Resume & Cover Letter Guide

Resume Basics

A resume aims to secure an interview by highlighting your relevant skills, abilities, and accomplishments for a specific job or internship. Recruiters spend only **7–10 seconds** reviewing a resume, so it's crucial to have a clean format, clear transferable skills, and strong accomplishment statements to make your resume stand out.

Analyzing the Job Description

Before writing your resume, identify the key skills, experiences, and keywords in the job description. Matching your experience to the job and incorporating industry keywords will greatly improve your chances of capturing the employer's attention or passing an applicant tracking system. If you lack a detailed job description, search for the job title on **O*NET**.

SAMPLE RESUME

EXPERIENCE

Lead Peer Advisor, SJSU, San Jose, CA
September 20XX–Present

- Oversee 7 peer advisors and address employee relation issues such as distribution of workload
- Assess and direct 30+ students per shift to appropriate resources and staff based on need
- Organize and manage print and electronic files to increase operational efficiency
- Prepare and maintain records of 200+ student logs and survey information

PROJECTS

Older Adult Intervention, SJSU, Fall 20XX

- Observed and assessed the home environment of an elderly adult
- Developed therapy intervention plan to enhance living satisfaction by increasing access to outside activities and community events
- Presented life story of older adult to a class of 30+ students and received an A on the project

SAMPLE HR JOB DESCRIPTION

Tasks

- Interpret and explain human resources policies, procedures, laws, standards, or regulations.
- Prepare or maintain employment records related to events such as hiring, termination, leaves, transfers, or promotions, using human resources management system software.
- Address employee relations issues, such as harassment allegations, work complaints, or other employee concerns.

Skills

- Speaking—Talking to others to convey information effectively
- Critical Thinking—Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems
- Writing—Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience
- Technology—Using computers to program, write software, set up functions, enter data, or process information

Resume Format Example

Ima Spartan

San Jose, CA 95126 | imaspartan@gmail.com | (408) 555-5555 | linkedin.com/in/imaspartan

OBJECTIVE

Seeking a Grants Associate position with the San Jose Foundation for Education Advancement

EDUCATION

B.A., English; Minor in Social Science   May 20XX

San Jose State University, San Jose, CA, GPA: 3.7

Relevant Coursework: Public Finance, Social Change, Society and Education

CERTIFICATIONS

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Therapist   June 20XX

Grant Writing for Education, LinkedIn Learning   April 20XX

PROJECT EXPERIENCE

School Development Project, SJSU   August 20XX – Present

- Research and identify prospective donors to help support K-12 after-school programs for various communities in San Jose
- Monitor grants and contracts tracking databases system to target new opportunities
- Develop communications materials for donors, sponsors, media and the public

EXPERIENCE

Grants Associate, Mental Health Association of San Jose, San Jose, CA   August 20XX – August 20XX

- Maintained donor database using Razer's Edge Software to process all financial donations made by individuals, grants, and corporations
- Consulted with current and potential donors about any changes in funding priorities to ensure proposals and grants met guidelines

Volunteer Activities Coordinator, Rock Lake Elementary, Fremont, CA   January 20XX - August 20XX

- Designed and implemented a tutoring program for 15 elementary school students
- Applied creative and innovative learning techniques including cross-cultural activities, games, journal writing, and discussion groups to increase student retention and learning

SKILLS

Languages: Bilingual in English and Vietnamese

Computer: Proficient in Microsoft (Word, Excel, PowerPoint), Google Apps (Sheets, Slides, Docs, Meet), Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok), Zoom, Slack, SchoolLoop (LMS), Canva, Qualtrics

ACTIVITIES

Member, Poets and Writers Coalition, SJSU   August 20XX – Present

Writing Accomplishment Statements

Writing strong accomplishment statements is crucial to demonstrating your qualifications to employers. Use the S.T.A.R. method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to create detailed but concise statements. Aim to keep your accomplishment statement **1–2 lines max**.

Situation/Task: *What did you do?*
Start your statement with a strong action verb and describe the situation/task you were given.

Action: *How did you do it?*
Describe the skills you used to accomplish the task.

Result: *What was the result?*
Quantify outcomes with numbers or percentages whenever possible.

Situation/Task Example:
Marketed event to 300 club members

Action Example:
Utilized multiple social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram

Result Example: Increased event registration by 20%

FINAL STATEMENT

Leveraged Facebook and Instagram to market events, boosting registration by 20% among 300 members.

