

## The Interactive Résumé

### John Jacob

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### Objective

My objective is to obtain a position with Purdue University for the position of adjunct. I would like to highlight my extensive teaching background as well as the numerous professional development activities in which I have participated.

### Experience

Penn State University  
*First-Year Composition* Instructor  
Fall 2009-Present

St. Cloud State University  
*Introduction to Rhetorical and Analytical Writing* Instructor  
Fall 2008-Spring 2009

St. Cloud State University  
*Introduction to Literature: Tolkien and Medievalism* Intern  
Fall 2008

St. Cloud State University  
*Professional Business Communication* Intern  
Summer 2008

St. Cloud State University  
*First-Year Composition* Supplemental Instructor  
Spring 2008

### Education

Ph.D. in Rhetoric Iowa State University 2009-Present  
M.A. in English St. Cloud State University 2007-2009  
B.A. in English St. Cloud State University 2003-2006

### Honors and Activities

#### Honors:

Q Award for Excellence in Teaching (top 10% instructor) Iowa State University  
2010 Promising Scholar Scholarship Iowa State University  
2010 John Quincy Adams Award for Excellence Penn State University

#### Activities:

Writing Consultant Fall 2010-Present  
Faculty Sponsor: Student Research Colloquium Spring 2009  
Assistant Director of the Writing Center, St. Cloud State University Summer 2008

## Contact Information

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### What Is a Contact Information Section?

A contact section provides employers with essential information so you may be contacted for an interview or to answer questions. Of course, as with the rest of your résumé, you'll want to double-check that all the contact information you include is current and accurate.

Unlike other sections of your résumé, this section does not have a special heading like "Contact Information." Instead, it simply lists the information below at the top of the page:

- your full name
- your permanent address
- your local or campus address (if applicable)
- your phone number(s)
- your e-mail address

You may also include:

- your web address/URL
- your fax number, etc.

Mistyping your phone number could easily cost you an interview! Also, if you list an e-mail address, be sure to check your e-mail regularly or you may miss an important message. A note on emails: if your email is something like "hotguy24@yahoo.com," consider signing up for a more appropriate email address before creating your résumé.

### Sample:

Firstname M. Lastname

Campus Address  
123 Resident Hall  
Anytown, IN 12345  
555-555-5555  
lastname@email.com

Permanent Address  
987 Main Street  
Anytown, IN 12345  
555-555-5555  
<http://webaddress.com>

### How to Design Your Contact Information Section

Employers will probably look first and last at your contact information section, so it's well worth your time to make this section easy-to-read and appealing to the eye. Whatever design choices you make, try to coordinate them with the rest of your résumé ([click here for more information on design](#)). Here are some specific design options:

- **Use page design strategies to present information in a usable format.** For example, to help readers find desired information, you might place your name in a larger font size, center it, boldface it, etc. If you have a permanent and local address, you might want to play with columns.

- **Add a graphic element such as a horizontal line** to help section off your contact information. Some résumés also include tasteful clipart or a simple image in this section.
- **Coordinate with your cover letter.** One way to make your application documents seem like a professional package is to match your cover letter and your résumé. You might do this by creating stationary or a letterhead for both documents. For instance, if you use two columns for your addresses and a double line on your résumé header, you might adapt it for the top of your letter as well.

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## Objective Statement

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Writing objective statements can be one of the most challenging parts of creating an effective résumé. Below, you'll find some strategies and options to help you make the most of yours.

### What Is an Objective Statement?

Immediately below the top section of a résumé (containing your name, address, etc.), there is usually a short section with one of these headings: "objective," "professional objective," "résumé capsule," or "career goals." Most often the objective statement includes 1-3 lines of text, summarizing the position(s) you are applying for and/or your main qualifications. While some writers choose to use a sentence format, many objective statements are simply descriptive phrases with minimal punctuation.

### Why Write an Objective Statement?

Objective statements improve your résumé by helping you:

- emphasize your main qualifications and summarize them for readers
- inform your readers of the position(s) you are seeking and your career goals
- establish your professional identity

### Tailoring for Your Audience

To improve your chances for success, it's always a good idea to tailor your objective statement (as well as your whole résumé and cover letter) to particular organizations and/or positions. This means, for example, calling a position by the name the company uses to describe it. You might even indicate the organization's name in your statement. Strive to match your qualifications with those desired by the organization. If you are unsure what your résumé's readers will be looking for, you'll need to do some research to give your objective statement a competitive edge.

