potential careers for this major.
- Based on your research, identify the advantages and disadvantages of this major for you.

EXPLORING OCCUPATIONS

- Identify the nature of the work including the required skills.
- Identify the education or training that is required to enter and progress in the field.
- Identify opportunities for advancement.
- Research the projected outlook and trends in this field. Visit www.bls.gov/oco.
- Find the salary range and types of benefits you can expect. Consider nonmonetary rewards, also.
- Identify the personal characteristics that are required of someone in this occupation.

- Based on your research, determine how well the nature of the work suits your interests, values, skills, and personality.
- List the advantages and disadvantages of this occupation for you.

RESOURCES FOR EXPLORING MAJORS

- **University Catalog**—Explore the catalog and other academic information on the university’s web site, including major requirements, course descriptions, and course syllabi.
- **Academic Advising Office**—Pick up course planning sheets for majors you are considering.
- **Textbooks for required courses**—Skim through texts at the George Mason University Bookstore to get a feel for the subject matter.
- **Career Library** (SUB I, Room 348)—Read the “Where to Start...Career Resources” lists for each major, which identify and describe careers related to various majors, and books on majors, including *The College Majors Handbook* by Fogg, Harrington, and Harrington.
- **Online resources**—Explore career links to majors at careers.gmu.edu/onlineresources. You can also visit advising.gmu.edu and click on “Exploring Major Sheets” under “Advising Resources.” These PDFs include information about the major, skills, and abilities needed to be successful in the field selected.
- **HireMason**—Research jobs and internships to identify tasks associated with occupations and majors, skills, and knowledge required at careers.gmu.edu/hiremason.
- **Upper-level students in the major**—Ask these students about their experience and what they like and dislike about the major, what the workload is, and how they plan to apply their knowledge in a career field.
- **Academic and professional student organizations**—Join organizations that have programs that feature career advice from professionals in the field. Information on student organizations and programs is available at sa.gmu.edu or the Student Activities office in SUB I.
- **Career-related experience**—Take advantage of a variety of opportunities, including research projects, internships, co-ops, part-time or summer jobs, volunteering, or study abroad to learn more about a particular subject area.

RESOURCES FOR EXPLORING CAREERS

- **Career Library**—Use the “Where to Start...Career Resources” lists to identify the materials that relate to the majors or occupations in which you are interested.
- **The Internet**—Go to careers.gmu.edu/links to locate web sites with such information as the nature of the work, training and qualifications, outlook for employment, and earnings for hundreds of occupations. You can also use a search engine to perform keyword searches on the Internet to research occupations. Contact your career counselor for help.

- **Job listings**—Review the job listings on HireMason (careers.gmu.edu/hiremason) to identify important skills and qualifications sought by employers.
- **Professionals in careers you are exploring**—See the “Interviewing Professionals for Career and Job-Hunting Information” section. Also, use the database at Career Network Online (careers.gmu.edu/cn) to contact Mason alumni who will share career information and advice. Some alumni will permit you to shadow them for half a day or more. Consult Alumni Affairs for names of alumni who lead chapters that represent various majors at www.gmu.edu/alumni/chapters.html.
- **Professional associations**—Identify associations related to career fields of interest and contact them for information on local chapter meetings, networking events, career trend information, lists of graduate or professional training programs, special certifications, salary, and informational publications. Associations Unlimited (accessed through the University Libraries web site) can help identify associations in your areas of interest.

INTERVIEWING PROFESSIONALS FOR INFORMATION

Information interviewing is a form of networking and a powerful tool for learning about job fields, developing contacts, evaluating your fit with a career, or gaining advice on job-hunting strategies.

Once you have identified career areas to explore, develop a list of potential contacts:

- Begin with people you know, friends, relatives, faculty members, coworkers, employers, or members of an organization to which you belong.
- Check out Career Network Online (careers.gmu.edu/cn), the network of Mason alumni and friends who have agreed to share information about their career fields, positions, and organizations. The opportunity for an externship (shadowing the person at work) may be an option. Obtain a username and password by contacting University Career Services.
- Locate people through newspaper and magazine articles, organization directories, referrals, or the Internet.

Interviews may be arranged by contacting the person by phone or e-mail. Career Network members indicate the ways they prefer to be contacted. See the script below for ideas on how to approach your contacts.

Preparing for and Conducting Informational Interviews

- Research the person’s field and organization through resources in the Career Library or on the Internet.
- Develop a list of questions or points to remember to keep you focused during the interview.
- Take a resume if you have one. If not, ask what information is most important to include on a resume for that field.
- Use knowledge you have gained from reading and talking with others about the career field and organization to ask informed questions.

Moving On

- Dress in the most professional attire that your wardrobe allows. The closer you are to interviewing for a job, the more critical it is to dress professionally.
- Arrive for the interview on time. If an emergency or unexpected problem arises that prevents or delays your arrival, call the person immediately.
- Enjoy the experience! Because you are the interviewer, you do not have the same pressures as in a job interview. At the same time, the experience helps you develop your interviewing skills—firm handshake, good eye contact, relaxed but erect posture, clear speaking, careful listening.

When setting up the interview, arrange a mutually convenient time to meet. Obtain directions and information on parking and transportation. Thank the person for agreeing to meet with you and leave information on how you may be contacted. If an in-person interview is not possible, you may suggest an extended phone conversation or correspondence by e-mail.

SAMPLE SCRIPT

Introducing Yourself

Hello, this is [your name]. I obtained your name through the Career Network database at George Mason University [or] our mutual friend...suggested that you would be a good person to talk with regarding.... I am a [indicate your year in college and major] and your career field is one I am considering. I am trying to learn more about issues and trends in your field and what skills employers seek in the persons they hire.

Requesting the Interview

I would appreciate meeting with you for a half-hour to see your work environment and ask a few questions. Would that be possible in the near future? or Would there be a convenient time to meet for a half-hour in the next two weeks?

Sample Questions

- What are your major work activities during a typical week?
- What skills, abilities, and personal qualities do you find most important in your work?
- What academic major would you recommend as preparation for your field? Are there specific courses you would recommend?
- What experiences would you recommend as preparation for this type of work?
- What do you like most about your job? What do you like the least?
- What are entry-level, mid-level, and senior-level salary ranges in this field?
- What professional associations do you recommend joining?
- What do you see as significant issues and trends in this field?
- What do you think the job prospects are for the future?
- Does my resume work well for this field? How could I improve it?
- What could I do to improve my qualifications?
- What advice do you have for locating a job or internship?
- What advice do you have for applying for jobs at this organization or similar ones?
- Are there other organizations I should contact about openings?
- Could you suggest others in this field with whom I might talk? May I mention that you referred me to them?
- How does your job affect your lifestyle?

Within three days of the interview, send a brief, error-free thank-you letter. This letter can be handwritten, typed, or e-mailed. You might want to call attention to some particular information that you found helpful.

Plan to stay in touch with the persons who have helped you. Keep them informed of your progress, and, as you begin job hunting, inquire about new referrals and job leads. Share your success as you make career decisions or land that professional job. Your contacts take pride in helping you achieve success.

Career Self-Assessment Inventories

University Career Services offers students and alumni the opportunity for formal and informal assessment of personality, skills, and interests as a part of the major and career exploration process. Following are descriptions of five assessment inventories offered in University Career Services. All assessments include a one-hour interpretation session with a counselor. Current students and recent alumni are charged \$15 to take the Strong Interest Inventory or the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Alumni who graduated more than six months ago are charged \$40 for one or \$60 for both assessments. If you are interested in any of these career assessments, please make an appointment with your career counselor.

Personality

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) measures your personality preferences and helps you understand

- Your motivations, strengths, and potential areas for growth
- How people differ and the unique gifts they contribute
- How to improve your relationships with others who have differing views
- Your preferred style of working, studying, and relating to others

Skills

SKILLSCAN Card Sort is an interactive exercise in which you discover your personal strengths. This assessment classifies your skills into three categories: transferable, functional, and content. Once you have identified your strengths and skills, you can list them on your resume and share them with employers, who often ask what skills you have to offer.