Examples:

BEFORE	AFTER
Responsible for customer service	Resolved customer disputes in a calm manner, ensuring complete problem resolution, leading to promotion as the primary customer service agent and new employee trainer
Prepared financial reports	Designed, developed and distributed customized monthly budget results; provided timely and accurate data for management analysis
Led a team of student volunteers	Recruited and managed a team of 10 volunteers to carry out a campus-wide orientation which led to the highest satisfaction rating by participants
Responsible for writing business plans	Effectively wrote a concise and strategic district business plan which reduced expenses by 10%

Accomplishment Statements Examples

Below are examples of how other students have demonstrated skills through class projects, internships, volunteer work, and part-time jobs. Review these examples to help identify and describe your own experiences using these skills.

☐ WRITING
translate, write, compose, edit, craft, revise, draft

- Identified prospective donors and wrote grant proposals to help support K–12 after-school enrichment programs
- Wrote engaging content for an Instagram marketing campaign which successfully increased company page views by 22%

☐ COMMUNICATION
convey, engage, publicize, connect, mediate, present, promote, teach, train

- Trained new virtual employees via Zoom, effectively teaching company's procedures and processes
- Served as a liaison to the campus community as president of the Creative Arts Club and presented to various campus groups to increase awareness on campus

☐ TEAMWORK
collaborate, partnership, contribute, support

- Collaborated with team of five for class project to research and design curriculum for after-school program to meet needs of multicultural student populations
- In partnership with 15 classmates and faculty, successfully organized and planned "Green Careers Week," a career information event for students

☐ INTERPERSONAL
cultivate, develop, interpret, understanding, relate

- Counseled and advised diverse populations while working as a peer advocate in the Health Center at SJSU
- Tutored and mentored high school students at Youth Works, an afterschool enrichment program for under-represented youth

☐ LEADERSHIP
initiate, establish, launch, implement, influence

- Initiated and developed the concept for SJSU's "Evening Art Walk," a virtual conference where creative arts students can showcase their final senior projects
- Spear-headed planning for the Global Studies' commencement ceremony as part of the student leadership team

☐ COMPUTER SKILLS
program, design, compute, build, develop

- Created and maintained donor database using *Raiser's Edge* software including processing all financial donations (individual grants and corporate pledges)
- Designed an organization website using *Wix* and successfully published online reports and articles

☐ ATTENTION TO DETAIL
organize, edit, focus, attentiveness, concentrate, review

- Developed agenda, scheduled speakers, and organized discussion groups as coordinator for a 4-day international student conference
- Edited copy for student newspaper and ensured that grammar, layout, and content were accurate

☐ PROBLEM SOLVING
clarify, strengthen, solidify, improve, increase, resolve

- Improved access to health care services for qualifying community members by coordinating monthly tea meeting with lawyers, physicians, and social workers to efficiently process approvals

☐ ORGANIZATION
prepare, goal setting, coordinate, direct, manage, arrange, meet deadlines, deliver

- Organized and brought together local artists from all over the San Francisco Bay Area for fundraising and promotion a events
- Provided organizational support to staff including managing schedules, supply purchasing, filing, preparing development materials, and coordination of meetings

Continues on next page

Accomplishment Statements Examples (continued)

☐ GLOBAL AWARENESS
global consciousness, cultural competency and awareness, forging common ground, inclusion

- Developed international counseling experience while participating in a summer internship at the University of Zambia
- Founded an International Student Mentoring Program where domestic and international students are paired for a semester in order to foster awareness, inclusion, and understanding of each other

☐ ANALYTICAL
investigate, observe, discern, consider, evaluate, assess

- Assisted in the evaluation and assessment of potential candidates for all administrative support openings as human resources intern
- Reviewed account ledgers and balances to ensure accurate billing and financial analysis

☐ FLEXIBILITY
adapt, acclimate, adjust, modify, pivot

- Demonstrated adaptability while providing excellent customer service as shift leader in a busy retail environment while managing a team of four
- Effectively transitioned from in-person office student assistant role to online email and live chat within one week

☐ DIVERSITY & EQUITY
advocate, support, promote, mediate, educate

- Organized and led a campus diversity and equity workshop, enhancing peer awareness and promoting an inclusive environment, which led to a 25% increase in student participation in diversity-related events
- Effectively collaborated with peers and faculty from various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds to develop a presentation on how cross-cultural values affect communication in business environments

☐ CRITICAL THINKING
critique, evaluate, review, measure, examine, problem solving

- Evaluated customer complaints and negative reviews for class project at assigned company site and identified three key service issues as well as potential resolutions to improve customer satisfaction
- Conducted journal review to examine best practices in addressing poor academic performance in K–12 settings
- Created and presented intervention plan focused on strength-based learning methods to improve academic performance at a local elementary school

☐ CREATIVITY
conceptualize, design, create, invent, generate, draft, formulate, devise

- Conceptualized and developed an on-going project for ESL students resulting in a publication of the students' autobiographical works for ESL teachers to use as a learning tool
- Created visual concept for *Poets and Writers Coalition*'s magazine launch; designed innovative advertising materials for annual School of Social Work Fair which contributed to a 25% increase in attendance from the previous year

DESIGN AND PLANNING
☐ *forecast, develop, prepare, calculate, project, anticipate, propose, outline, create*

- Developed four-year plan for incoming freshmen to support student success as part of a student leadership project
- Prepared annual budget based on analysis of previous year's costs and revenues as the student assistant for operations manager on campus

Using Action Verbs

Use action words to get your point across clearly, efficiently, and with impact. Here are a few suggestions, listed by functional areas, to help you get started.

