

OFFICE OF CAREER SERVICES
Harvard University · Faculty of Arts and Sciences
careerservices.fas.harvard.edu

CAREER AND ACADEMIC RESOURCE CENTER
Harvard Extension School
www.extension.harvard.edu/resources/career-academic-resource-center

RESUMES and COVER LETTERS

An Extension School Resource



© 2022 President and Fellows of Harvard College

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced in any way without the express written permission of the Harvard University Faculty of Arts & Sciences Office of Career Services.

7/22

Office of Career Services

Harvard University, Faculty of Arts & Sciences

Cambridge, MA 02138

ocsrecep@fas.harvard.edu

careerservices.fas.harvard.edu

CREATE A STRONG RESUME

A resume is a brief, informative summary of your abilities, education, and experience. It should highlight your strongest assets and skills, and differentiate you from other candidates seeking similar positions. Although it alone will not get you a job or internship, a good resume is an important element toward obtaining an interview.

Tailor your resume to the type of position you are seeking. This does not mean that all of your experience must relate directly, but your resume should reflect the skills, experience, and impact the employer would value.

NEED HELP?

- **CARC/OCS Resume and Cover Letter Webinar.** Learn how to create effective job search documents. See the CARC or OCS websites for dates.
- **HES Virtual Drop-In Hours:** Offered one Monday a month from 1:00-3:45pm September - May. Available to currently registered Extension School students and alumni only. See <https://extension.harvard.edu/for-students/support-and-services/career-services> for details.
- **Career Advising Appointment.** Matriculated degree students and alumni only. Please set up a 30-minute appointment via Crimson Careers; offered year-round.

RESUME TIPS

RESUME LANGUAGE SHOULD BE:

- Specific rather than general
- Active rather than passive
- Written to express not impress
- Articulate rather than "flowery"
- Fact-based (quantify and qualify)
- Written for people who scan quickly

DON'T:

- Use personal pronouns (such as I)
- Abbreviate
- Use a narrative style
- Number or letter categories
- Use slang or colloquialisms
- Include a picture
- Include age or marital status
- List references
- Start each line with a date

TOP 5 RESUME MISTAKES:

1. Spelling and grammar errors
2. Missing email and phone information
3. Using passive language instead of "action" words
4. Not well organized, concise, or easy to skim
5. Not tailored to the position or industry

DO:

- Be consistent in format and content
- Make it easy to read and follow, balancing white space
- Use consistent spacing,

PLAN TO WORK INTERNATIONALLY?

Resume guidelines can vary from country to country.

ACTION VERBS FOR YOUR RESUME

LEADERSHIP

Accomplished	Achieved	Administered	Analyzed	Assigned	Attained	Chaired	Consolidated
Contracted	Coordinated	Delegated	Developed	Directed	Earned	Evaluated	Executed
Handled	Headed	Impacted	Improved	Increased	Led	Mastered	Orchestrated
Organized	Oversaw	Planned	Predicted	Prioritized	Produced	Proved	Recommended
Regulated	Reorganized	Reviewed	Scheduled	Spearheaded	Strengthened	Supervised	Surpassed

COMMUNICATION

Addressed	Arbitrated	Arranged	Authored	Collaborated	Convinced	Corresponded	Delivered
Developed	Directed	Documented	Drafted	Edited	Energized	Enlisted	Formulated
Influenced	Interpreted	Lectured	Liaised	Mediated	Moderated	Negotiated	Persuaded
Presented	Promoted	Publicized	Reconciled	Recruited	Reported	Rewrote	Spoke
Suggested	Synthesized	Translated	Verbalized	Wrote			

RESEARCH

Clarified	Collected	Concluded	Conducted	Constructed	Critiqued	Derived	Determined
Diagnosed	Discovered	Evaluated	Examined	Extracted	Formed	Identified	Inspected
Interpreted	Interviewed	Investigated	Modeled	Organized	Resolved	Reviewed	Summarized
Surveyed	Systematized	Tested					

TECHNICAL

Assembled	Built	Calculated	Computed	Designed	Devised	Engineered	Fabricated
Installed	Maintained	Operated	Optimized	Overhauled	Programmed	Remodeled	Repaired
Solved	Standardized	Streamlined	Upgraded				

TEACHING

Adapted	Advised	Clarified	Coached	Communicated	Coordinated	Demystified	Developed
Enabled	Encouraged	Evaluated	Explained	Facilitated	Guided	Informed	Instructed
Persuaded	Set Goals	Stimulated	Studied	Taught	Trained		

QUANTITATIVE

Administered	Allocated	Analyzed	Appraised	Audited	Balanced	Budgeted	Calculated
Computed	Developed	Forecasted	Managed	Marketed	Maximized	Minimized	Planned
Projected	Researched						

CREATIVE

Acted	Composed	Conceived	Conceptualized	Created	Customized	Designed	Developed
Directed	Established	Fashioned	Founded	Illustrated	Initiated	Instituted	Integrated
Introduced	Invented	Originated	Performed	Planned	Published	Redesigned	Revised
Revitalized	Shaped	Visualized					