Interest

The Strong Interest Inventory Skills Confidence Edition (SII) compares your likes and dislikes with those of people in the work force. It can help you identify

- What type of work activities you might enjoy
- What work environment you would be most comfortable in
- What learning environment is best suited for you
- What major areas of study you might pursue
- What professional occupations you might investigate
- How confident you feel about pursuing various work activities

Self-Directed Search (SDS) is an interest inventory that was developed by John Holland whose theory of careers is the basis for most of the career inventories used today. Holland's theory states that most people can be loosely categorized into six types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. Occupations and work environments can also be classified by the same categories.

People who choose careers that match their types are most likely to be satisfied and successful. The version offered by University Career Services is free and is taken on paper. Alternatively, the SDS can be found online for a fee at self-directed-search.com.

Career Lifftoff is an inventory that assesses your interests and compares them to the interest profiles of various career fields. This assessment facilitates your career exploration by assessing what activities you relate to best and obtaining scores that indicate your level of interest in 30 career fields.

After taking the SII or Career Lifftoff, you can use the U.S. Department of Labor's online Occupational Information Network (O*NET) to identify more occupations that match your interests. Through O*NET, you can obtain descriptions of jobs, salaries, employment projections, and skill and educational requirements. To use O*NET, call University Career Services at 703-993-2370 for username and password information and then visit careers.gmu.edu/onet.



Mark your calendar for workshops, clinics, special events, and the Job and Internship Fairs!

Check out events schedule online at

careers.gmu.edu/calendar

Attend any of University Career Services' events and see how helpful we can be in assisting you to prepare for your job search or career/major selection decisions.



Develop Your Job Search Tools

Resume

A **RESUME** IS a universally recognized job-hunting tool designed to attract the attention of readers so they will want to meet and interview you. A well-written resume accomplishes the following:

- **Introduces** you to prospective employers or graduate school admissions committees.
- **Highlights your qualifications** (i.e., strengths, skills, accomplishments, and knowledge) relevant to the requirements of a job or academic program.
- **Provides a summary of your qualifications** that your references and persons in your network can use to speak effectively about you.
- **Demonstrates your ability** to present information in an organized, concise, and professional manner.

Three Steps to an Effective Resume

Step 1: Research jobs or graduate programs in your field of interest and learn what skills, knowledge, and competency areas the employers or graduate programs value. Then you will be able to state a clear objective and highlight qualifications related to the jobs or programs.

Step 2: Develop a first draft identifying your skills, experiences, knowledge, and accomplishments. Use this article as a reference. When in doubt, include all information and edit later. Your final version will be concise (one page long, two at the most) with enough detail to demonstrate skills and accomplishments.

Step 3: Have your resume critiqued by your career counselor or a knowledgeable person in your career field. You can also get feedback on your resume by attending a Resume Clinic or Resume Writing Workshop in University Career Services. Visit our calendar at careers.gmu.edu/calendar for dates and times.

RESUME CONTENTS

Identifying Information

- Name
- Address—Permanent and current, if applicable
- Telephone number(s)—Include numbers where you can be reached during the day as well as evening. **Be sure your telephone voice mail message is appropriate for employers.**
- E-mail address—**Your username should reflect your professionalism.**
- Web site URL (optional)—Your web site should look professional and contain information you would want an employer to see.

Objective (optional)

A strong, targeted objective may include some or all of the following:

- Type of position you are seeking
- Type of organization or work environment you desire
- Special skills or contributions you are offering

Your objective emphasizes what you can contribute to the employer, and the remainder of the resume highlights skills, knowledge, and experience that support the objective. Avoid general, unfocused objectives, such as “a challenging and rewarding position that uses my education and experience.”

If you are pursuing several career objectives that emphasize different skills and knowledge, you can create a separate resume for each. The objective can be omitted from the resume altogether and stated instead in an accompanying cover letter. Be sure the qualifications that best support your objective stand out throughout your resume whether you include an objective or not.

SAMPLE OBJECTIVES

Trainee position in real estate property management, with opportunity to contribute strong financial skills and relevant experience.

Administrative position in community health care education, with special emphasis on community relations and local employers.

Highlights or Summary of Qualifications (optional)

Instead of an objective or in combination with an objective, consider including a summary of qualifications. Be sure to summarize the experience, skills, and personality traits most pertinent to the positions you are seeking. The summary of qualifications is brief, usually with no more than five qualification statements. It can be bulleted or in paragraph format.

SAMPLE SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS SECTION

- Excel at oral communications, evidenced by four successful years on Forensic Team.
- Highly organized, able to manage multiple tasks with proven ability to meet deadlines.
- Work well independently and as a team member.
- Able to develop, write, and edit marketing materials.
- Extensive computer application experience using Word, Access, Excel, PowerPoint, Adobe QuarkXPress.

For examples of a summary with an objective, see sample resumes in this section for Ricardo Castro and Patricia Murray.

Education

The education section follows immediately after the objective or summary of qualifications, unless you graduated several years ago and have experience that is a stronger qualification. Begin with your most recent education and list your qualifications in reverse chronological order. Include the following:

- Degree(s) awarded
- Major and minor
- Month and year degree was (or will) be awarded
- Name and location of college or university

If you are about to graduate and transferred from a school where you received an associate degree or no degree, you may choose not to list the earlier school. On the other hand, you may choose to list the school to call attention to relevant honors, courses, or accomplishments. If no degree was awarded, list major (if applicable), names and location of school, and dates attended.

High school is rarely included unless you are a recent high school graduate or wish to draw attention to something special about your high school experience.

Other academic information, if relevant and supportive of your objective, could include the following:

- GPA (overall and/or in major) if 3.00 or higher
- Relevant courses
- Scholarships, honors, awards, and honor societies
- Course projects
- Thesis or dissertation topic
- Clinical or field experience
- Special training programs, certifications, or licensure
- Study abroad

If you have two or more honors and awards, you may choose to create a separate section in which to list these for greater emphasis. Likewise, if course projects, internships, and clinical or field experiences are among your most relevant qualifications, consider creating a separate section on related or relevant experience.

SAMPLE EDUCATION SECTION

BS in economics, minor in Spanish, expected May 2010
George Mason University, Fairfax, VA

Relevant course work: econometrics, money and banking, economic problems and public policies, international economics, international money and finance, economic development of Latin America

Study abroad: University of Madrid, Spain, fall 2007 and spring 2008 semesters

Completed extensive course work in economics and Spanish language and culture.

Financed 75 percent of college costs through part-time employment.

Experience

This section may include the following:

- Full-time experience
- Part-time experience
- Internships and co-op positions
- Significant volunteer, leadership, field, and practicum experiences
- Significant course projects

For each experience include job title; name and location (city and state) of organization; the dates you participated; and a description of the skills, competencies, accomplishments, knowledge, and responsibilities you demonstrated. To choose a format that best highlights your experience, see examples of the chronological, related, or relevant experience, and functional formats displayed later in this section.

SAMPLE EXPERIENCE DESCRIPTION

Accounting Assistant, ABC Accounting, Fairfax, VA,
May 2007–present

- Maintained accounts payable and receivable for more than 200 office clients.
- Created and implemented a system for ordering and maintaining inventory of office supplies using Access.
- Developed a tracking log of client contacts resulting in greater office efficiency.

Tips for Creating the Most Effective Descriptions

- State your experiences in phrases that begin with action words (verbs) and show the scope and results (achievement) of your activity (e.g., improved a procedure, clarified a problem, increased efficiency)
- Qualify and quantify your accomplishments, e.g., “trained more than 300 persons from 100 companies to use...” Well-chosen descriptive details help communicate your initiative, follow-through, and problem-solving skills.
- Use keyword nouns in experience descriptions (and throughout your resume). Employers often search electronic resume databases using key words to locate candidates with preferred qualifications.
- Avoid passive phrases, such as “Was responsible for,” “Duties included,” or “Assisted with.”
- Describe your most responsible functions first even if they occupied only a small percentage of your time.
- Always include the outcome of your efforts or accomplishments, e.g., report was used by the account executive to brief the board.

Key Words for Resume Preparation—Action Verbs

Use action verbs at the beginning of each statement that describes your experiences.