ANALYTICAL/FINANCE
- Allocate
- Appraise
- Audit
- Balance
- Bill
- Budget
- Calculate
- Check
- Compare
- Determine
- Distinguish
- Estimate
- Factor
- Forecast
- Isolate
- Observe
- Project
- Reason
- Reconcile
- Sort
- Tabulate

CLERICAL/ADMINISTRATIVE
- Archive
- Arrange
- Classify
- Collate
- Collect
- Compile
- Document
- Generate
- Implement
- Inspect
- Inventory
- Log
- Maintain
- Maintain records
- Monitor
- Operate
- Order
- Organize
- Prepare
- Process
- Purchase
- Record
- Reorganize
- Retrieve
- Schedule
- Screen
- Specify

TEAMWORK
- Collaborate with
- Contribute
- Participate in
- Discuss

COMMUNICATION
- Address
- Advertise
- Arbitrate
- Arrange
- Author
- Collaborate
- Communicate
- Contact
- Correspond
- Detail
- Direct
- Draft
- Edit
- Enlist
- Formulate
- Influence
- Interpret
- Invite
- Market
- Mediate
- Meet with
- Moderate
- Negotiate
- Persuade
- Present
- Promote
- Publicize
- Publish
- Reconcile
- Recruit
- Represent
- Respond
- Sell
- Solicit
- Speak
- Transcribe
- Translate
- Write

TEACHING/TRAINING
- Advise
- Assess
- Assist
- Clarify
- Coach
- Conduct
- Coordinate
- Counsel
- Critique
- Educate
- Enable
- Encourage
- Evaluate
- Explain
- Facilitate
- Teach
- Train

CREATIVE
- Act
- Adapt
- Compose
- Conceive
- Conceptualize
- Create
- Customize
- Design
- Develop
- Discover
- Enhance
- Establish
- Fashion
- Founded
- Illustrate
- Initiate
- Innovate
- Institute
- Integrate
- Introduce
- Invent
- Make
- Modify
- Originate
- Perform
- Plan
- Propose
- Redesign
- Remodel
- Restructure
- Revitalize
- Shape
- Simplify
- Suggest
- Transform

LEADERSHIP/MGMT.
- Administer
- Analyze
- Approve
- Assign
- Authorize
- Chair
- Consolidate
- Contract
- Control
- Coordinate
- Cultivate
- Decide
- Delegate
- Designate
- Develop
- Direct
- Disprove
- Encourage
- Evaluate
- Execute
- Handle
- Head
- Hire
- Instigate
- Judge
- Launch
- Lead
- Lobby
- Manage
- Motivate
- Orchestrate
- Organize
- Oversee
- Plan
- Prioritize
- Provide
- Recommend
- Recruit
- Regulate
- Review
- Serve as
- Serve on
- Set up
- Supervise
- Validate

TECHNICAL SKILLS
- Analyze
- Assemble
- Automate
- Build
- Calculate
- Code
- Compute
- Configure
- Construct
- Convert
- Create
- Debug
- Design
- Develop
- Devise
- Diagnose
- Draft
- Engineer
- Evaluate
- Fabricate
- Inspect
- Install
- Maintain

- Make
- Manufacture
- Operate
- Overhaul
- Process
- Produce
- Program
- Remodel
- Repair
- Solve
- Survey
- Test
- Upgrade
- Validate
- Verify

RESEARCH
- Accumulate
- Acquire
- Clarify
- Collect
- Compile
- Critique
- Diagnose
- Document
- Examine
- Extract
- Extrapolate
- Find
- Gather
- Identify
- Interview
- Investigate
- Organize
- Read
- Report
- Research
- Review
- Study
- Summarize
- Survey
- Synthesize
- Systematize
- Verify

RESULTS
- Increase
- Meet deadlines
- Obtain
- Produce
- Recognized as
- Reduce
- Resolve
- Restore
- Solidify
- Streamline
- Strengthen
- Transform
- Win

Identifying Transferable Skills

As a college student, you'll develop many skills from coursework, projects, internships, work experiences, club involvement, and activities. We call these skills *transferable skills* as they can apply to various occupations. Learn to identify these skills, highlight them on your resume, and articulate them in an interview.

