

Professional Application

Whether you are applying for an internship, a job, admission to an institution of higher learning, or the military after high school, completing an *application* will likely be part of the process. You can begin now to identify elements of your experience that you want to highlight to recruiters and hiring managers in your application.

Recruiters are liaisons for organizations like colleges and businesses. They help find people who are a good fit for the organization and present them to hiring managers.

The application process varies depending on what you apply for. By working through aspects of the process as described in this resource, you will be ready for a variety of scenarios.

Resume

Your *ré-su-mé*, a snapshot of your education and work experience, is often the first way potential employers learn about you. Recruiters and employers use your resume to determine whether you are a good candidate for an opportunity.

Even in high school, it is important to create a resume that accurately represents you, your skills, and experience. Consider the purpose of your resume:

- What do I hope to accomplish with my resume?
- Who will see my resume?
- What are the top three items of information I want to communicate with my resume?





Resume Sections

The information in a resume is organized in one of three common formats: chronological, functional, or a combination. While you are gaining experience, you will likely use the chronological format for your resume.

No matter what type of resume you create, use the following common sections to describe your relevant experience:

Section	Recommendations	Prompts
Education	List your education. Consider including details such as GPA, honorary status, or special distinctions.	What classes can you highlight that will showcase your relevant knowledge?
Work	If you worked during high school, list the skills and experience you gained.	How does this experience speak to your professional skills of time management, customer services, or teamwork? What less formal work experience can you share (babysitting, summer farm hand, lawn care)?
Other Experience		
Extracurricular	Share how you were involved outside of class during high school.	Did you serve as a leader, help plan events, or participate on an academic or athletic team? What skills did you develop that will help you in a business setting or workplace?
Volunteer or Service Activity	If you volunteered during high school, describe the experience.	What skills or knowledge did you develop from the experience that make you a stronger candidate?
Non-traditional	Consider including apprenticeships, life-changing travel experiences, unique hobbies, conferences you attended.	How has this experience helped you hone your skills? Why do these experiences help you stand out from others?
Additional	Consider listing related courses or training, special skills, awards and honors.	Have you received awards that would be a testimony to your achievement? What accomplishment are you proud of that does not fall under another category of experience?

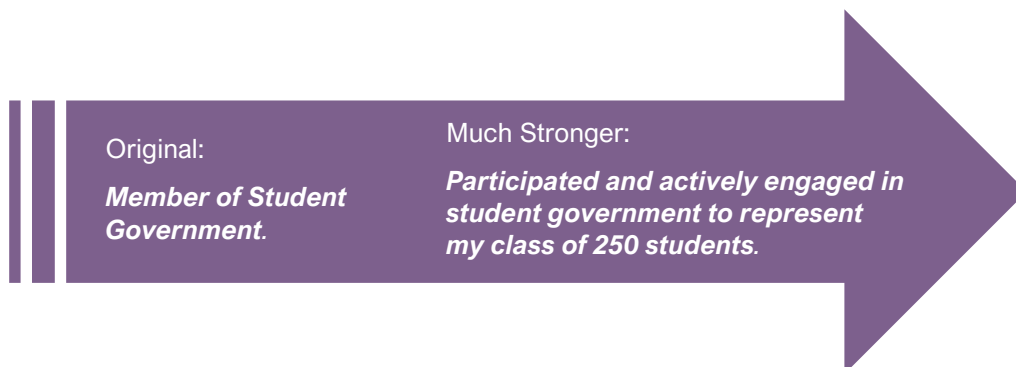
Note For personal safety, do not include your residence address, birth date, or Social Security number in your resume or cover letter.

Resume Tips

The way you word your resume is as important as what you include. Employers are looking for good communicators; your writing style and presentation impact their evaluation of you as a candidate. Learn how to orient your thinking to write a resume that makes the strongest first impression. Walk through the following example to see how to enhance your experience descriptions with active verbs and details.

Enhance Your Resume Wording

Experience Item	Tip and Rationale	Revision
Member of Student Government.	Use strong, “action” language to communicate your experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspire and excite the reader. • Invoke the reader’s confidence in your competency and skill when you do this activity. 	<i>Participate and actively engage in student government.</i>
Participate and actively engage in student government.	Be consistent in the point of view (verb tense). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate what you are currently doing and what you have done in the past. • Accurately represent your experience and demonstrate attention to detail. 	<i>Participated and actively engaged in student government.</i> (If you have graduated, you’re no longer on student council; use past tense.)
Participated and actively engaged in student government.	Be specific and confident about what you accomplished. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further demonstrate your skills. • Provide a full picture of your role and experience. 	<i>Participated and actively engaged in student government to represent my class.</i>
Participated and actively engaged in student government to represent my class.	Use numbers or metrics whenever possible. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate the scale and impact of your experience. 	<i>Participated and actively engaged in student government to represent my class of 250 students.</i>



Original:
Member of Student Government.

Much Stronger:
Participated and actively engaged in student government to represent my class of 250 students.



Professional Resume Example

The following example uses the “combination” resume format. If desired, download [Professional Resume](#) to use as a template.

Your Name

Professional Email Address • Phone number
Website URL

Education

George Washington High School Graduation May 2024

- Participated and actively engaged in student government to represent my class of 250 students.
- X.X GPA

Work Experience

Host, Steak Restaurant June 2023 – Present

- Provide outstanding customer service to 200 customers per night; mitigate conflict and resolve issues with unhappy customers.
- Manage competing demands, including seating guests, running food in collaboration with servers, and bussing tables.

Extracurricular Activity

Captain, High School Track and Field Team September 2022 – May 2024

- Led and inspired a team of 25 athletes during competition while maintaining courteous, fair conduct.
- Managed time while participating in athletic events, traveling to games, and maintaining schoolwork.
- Worked as a team to practice, brainstorm a winning strategy, and demonstrate team pride and unity.

