Start your future now….

RESUME WRITING GUIDE

Office of Career Services: Carroll Hall, Room 311
Phone: 540-464-7560 Email: careerservices@vmi.edu
Website: http://www.vmi.edu/careerservices

What is a Resume?

A resume serves as a brief summary of your qualifications and experiences as they relate to the type of job you are seeking—it is used when you apply for jobs, internships, or graduate and professional schools. The primary purpose of a resume is to secure an interview, giving you the opportunity to sell your strengths and abilities to prospective employers in person.

Your resume provides prospective employers with their first impression of you—it is an advertisement about you. Your resume is your chief marketing tool in the job search process. Therefore, your resume should be well-organized and highlight your background by emphasizing your skills and qualifications. Your resume helps prospective employers evaluate what you have to offer them and informs them of the type of job you are seeking, and the skills, accomplishments, and educational background you have to offer.

If you have several career interests and you are applying for several positions that are unrelated, you may want to develop multiple resumes with different objectives. The following pages will define different resume features and resume types and help you develop your own unique resume.

Need Individual Attention on Your Resume?

Visit Career the Office of Career Services in Carroll Hall, Room 311 or call 464-7560 to make a **30-minute appointment** with a career counselor to review your resume. You may also want to meet with a Career Ambassador to get started. Please see our Website at: http://www.vmi.edu/careerservices for names of Career Ambassadors on staff.

Want information on resume writing?

Visit our website at **http://www.vmi.edu/careerservices** or stop by the **Office of Career Services** in Carroll Hall, Room 311 to browse our resources on resumes, cover letters, job search strategies, networking, interviewing, negotiating salary offers, and business etiquette.

Want Employers to Come to You?

The Office of Career Services' ***KeydetConnect*** and **On-Post Interviewing Program** are available to VMI cadets and alumni. By registering on ***KeydetConnect***, you can search job and internship listings, post your resume online, apply for positions, and sign up for **mock interviews**. This saves you valuable time and gives employers access to your resume even when they are unable to come to VMI.

Resume Content

The key to writing a strong resume is to highlight the areas of your background that best demonstrate your skills and abilities as they relate to the position or opportunity for which you are applying. Also bear in mind that there is no such thing as a "standard" resume format—your resume is unique to *you*.

Identifying Information

Your name, mailing address, telephone number or cell number and email address should always top your resume. If you are still in school while you are sending resumes to potential employers, include both your permanent contact information as well as your college address and cell number.

Objective

The objective sets the tone for your resume and informs the employer of two things; the position you are seeking and what you bring. You should seek to be brief, with not more than 1-2 lines. It may include a job title, a description of activities and skills you wish to perform, the type of organization you wish to join, a special interest you have in a particular field, or your short and long-term goals. A job objective indicates to the employer (or graduate program) that you have some direction. Therefore, try to be as specific as possible in writing your objective.

Examples:

- To obtain a financial trainee position with a banking organization.
- To find a position as a programmer or analyst.
- Seeking a position in a foreign relations or intelligence field.

Education

Include all colleges and universities from which you have earned a degree. They should be listed in reverse chronological order (your most recent school listed first). For those colleges and universities you attended but did not receive a degree, their inclusion should be considered if you participated in some kind of experience relevant to the objective of your resume. As a 2nd or 1st class cadet, you usually don't include your high school, unless you were involved in a significant or unique experience relevant to your career goal. For 4th and 3rd class cadets, it is customary to include your high school information, including experiences related to your resume objective. Include the name and location of your college, type and date of degree earned, and major and minor. It is best to include your cumulative GPA and/or your major GPA. If you've earned Dean's List, make sure you list it here. You may also include any special training your received that supports your objective.

Example:

Virginia Military Institute (VMI), Lexington, Virginia
Bachelor of Arts, May 2011
Major: **International Studies** Minor: **Psychology**
Cumulative GPA: 3.2, Major GPA: 3.5 , **Dean's List** (4)

Related Coursework

You may want to list appropriate college coursework in your resume *if* you apply for a position that is unrelated to your major or the coursework is unique/specialized in the career field. For example, if you apply for a technical writing position, but you majored in biology, it would be advantageous to list your writing courses to highlight your skills. In most cases, it is recommended that you omit major-related coursework from your resume.