INSTRUCTING/GUIDING
- Advising
- Coaching
- Communicating effectively
- Encouraging
- Group facilitating
- Teaching
- Training/developing

LEADERSHIP
- Confronting
- Coordinating
- Initiating
- Making Decisions
- Mediating
- Motivating
- Negotiating
- Planning/Effecting Change
- Policy Making
- Promoting Change
- Recruiting
- Risk taking
- Self-directing

ORGANIZING/MGMNT.
- Achieving/producing
- Committee working
- Delegating
- Evaluating
- Goal setting
- Maintaining
- Managing
- Organizing things/people
- Planning
- Prioritizing
- Program development
- Scheduling
- Supervising
- Team building
- Time management

COMMUNICATIONS
- Communicating effectively
- Debating
- Editing
- Explaining
- Interpreting
- Interviewing
- Publishing
- Reporting
- Translating
- Writing

MACHINE MANUAL
- Adjusting
- Assembling
- Building
- Constructing
- Controlling/operating
- Filing
- Maintaining
- Operating tools/equipment
- Preparing
- Producing
- Repairing
- Showing dexterity
- Typing

ATHLETIC/OUTDOORS
- Agility
- Climbing/lifting
- Landscaping
- Navigating
- Physical coordination
- Traveling
- Working with animals

NUMERICAL/FINANCIAL
- Accounting
- Auditing
- Bookkeeping
- Budget
- Planning/implementation
- Computing Skills
- Managing Finances
- Statistical Problem Solving
- Taking Inventory

INFLUENCE/ PERSUADING
- Advertising
- Developing rapport
- Fund raising
- Influencing
- Mediating
- Motivating
- Negotiating
- Persuading/debating
- Promoting
- Selling

HELPING / HUMAN RELATIONS
- Caring, showing compassion
- Counseling
- Consulting
- Developing rapport
- Helping and serving
- Listening
- Public relations
- Referring
- Sharing credit
- Showing sensitivity
- Showing tolerance
- Team worker
- Understanding

CREATIVITY/INNOVATING
- Adapting
- Balancing factors
- Conceptualizing
- Creating developing ideas
- Experimenting
- Improving
- Innovating
- Inventing
- Judging
- Making decisions
- Relating abstract ideas

ARTISTIC
- Creative imagining
- Creative writing
- Design: visual/spatial
- Displaying
- Expressiveness
- Musical composing
- Playfulness
- Playing musical instruments
- Restoring/decorating
- Visualizing concepts
- Visualizing shapes

OBSERVATION/ INVESTIGATIVE
- Analyzing/comparing
- Appraising
- Clarifying problems
- Compiling
- Diagnosing
- Evaluating
- Information gathering
- Inspecting/examining
- Perceptive
- Problem solving
- Questioning
- Recording
- Researching
- Reviewing/evaluating
- Surveying
- Systematizing
- Testing
- Troubleshooting

PERFORMANCE
- Artistic presentations
- Demonstrating
- Public speaking
- Singing/dancing/acting

Online Resume Review

vmock

VMock is an online resume tool designed to provide you with instant and personalized feedback to help you improve your resume.

01. LOG IN with your SJSUOne ID and password

Currently registered students have access to VMock. To log in, go to vmock.com/sjsu.

02. UPLOAD or CREATE your resume

UPLOAD	CREATE
• Upload your resume only as a PDF file.	• Essential sections will be autopopulated into the resume builder.
• Format resume into one column.	• Fill in applicable content for those sections.
• Use a standard font (e.g., Arial, Calibri, Verdana).	• Reorganize sections, if needed, by hovering over the right-hand side and selecting "*Move Up*" or "*Move Down*."
• Do NOT add images, tables, or graphics.	
• Click on the blue *View Detailed Feedback* button to review the system feedback.	• Essential sections cannot be deleted, but if no content is entered, it will not appear in the downloaded version.
	• Add a new section/subsection based on experience and industry, from list of options, or type in the search bar.

03. UNDERSTANDING VMock scoring

- VMock resume score is computed based on three main modules and evaluated against top SJSU resumes.

- Scoring on VMock is strict. Don't stress about youur score; focus on your color zone and aim to move closer to the Green Zone.

Red Zone: Needs improvement. Pay attention to the feedback and specific examples.

Yellow Zone: You're on the right track. Follow the feedback to make improvements (score of 70 is good).

Green Zone: Great job! There might still be room for improvement. Make sure to review the feedback.

04. UPDATE your resume

- If you uploaded a resume and have reviewed VMock's detailed feedback, click the *SMART Edit* pencil to make revisions based on the feedback and suggestions; click *Rescore*.

- If you created a resume and have added all your content, click *Get Score*.

- Each time you Rescore, it will count towards your **10** resume uploads per year.

- Continue to make updates to your resume as needed. Aim towards reaching the Green Zone.