Community Service

Youth Group Leader, Faith Center January 2021 – December 2023

- Planned four annual events to connect 100 young people to their faith and create community.
- Served as a leader and role model to younger participants.
- Collaborated with community leaders to advocate for youth needs and ideas.

Awards and Honors

- Robotics Regional Competition, Third Place January 2022
- Dean’s List Sophomore and Junior Years

Cover Letter

Write a short letter as a “cover” page to your resume or application. Describe who you are and why you would be a good fit for the position. Review the table to understand each component of a powerful cover letter:

Proofread! Always thoroughly proofread your content before you submit it. Ask a mentor to review your letter and resume one last time with a fresh pair of eyes.

Paragraph Type	Content
Introduction	Include the name of the organization and position that you are applying for. Make this paragraph a thesis for your letter, sharing at a high level your skills and experience related to the position.
Body	In one or two paragraphs, share the story of how your experience and skills satisfy the requirements. Include details that set you apart from other candidates—the more memorable, the better!
Extracurricular Experience	If relevant to the position, share how you were involved outside of class during high school.
Conclusion	Restate or summarize your main points—namely, that you are an ideal candidate for this position. Acknowledge and thank the reader for their time to review your cover letter and resume.

The following example includes prompts for the basic cover letter content. You can download [Professional Cover Letter](#) to use as a template.

Your Name

Professional Email Address • Phone number

Website URL

Company Name
Company Address
City, State, Zip
Date

Hello [Contact Name or Title]:

I am submitting my application for the [name of position] at [name of company]. I am a great candidate for this position because of my knowledge and skills in [related areas].

[In one or more paragraphs, share your experience in more depth related to the knowledge and skills that you describe in your opening paragraph; share your interest in the company and why you would be a beneficial fit for them; share what makes you uniquely qualified for this role.]

Because of my unique experience and skills, I am a great candidate for [position] at [name of company]. Thanks for your time and consideration of my qualifications. Please contact me with any questions; I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Signature

Your Name
Professional Email Address
Phone



Interview

Now that you've accomplished the resume and cover letter steps, it's time to prepare for an interview! When offered an interview, confirm the date, time, and location or type of interview—in-person, by phone, or online, for the appointment. Your recruiter may provide information such as the person(s) you will interview with and how long you can expect the meeting to last.

Dress for Success

Employers can determine your strengths and weaknesses, not only by what you include in your resume, but also in how you present yourself. Appropriate professional interview attire depends on the situation or job you're pursuing. Choose attire that you feel represents you professionally. If you don't have a suitable outfit on hand, consider the following options:

- Borrow clothes from someone whose size and sense of style are similar to yours.
- Shop at a thrift store.
- Look for organizations that provide interview clothes at discounted prices.

Dress to Impress: Ask someone who works in a similar type environment, a trusted professional, or a mentor, for more direct guidance on interview etiquette and attire.

For more tips about your attire and environment for an online interview, watch [Preparing for a Virtual Interview](#).

Interview Questions

Following are the 10 most common interview questions, according to one source, *Forbes Magazine*.

Ten Most Common Interview Questions

1. Tell me more about you.
2. What are your greatest strengths?
3. What are your greatest weaknesses?
4. Why do you want to work here?
5. Why should we hire you?
6. Describe a challenge that you dealt with at work or school, and how you handled it.
7. What is your leadership style?
8. Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
9. Describe a leadership experience you have had and what you learned from it.
10. What questions do you have for me?

Although you will never be able to prepare for all the questions an interviewer could possibly ask, it is important to prepare and practice so that you feel confident in your answers.

Respond with Confidence

Interview questions help interviewers understand your mindset. Be prepared for behavioral, communication, opinion, and performance-based questions.

A behavioral interview question asks for an example of when you performed a certain way, for example, “Describe a time that you had to work with a difficult person.”

Consider using the Situation, Task, Action, Result (STAR) response format when you answer a behavioral interview question. The STAR method helps you walk through your example and address the question in a way that showcases your skills.

Practice with a friend, mentor, or loved one to gain confidence and become sure of your responses.



STAR Response Format

STAR Response Example

Question: Tell me about a time you had to handle a difficult situation.

To see how to use the STAR format to answer that question, watch [Virtual Interview with STAR Response](#).



Interviewer



Interviewee



References

After you have aced the interview, many jobs or opportunities ask you to provide references—people who can speak to your ability to do a good job in a position. References should not be friends or family, but rather supervisors, teachers, coaches, faith leaders—people who can objectively speak to your personality and work ethic.

Note Always confirm with someone that they are comfortable serving as a reference for you. Tell them when you list them as a reference for a position, so that they can be prepared and aware that a reference request may be coming.

Personal Statement

Applications often ask you to write about yourself and share your story. Whether you're applying with a higher education institution, the military, or a company, employers and recruiters often request a personal statement to better understand you. The goal is to demonstrate who you are as a person and show why you are a good fit for their organization.

When you create your personal statement, consider these questions:

- What makes you unique? What experiences set you apart from others? What events or circumstances have made you who you are?
- What are you passionate about and what inspires you? Why?
- What people have been great influencers in your story?
- Why do you want this next step in your life?

Your statement should be clear and concise and should leave the audience with an understanding of who you are. Ask multiple trusted sources to read your statement and provide feedback. And as always, proofread, proofread, proofread.

You've Got This

Life after high school is exciting and a bit intimidating. Whatever this next step looks like for you, think strategically, research opportunities, and talk to people you trust as you plan for success. When you're unsure about something, ask questions.

Most importantly, believe in yourself.