

TELL YOUR STORY

*Cover Letters, Resumes,
References & Thank-you notes*

Bluffton University Center for Career & Vocation

Just inside the main doors of Musselman Library
Monday—Thursday 9am—6pm; Friday 9am—2pm
Evenings and weekends by appointment

419-358-3030 | career@bluffton.edu



On Facebook search “Bluffton CCV”



On Twitter @BlufftonCCV



Search *Shari Ayers* and *Cody Sanderson* to connect with us on LinkedIn

Find the sustainable you!

Best Practices for Cover Letters

PURPOSE	EDITING & REVIEWING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much like your résumé, the purpose of the cover letter is to get an interview. • The cover letter should accompany and introduce your résumé. It should expand on, but not repeat, items in your résumé. Some items are better suited to your cover letter. • Use this space to demonstrate knowledge of the employer and the position. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have one or more trusted and capable individuals read your final version • Ideally, let your cover letter “rest” for a day and then return to it to see if you have done the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced, but not repeated, your résumé • Written (or at least tweaked) a new cover letter for <u>each</u> distinct position or open inquiry • Written for the reader • Focused on the job description and/or the organization’s mission and your fit with it • Highlighted specific experiences, projects, and applicable skills • Focused on what sets you apart • Been honest • Shown enthusiasm, passion, and energy • Made sure that there are no spelling or grammar errors (absolutely none)
STYLE & FORMAT	SECTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cover letter should match your résumé in style and format. • One sheet, one side is the preferred length. • Use conventional business letter formatting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Your contact information/address (may be in a header to match résumé) ⇒ Date ⇒ Hiring manager’s name and address (Be as specific as possible. If the name is not known, use simply “Human Resources Director” or “Hiring Manager.”) ⇒ Position Identification (example ... RE: Entry Level Accounting Position) ⇒ Salutation (Again, be as specific as possible. If not known, lean toward “Dear Hiring Manager” rather than “To Whom it May Concern.” Never, ever, ever use “Dear Sir.”) ⇒ Body/content (more about this below) ⇒ Closing and signature • Match the standards of your résumé: typically 1” margins, easy-to-read fonts (arial, times new roman, etc) in 11-point type. • You are S.T.A.R.-ing in your own life’s story. Think about describing your impact by describing the: Situation, Task, Action, and Results. How have you gone “above and beyond” and how might that experience benefit your next employer? 	<p>Typically three or four paragraphs is best. In general, think about these four areas –</p> <p><u>Paragraph 1: Why you are writing</u> Grab the reader’s attention. Demonstrate enthusiasm for the opportunity right from the beginning. Describe how and where you learned of the opening. Three or four sentences is usually sufficient.</p> <p><u>Paragraph 2: What you have done</u> Reference your degree and your most relevant experience. Take the time to describe one or two projects or experiences in some detail. This is the place to hint at what an interview with you will be like (make sure they are left wanting to hear more). Talk about connections between your background and the position. Use some of those key words you highlighted in your search. Write for the reader – what would be important for you to read if you were the HR manager?</p> <p><u>Paragraph 3: What you like about the company</u> Build on the previous paragraph. Make it clear you have done your research regarding the company and its mission. Ideally, do this without substantive quotations from the web site. This is your opportunity to highlight your fit in the organizational culture.</p> <p><u>Paragraph 4: What you hope will happen next</u> Thank the reader for his or her time. Indicate your desire for a follow-up conversation and interview. Restate your interest and enthusiasm for the position. You might want to restate your contact information and indicate that you look forward to following up with them about the opportunity. (Note: If you say you will follow up next week, mark it on a calendar – you don’t want to forget this).</p>

SAMPLE

CHRIS JACKSON

987 Johnson St. Oahu, HI 96701
Bluffton University, 1 University Dr. Bluffton, OH 45817
123-456-7890 • chrisjackson@bluffton.edu

October 22, 2015

ABC Company
Attn: Bob Jones, HR Manager
4321 Another Rd.
Somewhere, OH 44444

Re: Office Manager Opening

Dear Mr. Jones,

Please find enclosed my resume in application for the Office Manager position recently advertised in The Daily News. I was extremely excited to see this opening and I think my experience and personality would be a great fit for this position and your company.