ADMINISTRATIVE	defined	founded	assessed	improved	surveyed
accomplished	directed	generated	assisted	increased	tested
administered	drafted	illustrated	attended	initiated	
approved	edited	improvised	cared for	led	TEACHING
arranged	enlisted	initiated	clarified	managed	adapted
classified	explained	innovated	coached	marketed	advised
compiled	formulated	integrated	coordinated	negotiated	clarified
developed	helped	invented	counseled	organized	coached
documented	influenced	originated	delivered	planned	coordinated
maintained	informed	marketed	demonstrated	prepared	explained
managed	inspired	performed	developed	prioritized	guided
monitored	interpreted	problem solved	diagnosed	produced	informed
operated	interviewed	revitalized	educated	promoted	instructed
organized	lectured	shaped	engaged	recommended	served
prepared	marketed	synthesized	facilitated	reconciled	taught
prioritized	mediated	traveled	furnished	recruited	trained
provided	moderated		mentored	reviewed	
purchased	motivated	FINANCIAL	overcame	supervised	TECHNICAL
recorded	persuaded	administered	provided	targeted	administered
resolved	presented	allocated	referred	trained	analyzed
retrieved	promoted	analyzed	served	transformed	assembled
screened	recruited	appraised			built
systematized	represented	audited	MANAGEMENT	RESEARCH	calculated
	spoke	balanced	accomplished	calculated	cataloged
COMMUNICATION	supervised	budgeted	achieved	clarified	collected
addressed	suggested	calculated	administered	computed	correlated
advised	summarized	compiled	analyzed	critiqued	diagnosed
aided	trained	developed	appointed	discovered	evaluated
arranged	updated	financed	assessed	examined	experimented
articulated	wrote	forecasted	assigned	extrapolated	gathered
authored		formulated	chaired	identified	inspected
clarified	CREATIVE	invested	coached	investigated	monitored
communicated	acted	maintained	consulted	observed	organized
completed	adapted	managed	contracted	proved	
composed	composed	marketed	controlled		
conceived	conceived	prepared	coordinated		
conducted	conceptualized	projected	developed		
consulted	crafted	targeted	directed		
contributed	created	tracked	established		
cooperated	customized		evaluated		
coordinated	designed	HELPING	examined		
corresponded	developed	advised	exceeded		
counseled	directed	aided	executed		
debated	fashioned		implemented		

Skills

Specialized skills, such as computer skills or foreign language skills, may be included in your resume. List varied skills and level of expertise as in the sample below. Or, if certain skills are particularly relevant to your objective, you may choose to list them under a separate “Computer Skills” or “Technical Skills” section.

SAMPLE SKILLS SECTION

- Computer proficiency in MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint. Use Internet effectively for research
- Familiar with database management using MS Access
- Fluent in Spanish and English; conversational ability in French
- Effective leadership and oral communication skills exhibited in campus activities and organizations

Other Resume Categories

Other categories and content that illustrate competencies might include the following:

- Student activities
- Community service
- Volunteer work
- Course projects
- Presentations
- Leadership experience
- Research
- Publications
- Certifications or licenses
- Honors and awards
- Professional memberships
- International and travel experience
- Interests
- Security clearances
- Availability for travel or relocation

When deciding whether to create a separate resume category, ask if the information is important or relevant enough to warrant its own section or would it fit just as well under another major heading. In most cases, avoid creating a category that has only one item.

The student activity example could be listed in a separate “College Leadership” category. Or, if it describes your strongest relevant experience, it could be more effectively listed under “Relevant Experience.”

SAMPLE STUDENT ACTIVITY SECTION

**President, American Marketing Association
George Mason University, Fairfax, VA, 2008–present**

- Coordinate the activities of 75 members and lead a committee of five officers.
- Plan monthly professional development programs with local community businesses.
- Market all chapter activities to students through class presentations, activity fairs, and electronic communication.

► TIP!

Have your resume critiqued and conduct a practice interview with an employer representative at the beginning of each fall and spring semester. See the career calendar at careers.gmu.edu/calendar.

References

The names of references should not be included on the resume. Create a separate page with your complete contact information at the top followed by a list of your references (see sample below). Do not send your list of references with the resume unless requested to do so; instead, give it to the employer at the interview. Employers will usually contact your references by phone or e-mail.

References may include current or former supervisors, coworkers, or faculty. Before listing persons as references, ask their permission and make sure they are prepared to provide positive references. Keep them updated on your job search, and supply them with a copy of your current resume and a job announcement, if applicable.

Sample Reference List

DANIEL FAIRCLOTH

9118 University Drive
Fairfax, VA 22030
703-555-8120
dfair1111@gmu.edu

REFERENCES

Jocelyn Weaver, PhD
Assistant Professor
Biology Department
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA 22030
703-555-2014
jweaver9@gmu.edu

Melissa Graybar
Manager
Britches
88766 Maple Street
Alexandria, VA 33049
703-555-8110
mgraybar@britches.com

Rhonda Kalish, MD
Project Manager
National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, MD 20887
301-555-0909
rkalish@niaid.nih.gov

RESUME FORMAT

Present your resume in a way that shows your experience to the best advantage. The following are widely recognized and accepted formats:

- **Chronological**—Presents your experience in reverse chronological order (from most recent backward). The most traditional and best known, this format works well for most recent college graduates and persons whose most recent experience or education relates well to the job objective.
- **Related experience**—Is an effective way to list your career-related experience first when it is not your most recent experience. Use two experience headings: “Related Experience” and “Additional Experience.”
- **Functional**—May be effective for career changers because it allows the writer to de-emphasize position titles and organizations associated with a previous career and highlight qualifications that relate to a new career direction. It can be equally helpful to a candidate with varied experience because it enables the writer to focus on skills and relate them to a particular career field.

The functional format provides the most freedom to emphasize and group together particular skills and accomplishments under their own respective headings (see resume samples).

Employers, in general, prefer the chronological format to the functional style because a functional resume can make it more difficult to see when and where you demonstrated particular qualifications. Including an experience or work history at the end of the resume (see resume samples), however, helps satisfy the employer’s preference to see a chronology of your experience.

For more resume examples, go to careers.gmu.edu and click on “Resumes” in the “Quick Links” menu.

ELECTRONIC RESUMES

An electronic resume is formatted so it can be sent via e-mail, posted on the Internet, or scanned into an employer’s database. Because equipment varies greatly, you will need to convert your resume to the appropriate format, depending on the strategy you use. Other technical terms that are used to describe electronic resumes include web resume, scannable resume, keyword resume, and ASCII text resume.

A **web resume** is created specifically for a personal web site and combines HTML with web page design strategies. It is an effective way to showcase your technical and creative skills while presenting your education and experience. Be certain that your entire web site, as well as your resume, projects a professional image.

A **scannable resume** is designed to be stored in a database in a format that can be sorted and retrieved. Scannable resumes are selected based on key word searches. Include key words in your resume based on identifying key terms in the position description and job requirements, and by doing industry research. Scannable resumes should be printed on one side of white paper using a high-quality laser or ink-jet printer. Use Arial, Optima, or Helvetica fonts in 10- to 14-point type. Acronyms, italics, underlining, borders, and graphics should be

avoided. Do not fold, photocopy, or staple your resume. Paper clip an unfolded original resume and cover letter together, and send in a 9-by-12-inch envelope.

A **keyword resume** highlights specific skills and knowledge that the employer is seeking to meet the requirements of a position. Using a search engine, an employer can retrieve resumes that contain the desired keywords. All electronic resumes should include terms and jargon specific to your field of choice.

An **ASCII text resume** is a scanner-friendly resume that is submitted via e-mail directly to an employer or posted on the Internet. It is a straight-text document without any visual enhancements. When sending a resume via e-mail, be sure to cut and paste the resume into the body of the message rather than send it as an attachment. Also, send a copy first to your own e-mail address to check the appearance before sending it to an employer.

SPECIAL RESUMES

A federal government resume has special requirements.

A curriculum vitae (CV) is used to apply for positions in academia or research. Those who are just entering their field need not have CVs of great length but should focus on highlighting specific skills and areas of knowledge. Minimum CV headings should include educational background and degrees; research interests; teaching or research experience; dissertation topic; professional activities such as presentations, conferences attended, and university service; professional memberships; grants written; and leadership. Many other headings are possible. (See *The Curriculum Vitae Handbook* and *The Academic Job Search Handbook* on reserve at the Career Library.)