Keep in mind...

- Use VMock as a starting point to get feedback on a traditionally formatted resume.

- Your are allowed **10** resume uploads per year.

- When questioning VMock's feedback, use your best judgment. For more information on resume format and content, or if you are unsure of what sections to add, click *See Template > Download template and guidelines*.

- For additional help, attend Career Center drop-in hours or schedule an appointment with a career counselor on Spartan Connect.

Applicant Tracking Systems

What is an applicant tracking system (ATS)?

ATS is a software used to process applications and streamline the hiring process. The ATS does the initial selection of candidates by efficiently scanning resumes to find a match between the candidate's experience, qualifications, and skills, and the description of the job posting. You may be able to tell if a company uses an ATS description by seeing if their application link has a subdomain of an ATS company (e.g., companyname. taleo.com).

Tips to Maximize ATS Compatibility

1. **Software & File Format**

   • Use MS Word or Google Docs. If a PDF is required, save it directly from your original MS Word or Google Docs file. Avoid converting between formats.

   • Avoid using graphic design software like Canva or Adobe Creative, as ATS cannot read PDFs exported from these platforms.

2. **Standard Formatting**

   • Create your resume on a blank page in MS Word or Google Docs.

   • Avoid templates, headers, footers, text boxes, tables, images, columns, and graphics.

   • Ensure your document size is standard US 8.5x11.

   • Use sans serif fonts (e.g., Arial, Calibri, Tahoma).

   • Include clear section headings (e.g., Education, Experience, Project Experience, Skills).

   • Right-align all dates.

   • Include the word "Experience" in relevant section headings (e.g., Leadership Experience, Project Experience, Volunteer Experience, etc.).

3. **Keywords**

   • Mirror action verbs, keywords, and skills directly from the job description.

   • Incorporate keywords and skills within your bullet points, focusing on how you used those skills. In addition, list your skills that match the job description in the "Skills" section.

   • Place keywords at the beginning of your bullet points for maximum impact, as ATS prioritizes the first few words.

4. **Additional Considerations**

   • A one-page resume is ideal, but two pages are acceptable by ATS.

   • Don't use AI-generated content without rephrasing it into your own words. There are software features that enable an ATS to identify content generated by ChatGPT and other AI tools.

CV Basics & Format Example

A curriculum vitae, or CV, is a detailed record of your education and employment history. If you are applying to academic positions, research grants, graduate school, and positions abroad, you may be asked to include a CV. Unlike a resume, a CV is lengthier, often 5–10 pages, and is not customized to a specific position. See an example below.

Ima Spartan

San Jose, CA 95192 | (408) 555-5555 | imaspartan@gmail.com | linkedin.com/in/imaspartan

EDUCATION

B.A. Political Science, Global Politics Concentration, Minor in Economics   Spring 20XX
San Jose State University, San Jose CA, 3.85 GPA

Study Abroad, Barcelona, Spain   Summer 20XX

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Senior Project: Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, SJSU   Spring 20XX
- Conducted a comparative case study analysis of the public policy implementation in Malawi, Kenya, and Ghana as a response to the 2015 Millennium Development Goals
- Compiled and synthesized research into a 25-page research paper and presented research in a campus-wide poster presentation to over 40 faculty members and political science students

Nuclear Disarmament in the Post-Cold War Era, SJSU   Fall 20XX
- Researched the history and progress of nuclear disarmament and compiled over 30 primary sources into a 15-page research paper
- Created a PowerPoint presentation and presented research findings to a class of 30 students

Research Assistant, Professor X, SJSU   Fall 20XX–Spring 20XX
- Developed a 20-page Literature Review Guide for Professor X's Senior Project students
- Assisted in Literature Review research for Dr. X's publications on World Food Politics

Research Assistant, Professor Y, SJSU   Fall 20XX–Spring 20XX
- Conducted database research on comparative factors that influence democracy amongst nations

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant (Intro to International Relations), SJSU   Spring 20XX
- Assisted professor in leading discussions and in classroom management, creating an inclusive and productive learning environment for students
- Graded over 50 midterms and final exams and provided constructive feedback to students to help them learn and improve in the course
- Held office hours for 2 hours weekly to answer student questions and provide guidance on assignments and developing research topics

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Intern California Senate Caucus, Communications Department   Summer 20XX
- Wrote press briefings and articles for the Caucus website on recent events and policy achievements
- Conducted research for California State Senators to inform their policy decisions
- Monitored social media accounts and made weekly posts to increase user base
- Collaborated with campaign team to do precinct walks and make phone calls to potential voters

Model United Nations, UC Berkeley   September 20XX–May 20XX

- Served as the Kuwaiti delegate for the OPEC Oil Crisis Historical Committee at the 2015 UC Berkeley Model United Nations Conference
- Sponsored the passing resolution on cholera containment as the Venezuelan representative in the World Health Organization at the 2014 UC Berkeley Model United Nations Conference

