



Resume Building 101

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Presented by Cram Crew, Inc.



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Chances are that by now you know what a resume is, but do you know how to use yours to help you get into college? The academic resume is an important component of your college application and provides a snapshot of who you are in a more clear, direct, and concise way than your admissions essays. College admissions committees want to know you on a personal level. They want to know what motivates you and where your passions lie; they want to understand what you've accomplished and how your experiences will help you fit in with specific degree programs. A quality resume provides all of that information—but that's obvious. What's not so obvious is that your resume can also be used as a strategic tool that not only sells you to the college of your choice but also gives admissions officers a reason to remember you—it's something that can tilt the odds in your favor.

1 Format



Anyone who's had to slap together a resume for a job interview will tell you that the golden rule of resume building is to curtail the length if it exceeds one page. Well, that's a good rule to follow for the working world, but for the sake of college admissions, your resume can run a tad longer if necessary. Just like it's pretty hard to get to know someone who insists on giving one-word answers, it's hard for colleges to get to know you if you don't elaborate a little. When considering length, just be sure to keep your writing concise, relevant, and significant, and the length will take care of itself. We suggest 3–4 pages.

Once you begin drafting the details of your accomplishments, utilize strong, succinct fragments and past tense verbs, and be sure to keep everything consistent. That means if you use one bullet point in your Extracurricular Activities section, there should definitely be one bullet point entry in that section.

Speaking of sections, an organized resume is a happy resume! It's a good idea to group similar information under the following categories: Academic Information, Leadership, Honors/Awards, Extracurricular Activities, Community Service, Work Experience, Projects, Summer Programs, and any other appropriate sections. When crafting the entries in a section, be sure to provide only the details most relevant to that section. For instance, if you were elected president of a club, it's best to discuss the general details of the club in your Extracurricular Activities section but save the juicy details of your officer position for your Leadership section. Above all else, avoid redundancies in your information. We have a template to use as a starting point to make editing easier, but the content and order of the sections is up to you.

The most critical information on your resume—your personal information—should be front and center. When designing your layout, ensure that admissions officers can quickly and easily find your name and contact information by placing them at the top. Typically, students provide a mailing address, email address, and phone number in addition to their full name.

2 Academic Information Section



This is the place for some school pride. In this section, you'll include the name of your high school and some basic details about your career. Typically, students list their GPA, class rank, AP/PSAT/SAT/ACT/SAT scores, and college, IB, or dual credit courses and respective hours. Again, depending on the weight that the information holds, you may choose to include or exclude certain details. Specifically, if your GPA is a little weak but you rocked the SAT, highlight your solid test-taking skills by listing your SAT score but consider leaving your GPA off. It's not dishonest to omit the data because colleges can still access your GPA via your transcript. Remember, your resume should trumpet your triumphs, not your shortcomings.

3 Leadership Section



If your college application was a cake, your leadership abilities would be the icing. Did you champion efforts to save the rainforest, shepherd your team to victory as captain, or fearlessly lead your classmates as student body president? If so, be sure to brag about it in your Leadership section. When discussing your officer positions, provide details that illuminate which traits you possess that made you a good fit, who elected you, and what, if any, requirements you had to meet to be eligible. Additionally, discuss your responsibilities in specific terms and show the reader how this position of power allowed you to develop into a mature young adult ready to take on the challenges of higher education.

4 Honors and Awards Section



This section showcases any honors or awards you've received. Maybe you've earned Honor Roll for six consecutive semesters or maybe you were elected homecoming queen—just be sure to explain the significance of the position or honor. Other entries in this section might be about conferences you've attended or honor societies into which you've been inducted.

5 Extracurricular Activities Section



Though they are essential, colleges know there's more to high school than AP classes and SAT tests. Discussing your extracurricular activities on your resume is a great way to show not only what you're passionate about but also how well you work in a group setting. Typically, this section covers clubs, sports teams, and other organizations, either inside or outside of school.

Strong entries provide information about your specific tasks and duties within a certain club or organization. For example, if you dominated on the football field, offer the reader some details about the position you played, the level at which you played, like varsity, and a few highlights of your glorious career. Just remember, if you served as team captain of the football team, those specific details belong in the Leadership section. Finally, in addition to your description of the activity, you'll want to include your hours for each of your activities in the following format: hours per week/weeks per year. This information lets your prospective schools know just how much of your time you committed to your beloved activities.

6 Community Service Section



Leadership doesn't just come in the form of club presidents and team captains; altruism points to leadership in the community. The Community Service section is the place to highlight your volunteer work. In addition to including the grades during which you participated and the name of the organization, project, or event, you'll want to note the total number of hours you dedicated to each cause. If you choose to include a description of your service activities, keep it to 1-2 sentences, and be consistent. If you describe one, describe them all.

7 The Extra Stuff



Once you've exhausted your discussion of test scores, grades, clubs, community service, and awards, you might still have some pertinent information to share with your future college. Some students have dedicated themselves to earning a paycheck regularly while others have explored ancient ruins in Rome. Still others have acquired valuable skills in their free time. If this sounds like you, consider adding one of the following ancillary sections to your resume: Work Experience, in which you address employment or internships; or Skills & Hobbies, in which you discuss your foreign language proficiency or incredible cookie-baking talent. No matter what information you decide to include on your resume, use it to paint yourself in a flattering light that leaves your prospective college dying to know more!

NOTES



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