CAREER NETWORK *Online*

Ask members questions about their occupations.
Shadow them and learn about their professions.
Ask members to speak to your class or club.

Username and password required.
Students, contact Career Services, 703-993-2370.
Alumni, contact Alumni Affairs, 703-993-8696.

SAMPLE RESUMES

RICARDO CASTRO

rcastro@gmu.edu

Campus Address:

7567 Chain Bridge Road

Fairfax, VA 22030

703-555-1111

Permanent Address:

1028 Aztec Place

Richmond, VA 22039

814-555-4523

OBJECTIVE

A summer internship in public affairs. Special interest in the federal government.

QUALIFICATION HIGHLIGHTS

- Strong written and oral communication skills with two years on Forensics Team.
- Ability to establish rapport with people easily and make skillful presentations.
- Experience as coordinator of a variety of campus events.
- Fluent in Spanish; conversational ability in French and Italian.
- Proficiency in MS Word and PowerPoint; experience in Excel.

EDUCATION

Communication major; concentration in **Persuasive and Political Communication**

Expected graduation December 2010

George Mason University, Fairfax, VA, Major GPA 3.00

Course work includes interpersonal, nonverbal, and male-female communication; persuasive and expository speaking; communication in problem-solving groups; writing for business; and French language and culture.

EXPERIENCE

Vice President, **George Mason University Student Government**

Fairfax, VA, October 2008-August 2009

- Supervised four committees totaling more than 80 members.
- Conducted weekly meetings for chairpersons and committee members.
- Planned the orientation schedule and activities for new leaders.
- Led daily training sessions during orientation week for newly elected committee members.
- Served as liaison among the students, staff advisors, and dean of students.

Career Assistant, **George Mason University Career Services**

Fairfax, VA, September 2007-September 2008

- Responded to phone inquiries from students, employers, and faculty regarding career counseling appointments, job listings, cooperative education, and various other services provided.
- Scheduled appointments for 12 staff members via GroupWise calendar system.
- Accurately entered job listings into database for student access via the Internet.
- Compiled job listing information for use by counselors in class presentations.

LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES AND HONORS

Campus ambassador and tour guide for Admissions Office, 2009-present.

Activities reviewer for the *Broadside* student newspaper 2009-present.

Recipient of the George Mason University President's Award for Outstanding Leadership and Service, 2009.

Student Government Representative for Sophomore Class, 2008-2009.

Rush Chairperson, Alpha Beta Fraternity, Spring 2008.

PATRICIA MURRAY

202-555-0770

patmur@gnu.edu

10760 Royal Avenue, Springfield, VA 22150

703-555-3458

INTERESTS

Research and analysis of market conditions in international areas.

STRENGTHS

Graduate work completed with emphasis on international business and transactions; specialization in trade and economics. Experience with research projects, including written analyses and oral briefings. Excellent oral and written communication skills. Self-starter, team-oriented player. Proficient in use of office technology products, including spreadsheets, databases, word processing, presentation software, and the Internet.

EDUCATION

M.A., **International Commerce and Policy**, May 2010, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA

Course work included trade, finance, economics, multinational business studies, and country studies (Germany, South Africa, Western Europe)

B.A., **German; Minor in Political Science**, January 2002, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA

EXPERIENCE

Research

- Researched issues from congressional hearings; presented analysis to relevant committees.
- Tracked and interpreted congressional and governmental legislation (national and international) applicable to association issues; presented findings in form of briefing papers.
- Executed special projects and research assignments, including "A Case Study of Agricultural Policy between the U.S. and the European Union: Seafood Inspection and BST."
- Attended meetings for the association; presented research and market analyses on pertinent issues.
- Contacted government agencies, libraries, and congressional offices for verification of relevant information.

Management

- Assisted in financial management coordination, project management, and proposal development.
- Developed, organized, and managed two yearly committee meetings.
- Managed day-to-day operations of association and two sister associations.
- Planned, organized, and facilitated meetings; hired, trained, and supervised support staff.

Writing/Editing/Public Relations

- Independently edited and formatted a monthly newsletter with circulation of 2,000.
- Published articles for association's bimonthly publication with a circulation of 54,000.
- Facilitated press outreach for project director, composed press releases, and prepared press book.
- Prepared reports, visual aids, agenda books, and press kits for external and internal use.

International

- Lived in Germany and Switzerland for 14 years; fluent in German; traveled throughout Western Europe.
- Worked in Germany for two years for the Department of Army.

WORK HISTORY

Senior Administrative Assistant, World Wildlife Fund, Washington, D.C., 2007-present.

Office Manager/Program Assistant, American Veterinary Medical Association, Washington, D.C., 2005-2007.

Support Staff, U.S. Department of the Army, Bonn, Germany, 2003-2005.

Undergraduate Student Seeking Internship

Functional Format

18

COMPARISON OF INTERNATIONAL AND U.S. RESUMES

International and U.S. resumes have more similarities than differences; however, international students who wish to work for U.S. employers and U.S. students who plan to apply to employers abroad should be aware of the differences that do exist. In addition, resume styles and content will vary from country to country.

RESUMES OR CV FOR INTERNATIONAL EMPLOYERS	RESUMES FOR U.S. EMPLOYERS
May be two or more pages, but depends on the country	Generally one page for undergraduate students and two pages for graduate students.
Often lists academic and work experience in chronological order.	Lists employment history in reverse chronological order (most recent first). Some work history may be left out if it does not relate to the position.
May include personal information, such as age, race, marital status, religion, hobbies, and recreational interests.	Does not include age, race, marital, or religious information. Interests are generally limited to those related to academic, community service, or career.
Usually provides details of competencies, specific skills, accomplishments, and responsibilities that were used in jobs.	Highlights jobs, skills, accomplishments, competencies, and academic background that are relevant to career objective. The focus is to "market" oneself. U.S. employers want details.
Notation of employers might include a description or focus of the organization.	Includes the names and locations (city, state, country) of each employer, with a brief description of the position, including your accomplishments to illustrate the work performed. Uses active verbs to describe work, in past tense if the job is in the past and present tense if the job is current. Refer to page 14 for list of verbs.
European A4 standard paper size of 215.9 x 279.4 mm (8.4 x 11.9 inches) can create problems with U.S. printers.	Standard paper size of 8½ x 11 inches can create problems on European printers.
Personal photo often posted on the resume at the top of the page.	Personal photo is not included, with the exception of the arts, entertainment, or broadcast media fields.
Dates of attendance at all educational institutions are often noted.	Future college graduation dates should be noted. Completion of high school would not be noted if one is in college. An associate degree that is matriculated into a four-year degree would not be noted unless it is unique. Colleges that one transfers from should not be noted.
Military service is often included.	Military service may not be noted unless it relates to the position sought, shows an employment history, or otherwise distinguishes the applicant.
Uses British English in European countries.	Uses American English for U.S. companies. Avoids using first person ("I" statements) on a resume.
Personalized cover letters are usually expected.	Tailored cover letters are usually expected.

Additional Resources

Book: *The Global Resume and CV Guide* by Mary Jane Thompson. Web site: www.utexas.edu/cola/lacs/international_jobs

Practice answering tough interview questions



Perfect Interview online software allows you to sit face to face with a prerecorded interviewer. Record yourself with a webcam or type in your responses and get guidance on how to answer from a video coach.

www.perfectinterview.com/gmu

RESUME CHECKLIST

LAYOUT AND APPEARANCE	YES	NO	CAREER COUNSELOR COMMENTS
Is my name at the top of the page and in bold? Are my address, phone number, and e-mail address easy to read?			
Is my resume an appropriate length? (1 page preferred)			
Does my resume have about 1-inch margins (½-inch minimum)? Is the font size 11 minimum or 12 maximum?			
Is formatting (e.g., bold font, bullet sizes, heading styles) consistent throughout the resume? Are the headings and statements evenly spaced?			
Are verb tenses in the present tense for current jobs? Are verb tenses in the past tense for previous jobs?			
Do I have approximately two to six statements per job? (Bullet form is recommended.)			
CONTENT			
Does my objective statement clearly state what I am seeking and what I will bring to the position?			
Did I include the following headings: Education, Experience, and Skills?			
Does my education section state my official degree and expected graduation date? Did I include my cumulative GPA (if a 3.00 or above)? Is my GPA accurate?			
Do my statements demonstrate major accomplishments rather than routine tasks/duties? Check the statements that demonstrate your accomplishments.			
Do my accomplishment statements start with action verbs? (See page 14 for examples of action verbs.)			
Do my accomplishment statements demonstrate the use of key skills?			
Do my statements demonstrate the results of my accomplishments? Did I quantify my results (i.e., use numbers when possible)?			
Does my resume end with strength? (e.g., Skills, Activities section)			
Is my resume completely free from spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors?			