Resident Advisor, San Jose State University Housing   June 20XX–May 20XX

- Developed a community of over 70 residents, serving as a role model and student leader in charge of student education, safety and well-being, resource referral, and social justice engagement
- Planned and facilitated weekly programming activities to increase student engagement and enhance the student experience

WORK EXPERIENCE

Waitress, Cheesecake Factory, San Jose, CA   January 20XX–June 20XX

Barista, Starbucks Coffee, San Jose CA   August 20XX–May 20XX

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

House Building in Tijuana, Mexico   Summer 20XX

- Travelled with a group of 40 church members to assemble over 5 houses for low-income families

Food Pantry, SJSU, San Jose, CA   November 20XX–May 20XX

- Volunteered bi-monthly to organize food donations and serve meals to the homeless

AFFILIATIONS
Member, American Political Science Association   August 20XX–May 20XX
Member, Pi Sigma Alpha, San Jose State University   January 20XX–May 20XX
Member, AIESEC, San Jose State University   February 20XX–May 20XX

CONFERENCES
Social Justice Conference, San Jose State University   Spring 20XX
Women in Leadership Conference, San Jose, CA   Fall 20XX

TRAININGS
Introduction to Stata, San Jose State University   Fall 20XX
Social Inclusion and Diversity Training, San Jose State University   Fall 20XX
Sexual Assault Advocate Training, San Jose State University   Fall 20XX

HONORS and AWARDS
Outstanding Senior Award for San Jose State Political Science Department   Spring 20XX
Resident Assistant (RA) of the Year   Spring 20XX
ABC Academic Scholarship   August 20XX–May 20XX

SKILLS
Computer: Stata, SPSS, Microsoft Office, Google Suite, Wix, Adobe Illustrator
Language: Fluent in English, Conversational Spanish

RESEARCH INTERESTS
International Security/ Terrorism
International Development
Regions: Middle East/North Africa and Eastern Europe

Cover Letter Basics

A cover letter is a formal letter or email accompanying a resume or CV, allowing job applicants to introduce themselves, highlight their qualifications, and express their interest in a specific job position. Its purpose is to complement the resume by showcasing the applicant's personality, enthusiasm, and suitability for the role, often tailored to address the company's needs and requirements.

A cover letter provides the opportunity to introduce yourself.

- Who you are
- Why you want the job/internship
- Why you are uniquely qualified for a position or company

A cover letter may also be called a *letter of intent, statement of intent, application letter, or letter of interest.*

Cover letters include information about why you are qualified for a specific job listed.
Letters of intent explain your interest in applying to a company that does not have a specific job listed.

When done well, a cover letter can be a great way to demonstrate your writing skills and personality in a way that separates you from other candidates.

Format

The cover letter can be twritten as a formal document (MS Word, PDF, etc.) or as the content of an email sent to a hiring manager. See tips on determining which is best in the "Cover Letter vs. Email" article in *The Muse*. Regardless of how it's sent, the content remains the same.

Cover letters are typically 1/2 to 3/4 of a standard US 8.5x11 page long and typically entail 3–4 paragraphs. Below are some tips and examples to get you started.

Address Your Document

Make sure you have an appropriate greeting to your cover letter such as the examples below. See additional greeting tips in this "Should You Use 'Dear Hiring Manager" article by *Indeed*. (E.g., "Dear Hiring Manager" or "Dear Recruiter")

Introduction and Thesis (1st Paragraph)

Introduce yourself and express your interest in the position and the organization. If you were referred to the position by a current employee, include that in your introduction.

For example:

> *Dear [Hiring Manager's Name],*
> *I am writing to express my interest in the [Position Title] at [Organization Name]. With a strong background in [relevant field or experience], I am eager to contribute my skills and passion to your team. I first learned about this opportunity through [Employee's Name], who spoke highly of the organization's commitment to [specific aspect of the organization or its mission]. This endorsement, combined with my research into [Organization Name]'s innovative projects in [relevant industry], has fueled my excitement to join your team and contribute to your continued success.*

Strong Examples of Qualifications (2nd/3rd Paragraphs)

Highlight one or two key experiences that showcase the skills you identified as your strengths.

For example:

In my current job, I proactively jumped in to help launch an internal recycling and waste reduction initiative. I used my project management and marketing skills to generate company-wide interest and assemble a team of 10 volunteers from various departments to form our first recycling and sustainability team. As a result, two waste reduction programs were launched which led to a 25% reduction in solid waste production within the company.

In my role as a sales associate, I am frequently required to provide exceptional customer service on short notice. Exceeding customers' expectations is a point of personal and professional pride for me, and this is a skill I'm eager to continue developing.