HELPING

Assessed	Assisted	Clarified	Coached	Counseled	Demonstrated	Diagnosed	Educated
Enhanced	Expedited	Facilitated	Familiarized	Guided	Motivated	Participated	Proposed
Provided	Referred	Rehabilitated	Represented	Served	Supported		

ORGANIZATIONAL

Approved	Accelerated	Added	Arranged	Broadened	Cataloged	Centralized	Changed
Classified	Collected	Compiled	Completed	Controlled	Defined	Dispatched	Executed
Expanded	Gained	Gathered	Generated	Implemented	Inspected	Launched	Monitored
Operated	Organized	Prepared	Processed	Purchased	Recorded	Reduced	Reinforced
Retrieved	Screened	Selected	Simplified	Sold	Specified	Steered	Structured
Systematized	Tabulated	Unified	Updated	Utilized	Validated	Verified	

Harvard Extension School on Your Resume

We are regularly asked how students and alums can most accurately convey their education at the Extension School on their resumes. You'll find sample formats below for those enrolled in degree programs, earning a certificate, or completing a single class. The degrees earned at HES are Bachelor of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies and Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies and are commonly abbreviated from their Latin translations as ALB and ALM degrees. When including coursework or foci, awards and honors, projects, or campus involvement in the Education section of your resume, always consider what is relevant to the specific job you are applying for. If you want to go into more detail about projects or campus activities relevant to the employer, you may consider including those details in separate Academic Projects or Volunteer and Activities sections instead of under Education.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SCHOOL

Cambridge, MA

Master of Liberal Arts (ALM), Information Management Systems

March 2022

- Dean's List Academic Achievement Award
- Relevant coursework in enterprise information systems, data mining and forecast management, managerial decision making

Harvard University Extension School, Cambridge, MA

Bachelor of Liberal Arts, Field of Study Economics, May 2025

Cum Laude, Dean's List, GPA 3.62

Worked up to 40 hours a week to defray cost of tuition

HARVARD UNIVERSITY Extension School, Master of Liberal Arts, Biotechnology (May 2024)

HARVARD UNIVERSITY Extension School, Cambridge, MA

March 2022

ALM, Global Development Practice

Graduate Certificate in Sustainable Cities and Communities

HARVARD UNIVERSITY, Cambridge, MA [if Extension School is not included, the full degree name with 'in Extension Studies' should be included for clarity]

Master of Liberal Arts (ALM) in Extension Studies, March 2021

(or Bachelor of Liberal Arts (ALB) in Extension Studies)

Field of study: Anthropology and Archaeology

Harvard University Extension School, Cambridge, MA

Graduate Certificate in Cybersecurity (2021)

HARVARD UNIVERSITY Extension School

Cambridge, MA

Preadmission coursework toward Bachelor of Liberal Arts

2020-2021

HARVARD UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SCHOOL, Cambridge, MA

Completed course in Industrial Psychology and Organizational Behavior, Fall 2020

RESUMES AND COVER LETTERS

WRITE AN EFFECTIVE COVER LETTER

Your cover letter is a writing sample and a part of the screening process. By putting your best foot forward, you can increase your chances of being interviewed. A good way to create a response-producing cover letter is to highlight your skills or experiences that are most applicable to the job or industry and to tailor the letter to the specific organization you are applying to.

Some general rules about letters:

- Address your letters to a specific person if you can.
- Tailor your letters to specific situations or organizations by doing research before writing your letters.
- Keep letters concise and factual, **no more than a single page**. Avoid flowery language.
- Give examples that support your skills and qualifications.
- Put yourself in the reader's shoes. What can you write that will convince the reader that you are ready and able to do the job?
- Don't overuse the pronoun "I".
- Remember that this is a marketing tool. Use lots of action words.
- Have an OCS adviser provide feedback, when possible.
- If converting to a .pdf, check that your formatting translated correctly.
- Reference skills or experiences from the job description and draw connections to your credentials.
- Make sure your resume and cover letter are prepared with the same font type and size.

	Your Street Address City, State, Zip Code
	Date of Letter
Use complete title and address.	Contact Name Contact Title Company Name Street Address City, State, Zip Code
Address to a particular person if possible and remember to use a colon.	Dear _____: Opening paragraph: Clearly state why you are writing, name the position or type of work you're exploring and, where applicable, how you heard about the person or organization.
Make the addressee want to read your resume. Be brief, but specific.	Middle paragraph(s): Explain why you are interested in this employer and your reasons for desiring this type of work. If you've had relevant school or work experience, be sure to point it out with one or two key examples; but do not reiterate your entire resume. Emphasize skills or abilities that relate to the job. Be sure to do this in a confident manner and remember that the reader will view your letter as an example of your writing skills.
Ask for a meeting and remember to follow up.	Closing paragraph: Reiterate your interest in the position, and your enthusiasm for using your skills to contribute to the work of the organization. Thank the reader for his/her consideration of your application, and end by stating that you look forward to the opportunity to further discuss the position.
	Sincerely,
	Your name typed