### Questions to Ask

Before drafting or revising your objective statement, you will find it helpful to answer as many of the following questions as possible.

About You	About the Company or Organization
What are your main qualifications (strengths, skills, areas of expertise)?	Which of your qualifications are most desired by your résumé's readers?
What positions (or range of positions) do you seek?	What position titles (or range or positions) are available?
What are your professional goals?	What are some goals of the organization that interest you?
What type of organization or work setting are you interested in?	What types of organizations or work settings are now hiring?

### Being Specific

The most common mistake made in writing objective statements is being too general and vague in describing either the position desired or your qualifications. For example, some objective statements read like this:

An internship allowing me to utilize my knowledge and expertise in different areas.

Such an objective statement raises more questions than it answers: What kind of internship? What knowledge? What kinds of expertise? Which areas? Be as specific as possible in your objective statement to help your readers see what you have to offer "at a glance."

### Common Approaches to Writing the Objective Statement

If you know or want to emphasize...	You might experiment with one or more of these formats...	Samples
a specific position (or two) and your main relevant qualifications	<p>A position as a [name or type of position] allowing me to use my [qualifications]</p> <p>To utilize my [qualifications] as a [position title]</p>	<p>A position as a Support Specialist allowing me to use my skills in the fields of computer science and management information systems</p> <p>To utilize my skills in computer networking as a network specialist.</p>
the field or type of organization you want to work in and your professional goal or your main qualifications	<p>An opportunity to [professional goal] in a [type of organization, work environment, or field]</p> <p>To enter [type of organization, work environment, or field] allowing me to use my [qualifications]</p>	<p>An opportunity to obtain a loan officer position, with eventual advancement to vice president for lending services, in a growth-oriented bank</p> <p>To join an aircraft research team allowing me to apply my knowledge of avionics and aircraft electrical systems</p>
your professional or career goal or an organizational goal	<p>To [professional goal]</p> <p>An opportunity to [professional goal]</p>	<p>To help children and families in troubled situations by utilizing my child protection services background</p> <p>An opportunity to help children and families in</p>

		troubled situations by utilizing my background in child protection services
a specific position desired	[position name]	Technical writer specializing in user documentation

### Some Variations to Try

- Integrate key words and phrases used in the job advertisement(s)
- Play with word choices to fit your strengths and your readers' expectations. You might try:
  - substituting for "use" words like "develop," "apply," or "employ," etc.
  - replacing "allowing me" with "requiring" or "giving me the opportunity," etc.
  - changing "enter" to "join," "pursue," "obtain," "become a member," "contribute," etc.
- Blend two or more of the above generic models or create your own!

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## Experience

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Many job ads call for individuals with relevant experience, and all employers prefer experienced people to inexperienced ones. Your experience section can be the "heart" of your résumé. How can you put your experiences in the best light? Read below for some strategies.

### **What Is an Experience Section?**

An experience section emphasizes your past and present employment and/or your participation in relevant activities. Sometimes this section goes under other names such as the following:

Work Experience  
Professional Experience  
Work History  
Field Work  
Volunteer Work

Feel free to customize your headings for this section, especially if you are writing a tailored résumé. For example, if the job ad calls for someone with editorial experience, you may want to create a section with the heading "Editorial Experience." Even the busiest reader will notice.

Also, you may discover you need more than one section to organize your experiences. For instance, you may want a section for volunteer work and another for your work history or one for technical experience and another for supervisory experience.

The usual content for an experience section includes:

- company or organization and its location
- position title
- dates of employment or involvement
- descriptions of responsibilities and duties

### **Sample:**

Subaru-Isuzu Automotive Inc., Lafayette, Indiana

Security Officer, January 1997 to present

Assisted with loss prevention, access control, fire prevention, and medical response

However, you need not put all this information in this order. For example, if you wish to emphasize the jobs you held rather than the place of employment, you may want to list position titles first.