Request for Action (Final Paragraph)

Close by summarizing your skills and experience in relation to the job description. Show your interest by making a specific request for an interview. Finally, thank the reader for taking the time to consider your application.

For example:

I'm excited about the human resources internship at Company ABC and would love to opportunity to meet in person and further discuss the value I can offer as an intern.

For additional examples, see "How to Write a Cover Letter" by *Indeed*.

Cover Letter in Email Body

When sending your cover letter or introductory email directly to a recruiter, you should keep in mind the following tips:

- Follow directions. If the company asks for a cover letter, provide one. If a cover letter is not requested, you may send one, but it may not be read.

- Use an informative subject line. If emailing, make sure your message is easy to find by including Your Name, Cover Letter, and Job Title. For example, Sammy Spartan Cover Letter Marketing Assistant.

- Have a short introduction. If you attach your cover letter as a separate document to an email, include a short introduction in the email to let the hiring manager know your cover letter is attached.

- Keep it concise. The longer a cover letter is, the less likely it is to be read thoroughly.

Ima Spartan
San Jose, CA 95192
imaspartan@gmail.com
(408) 555-5555

Date

Company Name
123 Spartan Way
San Jose, CA 95192

Dear [Hiring Manager's Name],

I am excited to apply for the Behavioral Therapist position at [Company/Organization Name]. With a degree in psychology from San Jose State University and a strong commitment to supporting youth with learning disabilities, I am confident in my ability to contribute effectively to your team.

Throughout my academic journey, I have developed a deep understanding of the challenges faced by individuals with learning disabilities. My personal experience of having a sibling with dyslexia has fueled my passion for helping others navigate similar obstacles. This passion led me to pursue an internship with [XXX organization] last summer, where I gained hands-on experience in both one-on-one and group sessions with children aged 7 to 12. This role allowed me to refine my active listening, communication, and empathy skills, all of which are crucial for a successful behavioral therapist.

Additionally, my senior seminar research paper focused on the effects of learning disabilities on school-aged children and their self-confidence. Presenting this paper at the Santa Clara County Office of Education Professional Development Day enhanced my abilities in research, analysis, writing, and public speaking.

I am particularly drawn to [Company/Organization Name] because of your mission to put youth first. I am eager to bring my dedication and skills to your team and make a positive impact on the lives of the children you serve.

Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss how my background, skills, and passion align with the goals of your organization.

Best,
Ima Spartan

Cover Letter Email Example

Dear Green Living Manager,

I was referred by my peer, Sammy Spartan in the Green Living Marketing Department, to get in touch with you regarding your current opening as a Communications Assistant. I am a graduating senior from San Jose State University (SJSU) with a degree in Environmental Studies and would love to bring my communications experience and my passion for green living to your team.

In my previous Communications Manager role for Kappa Delta at SJSU, I wrote monthly articles for the national website and posted weekly on our Instagram account to drive engagement with our 500 members. I received consistent praise from the fraternity counsel for my engaging content and clear, straightforward writing style. Additionally, I advocated to reduce the number of printed marketing materials we used and instead direct students to our Instagram, which significantly reduced costs and paper waste.

I would love to join your team as a Communications Assistant at Green Living and bring my ideas, work ethic, and writing experience to support your audience. Attached to this email you can find my resume and a copy of this cover letter. I would love the opportunity to further discuss my qualifications with you. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Ima Spartan
SJSU Grad, B.A. in Environmental Studies
(408) 555-5555
imaspartan@gmail.com

Gen AI for Resume and Cover Letter Improvement

Generative AI (Gen AI) is a type of artificial intelligence that uses algorithms to analyze data (text, images, audio, video) from the Internet to create new content based on given instructions (or "prompts"). It's a powerful and fast tool for comparing or analyzing large data sets to identify themes and patterns and generate new customized content. This makes it useful for improving or tailoring resumes and cover letters for specific jobs.

Gen AI Product Examples: ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot, Gemini, etc.