Letters of Recommendation

Recommendation letters are typically requested when applying to graduate school or for a scholarship and employers in certain fields.

Provide the letter writers with the context and purpose as to what area(s) they should focus on when writing the recommendation. The recipient may articulate in detail what they want to know; however, themes often include your leadership ability, knowledge and skill areas, potential to successfully perform the work in question, and any qualifications that meet the standards required by a scholarship, award, or job description.

Provide your letter writers with the following:

- Four to six weeks lead time to write the letter
- A copy of your resume
- Written highlights of your academic courses
- Examples of projects and research papers
- Your transcripts
- Any other information that serves to distinguish you for the purpose of the recommendation
- Stamped and addressed envelopes
- A hand-written thank-you letter or card

Save a copy of your recommendation letters. They may be used again but should be updated by the original writer after one year. Additional information on letters of recommendation can be found at www.princetonreview.com/business/letters-of-recommendation.aspx.

Job Search Letters

COVER LETTERS

The cover letter is a standard business letter that accompanies a resume. There are two basic types of cover letters:

- **Letter of inquiry**—Used to contact an employer where no known opening exists to express an interest in the organization and request an opportunity to interview for an appropriate position
- **Letter of application**—Used to apply for an open position within an organization, which includes pertinent details about your qualifications and requests an interview

Cover Letter Preparation

Before writing a cover letter, be sure you can answer the following questions:

- Why are you interested in the position and organization? Why are you a “fit” for this job?

- Can you describe the relevant transferable skills and knowledge from your experiences and education that directly relate to the position?

To fully answer these questions, you may need to visit the organization's web site and review the position description.

Sample Cover Letter Contents

- **Opening paragraph**—Catch the employer's interest with a strong opening sentence that states the purpose of your letter. Explain briefly why the organization is of interest to you. Use a referral name (with permission), if appropriate.
- **Middle paragraph(s)**—Highlight your knowledge, skills, and abilities as they relate to that particular organization and/or the specifics of the opening. Do not repeat verbatim all the information on your resume, but select those qualifications that directly relate to the employer's needs. Briefly discuss how you can contribute to the organization.
- **Final paragraph**—Ask for a personal interview and state how you may be contacted. Reiterate your interest in the organization and thank the employer for considering you.

Additional Resume Writing/Cover Letter Resources

University Career Services Library, SUB I, Room 348

- *Best Resumes for College Students and New Grads*
- *Best Key Words for Resumes, Cover Letters, and Interviews*
- *eResumes*
- *Resume Magic*
- *The Resume Catalog: 200 Damn Good Examples*
- *Cover Letter Magic*
- and many more

Web Resources

- Go to careers.gmu.edu and click on "Resumes" and "Cover Letters" in the "Quick Links" menu.

Resume Critique Services

- Meet with your career counselor for a resume critique.
- Attend clinics to have your resume critiqued by an employer.

SUGGESTED COVER LETTER LAYOUT AND FORMAT

Your Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Date of Letter

Employer's Name
Position or Title
Company Name
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. Last Name of Addressee or Hiring Manager:

Opening Paragraph

State the position for which you are applying including how you learned about it. If someone referred you to the position, indicate that person's name.

Middle Paragraph

Connect your skills and experience to the job description. Emphasize the skills that relate most to the position for which you are applying. Include your education.

Additional Paragraph (optional)

Indicate your interest in the company. Incorporate any research you have done about the company to show your interest in its mission and goals.

Closing Paragraph

Restate your interest in the position and how your qualifications fit the company's needs. Request an interview. Include your e-mail address and phone number where the company may contact you. Thank the addressee for his or her time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(Your Signature)
Type your name

Enclosure

COVER LETTER CHECKLIST

FORMAT AND APPEARANCE	YES	NO	CAREER COUNSELOR COMMENTS
Did I include my name, address, zip code, e-mail address, and telephone number?			
Is my cover letter an appropriate length? (One page preferred)			
Did I check and correct any spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors?			
Does the paper quality match my resume paper?			
Is the letter vertically centered on the page? Did I use a business letter format (full block, modified block, or indented format)?			
CONTENT			
Did I address my letter to an individual in a hiring position? If I could not find an individual, did I address it "Dear Employer" or "Dear Hiring Manager"?			
Does the first line state why I am writing the letter and the position for which I am applying?			
Was I concise and specific when discussing career goals and qualifications?			
Do I describe what I can contribute to an employer and not what I can get out of the organization?			
Did I include information that will intrigue the employer to read my resume, or did I just restate what is on my resume?			
Did I communicate actively by using strong verbs and avoiding contractions (e.g., I'd, didn't, it's)?			
Did I limit the use of sentences starting with "I"? Instead, did I use "This experience" or "In this internship, I demonstrated"?			
Is my cover letter tailored to my reader, showing that I have researched the organization? Have I demonstrated knowledge of the industry?			
Did I demonstrate enthusiasm and energy for the position?			
Did I refer to personal qualities that are crucial to success in the field?			
Did I tell the reader why they should hire me?			
Did I end my letter stating the action I will take next? For example, did I state that I would be calling to request an appointment to discuss the position?			

OTHER LETTERS

- A **networking letter** is written to develop a contact in a field or organization and may be used to request an information interview, job lead, or help with preparing job search materials.
- A **thank-you letter** follows an interview and conveys appreciation for the interview and reiterates your interest in the position.
- A **letter of apology** expresses your regret for missing an interview, conveys your continued interest, and states your desire to reschedule the meeting to explain why you missed the interview and discuss your qualifications.
- An **offer acknowledgment letter** thanks the employer for a job offer, indicates your understanding of the terms being offered, and gives a date by which you will notify the employer of your decision.
- An **acceptance letter** serves as an ethical contract between you and the employer after you have been offered a job. It should be brief, express your appreciation, restate the terms and conditions of employment (salary and benefits), and the starting date.

- A **rejection letter** declines a job offer and expresses appreciation for the employer's time and the offer in a positive, tactful manner.
- A **withdrawal letter** notifies an employer in a considerate and positive tone that you no longer wish to be considered for a position with that organization.

Letter Writing Tips

- *Personalize letters*—Address the letter to the appropriate individual, if possible.
- *Be specific, concise, and direct*—Avoid clichés.
- *Be positive*—Accentuate the strengths you possess in a confident, but not arrogant, manner.
- *Be available*—Provide a phone number and e-mail address that you check routinely.
- *Proofread*—Have someone else proofread your letter for spelling and grammar.
- *Be professional*—Use a standard business format (see samples). Sign the letter and package it professionally.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND SAMPLE LETTERS

Congressional Internship

Student Conservation Association (SCA)

Job Function: Public Administration/Public Affairs/Public Policy/Transportation
Application Deadline: 11/15/2010

SCA and Unilever Corporation have partnered to offer a unique congressional internship opportunity that will give students a chance to change the world. Working in either a Democratic or Republican office, students will gain firsthand knowledge of how government policy shapes our National Park System. After spending 15 weeks on Capitol Hill, interns will be placed in the field at a national park to help implement those policies.

Minimum Requirements

- Strong communication skills, both written and verbal
- Interest in public policy and environmental issues
- Strong customer service skills and comfortable dealing with the public
- Willingness to work in a Democratic or Republican congressional office
- Computer proficiency with spreadsheets or databases
- Ability to conduct Internet research
- Current undergraduate or recent graduate with a GPA of 3.00 or higher
- Detailed resume
- Directed writing sample and college transcript

Location: Washington, D.C., and an assigned national park

Position Type: Internship—Paid or stipend

Desired Major: Public policy, government, political science

To Apply

Send resume, cover letter, and college transcript via George Mason HireMason database or to SCA Human Resources Office at the November 15, 2010, deadline.