As my resume shows, I have a great deal of experience in customer service oriented positions and my recently obtained degree in Business Administration and Communications from Bluffton University helped me to build on those skills even further. I gained many skills from my positions at Smith Company and ABC Organization. In both positions I supervised teams and managed office functions while serving customers.

In addition to having the skills and experience necessary to successfully fill this position, I am eager to be considered for this role because I know the great impact ABC Company has had on the local communities and I would enjoy being part of that process and impact. I have also had the opportunity to know multiple people with experience at ABC Company, specifically Amy Brown and Mark Black, who have always spoken very highly of the company and the opportunities afforded to them as employees.

In closing, thank you for taking time to review my resume. I look forward to an opportunity to meet with you in person to further discuss how my skills could fit your needs in this position. If you find that you are in need of any additional information to complete my application, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

Best Regards,

Chris Jackson

Chris Jackson

Enclosure: Resume & References

Best Practices for Résumés

PURPOSE	FORMAT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Résumé is related to the French word for summary. Think of it as a summary of your education and experiences, your relevant knowledge and skills. • Although you are the subject of the résumé, think primarily of the employer’s needs and tailor the résumé to that audience. Estimates of how long a reader will look at your résumé vary from 7 to 30 seconds. In some circumstances, the résumé receives its initial “reading” by a computerized search process (thus, key words are, well, key). • The purpose of a résumé is to get an interview. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronological (most recent items listed first) is the most commonly sought format. • Use a simple, classic form. Be careful of ready-made templates as they can be difficult to edit in some cases. • Consistency, consistency, consistency ... make sure it is balanced and focused: in font type and size, in section descriptions and color, in margins and bullet points.
CONTENT	SECTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideally, keep both running and targeted résumés. The running résumé is your “parking lot” for items you may or may not include on the résumé you create that is “targeted” for a particular position or kind of position. Running résumés are never sent to a potential employer. • Strong action verbs are your very best friends! • Be specific whenever you can (shortened wait time by 50%; increased productivity by more than 15%) but never, ever simply make up statistics. • Mirror language from the job description and use field-specific words and phrases but avoid jargon except where expected. • Avoid repetition (you have limited space; use it strategically). 	<p>Three sections are absolutely required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Information • Education • Experience (may be in one or more sections) <p>Other sections to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighted Qualifications • Professional Summary • Campus and Community Involvement • Leadership and Professional Development • Skills and Certifications • Languages (note fluency) • Honors • Research <p>Depending on your field, you may have additional sections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Teaching or Classroom / Field Experience • Dietetics Internship
STYLE	EDITING & REVIEWING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One sheet, one side is the preferred length for most relatively new workers; those with more experience may decide to use both sides of one sheet, but should always make sure it fills the second page (no partial pages). • Standards include: 1” margins, easy-to-read fonts (arial, times new roman, etc) in 11-point type • Unless you are applying for a position in a creative field (the visual arts, graphic design, etc.) you want the employer to notice <u>you</u> rather than your design choices. • Keep the formatting the same from one section to another. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have one or more trusted and capable individuals read your final version • Use the résumé rubric included in this packet to do a self-evaluation. • Ideally, let your résumé “rest” for a day and then return to it to see if you have done the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Told the strongest part of your story on the top half • Focused on what sets you apart • Described your experience by accomplishments rather than responsibilities • Referenced transferable skills for past positions • Researched keywords and used them appropriately • Been honest • Shown enthusiasm, passion, and energy • Used active verbs in the correct tense • Made sure that there are no spelling or grammar errors (absolutely none)



CHRIS JACKSON

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Bluffton University, 1 University Dr. Bluffton, OH 45817
123-456-7890 • chrisjackson@bluffton.edu

Highlighted Skills

Driven leader with variety of supervisory experiences
Qualified in recruiting, training and acclimating new team members
Thrives when motivating others to work toward common goal

Education

Bachelor of Arts, Bluffton University, Bluffton, OH **Anticipated May 2016**

- Double major in Business Administration and Communications; Minor in Spanish
- GPA 3.7/4.0 (Dean's List 6 of 6 semesters)
- Cross-Cultural Experience: Semester in Guatemala, Fall 2013
- Honors Thesis: *Microfinance Management: Local Commitment, Global Impact* (December, 2015)
- NCAA D3 student athlete: Varsity Soccer, 2012-present (co-captain, 2014 – present)