### Why Write an Experience Section?

An experience section can:

- convince employers your experiences will help you do your job more effectively
- provide evidence of your qualifications
- list and describe your experiences in the most impressive and relevant way possible

### Where Should You Place This Section?

Most people put their experience somewhere in the middle of the page between their objective statement and their activities. If you have significant experiences, you may wish to emphasize them by placing your experience section closer to the top of your page. If your experiences are not obviously relevant, however, you may want to put your experiences beneath, for example, your education section.

### Tailoring for Your Audience

With some research into the company hiring and the position advertised, you will soon get a sense for what your résumé readers will want to see in your experience section.

Analyzing company literature as part of your job search, for example, will reveal qualifications, credentials, organizational goals, current projects, technologies, etc. most relevant to the company. The more you know about the company, the easier it will be to tailor--so be sure to profile the company as part of your job search.

You may tailor your experience section in three main ways:

**1. Select and include only your most relevant experiences:** Based upon your career goals and the qualifications desired by the company, you will likely find that certain experiences are less relevant. For example, if you are applying for civil engineering positions, your part-time work at a fast-food restaurant may not interest your résumé's readers. Why waste the space?

**2. Place your most relevant experiences first:** Since readers are most likely to read information closer to the top of the page, place your most impressive experiences first. If you had an internship at the same company you are applying to for a permanent position, you'll want to make sure your readers know it.

**3. Incorporate keywords used (and values appealed to) in company literature and job descriptions:** If the company, for example, values problem solving or taking the initiative or being a team player, then you should consider working these words into your descriptions.

### Questions to Ask

About You	About the Company or Organization
What past and present experiences do you have--including jobs you've held and positions as a volunteer, intern, student, etc.?	What types of experiences are generally desirable in your field or area of interest?
Which of your experiences are most related to your career goals?	Which experiences are most desired by the company (as listed in job ads and position



How can you "sell" some of your seemingly irrelevant experiences?	descriptions)? Which experiences would the company likely see as plusses?
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### Developing Your Descriptions

As indicated above, the wording of your descriptions should mirror the description in the job advertisement as much as possible. You might do this very deliberately by listing or circling all the keywords or phrases used in company literature and then working them one by one into your résumé as they apply. Or you may choose to describe only those experiences--or aspects of a given experience--that seem most relevant.

Another way to be strategic in your word choice is to use action words. By describing yourself with action words or verbs, past or present tense, you show yourself in action, thus emphasizing your skills ([click here for more information on action verbs](#)). For example, if your description indicates that you "coordinated funeral arrangements for families," you emphasize that you have the ability to coordinate.

### Using Wording to Sell Yourself

To "sell" your work skills and experiences, you'll want to use wording strategically. Here are two pitfalls to avoid when you write descriptions:

- being too brief, not including enough detail
- understating your qualifications, selling yourself short

Using select journalistic questions (who?, what?, why?, where?, when?, how?), you can easily expand your descriptions to include enough detail. Consider the following examples:

Description Before	Questions Asked	Description After Answering the Questions
Tested Equipment	How? What kind?	Conducted compatibility testing and evaluation of mechanical equipment
Planned Activities	What kinds? How? When? For whom?	Planned arts, crafts, activities, and exercises weekly for teenage girls

Make sure your descriptions are carrying their weight for you. Sometimes it helps to re-see your experiences as a professional would. Compare the following examples. Which seems more impressive to you?

Understated	Professional
Answered phone	Acted as liaison between clients and legal staff
Performed various tasks	Developed awareness of library operational procedures
Wiped tables	Created healthy environment for customers and maintained positive public image

### **Making Your Descriptions Parallel**

Since résumé readers are busy, you'll want to do everything you can to make your their job easier. One way to do this is to use parallel structure in your descriptions. If you set up a pattern and stick with it, your readers will be able to process information more quickly.

Notice how all the verbs in the parallel example below "agree" with one another. Because all descriptions are in past tense, readers don't have to struggle to make sense of them. Similarly, if you use present tense verbs or gerunds (-ing words), try to do so consistently ([click here for more information on parallel structure](#)).

### **Not Parallel**

Experience:

- Recorded OSHA regulated documents
- Material purchasing and expediting
- Prepared weekly field payroll
- Responsible for charge orders

### **Parallel**

Experience:

- Recorded OSHA regulated documents
- Conducted material purchasing and expediting
- Prepared weekly field payroll
- Processed charge orders

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## Education

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Education sections vary tremendously on résumés; sometimes they are only a couple lines while other times they span half a page. What's the best way for you to approach yours? Read below for some options.

