

# UNC Resume Guide for Students

Welcome to the official UNC Resume Guide. This document is designed to help students create effective, professional resumes tailored to various industries and job opportunities.

Use the Table of Contents below to navigate to the sections that matter most to you. Remember, your resume is a living document—plan to revise it regularly as your skills and experiences expand. This guide is meant to be a starting point.

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## 1. Resume Writing Basics

A resume is a strategic marketing document—not just a job history. It’s meant to highlight your qualifications, skills, and experiences that **align with the position you’re targeting**. Be sure to individualize your resume for each position.

Think of your resume as a living document that evolves as you grow. You should update it regularly to reflect your most relevant and recent experiences.

Basic guidelines to keep in mind:

- Keep it to one page (unless you have extensive relevant experience).
- Use clean, readable fonts (Arial, Calibri, Times New Roman, Helvetica) between 10–12 pt.
- Save as PDF with a professional file name: Last\_First\_Resume.pdf
- Be consistent throughout your entire document and be mindful of bolding and over-bolding
- Include: Contact Info, Education, Experience, Leadership/Volunteer Roles, Certifications.
- Do not include: Headshots, photos, excessive colors or designs, or unrelated personal details.
- Proofread! Double-check for typos and verify company names and formatting.

You can (and should!) adjust section headings to match your experience and make your resume more relevant to your goals. Use headings that reflect what you’ve actually done, especially if you don’t have traditional job titles.

- Instead of "Experience," try: Relevant Experience, Marketing Experience, Clinical Experience, Theatre & Performance Experience etc.
- Instead of "Leadership," try: Campus Involvement, Leadership & Service, Student Organizations, Community Engagement etc.
- Instead of "Volunteer," try: Service Experience, Community Impact, Outreach Work, Civic Engagement etc.

- Other Custom Sections: Research & Projects, Creative Work, Study Abroad & Global Learning, Technical Skills & Tools etc.

Tip: Consider building a 'Master Resume' with all your experience, then tailor a version of it to then create a tailored version for each job to which you apply. A 'Master Resume' can also be called a 'Kitchen Sink Resume' or 'Comprehensive Resume'

Use tools like [Jobscan](#) to compare your resume to a specific job description and optimize your keyword usage. Alternatively, try using [Big Interview](#) and click on 'Big Resume' to scan your resume and provide AI feedback!

## 2. Crafting Resume Bullet Points

Resume bullet points are the core of your resume—they demonstrate what you've accomplished, how you've contributed, and the value you can bring to a future employer. Your goal is to show results and impact, not just list responsibilities.

Best practices for crafting bullet points include:

1. Begin with a strong action verb (e.g., Managed, Designed, Led). [Action Verbs](#)
2. Avoid vague phrases like 'Responsible for' or 'Helped with'.
3. Eliminate personal pronouns ('I', 'my') and complete sentences.
4. Quantify your accomplishments (e.g., 'Increased attendance by 30%').
5. Tailor each bullet to the job or internship description.

Before-and-after examples are helpful to illustrate how to transform a generic duty into an impactful statement:

✗ Before: Helped organize campus events

✓ After: Organized and promoted 5 campus events, boosting attendance by 40%

This small change shows not just what you did, but how well you did it. You want your bullet points to leave an impression!

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT can help you brainstorm bullet points, improve clarity, and match your resume to a job description. These tools can accelerate your writing process and help you be efficient and strategic.

### **Example Prompts for AI:**

When turning your responsibilities into impacts, try using this prompt:

- Transform this bullet into an accomplishment using action verbs and measurable outcomes where possible:  
*[paste bullet]*

When translating skills from campus jobs, clubs or classroom projects, try using this prompt:

- What transferable skills does this bullet demonstrate for a role in [marketing / healthcare / business / policy / tech]?

When aligning your resume to the job description, try this prompt:

- Compare my resume bullet with this job description and suggest a more aligned version using similar language without copying directly.