Experience

Summarize your experiences by highlighting those that best reveal your skills and abilities in relation to the type of job you are seeking. You should include the title of your position (bold), the inclusive dates you worked at the organization, the name of the organization, and the location (city and state).

Example: **Summer Intern**, Summer 2010
Merrill Lynch, New York, NY

You can include paid work experiences, volunteer work, internships, and student organization involvement. If you have several experiences that are directly related to the type of job you are seeking, you may list them under a separate category called "Related Experiences." Bullets: Remember to be brief (one to two lines) and lead with strong action-verbs in the past tense to indicate your responsibilities and accomplishments.

College Activities

This section highlights college and professional organizations and clubs in which you participated. This could include rank in the Corps of Cadets, clubs or organizations, RDC, Honor Court, Rat Challenge, research projects, Habitat of Humanity, Special Olympics or other volunteer projects. Include the name of the organization, any offices you held, and the dates you were a member. Include a brief description of your activities if these would be relevant to the position for which you are applying. Describe activities using language someone not familiar with VMI would understand.

Honors / Awards

Provide information about any honors you received such as scholarships, Academic Stars, Honors programs, and memberships in honor societies. Include dates. If you have less than three honor entries list them under the education section.

References

List references on a separate sheet and bring it to interviews. Before listing someone as a reference on your resume, *always* seek his or her permission so that the person is aware that he or she might be contacted. Think of faculty and employers who know you and your work well and will give you a positive recommendation. Include names, titles, addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers for each reference, along with a brief description of your relationship with them. Be sure to include your name and address on your reference sheet.

Skills

Information about special skills that are relevant to your job objective can enhance your resume, such as computer skills, language skills, research skills, leadership skills, and technical skills. You can include this information as a separate category or as part of other entries on your resume.

Example: **Computer Skills**: Microsoft Office Suite

Personal Data

Do **not** include personal data such as gender, ethnicity, birthplace, or personal interests - it is illegal for most employers to request this information. More importantly, it has nothing to do with your skills and qualifications.

Other Categories

Be creative and don't feel you have to limit the content of your resume to the categories listed above. If you have special information that supports your application, create a place for it.

Writing Bullets

Describe your background skills and experiences in terms employers will understand and value. Write 3-5 bullets for each activity and accomplishment mentioned on your resume. Lead your bullets with an action verb (*see list of Action Verbs later in this guide*) and keep them in short, fragmented sentences. You can also add numbers, dollars or time to quantify your bullets. This will add scope to your bullets.

Resume Formats

There are three basic resume formats: chronological, functional, and combination. The type of format you use depends on your particular background and the type of work you are seeking.

Chronological Resume Format

A chronological resume emphasizes your work and/or experiences and organizes your information around dates. Chronological resumes are easy to follow because they highlight career growth and the names of employers. You should use the chronological format when your work or activity experience is strong and relevant to your job objective, when previous job titles are impressive and job history shows growth, and when you want to emphasize your accomplishments. Disadvantages of this format—your skills may not be highlighted and gaps in your career path may be more visible. List jobs or experiences in reverse chronological order with your most recent position listed first.

Functional Resume Format

A functional resume organizes information under functional headings that highlight your major areas of accomplishment or strength. Experiences and skills are organized to support your job objective and are not bound by employment dates. Titles and work history are de-emphasized. You may draw upon all sources of experience (employment, volunteer work, college activities, and coursework) to describe your skills.

Since the functional resume emphasizes capabilities and skills, it can be useful when you want to enter a different career field or illustrate your *transferable* skills. Although the functional resume takes more time and thought to prepare, it may be more effective than the chronological format if your work experiences have been limited or you wish to focus on special skills and abilities. *See the list of Functional Headings listed later in this guide.*

Combination Resume Format

The combination resume includes aspects of *both* the chronological and functional formats. Work history and skills or accomplishments are emphasized equally. This format allows you to include a section about prior work experiences and a section on your functional and transferable skills.