### What Is an Education Section?

An education section highlights your relevant schooling and academic training. If you have substantial work experience, this section may be very brief and may simply list the information below. If you are a currently enrolled college student or a recent graduate, however, you may want to build this section substantially.

### What Does the Education Section Include?

The education section usually includes information about:

- schools you have attended such as universities and 4-year colleges, junior and community colleges, as well as professional and technical schools (rarely high schools, unless somehow relevant)
- location of schools
- date of graduation, actual or anticipated
- degree(s) earned

Some people choose to withhold their GPA because they feel it is irrelevant or not high enough. If a company specifically requests your GPA, however, you may want to include it regardless. In such cases, not including your GPA may, ironically, call attention to it.

### Sample:

Bachelor of Science in Management  
Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana

May 1999  
GPA: 2.9/4.0

### Why Write an Education Section?

An education section can:

- persuade employers your educational background will help you do your job more effectively
- provide evidence of your qualifications
- foreground your areas of expertise

### Where Should You Place This Section?

Education sections, like experience sections, are usually placed in the middle of a résumé, somewhere between the objective statement and the honors and activities sections.

If your educational background is your strongest qualification or may help your résumé "stand out," then you'll probably want to put it near the top. If you are a recent graduate, this section may be a major focus for recruiters. On the other hand, if your experience

sections are stronger, then you'll probably want to move your education section below them.

### How Do You Build Your Education Section?

If you have the space on your résumé and/or if your educational background is particularly relevant, you may want to expand this section by including some of the content listed below as it applies to your experiences and career goals.

NOTE: If you have enough information, you may wish to turn some of the content below into subsections or even into separate sections. For example, if you know several relevant computer technologies, you might want to list them under the heading "Computer Proficiency" rather than tuck them under your Education section.

Other Content to Consider	Samples
Major/minor grade point average (GPA)	<b>Major GPA:</b> 2.9/4.0 <b>Minor GPA:</b> 3.1/4.0
Major and minor areas of study, concentrations, emphases or specializations	<b>Minor:</b> Management Information Systems <b>Concentration:</b> Professional Writing <b>Emphasis</b> in Individual and Family Development
Special projects	<b>Special Course Project, Business Writing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determined feasibility of upgrading communication technologies in local business</li> </ul> <b>Thesis:</b> "Diversity Training in the Workplace"
Relevant coursework	<b>Relevant Coursework:</b> Structured Programming Client/Server Computing, Object Oriented Programming, Local Area Networks
Familiar computer applications	<b>Computer Literacy:</b> Internet; E-mail; Windows: Microsoft Office; Macintosh: Photoshop
Continuing education courses, programs, training units, etc.	<b>In-House Training Workshops:</b> Diversity Training, Crisis Management
Academic honors	Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy (Magna Cum Laude) Graduated with distinction
Funding	B.S. in Aviation Technology (provided 100% of funding) Full-ride scholarship
Certifications	First Aid Certification Teacher Certification

### Tailoring for Your Audience

To improve the effectiveness of your education section, you will want to know what content the hiring company will most value. You can get a good sense for which educational qualifications are most relevant by analyzing job ads and company literature as part of your job search.

You may tailor your education section in three main ways:

**1. Select and include only your most relevant educational content:** *Based on your career goals and the qualifications called for in job ads, you may choose to include or omit certain kinds of information. For example, if you earned a degree in a very specialized field (one employers may need to know more about) or have taken specific courses directly relevant to the position, then you'll want to include a listing of coursework. However, if your degree is self-explanatory and employers likely will know your more specific credentials, then you may omit this section.*

**2. Emphasize content through placement and design:** *Since the eye is drawn to section headings and the uppermost portion of sections, you may choose to put your most impressive and relevant educational experiences in either (1) their own sections/subsections or (2) near the top of a section. For instance, if you have substantial computer skills or have undertaken a special project, you may choose to put this information in its own section rather than simply list it beneath "Education."*

**3. List most relevant schooling first:** *While you may wish to use reverse chronological order (most recent schooling first), you also have the option of placing your most relevant educational experiences first.*

### Questions to Ask

About You	About the Company or Organization
What institutions, programs, schools, etc. have you attended?	What can you expect the company to know about your degree program, coursework, training background, etc.? What might you need to describe or elaborate?
What educational training beyond traditional schooling and coursework have you had, if any?	What non-traditional educational experiences would the company want to know about?