Related Experience

Assistant Manager, ABC Organization | Bluffton, OH **August 2015 – Present**

- Manage a shift team of six employees including training, supervision, and performance review
- Consistently exceed quarterly sales goals in a fast-paced retail environment
- Created new strategies for visual merchandising which have since been adopted company-wide

Customer Account Coordinator, Smith Company | Lima, OH **Summers 2012 – 2015**

- Addressed and resolved customer account issues with speed, accuracy, empathy, and the ability to find multiple potential solutions to a single problem
- Developed new and existing customer relationships resulting in the highest referral and retention rate over three consecutive summers (2013 – 2015)

Communications Intern, XYZ Non-Profit Agency | Findlay, OH **August 2014 – February 2015**

- Managed the robust social media presence of a rapidly-expanding non-profit agency
- Recruited, trained, and supported a team of more than 100 volunteers with a retention and satisfaction rate above the industry average
- Assisted with the development of a new mission statement and organizational strategy

Student Ambassador, Bluffton University | Bluffton, OH **August 2014 – May 2015**

- Directed informative and engaging tours for prospective students and their families
- Implemented active listening skills to learn about guests and anticipate their needs and questions
- Frequently volunteered for additional shifts resulting in the highest tour-capacity each semester

Other Experience

Filing Clerk, XYZ Non-Profit Agency | Findlay, OH **August 2014 – February 2015**

Maintenance Clerk, Jones Surf Shop | Oahu, HI **August 2013 – February 2014**

Involvement & Professional Development

- **Student Member**, National Association of Communications Professionals **January 2014 – Present**
- **Member**, Bluffton University Business Leaders (BUBL) **August 2012 – Present**
(Treasurer, August 2014 – December 2015; President, August 2015 – Present)
- **Presenter**, Student Leadership Conference, Memphis, TN **April 2015**

Best Practices for References

PURPOSE

- Your reference list should match your résumé and cover letter in style and format. When placed side by side, they become a part of your job search “brand.” It should be clear that they are a family of documents.
- One sheet, one side is more than sufficient.
- Try a centered and a left-justified format to see which looks more visually pleasing.
- Include for each reference:
 - ⇒ Name
 - ⇒ Title
 - ⇒ Employer
 - ⇒ How you know the person (if not easily identified from the title and employer); occasionally an employer will ask you to identify how long you have known the person – watch for these kinds of specific requests and follow them exactly.
 - ⇒ Email address
 - ⇒ Phone number
 - ⇒ Mailing address

SAMPLE

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123-456-7890 • chrisjackson@bluffton.edu

Professional References

Sue Smith

General Manager, ABC Organization
555 North St. Bluffton, OH 45817
(555) 555-5555
ssmith@abc.org

Dr. Jim Jones

Professor of Business, Bluffton University
1 University Dr. Bluffton, OH 45817
(555) 555-5555
jjones@bluffton.edu

Jane Brown

Office Manager, XYZ Non-Profit Agency
2222 South St. Findlay, OH 45840
(777) 777-7777
brownj@agency.org

Thank-you Notes



It is important to send thank you notes to everyone you speak to at a recruiting event or meet with for an interview. Here are some things to do *during* the event/interview to make it a bit easier:

- Ask for business cards so you have the info you need later
- Keep brief notes of what was discussed so you can remember one person from another
- Send thank you notes quickly—ideally within 24 hours of the event!



Remember....

- Use good handwriting; take your time
- Spelling and grammar should be correct
- Use a blue or black pen
- Handwritten notes are almost always appropriate, but sometimes a thank you email may seem more fitting—use your best judgement
- Bonus if you can hand-deliver the note!

Thank them for the conversation and interaction

Reiterate something positive from your conversation with them

Reiterate your interest in an opening and be specific about what action you'll take going forward

Dear Mr. Smith,

Thank you for taking time to speak with me at Education on April 13th and for considering me for a position at ABC School District.

I was excited to hear about the LeaderInMe program being incorporated into the curriculum at ABC School District. As I mentioned in our discussion, I believe my experience in the LivingLeaders program during my student teaching would really enable me to bring relevant experience to a teaching role at ABC Schools.