General Resume Writing Guidelines

- Be brief. A one-page resume is adequate. Use two pages only if you have had extensive experience.
- Use action verbs to describe your accomplishments. *See the list of Action Verbs listed later in this guide.*
- Emphasize your successes, accomplishments, skills, leadership abilities, and qualifications. State all information positively and relate your skills and background to the job you are seeking.
- Give specific examples of your accomplishments. Quantify when possible to strengthen the impact of your message (e.g.: “supervised 12 employees,” “managed a $2,000 budget”).
- Be consistent with format, type style and type size.
- Be consistent with verb tense and proofread for misspelled words and grammatical errors.
- Use capital letters, bold print, or italics to highlight parts of your resume.
- Use simple graphics such as lines to create a border.
- Print your resume on light-colored paper (white or ivory, for example) and use matching paper for your cover letter, especially when using a paper color other than white.

Action Verbs

Want to strengthen your resume? Try leading bullets with an action verb to highlight an important skill or attribute you bring from past experiences.

Example: ***Managed*** *a $200,000 VMI Foundation portfolio of diversified stocks* VICE ***Responsible for managing*** *a $200,000 VMI Foundation portfolio of diversified stocks*

Below is a list of commonly used verbs to highlight your skills and accomplishments:

accomplished	compared	effected	installed	persuaded	represented
achieved	computed	eliminated	instituted	planned	researched
acknowledged	conceived	encouraged	instructed	prepared	reserved
acted	conceptualized	endured	integrated	presented	resolved
adapted	conciliated	enlisted	interpreted	presided	reviewed
adjusted	conducted	entertained	interviewed	preserved	revised
administered	confronted	established	investigated	met	scanned
advertised	consulted	estimated	invented	printed	scheduled
advised	contracted	evaluated	led	processed	screened
affected	controlled	examined	learned	produced	selected
analyzed	convinced	exchanged	lectured	promoted	served
answered	cooperated	executed	listened	proofread	sketched
anticipated	coordinated	expanded	logged	proposed	sold
applied	corresponded	expedited	made	protected	solved
approached	counseled	experienced	maintained	provided	spoke
approved	created	explained	managed	publicized	staffed
arranged	critiqued	explored	manipulated	purchased	standardized
assembled	decided	facilitated	marketed	quoted	stimulated
asserted	defined	familiarized	maximized	ran	studied
assessed	decorated	followed	mediated	raised	summarized
assigned	delegated	formulated	merchandised	read	supervised
assisted	delivered	found	met	realized	supplied
attained	designed	founded	minimized	received	surveyed
attended	detailed	generated	moderated	recommended	synthesized
audited	detected	governed	modified	reconciled	systematized
authored	determined	guided	monitored	recorded	talked
budgeted	developed	handled	motivated	recruited	taught
built	devised	hired	negotiated	rectified	tested
cataloged	directed	implemented	obtained	redesigned	trained
chaired	displayed	improved	operated	reduced	translated
charted	dispensed	increased	organized	related	traveled
clarified	disproved	influenced	originated	remodeled	treated
classified	drafted	informed	oversaw	rendered	transmitted
collaborated	drew up	initiated	participated	renewed	updated
collected	edited	innovated	perceived	repaired	upgraded
communicated	educated	inspected	performed	reported	utilized

Functional Headings

Functional headings should be listed as the most relevant to your objective first with those lesser relevant later. This allows you to group and highlight experiences and skills most relevant to the employer higher in the resume. For example, if you are applying for a sales position, you may want to group your sales, promotional and advertising experiences under “Advertising Experiences”.

Accounting
Administrative
Advertising
Athletic
Career Development
Chemistry
Communication
Computing
Community Affairs
Counseling
Creativity
Culinary
Data Processing
Design
Drafting
Editing
Employment
Engineering
Field Work
Finance
Fund Raising
Graphic Design
Healthcare
Human Resources
Human Services
Inspecting
Instruction
International
Interpersonal
Interviewing
Investigation
Investment
Laboratory
Layout
Leadership
Legal
Management
Market Research
Marketing
Medicine
Organization
Planning
Presentations
Printing
Product Development
Production
Problem Solving
Programming
Promotion
Publicity
Public Relations
Public Speaking
Purchasing
Real Estate
Research
Retailing
Security
Scheduling
Selling
Social Work
Supervision
Teaching
Technical
Testing
Training
Writing

Source: Jackson, Tom. *The Perfect Resume: Today's Ultimate Job Search Tool*. New York: Broadway, 2004.

