



Envision's Resume Workshop for High School

By the time teens reach high school, the idea of a resume may be stressing them out. Without previous job experience, they probably fear their resume is going to be an embarrassment – a nearly blank sheet. By hosting this workshop, you can take the fear and unknown out of the resume process.

Sample Resumes and Tools

In the online portion of this article, we include links to sample resume templates, which you may choose to download and print out, to use as guidelines during the workshop. You can find these templates on sites like About.com, Adventures in Education or Career FAQs. You may also choose to use online resume-building tools such as those found on the Career Kids website or Resume Genius.

Return to the main article for specific links.

Understanding Resume Components

Start by reviewing the basic resume building blocks, as identified below. You may want to find a good sample resume in the links we provided, and print copies for hand-outs.

The Elements of a Resume

- Name and Contact Information
- Summary Statement/Objective
- Education
- Work Experience
- Activities
- Awards
- Skills and Special Strengths

The younger the student, the more they will focus on the last three points, until they have paid work experience under their belts. When hiring teens, prospective employers don't expect a lot of work experience, but they *do* look for experiences that translate to good employee qualities. For example:

- School awards indicate intelligence, diligence and the desire to excel
- Volunteer work indicates a desire to help others
- Participation in clubs and extra-curricular activities indicate energy, drive, involvement, experience working in groups, etc.

Identify Interests

Many high school students are already targeting specific career fields. For those who are still narrowing down their job interests, ask them to match their personal interests with careers. For example, a student who loves animals could be a zookeeper or vet. One who loves computer games might someday be a web designer or graphic artist.



List Experience and Skills

Next, students will make a list of all their activities and accomplishments. Examples:

- On a team or in a club
- On the Yearbook Committee
- Elected as class president
- Frequently cooks dinner for the family
- Served as camp counselor
- Joined a volunteer group
- Earned academic prizes or recognition
- Certified in CPR

Anything they've done, in or out of school, has given them experience and created the foundation of a skillset. They should include any activity that required responsibility, as well as any special achievement.

Through activities like these, students are developing skills without even realizing it: people skills, communication, problem-solving, collaboration, etc. Even babysitting demonstrates patience and responsibility. After they've listed every activity they can think of, ask the students to reflect on what they learned as a result of that activity. At first they may think that playing a video game couldn't help them at all in a job, but you can provide examples that enable them to start thinking in these terms. What computer skills did they learn when they played those games? Is their reaction time faster than when they started? Did they learn to quickly identify both the dangers and the assets presented on the screen?

Most teens have technical/computer skills that may seem second nature to them, but yet might actually be impressive to an adult. Be sure they include all technical and device-related skills in their list. They may also be adept at online research, which could prove to be a valuable skill in some jobs.

Your objective in the workshop is to help students identify and articulate the skills they've already cultivated, as well as plan to fill their experience gaps through future activities. They should maintain a running record of these skills and activities, so when resume (and/or college application) time comes around, they're ready. Their activity record provides a comprehensive list of past experiences, with details on how each prepared them for the task at hand.

All past experience can help us in the future – and make us better potential employees. The trick is to help the employer see it that way, too. And that's what the resume is for.

Review Resume Writing Techniques

Obviously it's important for students' resumes to contain strong content, but good writing is the other key component of a good resume. One goal of the workshop is to familiarize your students with the



special requirements of resume writing. Unlike most other academic writing exercises, resumes are built on brief, incomplete sentences, with a strong focus on action verbs and specific *results*.

A resume is more than a list – it’s a carefully crafted message to an employer about why the applicant would be good at the job and an asset to the company. In essence your students’ resumes are saying, “Here’s what I’ve accomplished and why you should take note.”

On the other hand, the employer is receiving multiple resumes and will seldom read them carefully. Therefore, your students’ resumes must be built for easy scanning, and formatted so that the most important information stands out and is easy to find.

As you conduct your workshop, have your students practice phrasing their accomplishments with popular resume action words, such as “earned, organized, led, developed, operated, enhanced,” etc. Examples of action verb statements:

- Organized neighborhood food drive
- Increased Spanish Club’s membership base
- Selected as captain of the cheerleading squad
- Led group science project
- Developed website for school event or fundraiser

The Muse.com and Adventures in Education provide great action word lists.

Examples of summary statement:

- High school honors student with a genuine love for animals seeking part-time employment with a veterinary hospital, in preparation for veterinary school.
- Avid sports fan with strong organizational skills seeking internship with professional sports team.
- Award-winning student with great people skills and genuine desire to help others. Specific strengths include writing, attention to detail, and motivating peers.

Sample Resume Critique

Education World offers a great resume exercise for high school students, in which they critique two sample resumes, one from "Sally Sad," a high school graduate with little motivation, job experience or professionalism, and the other from "Joe Graduate," a sharp student who has been actively acquiring several skill sets. You can find a full description of this exercise at:

http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/writing-good-resume-career-readiness.shtml

For easy access to this link, return to our Resume Workshop blog online in the Envision Educators’ Resource Center.



Create a Resume: Summer Job or Dream Job

Now it's time for your students to develop an actual resume. You may want to let them choose between a generic resume based on their existing experience, or a "dream job" resume.

Dream Job – Students who decide to write a resume for their dream job will need to conduct research to determine what education, skills and past experience they would need in order to be successful in that career. Then, ask them to craft a list of activities and jobs that would attract an employer seeking to hire someone for that position – and to include those in the "dream resume."

Generic Resume – Students who create a generic resume can use it as the foundation for future job applications, building upon it as they add new skills and experiences. If they feel the initial resume is a little light, tell them to feel free to include "target" future activities, which they hope to be able to accomplish moving forward.

Tailoring the Resume to a Job Posting

If your students have created generic resumes, the final step in the workshop is to practice customizing that resume for specific jobs. Ask them to find an appealing job ad and then analyze how the ad describes the position and necessary qualifications. Students should underline key phrases in the ad that speak to their own skills, experiences and interests. They should then review their generic resume and emphasize those qualifications, making sure they're easy to find, and strongly stated.

A simple way to customize your resume is by editing the summary statement at the top, using specific references or terms found in the job listing. Students can also **bold** their experience or skills that are most relevant to this particular job.

Other Resume Tips for Students

- Keep it short and to the point
- Avoid adjectives – keep your statements objective
- Customize the resume for the specific job to which you're applying
- Make sure your email address and voicemail message are professional, to leave a positive impression when employers respond to you
- If you're applying for a part-time or summer job, include the hours or dates you're available
- Update your resume every time you take on a new job or activity. If you do it immediately, you won't forget.