Disclaimer: SJSU does not endorse or sponsor any listed products. We recommend starting with a free version of a GenAI product. Select a product based on your specific needs such as content (text, code, image, audio), data accuracy, and timely data collection.
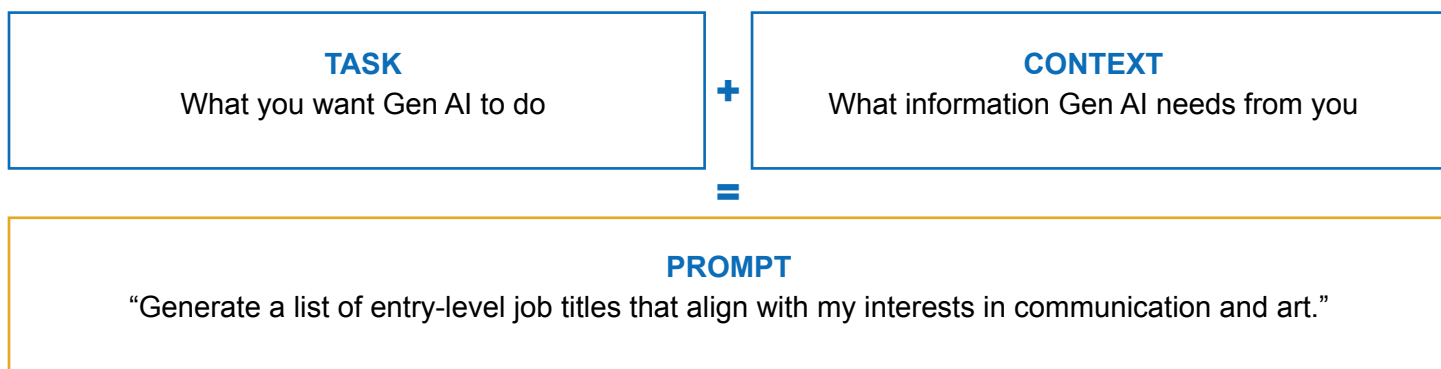
Ethical Considerations: While Gen AI is a powerful tool for generating ideas, it is important to be aware of its challenges, such as biases in data, potential inaccuracies, plagiarism risks, and data security concerns.

Recommendations for Ethical AI Use

- Avoid including private information in your prompts, such as name and contact information.
- Verify AI-generated content against trusted sources (e.g., research-based studies, professional journals, insights from professionals in the field) to ensure accuracy.
- Use AI to analyze and summarize large data sets, generate ideas, and simplify complex tasks. Personalize AI-generated content by paraphrasing it in your own words and style.

Get Started: Before using Gen AI products to improve your resume, do the following:

1. Have the most updated version of your resume. Use VMock for instant formatting and content feedback. Identify an internship or job description from Handshake to include in your prompts.
2. Develop your **prompt**. A prompt is an input or query a user or program gives an AI model to get a specific response. Focus your prompt on a specific task and include context. See the formula below.

TASK What you want Gen AI to do	**+**	**CONTEXT** What information Gen AI needs from you

=

> **PROMPT**
> "Generate a list of entry-level job titles that align with my interests in communication and art."

Additional Prompts

- **Identify the skills and requirements** listed in the job description but missing from my resume. Here's the job description: [INSERT JOB DESCRIPTION]. Here's my resume: [INSERT RESUME].
  See this prompt in action.
- **Revise my cover letter** to make it more concise, personalized, and impactful. Please limit it to three paragraphs. Here's my cover letter: [INSERT COVER LETTER]. Here's the job description: [INSERT JOB DESCRIPTION]. See this prompt in action.

Next Steps: Log into a Gen AI product of your choice and practice prompting. Make an appointment on Spartan Connect for further personalized assistance from a career counselor.

Reference List Basics

Employers may request references in the application or interview process to verify your employment history and learn about your strengths and weaknesses from previous supervisors or co-workers. **Do not provide a reference list until the employer requests one.** A reference list is a separate document and should not be combined with your resume. If you are asked to provide a reference list, use the following tips.

Contact Information
Make sure your contact information is at the top and includes your name, city, contact number, and email address. *Note: Use a professional email address on your resumes and cover letters, not a SJSU email address, because SJSU alumni only have access to their SJSU email address for one year after graduation.*

Ask Permission
Always ask permission from your references before you use their names. Prepare your references by obtaining their current contact information and sharing your resume and job description with them.

Ideal References
References should be individuals who know your work and can vouch for you in a professional matter.

Examples: Current and former supervisors, mentors, advisers.

References should not be your family, friends, or peers.

Do not choose people who are not familiar with your professional background or accomplishments.

Ima Spartan
San Jose, CA 95192
408-555-1234
imaspartan@gmail.com

REFERENCES

Alice Smith
Associate Director of Health Services
San Jose State University
1 Washington Square, San Jose, CA 95192
408-123-4567
alicesmith@sjsu.edu
Relationship: Supervisor

Bob Matthews, Ph.D.
Director
Santa Clara County Health Department
1234 Lenzen Avenue, San Jose, CA 95126
408-987-6543
bmatthews@phd.sccgov.org
Relationship: Former supervisor

Curtis Phillips, M.A.
Program Manager
UNICEF
987 Montgomery Street, San Francisco, CA 94104
415-678-9876
phillipsc@unicef.org
Relationship: Mentor

Resume Examples by Major

Please use this link to the Career Center website to access resume examples by major. If your major is not listed, review a resume example related to your major (e.g., communication studies, public relations, and journalism share similar formats).