**Do you have the qualifications for this internship?
Then write them down!**

◀ Example of Internship Description

Highlighted key words indicate skills, competencies, experience, or knowledge areas that the candidate must possess and include on his or her resume, cover letter, and supporting materials to be considered for an interview. If the key elements are not there, you won't be selected. Be prepared to discuss and give examples of your qualifications at the interview.

1234 Campus Road
Fairfax, VA 22030

September 1, 2010

Internship Coordinator
Student Conservation Association
Street Address
Washington, DC Zip code

Dear Internship Coordinator:

I am writing this letter in response to a posting on www.idealists.org for the Student Conservation Association 2011 congressional internship. My academic major at George Mason University is government and international politics. Conservation ecology has been an interest of mine for many years, and I am eager to obtain experience with a non-profit advocacy organization as an intern.

My volunteer work in high school and college was with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. My college course work is writing-intensive, and the enclosed writing sample illustrates my experience during the annual Maryland Cleanup, Project Clean Stream.

I find the opportunity to work on Capitol Hill as an SCA intern in the office of an elected official very exciting because it would combine my academic major and environmental interests and aspirations. I anticipate that my course work will come alive working alongside staff and elected officials in the legislative branch of government. I am willing to contribute my proficiencies in conducting research, as well as administrative and computer spreadsheet and database skills.

I have enclosed my resume that highlights my customer service and public relations experience, and transcripts for your review. I will follow up next week to ask whether you will need additional information. I may be reached by e-mail at student27@gmu.edu or telephone at 703-555-3456. Thank you for your consideration and time.

Sincerely,

Samantha Student
George Mason University

Enclosure

Example of Tailored Cover Letter ▶

The E-mail Cover Letter

An e-cover letter can be sent in the body of an e-mail or as an attachment.

Electronic cover letters (e-cover letters) are shorter and more concise than hard-copy cover letters. They should not exceed three paragraphs.

You do not need to leave space for your handwritten signature in an e-cover letter.

Your address block follows your name at the end of an e-cover letter.

You do not need the word "Enclosure" at the bottom of an e-cover letter.

Fairfax County Public Schools
 Title: School Counselor, Rachel Carson Middle School
 Job Function: Counseling/Consulting/Crisis Intervention/Program Assessment and Evaluation

Duties: School counselor will work with students from multicultural and diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Provide developmentally appropriate information, knowledge, and skills to promote student success in academic, career, personal, and social areas. Serve as a consultant to parents and teachers helping them to be more effective in working with students through individual or group conferences, staff development activities, or parent educational workshops. Provide crisis intervention addressing specific concerns of students at risk or with identified needs consulting with parents and/or teachers as appropriate. Assess needs of students and staff, evaluate programs and make changes in the school counseling program to increase effectiveness. Act as liaison between teachers, parents/guardians, support personnel, and community resources to facilitate successful student development. Be an advocate ensuring equitable access to programs and services for all students.

To Apply: E-mail resume and cover letter to alice.ford@fcps.edu by April 15, 2011.

◀ Example of Professional Job Description

2201 Wentworth Way
 Fairfax, VA 22030

March 15, 2011

Alice Ford, Recruitment Specialist
 Fairfax County Public Schools
 8115 Gatehouse Road
 Falls Church, VA 22042

Dear Ms. Ford:

I am applying for the position of school counselor at Rachel Carson Middle School as advertised on the Fairfax County Public Schools web site on March 15, 2011.

A graduate student at George Mason University, I will complete an M.Ed. in counseling and development with a concentration in school counseling in May 2011. The possibility of working at Rachel Carson is exciting to me because of its multicultural student body, its nontraditional teaching methods, and the innovative programs initiated by the school to help each child develop to his or her fullest potential. Please consider some of the highlights of my qualifications:

- M.Ed. in counseling and development with a concentration in school counseling, May 2011, GPA 3.90
- B.S. in psychology, James Madison University, May 2007, GPA 3.75
- Counseling internship conducting individual and group counseling sessions covering anger management, social skills development, study skills, friendship, grief, deployment, and divorce
- Counseling practicum experience at Bailey's Elementary School for the Arts and Sciences working with a diverse student body that included many non-English-speaking recent immigrants. Conducted individual and group sessions addressing attendance, academic, career, and social concerns.
- Developed and presented a workshop for parents on Social Development Issues of Early Teens.
- Experience in assessing and evaluating school counseling programs and services

Enclosed is a current resume for your consideration. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you in person so we might discuss more fully the scope of the position and my qualifications for it. I can most easily be reached on my cell phone at 703-555-4398.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
 Joanna Spelman

Example of Job-Tailored Cover Letter ▶

◀ Sample Thank-You Letter
for a Professional Job Interview

76 Langley Circle
Vienna, Virginia 22030

May 28, 2011

Ms. Anita Lauverly
Director of Human Services
KLG Corporation
Business Park
Dunn Loring, VA 22017

Dear Ms. Lauverly:

It was a pleasure to meet with you yesterday to discuss the human resource assistant position open in your organization. The information you shared confirmed my own research describing KLG as a dynamic organization that emphasizes teamwork and creative problem solving. As my references will attest, this emphasis is compatible with my work style and strengths.

As we discussed, my qualifications seem well matched for the position. My previous internship and summer jobs allowed me to gain substantial experience in the human resource management field and become familiar with HRIS, the same system KLG uses. In addition, my volunteer activities with the Society for Human Resource Management have kept me informed about trends in the field and helped me develop my public-speaking and leadership skills.

If I can provide you with any additional information, please let me know. I look forward to hearing from you with your decision at the end of next week.

Sincerely,

Janet Somers

4400 University Drive
Fairfax, VA 22020

August 7, 2010

Jacquelyn Wood
Director of Public Relations
The Arlington Group
405 West Street
Baltimore, MD 20662

Dear Ms. Wood:

I am very pleased to accept the position of web designer for the Arlington Group's Baltimore office that you offered during our phone conversation on August 4, 2010. I look forward to joining you and your public relations staff beginning on September 20.

I understand and accept the terms and conditions that you reviewed, including a starting annual salary of \$38,600, full medical benefits that will begin 30 days after my start date, and 16 days of annual leave.

Thank you for the exciting opportunity to join your company, as well as your confidence in me. I will be out of town prior to September 20 but can be reached on my cell phone at 703-555-2456 or via e-mail at lahmad21@aol.com should you need to contact me. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Sincerely,

Layla Ahmad

Sample Job Acceptance Letter ▶



Conduct Your Job Search

Interviewing: Strategies for Success

A key element of successful interviewing is positively presenting yourself to demonstrate how your qualifications meet the employer's needs. Preparation, practice, and a well-articulated presentation are critical. Remember that the employer has asked you to interview because of genuine interest in you. Now it is your turn to demonstrate your interest and provide proof of your qualifications.

WHAT EMPLOYERS LOOK FOR AT THE INTERVIEW

- Many facts about you in a short time
- To understand and clarify what you want
- Your potential to do the job successfully
- Enthusiasm, interest, and professionalism
- Specific examples of your skills, accomplishments, and competencies
- What you know about their organization
- How you would fit in the organization's culture

The Initial Screening Interview

The screening interview is your first opportunity to talk with a recruiter. This interview may take place on the phone, on campus, or at the company's site. Although recruiters are usually not the hiring authority, they influence decisions about whom to invite for a lengthier interview; therefore, you should prepare carefully.

Your main task is to impress the interviewer so that you will receive an invitation to interview more thoroughly at the organization's site. You will be judged by your responses to questions about your qualifications and personal characteristics and your genuine interest in the organization. You need to convince the interviewer that you are a good fit for the position and the organization.

The Selection or Site Interview

The selection or site interview takes place at the employer's location and may include several meetings and a meal. Any travel arrangements, directions, and the name of a contact person should be determined in advance of the interview date.