Scannable Resumes

The "Electronic Revolution" has made it possible for employers to find job applicants faster and easier. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) systems look at images (resumes) to distinguish characters (letters and numbers) and then create a text file (ASCII). Artificial intelligence then reads the text and extracts the important information about the applicant. The purpose of a scannable resume is to match employers' needs to applicants who fulfill those needs quickly and effectively. Scannable resumes allow employers to search a database of resumes by using *keywords*, *buzzwords*, or *descriptors* to find matches or "hits." Ultimately, a computer-friendly resume is one that maximizes the computer's ability to read the applicant's resume and obtain hits. Finally, it is a good idea to have two versions of your resume—a scannable version and a traditional version—to take with you to an interview.

Scannable Resume Content Guidelines

- Use common headings such as: Objective, Education, Employment, Work History, Positions Held, Skills, Accomplishments, Summary/Highlights of Qualifications, Publications, Licenses, Certifications, and Honors.
- Incorporate important nouns relevant to the position. The scanner will search for descriptive words (keywords) such as: writer, accounting, manager, Spanish (language fluency), Public Relations Society of America.
- Use concrete words, for example, it is better to use "managed a team of software engineers" instead of "responsible for managing, training..."
- Use common keywords to define your skills, experience, education, professional affiliations, etc.
- Use industry-specific jargon and acronyms. Minimize abbreviations to common ones like B.A., B.S., or GPA. When you use acronyms, also spell out their meanings.
- Include specifics such as names of software packages (Adobe Photoshop, Microsoft Excel).
- When faxing a resume to be scanned, set the fax to "fine mode" so that the recipient receives a better quality.

Scannable Resume Format

- Use any standard resume format—chronological, functional, or combination.
- Format your name and address with your name on one line and the address on each line appearing below it.
- List multiple telephone numbers on separate lines.
- Use capital letters for section headings.
- Do not use vertical or horizontal lines, shading, graphics, boxes, charts, or columns on your scannable resume.
- Use common, simple, non-decorative typefaces such as: Arial, Calibri, Helvetica, Times New Roman, Tahoma, Trebuchet, or Verdana.
- Use standard type sizes between 10 and 14 points.
- Do not use italics, underlining, shadows, or reverse (white letters on black background).
- Use white space, computers use it to recognize when one topic has ended and another has begun.
- Use one side of 8½ x 11" white paper.
- Use a laser printer or high-quality photocopier.
- Include your name on the top of each page if there are multiple pages of your scannable resume.
- Do not fold or staple.

Thomas Jonathan Jackson

Permanent Address: 8. E. Washington ST., Lexington, VA 24450
Current Address: VMI Box 11111, Lexington, VA 24450 – **Cell:** (540) 111-1112
Email: jacksontj@vmi.edu

OBJECTIVE

To obtain an entry-level finance position.

EDUCATION

Virginia Military Institute (VMI), Lexington, VA
Bachelor of Arts, Economics and Business May 2012
Concentration: **Finance**
GPA: 3.23, **Dean's List** (2)

CAREER RELATED EXPERIENCE

Summer Intern, Summer 2011
Merrill Lynch , New York, NY

- Assisted financial advisors in Merrill's Global Private Client Division
- Guided $1,000,000 in assets by placing calls on behalf of intern team
- Researched investment philosophies and portrayed findings in a presentation format
- Analyzed extensive data on prospective clients

Vice President, Fall 2010 - present
Cadet Investment Group, VMI, Lexington, VA

- Managed a $200,000 VMI Foundation portfolio of diversified stocks
- Developed invaluable experience in security analysis, selection, and portfolio management
- Corresponded with external agencies to present our team's progress
- Orchestrated recruitment tutorials and conducted new recruit interviews
- Coordinated with group advisors and officers regularly to assess program direction and growth

SKILLS

Computer: MS Office Suite
Language: Spanish (Basic)

COLLEGE ACTIVITIES

Assistant Prosecutor, Fall 2010 – Spring 2011
Honor Court, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, VA

- Educated the corps of cadets on honor and integrity as a representative of the Honor Court
- Investigated breaches of the Honor Code to ensure the health and preservation of VMI tradition

Vice President, Fall 2010 – Spring 2011
Sigma Beta Delta Honor Society, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, VA

- Facilitated involvement among cadets interested in Business, Management and Administration

Academic Mentor, Fall 2009 – Spring 2010
Miller Academic Center, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, VA

- Mentored freshmen in helping them identify academic priorities, set goals, construct and implement plans, and evaluate their progress

AWARDS & HONORS

Eagle Scout, Boy Scouts of America

Thomas Jonathan Jackson

Permanent Address:
8. E. Washington St.
Lexington, VA 24450
Phone: (540) 111-1111

Current Address:
VMI Box 11111
Lexington, VA 24450
Cell: (540) 111-1112

Email: jacksontj@vmi.edu

OBJECTIVE

To obtain an entry-level engineering position.