I am very interested in any teaching openings at ABC School District and will continue to check the website for openings, as you suggested. Please feel free to contact me if you need any additional information to be considered for future openings.

Best regards,

Amy Smith

Bluffton University, 3rd-5th Licensure

4/14/16

Some final thoughts....

- Submitting applications
 - ⇒ If submitting electronically, use pdf unless requested otherwise
 - ⇒ If submitting in person or by mail, use simple résumé paper. The Center for Career & Vocation has a limited supply of résumé paper for student use. Typically, we can provide you with 10 or so copies of your résumé and cover letter. For larger projects, check an office supply store
 - ⇒ Use a cover letter any time you are not handing your resume directly to someone
- If color is used on your documents, be sure to print out a black and white version to make sure everything is readable in gray tones
- If you struggle with *Highlighted Skills*, consider these:
 - ⇒ What does a teacher who knows you well think when they see your name on a class list?
“Oh Chris Jackson.... He always contributes to class discussion and gets everyone involved”
Possible Highlighted Skill: “Skilled at facilitating group conversations and soliciting participation”
 - ⇒ What does a former coach think when they see your name on a team roster?
“Chris Jackson... I’ve hardly seen a more dedicated player”
Possible Highlighted Skill: “Incredible work ethic with dedication to excellent performance”
 - ⇒ What does a supervisor think when they see your name on the shift schedule?
“Chris Jackson... I never have to check up on him. He’s great with the customers”
Possible Highlighted Skill: “Exceptional customer service skills and ability to self-supervise”
- If you struggle with resume bullet points:
 - ⇒ Think past just the tasks of the job and consider outcomes of your work
(*“Cleaned restrooms and emptied trashes”* vs. *“Maintained safe and clean environment to welcome visitors”*)
 - ⇒ What was the bigger picture to which you contributed
 - ⇒ Think transferrable skills—Did you...
 - * Train or supervise others?
 - * Suggest Improvements to processes?
 - * Manage major programs or projects?
 - * Maintain records or documentation?
 - * Work independently or self-supervise?

Bluffton Center for Career and Vocation

Career ready. Purpose led.

Resume Rubric for: _____ Major: _____

Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

	Excellent	Above Average	Needs Improvement
Format/ Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate length for field/level of experience Fills the page, but not overcrowded Consistent font/spacing Consistent & effective use of bold/italics/underlining Section titles clearly listed & easy to find 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate length for field/level of experience Fills the page Somewhat consistent font/spacing Some use of bold/italics/underlining Section titles listed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inappropriate length for field/level of experience Difficult to read/visually distracting Font/spacing is inconsistent Ineffective or no use of bold/italics/underlining Section titles not listed/difficult to find
Comments:			
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name & contact info clearly listed at top Titles, organizations, dates, and/or locations listed consistently Sections ordered in terms of importance Section titles highlight relevant skills/experience Experience in reverse chronological order in sections Excellent use of top-of-page real estate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name listed, missing some contact info Titles, organizations, dates, and/or locations listed somewhat consistently Section ordering sufficient Section titles sufficient Experience in reverse chronological order in all or most sections Somewhat effective use of top-of-page real estate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name & contact info unclear Inconsistent listing of titles, organizations, dates, and/or locations Ineffective ordering of sections Section titles do not highlight skills/experience Experiences not in reverse chronological order in sections Ineffective use of top-of-page real es-
Comments:			
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses a variety of strong action verbs Lists degree and grad date Outcome/accomplishment oriented No spelling/grammar errors Descriptions are concise and descriptive Keywords/skills targeted for the position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some use of action verbs Missing either degree or grad date Some outcomes/accomplishments No spelling/grammar errors Descriptions somewhat concise and descriptive Keywords/skills somewhat targeted for the position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ineffective use of action verbs Does not list degree and grad date; Includes high school No outcomes/accomplishments listed Spelling/grammar errors Descriptions not concise and/or descriptive Keywords/skills not targeted for the position
Comments:			
Overall	Meets most of the criteria of an excellent resume	Falls between an excellent resume & one that needs improvement	Does not meet the criteria of an average or excellent resume
Comments:			

Based on a resource developed by NYU Wasserman, The Center for Career Development

Find the sustainable you!

Located in Musselman Library

www.bluffton.edu/studentlife/career/