

Instructor's Guide

for

Quick Resume and Cover Letter Video

Overview

Today's job market moves at a brisk pace, and you have to act fast in order to win the job of your dreams. That means pulling away from the pack and reaching the job market before the competition. Your ticket to getting noticed first: a professional resume and cover letter.

This video shows job seekers how to prepare an effective resume and cover letter. It coaches viewers through all of the necessary elements and offers tips for making their documents stand out from the crowd. Stopping points are included so that students can work on each section of their resume and cover letter as they are discussed. Emphasis is placed on writing an *effective* resume, not a *perfect* one, so that job seekers can quickly enter the job market. By following the advice presented, students can quickly and easily create documents that will get them noticed and land them more interviews.

The video offers suggestions for activities and group discussions, some of which are also introduced in this instructor's guide. The ultimate goal is to take students step by step through the process of creating these documents and targeting them to each student's specific job objectives.

Presentation Suggestions

Begin the class with a brief discussion about the purpose of resumes and cover letters. What are they used for? What makes one resume better than another? What do they find frustrating about writing their own? Explain that the video they are about to see will help them get past these frustrations.

Point out that resumes and cover letters are used by employers to screen out job candidates. Thus creation of these documents represents a necessary first step in the job search. Because employers are looking for reasons *not* to interview someone, it is important to create documents that are professional looking and free of errors. At the same time, remind students that an effective resume can't get them a job—it can only help to get them an interview. The more time they spend trying to perfect their resume is valuable time they could have been engaged in other aspects of the job search.

When you feel students have begun thinking about the value of resumes and cover letters, give them the **Anticipation Quiz** to complete prior to watching the video. If you wish, allow the students to state their answers and discuss them.

Show the video. Encourage students to take notes or to make changes to the answers they put down for the Anticipation Quiz while watching the video.

At the conclusion of the video, ask students to discuss any changes they made to their answers on the Anticipation Quiz as a result of information they learned. Follow up this discussion with the **Activities**.

Use the **Discussion Questions** to request oral or written responses from students or assign the questions as homework essays.

Give the **Quick Quiz** at the conclusion of class and correct the quizzes as a group.

Assign the **Homework Option** if desired.

Anticipation Quiz

Directions: Answer these questions as completely as possible. You will revise your answers as you watch the video.

1. What are the four basic sections of a resume?
2. What does a “job objective” say?
3. How do you prove your past performance on a resume?
4. How do you end a cover letter?
5. How many errors in spelling and grammar can you get away with in a resume or cover letter?

Answer Key

1. Contact Information, Job Objective, Education and Training, Proof of Past Performance (Work History)
2. A job objective describes your career goals, but phrases them to show what you can offer an employer.
3. Use numbers to quantify your achievements. Emphasize your skills, particularly using any special equipment.
4. Close with an action statement—set up a time and date to follow up or request an interview.
5. Zero. Having no typos or misspellings shows that you care about your work and you pay attention to details.

Activities

Activity #1

Title: Rough Resume Workshop

Format: Small group

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: A copy of each student's resume (whether brought in or completed during the video), pens, paper, and stapler.

Procedure:

1. Divide the class into groups of three or four students each.
2. Have students staple one or two sheets of blank paper to their resume. This will be the comments and corrections page.
3. Have students trade their resumes with each other for peer review. Reviewers should read over the resume carefully and then use the attached blank pages to make comments or suggest corrections. Remind students to be constructive and offer positive suggestions for improvement. Emphasize the need to check for errors in grammar and spelling as well.
4. Give each peer reviewer five minutes to comment on each resume. After five minutes have passed, indicate that group members should trade their resumes again until everyone in the group has had a chance to look over every resume.
5. The attached sheets will provide a starting point for polishing this resume for actual use in a job search.

Activity #2

Title: Customized Cover Letters

Format: Small group

Time: 15-20 minutes

Materials: Paper, pen, 3 x 5 cards

Procedure:

1. Prior to the class meeting, write each of the following on a separate 3 x 5 card:
 - Letter to an employer you don't know but who you were referenced to by a colleague.
 - Letter introducing yourself for a job that has been advertised.
 - Letter introducing yourself to an organization with no current openings.
 - Letter to thank someone for a recent job interview.
 - Letter to recommend the creation of a brand new position within an organization.
2. Have students break into five groups. Give each group one of the five index cards.
3. Tell groups that they need to write an opening paragraph for a cover letter to the situation they have been assigned. This is a group effort. Allow 10-15 minutes.
4. Bring the class back together and have each group read their paragraph. Critique each paragraph based on the tips and recommendations discussed in the video. Does each letter's opening paragraph sound appropriate for the situation? What could the letter have included to make it better? What could the letter have omitted?
5. Once all of the groups have presented their paragraphs, discuss the various ways cover letters can be customized to fit their target audience. What did all the opening paragraphs have in common? Where was their room for variation? How can you customize a cover letter to not only match your specific situation and the person you are writing to, but to your personality as well?

Discussion Questions

1. Technology has changed the way people find jobs. How has it changed the resume creation and distribution process? What are some ways that you use computers or the Internet to make your resume more effective and have it seen by more people?
2. Why are cover letters important? Doesn't a resume tell an employer everything they need to know? What can a cover letter do that a resume can't?
3. The video discusses some optional information you might put on your resume, including recognitions and awards, personal interests, and memberships to organizations. What other kinds of information might you include on a resume, provided it fit the job?

Quick Quiz

***Note:** You may read these questions out loud, allowing time for students to respond, or copy and hand this out as a written exercise. If you read the quiz, write responses on the board/overhead.*

Directions: Indicate whether each statement is true or false, according to the video.

1. It is a good idea to have another person proofread your resume and cover letter.
2. You should avoid writing your cover letter to a specific person.
3. Employers spend an average of 2-3 minutes looking at a resume.
4. Resumes should be no more than 1 or 2 pages long.
5. A resume tells a story of who you are and what you have to offer.
6. You should always include a job objective on a resume.
7. You should use your full name only—no nicknames—in your contact information.
8. Generally you start listing your most current job first and work backwards.
9. Resumes should have very little, if any, white space showing.
10. You should be sure to target your skills and experience to an employer's needs.

Answer Key

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|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. True | 2. False | 3. False | 4. True | 5. True |
| 6. False | 7. True | 8. True | 9. False | 10. True |

Homework Option

Cover letters are most effective when they can be targeted to a specific person in an organization. It also helps in the body of the cover letter to mention anything you know about the organization to show that you understand the its goals and needs. In order to customize your cover letter in this way, you need to do research.

Have your students pick three companies they would be interested in working for (they can use the yellow pages for assistance). Then have them use the Internet to research those companies. In their research they should answer the following questions:

- What does the organization do?
- How long have they been in business?
- What are their strengths?
- What new products or services do they have?
- Who is their main competition?
- Do they have any open jobs posted?
- Who is the hiring authority (the person they address their cover letter to)?