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## Honors and Activities

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### What Is an Honors and Activities Section?

This section of the résumé highlights the relevant activities you have been involved with and the honors you have received that you could discuss with your prospective employer or that have given you valuable experience or skills.

An honors and activities section might include the following:

- academic awards and scholarships
- membership in campus, national, or international organizations
- leadership positions held in campus, national, or international organizations
- university and community service positions
- date of award or dates of involvement in an activity

### Sample:

Firststar Outstanding Student Scholarship	1998
Copy Editor, Purdue University's student newspaper	August 1999-December 1999
Coach, local middle school soccer team	August 1998-December 1998
Vice President, Golden Key National Honor Society	August 1999-May 2000

### Why Write an Honors and Activities section?

Including an honors and activities section can:

- customize your résumé for specific positions
- provide evidence of your qualifications
- demonstrate that your work has been recognized as of a high quality by others
- provide evidence that you are a well-rounded person
- reflect your values and commitment

### Where Should You Place This Section?

The honors and activities section is generally placed after the education and experience sections of the résumé. Since this section is usually the last one on the résumé, you can include as many or as few honors and activities as space permits.

### How Do You Build Your Honors and Activities Section?

It is best to brainstorm a list of all your honors and activities before you write the honors and activities section of the résumé. You then can choose the most relevant and recent honors and activities from your list. Remember that this section is supposed to help you stand out from the crowd and demonstrate your qualifications for a position; consequently, you may not need or want to include all of the honors and activities from your list on the résumé.

<b>Content to Consider</b>	<b>Samples</b>
Scholarships	Robert C. Byrd Four-year Academic Scholarship 1998-2002  Alfred H. Nolle Scholarship by the Alpha Chi National Honor Society 1997-1998
Academic Honors	Dean's List 1998-present  Who's Who Among College and University Students 2000
Leadership Positions	Phi Kappa Delta (International Speech Honor Society) Vice-President 1999-2000  Secretary of Correspondence of Purdue University's Chapter of the Golden Key Honor Society 1999-2000
Membership in Professional Organizations	Eta Kappa Nu (Electrical Engineering Honor Society) 1998-present
University Service Positions	Freshmen Engineering Academic Counseling 1998-1999  Residence Hall Freshmen Council 1997-1998
Community Service Positions	Boy Scouts of America Assistant Scoutmaster 1997-present  Tippecanoe County Adult Reading Program Tutor 1999-present

### Questions to Ask

<b>About You</b>	<b>About the Company or Organization</b>
What activities have you been involved with in the past and in the present?	What kinds of activities and honors are valued most highly in your field?
Which of your activities and honors are most closely associated with your career goals?	Which of your activities and honors will the company to which you are applying consider most valuable?
What does your involvement in activities, related and unrelated to your career goals, reveal about you and your values? How can you "sell" these activities to an employer?	What are the values considered most important by the company you are applying to or by the field in general?

### **Tailoring for Your Audience**

The activities and honors section of the résumé is a great place to tailor the résumé for specific positions and companies. This section can be customized easily for specific positions since you will probably not include all of your activities and honors but only those that make your résumé stronger. To tailor this section for your audience, you should apply the same principles that you used in tailoring the Experience section of your résumé.

You should:

**1. Select and include only your most relevant experiences:** *Based upon your career goals and the qualifications desired by the company, you will likely find that certain activities and honors are less relevant for specific positions. For example, if you are applying for a mechanical engineering position, your role as a youth leader in a local group may not interest your audience. If you are applying for a teaching position, however, this same activity might be very relevant.*

**2. Place your most relevant experiences first:** *Since readers are most likely to read information closer to the top of the page, place your most impressive experiences first.*

**3. Appeal to your company's values:** *If the company values problem solving, for example, or taking the initiative or being a team player, then be sure to include activities and honors from your list that demonstrate that you possess those skills.*

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