



FSU Career Info Sheet

Application Letters & Resumes

Application letters

A letter of application for a position should always be sent with a copy of your Resume. The more that you know about the job and the company that you're applying to, the better and more relevant your application will be.

Your application letter should:

- Be a formal, business style letter, preferably no longer than one page
- Be addressed to the correct person (try to find out the person's name rather than addressing it to Dear Sir/Madam)
- Tell the reader which position you're interested in and why
- Tell the reader why you believe that you are the best person for the position (back this up with some solid reasons)
- Address the selection criteria. Applicants who don't address selection criteria usually don't get an interview. Treat each criterion as a question that needs to be answered, giving examples wherever possible
- Be typed on A4 size paper. It should only be hand written if the employer specifies this
- Let the reader know your Resume is enclosed
- Include lots of action verbs, such as *organised*, *supervised* and *participated in*
- Not have any spelling or grammatical mistakes

A Resume

Your Resume is your key marketing tool. It is your way of displaying the skills and abilities that you have that are relevant to a particular position.

A Resume should contain a brief summary of your:

- Personal details, including your name, address and telephone number
- Education and training
- Employment history
- Relevant skills, knowledge and interests
- Referee details

Your Resume does not have to contain details regarding:

- Your age/date of birth
- Marital status
- Family details
- Gender

Four Keys to a Good Resume

1. The key purpose of a Resume is to get you an interview. Many people make the mistake of seeing their Resume as a historic record of what they've done in the past. It is much better to view your Resume as a marketing tool, presenting the reader with the sort of information that will inspire them to interview you.

2. The person looking at your Resume is likely to only look at it for a few seconds. This means that your Resume needs to be presented in such a way that someone reading it will be able to know a lot about you after only reading for a few seconds.
3. It is really difficult to create a good Resume in a very short period of time. Job opportunities in the finance sector tend to appear and disappear very quickly. It is worth having an up-to-date Resume on disk even if you're not currently looking for a job.
4. There is no such thing as a perfect Resume. Rather than trying to create a perfect document, it is much better to have your Resume on disk and make improvements to it on a regular basis. Take time to find the layout that best displays your skills and qualities and makes the reader want to read it.

Putting together a Resume

A well-presented Resume is one that is on good quality, plain white paper, produced using a computer and laser printer, with printing only on one side of the page. There should be no spelling mistakes, the style should be consistent and the pages not too crowded. Ideally, the Resume should be no more than four to five pages long.

Keep it short, easy to read, interesting and relevant. Don't put in anything that isn't relevant to the position you're applying for. Try to make the first page of your Resume especially relevant. Some people use this page to list past achievements relating them directly to the position.

Only include information in your Resume that the employer will want to know. The best way of predicting what the employer wants to know is by carefully reading any information that you have about the job, such as the advertisement and the position description. Contact anyone you know that has worked for the company to find out as much as you can about the way it operates and what its priorities are. Looking at annual reports or publicity produced by the organisation, or looking for information about the company on the Internet can provide you with excellent information. You can also ring the company to find out what it does and what it considers to be its strengths and weaknesses.

At the end of the Resume should be the names of at least two referees. Referees are people that can be contacted by an employer to discuss your work, academic and/or personal qualities. It is important that you ask your referees whether they want to be your referees. Their names and addresses need to be current and they need to know whenever you apply for a job. If you haven't been able to contact your referees, it's acceptable to state at the end of your Resume that '*referee details will be provided on request.*'

The right style for your Resume

A Chronological Resume involves listing your education and work experience starting from the most recent. This type of Resume is most appropriate when you are seeking to move to a new position in the field you're currently working in. In this type of Resume it's extremely important to focus on your past achievements. Rather than listing the duties or tasks that you undertook in each position, it is better to list your key achievements. For example, rather than listing the duty which was to 'sell insurance products' it is better to state what you actually achieved, e.g., 'increased sales of insurance products by 20% over a 12 month period.'

A Functional Resume involves clustering your experience under headings that relate to skills, knowledge and other attributes that would be of interest to the employer, for example, Leadership Skills, Communication Skills, Research Skills, Financial Skills. This type of Resume is most appropriate when moving into a new area that's significantly different from the field you're currently working in. A functional Resume should have some sort of statement of your career goals and the skills you'd like to use in the future that helps to explain to a prospective employer why you want this career change.

Choosing the best words

After writing your Resume spend some time choosing the best words. Your Resume should show that you are professional, positive and confident. Wherever possible use active words that describe you and your achievements, for example – *I co-ordinated, participated in, achieved, completed, created, invented, supervised, organised.*

Check that your Resume is communicating what you want it to say by showing it to someone – perhaps a co-worker, friend, careers advisor or a person that is involved in recruiting staff.

First impressions count

Always attach a covering letter to the Resume and provide employers with a printed (rather than photocopied) Resume. If you need to fax your Resume, follow it up with a printed copy in the mail.

Don't forget to keep a copy of your Resume and application letter for your reference when asked to attend an interview.

For more information contact the FSU Careers Centre on 1300 366 378 or careerscentre@fsunion.org.au