Your interview schedule will likely include individual and group meetings with people of varying levels of responsibility, including prospective peers, superiors, and the person with authority to hire you. Consequently, you will need to adjust to their individual styles of interviewing.

Project interest and enthusiasm even though you may repeat the same information many times throughout your interview day.

Think about fresh ways to talk about your short-term and long-term goals, your interests, and your accomplishments.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

The best way to prepare is to research the job requirements and the organization, prepare your questions and answers, attend to the interview logistics, and get psyched for the interview.

Research: Information to Gather Before the Interview

Obtain information on the job and organization from people in the field, company literature and web sites, public and career libraries, trade journals, newsletters, business magazines, and directories. Be prepared to discuss your knowledge of the organization at the interview. Be sure to gather the following:

- Job description
- Knowledge, skills, and personal qualities required for the job
- Trends and major issues in the field
- Realistic salary for the position
- Size, location(s), and structure of the organization
- Past, present, and projected growth
- Types of clients and products and services offered
- Relationship of the organization to its competitors
- Major executives in the firm and their background
- Management philosophy and style

Prepare Questions to Ask

You should prepare thoughtful questions to ask during the interview that demonstrate an interest in the employer and will help you learn whether the position and organization will fit your interests, values, and qualifications. Avoid asking questions that are answered on the employer's web site or in the literature provided prior to the interview.

Questions to Ask the Employer during the Interview

- What specific skills and experiences would you ideally look for in the person filling this position?
- How would you describe a typical day in this job?
- What qualities and characteristics does it take to be successful in this position?
- What needs to be accomplished in this position in the next 6 to 12 months?

- What significant changes do you foresee in the future for this position and the company? How does one advance in the organization?
- What kind of training do new hires receive in this position in the first three months?
- How much travel is normally expected?
- What kind of support does this position receive from coworkers, supervisors, and management?
- What kinds of programs are offered for professional development?
- What is the work environment like?
- What else can I tell you about my qualifications?
- When can I expect to hear from you?

Attend to Logistics

- Bring copies of your resume and a list of references. You may wish to bring a writing sample or portfolio, if appropriate, and a copy of your transcript(s).
- Dress to project an image of confidence and success. Business dress is considered standard attire for most interviews, even if more casual clothing is typically worn at the workplace. For men, this means a suit or jacket, dress shirt, tie, and slacks. For women, a pants suit or dress suit with a modest hemline is appropriate. Both men and women should select conservative colors—black, navy, brown, or gray—and dress shoes in complementary colors. Hair should be neatly trimmed. If jewelry is worn, it should be simple and tasteful. If a fragrance is worn at all, it should be very subtle. Go to quintcareers.com/dress_for_success.html for details on this topic.
- Know how to get to the interview and leave plenty of time to get there. Arrive early but don't check in with the employer more than 15 minutes before your scheduled appointment.
- Find out how long the interview will take. Be prepared to stay longer, if necessary.
- Ask whether the interview is an initial screening or a selection interview and whether you will be talking to one or more persons.

The Portfolio: Another Strategy to Showcase Your Qualifications in the Interview

A portfolio can help you to organize your work in preparation for your job search and be used to market your qualifications at the interview.

For more information and resources on developing a portfolio, go to careers.gmu.edu and click on "Portfolios" under "More" in the "Quick Links" menu.

Getting Psyched for the Interview

- **Relax**—Use strategies to mentally prepare for the interview. Practice relaxation techniques, which might include breathing deeply, fantasizing about successful scenarios in which you answer questions with ease and certainty, and identifying irrational thoughts and replacing them with healthy, rational messages. Remind your-

self that you are a person with skills and knowledge to offer; after all, they chose you to interview!

- **Enthusiasm**—Remember that enthusiasm and a positive attitude will often offset a lack of experience.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Successful interviewing involves making a positive first impression and building rapport with the interviewer, answering and asking questions confidently and thoughtfully, closing the interview positively, and learning how to follow up afterward.

First Impression: Building Rapport

First impressions are important and often lasting. To build a good rapport with the interviewer, be receptive to the interviewer's style. Share responsibility for creating a comfortable atmosphere for the interview. Reflect an attitude of openness, confidence, enthusiasm, and courtesy through your nonverbal and verbal behaviors. Mention your best skills and qualifications early in the interview, and give examples of situations where you used them.

- Smile and have a firm handshake.
- Make eye contact immediately and continue to do so throughout the interview.
- Have a relaxed but erect posture.
- Speak clearly with good volume.
- Control nervous habits (such as tapping your foot) and use natural hand movements for emphasis.
- Make courteous observations. For example, comment on something interesting that you observed in the office or building.
- Initiate discussion appropriately. For example, make a positive comment about the organization and how you see yourself contributing to it. Ask a question about some of the job requirements.
- Be a good listener.

► TIP!

Address the interviewer as Ms. or Mr. Use the first name only if the interviewer suggests it. Remember to use the person's name often during the interview.

Answering Interview Questions

Employers interview you hoping to find reasons to hire you, not to rule you out. Each time an interviewer asks a question, you have an opportunity to communicate examples of when you effectively demonstrated your knowledge, skills, competencies, and experience that relate to the job you seek. The examples you use can include experience in the following:

- Class projects demonstrating leadership or team work
- Academic classes and course assignments
- Work performed in a student organization
- Volunteer or community service experience
- A part-time or full-time job
- Athletic activities

Moving On

- Travel or study abroad
- Personal or family experiences

Anticipate the types of questions you will be asked and practice your answers. For help with questions that seem difficult to answer, meet with your career counselor.

Interviewers ask two basic types of questions:

- **Standard questions**, such as, “How would you describe your own work style?”
- **Behavioral questions**, such as, “Describe your most challenging course project; what specific things did you do to ensure its success?”

In either case, give specific examples of your strengths and experience by structuring your answers using the STAR Formula:

S/T—Situation or task you faced

A—Action and role you took to respond to or solve the task

R—Results that occurred based on your action.

Remember, you only have 30 to 60 minutes for the employer to learn about you and your abilities. There are often no right answers to a question. Here are some guidelines that will help you formulate strong responses:

- Practice, practice, practice!
- Be positive and highlight your strengths.
- Be concise and give answers that are clear and direct. Avoid rambling.
- Be specific and provide examples that demonstrate your skills and qualifications.
- Be positive and enthusiastic.
- Help the employer understand your qualifications and strengths; that is, your knowledge, skills, competencies, and experience to conclude that you are the right person for the job.
- Address negatives in your background honestly and directly, using examples to demonstrate how your strengths in other areas will make up for those negatives.

The Six Most Feared Interview Questions

“Tell me about yourself.” Focus on your academic background and why you chose your major, accomplishments during college, activities that helped you develop personally and professionally, lessons learned, and what excites you about working in your chosen field.

“What is one of your weaknesses?” Think of this question as, “What is one area I need to develop to be more effective in my field?” Avoid offering personal or character flaws. State the weakness, own it, and tell the interviewer what you are doing to work on it.

“Why do you want to work for us?” Discuss the research you have done on the company and the job description. Talk about how your interests, skills, and experience match the job requirements.

“Why should I hire you?” This question is similar to the previous question, only more intimidating. Answer and also note examples using the STAR Formula. For example, don’t just say you possess good customer relations skills, give specific examples of how you have effectively interfaced with the public.

“Where do you want to be 10 years from now?” Think about tasks and roles you would like. Would you like to advance into management, manage major projects, supervise or train others, or simply become so competent at what you do that others ask you to consult with them?

“What are your salary requirements?” Avoid giving a specific figure. Research salary surveys such as salaryexpert.com or the NACE Salary Survey in the Career Library to learn what the entry-level salary ranges are in the field or industry you are entering. Then, state the salary range. See more on this topic in the “Salary Requirements” section that follows.

STANDARD INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions about Yourself

- What do you consider to be one of your strengths?
- What have been your greatest accomplishments during the past two years?
- What three things are most important to you in a job?
- How do your qualifications relate to our position? What do you have to offer?
- How would a coworker, friend, or boss describe you?
- How would you describe your own work style?