Resume bullet: [paste]

Job description: [paste]

When changing the tone to sound less robotic, try this prompt:

- Review this resume bullet for professionalism and tone. Suggest a version that sounds confident but not exaggerated:  
[paste bullet]

### Remember: Prompt = Context + Goal + Content

Example: I'm applying for an internship in public health. Rewrite this resume bullet to highlight research and communication skills while keeping it truthful:

[paste bullet]

### Ways AI Can Help:

- Identify top skills from a job description (Prompt: 'What skills are required for this job?')
- Rewrite bullets using industry-specific language (Prompt: 'Revise this bullet for a marketing job: ...')
- Generate bullet points from raw experience descriptions
- Suggest action verbs (Prompt: 'Suggest stronger verbs for: managed a team...')
- Proofread grammar and suggest formatting edits

Remember: AI should support your writing—not replace your voice. Always review suggestions to ensure accuracy and authenticity.

Check out UNC's AI resources here: <https://its.unc.edu/ai/copilot/>

[Generative AI Resources for Learning - Generative AI at UNC \(https://ai.unc.edu/learning/\)](https://ai.unc.edu/learning/)

## 3. Using Resume Bullet Point Frameworks

To make writing bullet points easier and more effective, try using a framework to structure your thoughts. Frameworks can help you highlight not only what you did, but how and why it mattered. Below are three common models:

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>SAIL Framework</b> | <b>S</b> kills + <b>A</b> chievement + <b>I</b> mpact + <b>L</b> earning<br><b>Example:</b> “Designed promotional materials for a student club (Skills), distributing 1,000+ flyers (Achievement), resulting in a 50% increase in meeting attendance (Impact), which strengthening public speaking skills through presentations and outreach (Learning).” |
| <b>XYZ Framework</b>  | <b>X</b> = What You Accomplished<br><b>Y</b> = Measurable Result<br><b>Z</b> = How You Did It<br><b>Example:</b> “Improved student engagement (X) by increasing club event attendance by 30 students (Y) through launching a new social media campaign (Z).”  |
| <b>WHO Framework</b>  | <b>W</b> hat You Did + <b>H</b> ow You Did It + <b>O</b> utcome   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <b>Example:</b> “Organized a campus-wide volunteer program (What) by coordinating with community partners (How), resulting in 200+ hours of service contributed (Outcome).” |
|--|---|

Choose the framework that works best for the story you're telling. The key is to highlight both the action and the result.

## 4. Incorporating Keywords and Skills

In today's job market, many employers use Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) to scan resumes before they reach a human. To increase your chances of passing the ATS scan, it's essential to include the right keywords—terms that appear in the job posting.

### **What are Keywords?**

Keywords are words or phrases that reflect the skills, qualifications, tools, or knowledge required for a role. These may include:

- Job titles: e.g., Marketing Intern, Data Analyst, Sales Associate
- Skills: e.g., Social Media Strategy, Financial Modeling
- Certifications: e.g., CPA, Google Analytics Certified
- Software/Tools: e.g., Python, Tableau, Adobe Creative Suite
- Action verbs: e.g., Led, Managed, Designed, Analyzed

### **Where to Include Keywords**

- In your resume summary (if used)
- In bullet points under each role
- In your Skills section
- In certifications or technical proficiencies

Make sure your language matches the job description exactly. For example, if the posting says 'Project Management,' use that phrase—not just 'Managed Projects.'

### **Hard Skills vs. Soft Skills**

- [Hard Skills](#) (Technical Skills): Measurable and job-specific (e.g., Excel, SQL, Budgeting)
- Soft Skills (Interpersonal Skills): Personal attributes that help you work well with others (e.g., Leadership, communication, collaboration, customer service)

## 5. CV vs Resume: When and How to Use Each

A resume and a Curriculum Vitae (CV) serve different purposes. Understanding when to use each is important, especially for students considering research, academia, or graduate school.

### **Resume:**

- Typically 1 page (2 pages max)
- Used for job and internship applications
- Highlights key skills, experiences, and achievements
- Tailored to each position

## **CV (Curriculum Vitae):**

- No length limit
- Used for academic, research, and some international jobs
- Includes education, publications, presentations, research, grants, and scholarly achievements
- Rarely tailored—intended to be comprehensive

If you are applying to graduate school, fellowships, or research roles, you may be asked to submit a CV instead of a resume. For most internships or industry jobs, a resume is the right choice.