EDUCATION

Virginia Military Institute (VMI), Lexington, VA
Bachelor of Science, Civil Engineering May 2012
GPA: 3.23, **Dean's List** (2)

ENGINEERING EXPERIENCES

Summer Intern, Summer 2011
Stearns and Wheeler, Roanoke, VA

- Designed solids handling portion of a wastewater treatment plant
- Researched new technologies to be use in water treatment
- Reviewed and edited Preliminary Engineering Reports
- Met with clients, visited sites, and edited and reviewed site plans

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- Guided team of 10 cadets in concrete canoe project implementation
- Presented water treatment research to governing board of engineers
- Published weekly updates and information on timber building projects

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

VMI Regimental S3 (training and operations) Lieutenant, Fall 2010
Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, VA

- Planned and wrote operation orders for battalion level activities
- Organized and supervised operations involving over 600 personnel
- Coordinated with VMI administration to develop student training schedules
- Prepared weekly schedules for the student body
- Instructed junior leaders in corps of cadets
- Directed programs for building projects
- Supervised numerous timber framing projects to completion

COLLEGE ACTIVITIES

- **Player**, VMI Rugby Team, Virginia Military Institute, February 2011 - Present
- **Participant**, ASCE conference, Charlottesville, VA, 2010
- **Structural engineer**, Concrete Canoe project, VMI, September 2010 - Present
- **Builder**, VMI Timber Framing projects for non-profit, VMI, April 2011

OTHER SKILLS

Computer: MC Office Suite
Language: Arabic (Basic), French (Conversational)

Thomas Jonathan Jackson

Permanent Address: 8. E. Washington ST., Lexington, VA 24450
Current Address: VMI Box 11111, Lexington, VA 24450 – **Cell**: (540) 111-1112
Email: jacksontj@vmi.edu

OBJECTIVE

Seeking a full-time, entry- level position.

EDUCATION

Virginia Military Institute (VMI), Lexington, VA
Bachelor of Science, Mechanical Engineering May 2012
Minor: **Mathematics**
GPA: 3.39, **Dean's List** (6)

RELATED COURSEWORK

Fluid Mechanics	Instrumentation Lab	Energy Lab
Energy Conversion Design	Mechanical Design	Dynamics of Machinery

SKILLS

Computer: MS Office Suite, MathCAD, AutoCAD, Fluent, and Inventor
Language: Spanish (Basic)

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Independent Researcher, Fall 2010
Mechanical Engineering Department, VMI, Lexington, VA

- Investigated and analyzed the motion of solid particles in the atmosphere through computer modeling.
- Reported findings to faculty mentor

Summer Undergraduate Research Initiative, Summer 2010
Civil Engineering Department, VMI, Lexington, VA

- Researched behavior of deep reinforced concrete pile caps.
- Presented findings to faculty members and VMI community.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Computer Laboratory Student Assistant, 2009- Present
Information Technology Department, VMI, Lexington, VA

- Performed maintenance operations on computers and printers in computer labs.

COLLEGE ACTIVITIES

President, 2010-11
VMI Chapter of American Society of Mechanical Engineers

- Organize monthly meetings for VMI society members and guests.

Sergeant, 2010-11
VMI Color Guard, VMI Corps of Cadets, Lexington, VA

Cadet Corporal, 2009-10
VMI Corps of Cadets, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, VA

- Created cadet regiment weekly schedule
- Organized special events (e.g. The Presidential Inaugural Parade - 2009).

Cadre, Rat Challenge – Mountain Climbing and Rappelling Station, 2010-Present
Member, VMI Strength and Physical Fitness Club, 2010 - Present
Member, VMI Triathlon Club, 2010 - Present
Member, VMI International Club, 2009 - 2010

HONORS & AWARDS

- Tau Beta Pi Engineering Honor Society
- Phi Eta Sigma Freshman Honor Society
- Highest GPA Award in the Civil Engineering Program (Sophomore Year)