Questions about Your Career Goals or Plans

- What type of position are you interested in?
- What are your career objectives, both short-term and long-range?
- How will employment with us fit into your career plans?
- How do you define success? What personal characteristics will contribute to your success?

Resume Builder

An online software that walks you through each step of writing a resume

To access Resume Builder:

1. Log on to HireMason at careers.gmu.edu/hiremason
2. Click on “Documents”
3. Click on “Resume Builder” tab



Questions about School and Education

- What classes did you like most in school? Least? Why?
- What are your plans for continuing your education?
- How does your education relate to this position?
- What activities did you participate in at school?

Questions about Previous Experience

- What were the biggest pressures on you in your last job? How did you handle them?
- How does your previous experience relate to this position?
- What did you like most and least about your last job?

Questions Specific to the Company or Job

- Why do you think you'd be a good match for this position?
- What kind of boss do you like to work for?
- What do you think would be your greatest contribution to our operation?

THE BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW

Employers are constantly seeking ways to assess behavioral qualities that they feel are important for a particular position. More than 80 percent of employers who recruit at Mason use a structured competency-based behavioral interviewing approach, which assumes that past performance is the best predictor of future success. Behavioral questions require job candidates to give specific examples of how they handled specific real-life situations. This approach elicits the candidate's competencies, skills, abilities, and knowledge more reliably than standard interview questions. While behavioral interviewing questions may initially seem more intimidating, they are often easier to answer because you can draw on actual experiences, rather than responding to hypothetical scenarios or giving vague or generalized responses.

In the rare case that you cannot recall a real example related to the question, you can tell the interviewer, "I've never actually been in that situation; however, I think I would..." Then, give your best appraisal of how you would respond in that circumstance.

The following questions are typical of behavioral questions. When thinking about how you would answer them, remember to use the STAR Formula and write down your answers.

Situational/Behavioral Questions that Target Specific Job Skill Requirements

- Describe a time when you were faced with stresses in school or at work that tested your coping skills. What did you do?
- Tell me about an experience in which you had to speak up and tell other people what you thought or felt.
- Give an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to gain information needed to solve a problem; tell me how you analyzed the information and came to a decision.
- Give an example of an important goal you set and describe your progress in reaching that goal.

- Describe the most creative project you have completed.
- Discuss a recent situation in which you had to deal with an angry and upset customer, coworker, or classmate.
- Describe a project that was difficult for you to lead. What did you do to keep the project on track?
- Give an example of how you contributed toward a teamwork environment in school or on the job.
- Describe the most difficult supervisor or professor you have had, and tell me how you dealt with that person.

HANDLING INTERVIEW CHALLENGES

Inappropriate and Biased Questions

Questions related to the following subjects should be indicators that there may be something wrong in the interview:

- Age
- Gender or marital status, pregnancy, use of birth control, or children and childcare
- Birthplace or national origin
- Religion or religious days observed
- Race or ethnic group and membership in related organizations
- Disabilities or health conditions unrelated to job performance
- General information about arrests
- Sexual orientation

The answers to these questions on these subjects might be used to discriminate unfairly against you. Occasionally, you might be asked a blatantly discriminatory question by a clearly biased interviewer. In this case, you have to make a decision. One option would be to contact the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which will not take action unless a negative job action has occurred. If you have questions about the interviewer, the interview process, or the questions asked, you may take the following steps:

- Contact the organization's human resources office and discuss your concerns.
- Contact Career Services to gather further information and advice.
- Continue the interview and strategically answer the interviewer's questions.

Most often, bias-based questions are asked inadvertently to address a concern on the part of an insufficiently trained interviewer. The two approaches for handling the situation are as follows:

- Think about the underlying concern of the employer, reframe it to reflect that concern, and respond. For example, "Where were you born?" Your response might be, "If you are wondering about my status, I am authorized to work in the United States." Your response to a question about whether you have young children might be, "If you are concerned about my ability to travel, let me assure you that I am prepared to make all the necessary arrangements and will be able to travel as required in this job."
- A second nonconfrontational approach would be to answer the question directly, speaking to the underlying concern you think the employer might have. For example, "How do you plan to care

for your children?” Your response might be, “I have wonderful, stable child care arrangements that permit me to make a full commitment to my work.”

You also can ignore the illegal question and attempt to move smoothly to another topic or you can tactfully remind the interviewer that questions need to address information or qualifications required to perform the job. Although these approaches are reasonable, you do run the risk of offending the interviewer.

Handling Inappropriate Questions: More Resources

See more on handling these questions by going to careers.gmu.edu and clicking on “Interviewing” in the “Quick Links” menu.

HIGHLY TECHNICAL QUESTIONS

Interviewers often ask the interviewee to define technical terms, write code on the spot, or evaluate or read a technical design schematic. Be prepared for this type of question. If you don’t know the answer, it’s better to say so than to attempt to circumvent the question.

DISABILITY ISSUES AND POTENTIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

A job seeker who has a disability is, first, a fully qualified candidate for a position and, second, a person with a disability. As a job seeker, you may or may not choose to disclose a disability to potential employers. If technological or other types of accommodations will equalize or maximize your effectiveness on the job, they can be discussed during the information exchange or closure stages of the interview, before a job offer is extended. The decision to disclose a disability is personal and may vary depending on the situation and the job requirements.

If you do disclose a disability, it is important that you feel comfortable and confident in your approach. All job seekers are advised to approach a discussion of their qualifications in a positive manner. You can highlight your relevant skills and give evidence of your qualifications for the position in the form of examples from past academic, employment, or volunteer experiences. A proactive approach will be most effective and emphasize one’s adaptability, flexibility, and talents.

After fully highlighting your skills and determining you are qualified for the job, begin discussing your needs for an accommodation. An example of a request for accommodation might be handled in this way: I am hearing-impaired. I read lips, so I can effectively communicate face to face with coworkers and clients. To allow me to communicate with customers and coworkers outside the office, I will need two pieces of essential equipment: a portable telephone amplifier and a tactile pager, a vibrating beeper. As you may be aware, the federal government allows a tax deduction for the purchase of this type of device. Does this present a problem?

For additional resources, go to careers.gmu.edu/links and click on “Additional Resources for Students with Disabilities.”

Resources on interviewing are available in the Career Library, SUB I, Room 348, and at careers.gmu.edu.

CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

If you determine that the position would be a good fit for you, be sure to express interest in the position and briefly summarize why you are well qualified for it. Then ask what the next step will be or when you can expect to hear from the interviewer. This inquiry demonstrates your confidence and interest and gives you important information.

Salary Requirements

Salary requirements are best discussed when an employer makes you a job offer. You are in the best position to bargain after the employer has determined that you’re the best person for the job. Be sure to give the employer a salary range, not a specific figure. Sometimes employers insist on asking about your salary requirements or expectations early in the interview. If this happens, consider the following strategies:

- Emphasize your abilities, the match between you and the organization’s needs, and your expectations that the salary will be competitive. Try postponing discussion of salary until the interviewer is prepared to make you an offer (e.g., “I’d like to hold off discussion of salary until I have a fuller understanding of the nature and scope of the responsibilities of this position.”).
- If you must give a figure, give a range that you are comfortable with, based on your research.
- Try to get the employer to mention a salary figure first by turning the question back to him or her. Remind the employer of the skills you’ll bring to the position and note that salary is negotiable. Ask what he or she had in mind in terms of salary.

See the Career Library or www.salaryexpert.com.

Salary Resources

- See salary information at careers.gmu.edu/links. Click on “Prepare to Job Hunt” and scroll down to salary sites.

Evaluating Job Offers

- Take time to evaluate all the factors involved in a job offer.
- Employers generally give candidates between one and two weeks to decide. This time span may vary depending on your needs and those of the employer, but allow at least 24 hours for evaluation before accepting any position.
- Ask for a copy of the job offer in writing.
- If you are asked to decide sooner than you wish, ask for an extension, which may or may not be granted. It is perfectly reasonable to say that you have other interviews scheduled that you want to attend before making your final decision if that is the case.
- Follow up with other organizations that are considering you for employment in which you still have interest. Explain that you have received another offer, and because of your interest in their organization or position, you are following up to learn the status of your candidacy.
- If unsure about whether to accept a position, use your career counselor as a sounding board.