## **6. Resume vs CV: How to Convert Between Them**

A resume and CV are not longer/shorter versions of the same document. They serve different audiences and purposes. Converting one into the other means changing what you prioritize rather than adding or omitting pages.

### **Converting Resume to CV**

- Expand your document to include full academic and professional history, adding sections such as Research Experience, Publications or Presentations, Relevant Coursework, Certifications, Teaching Experience, Honors and Awards, and Professional Affiliations. A CV should contain your complete employment history.
- Rewrite bullets to emphasize scope, methods, and subject matter expertise. Move away from accomplished-driven language (“increased,” “improved,” “achieved”) to descriptive language that explains what you studied, how you conducted your work, and what knowledge or skills you developed through the experience.

### **Converting CV to Resume**

- Select only the most relevant experiences that demonstrate skills needed for the job and remove content that does not directly support the position, such as listing coursework, conference attendance, or highly technical research details that are not meaningful to an industry employer.
- Your language should be skills-based. Focus on what you did, how you contributed, and what result/value/outcome it created (for a team, project, or organization), rather than the theoretical framework or research methodology behind the work.

## **7. Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) and Resume Formatting**

An ATS is a software system used by employers to manage and screen job applications. These systems scan resumes for keywords and formatting to determine if a candidate meets the job criteria.

### **Tips to Optimize for ATS:**

- Use standard fonts like Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman in 10–12 pt size.
- Avoid using tables, columns, graphics, or text boxes.
- Use bold section headings (e.g., EXPERIENCE, EDUCATION).
- Save and submit your resume as a .docx or simple PDF file.
- Do not place content in headers or footers—ATS may not read it.
- Use exact terms from the job description (e.g., 'Certified Public Accountant' and 'CPA').
- Avoid keyword stuffing—ensure keywords are integrated naturally.

## **8. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

- **Q: How long should my resume be?**

A: One page is standard for students. If you have extensive relevant experience (e.g., military, industry work), two pages may be acceptable.

- **Q: What if my application states that I can submit either a resume or a CV?**

A: If an employer says “resume or CV,” choose based on the field and the role rather than personal preference.

- **Q: Where should the Education section go?**

A: Place it at the top if you're a student or recent graduate. Include degree, major, university, expected graduation date, GPA (if 3.0+), and honors.

- **Q: What if I have no internship experience?**

A: Use class projects, part-time jobs, volunteer work, and campus involvement. Emphasize transferrable skills.

- **Q: Should I customize my resume for each job?**

A: Yes! Tailoring helps you stand out by matching your skills and experience to each unique role.

- **Q: What if I'm a veteran or non-traditional student?**

A: Highlight leadership and adaptability. Translate military or life experience into transferable industry language.

- **Q: What do different industries look for?**

A: Business: Metrics and leadership. Creative: Portfolios. STEM: Skills and projects. Nonprofit: Service and impact etc.

- **Q: Should I include a summary statement?**

A: Only if it adds value. Use it if changing careers or clarifying your focus.

- **Q: Can I list coursework or skills?**

A: Yes. Especially helpful if you're newer to the field.

- **Q: Is it okay to use a resume template?**

A: Yes—just choose a clean, ATS-friendly one with no graphics.

- **Q: Should I include high school experiences?**

A: Only if you're a first- or second-year student, or the experience is highly relevant.

- **Q: I am graduating soon and seeking a resume review before I apply for positions. Where can I go for support?**

A: Two main options for career support include the UNC Career Center and the UNC Career Hub where you can explore school/program specific career services.

## **9. Additional Resources and Next Steps**

If you're still unsure about your resume, have questions, or want help describing your experiences, we encourage you to make an appointment with your career office. We're here to support you.

Click on this link to go to Career Offices! <https://careerhub.unc.edu/career-resources/find-a-career-office/>

Every student's resume can look a little different depending on their experiences. For example:

- If you're earning a dual degree (like Biology and Public Health), you may want to clearly list both under your Education section and tailor your resume for each field.
- If you've held multiple roles in one organization (e.g., starting as a member and becoming President), list each role with dates and bullets under the same organization to show your growth etc.

These details can make a big difference in how your story comes across—your career office can help you navigate all of them.