

Lesson 2

Career Development Portfolio



Key Words

employment application
interview
networking
portfolio
resume
success

What You Will Learn to Do

- Assemble a personalized career portfolio

Linked Core Abilities

- Communicate using verbal, nonverbal, visual, and written techniques
- Take responsibility for your actions and choices

Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Explain the importance of developing and maintaining a career portfolio
- Identify components to include in a career portfolio
- Identify what best represents personal achievements and goals
- Describe documents to include in a career portfolio
- Define the key words contained in this lesson

Introduction

What do you want to become? What are you suited to do? What do you need to do to prepare? These questions and many more like them are what you must try to answer to prepare for your future. This lesson focuses on the career development portfolio, its importance, and its development and maintenance.

The better you prepare, the better your chances of achieving **success** and doing something that you enjoy. A career portfolio is a tool that helps you document evidence of your successes. The portfolio provides information about you and your achievements over time. It is a type of scrapbook that contains evidence of your accomplishments, your educational development, and your career growth.

By maintaining an up-to-date portfolio, you will be able to quickly reference needed information when applying for jobs, colleges, or scholarships.

Key Note Term

success – the gaining of fame or prosperity

What Is a Career Portfolio?

A portfolio is a file that contains an organized collection of your work based on your personality, goals, and aspirations. It provides insight and information on you and your achievements and growth over time. It presents an in-depth picture of your skills and competencies. It also provides a means to reflect on important areas of your life development and the impact of education on future lifestyle and career choices. It contains information that promotes what you want others, specifically future employers and schools, to know about you.

Why Create a Career Portfolio?

There are many good reasons to create and maintain a career development portfolio. A portfolio is tailored to meet your needs and requirements. It serves as your record of achievement. A portfolio will

- **Serve as an ongoing record of your completed work. Your portfolio will contain copies of good work from all of your classes, including information on projects in which you are involved that will be ongoing from year to year. It will provide you with a historical record that you can apply to other projects.**
- **Allow you to evaluate and see your improvement and growth, including how much you have done over the course of a nine-week period, semester or quarter, this year, or all the years of your high school experience.**
- **Serve as evidence of your accomplishments, even if you transfer from one school to another.**
- **Update your parents on your progress.**
- **Furnish you with a record of areas in your growth and development that may require additional work.**

- Help you with the application process for future jobs and/or enrollment in colleges or universities.
- Prepare information for school and job interviews.

Your Personal Career Portfolio

The following sections show you how to create a career development portfolio that suits your own personality, goals, and aspirations. As you begin to use this information, you will be able to see how important pieces of your life fit together so that you can feel confident and optimistic about your future. During the development and use of your career portfolio, you are encouraged to talk with your parents, instructors, counselor, and other supportive people in your life. They can best advise you on the type of information that you should save in your portfolio; information that promotes what you want others to know about you.

Creating Your Career Portfolio

By now, you may be able to pause and reflect on certain things you have learned, your likes and dislikes about them, your personality, your dreams for yourself, the things you wonder about, the things that frustrate you, and especially the things that you like most about yourself. When creating your career development portfolio, apply these thoughts and reflections to the areas of

- Self-knowledge/self-analysis
- Your life roles
- Past, present, and future educational development
- Career exploration and planning

Although portfolios will vary based on the needs of the individual and the audience, there are some basic requirements to all portfolios. They are as follows:

- A personal cover page
- A table of contents
- A personal statement
- A résumé
- Letters of reference—as many as possible
- Transcripts (optional)
- Samples of your school work from different subject areas to include why they are significant
- References and contact information

Key Note Terms

résumé – a short account of one's career and qualifications prepared typically by an applicant for an employment position

networking – meeting people and making contacts; the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions

Your career development portfolio is still missing one essential element: an address book. The names, addresses, and phone numbers found in an address book represent the contacts that a person makes and develops over many years of **networking**. Fellow JROTC cadets, other classmates, teammates, your parents'

friends, your friends' parents, people met at camp, church, or acquaintances made while traveling are contacts that may become an important part of your future. They may be future clients, customers, colleagues, or employers.

Evaluating Your Career Portfolio

A **portfolio** is not complete unless you evaluate it thoroughly. Remember that the portfolio represents you. The following are some questions you should ask yourself to ensure that you have developed a quality product.

- **Are the required documents included?**
- **Have you edited it to make sure that there are no errors?**
- **Is the portfolio neat and organized?**
- **Is the portfolio labeled properly?**
- **Is it pleasing to the eye?**
- **Does it represent you as a person?**

Maintaining Your Career Portfolio

You should review the information in your portfolio at least three times per year and remove anything that is outdated. Your objective is to keep your career development portfolio as responsive to your future needs and interests as possible. This portfolio should be the best record of your school and work accomplishments.

When Should I Begin to Build a Portfolio?

You may be saying to yourself, “Why do I need to worry about creating a portfolio now? I’m not going to apply for jobs until after graduation.” That may be true, but because there are so many uses for portfolios, the time to start building one is now. Remember, a portfolio is a collection of your work and accomplishments, so you need to collect those documents as you complete them.

The wrong time to start building a portfolio is the night before a deadline. Building a professional-looking portfolio takes time. As you are applying for admission and scholarships, you will need to collect specific documents, such as transcripts and test scores. Because you are collecting these documents from various sources, the process may take weeks.

Start today by requesting any documents you may need and by reflecting on what you have done that will demonstrate the kind of person you are. Find the evidence that will prove your abilities.

What Information Can Be Found in a Portfolio?

There isn't just one set of guidelines for assembling and using portfolios. As you go through life, you will need to customize your portfolio depending on its purpose. Not only might the contents change but also the form of the portfolio.

Key Note Term

portfolio – a document that contains a student's achievement over time and provides an in-depth picture of the student's skills and competencies

All portfolios are different depending on their purpose. For example, a person who is using a portfolio for promotion purposes has much different information in the portfolio than a person who is applying to serve in the Peace Corps.

Furthermore, your portfolio may take on different forms. Someone who is applying for a job as a Webmaster for a large corporation would probably choose to create a digital or electronic portfolio; a person applying for an accounting position in the same corporation may have a more traditional portfolio.

Additionally, you may choose to customize your portfolio based on the way you use it. As you are searching for scholarships to apply for, you will want to note not only their required documents but also the values they desire. When you are aware of your audience and their expectations, it is easy to tailor your work to their desires. This is not to say that you will lie in your portfolio, but rather that you will emphasize some skills or accomplishments over others, and you may even choose not to include some material.

For example, if you are applying for a scholarship based on academic merit, you would naturally want to showcase achievements in that area. However, if you are applying for a scholarship based on service to the community, you would want to discuss how you've volunteered at the local Boys and Girls Club, led a campaign to introduce a recycling program in your neighborhood, and participated in a fundraiser for juvenile diabetes. See Table 9.2.1 for questions you should consider when customizing your portfolio.

Table 9.2.1: Customize Your Portfolio

Purpose	Why are you creating this portfolio?	Application to a particular school or academic program? Is it for a job? A scholarship? An award?
Audience	Who will be reading this portfolio?	Will they be supervisors? A scholarship committee made up of faculty, staff, and students? Peers? Faculty? Community members?
Format	How should I present this information?	Should it be presented in a notebook? A folder? Electronically?
Required	Have I included all the required documents that have been requested?	Can I, or should I, include other relevant documents? Will I be penalized for including additional documents? Have the documents been revised or updated?
Other Information	What information should be contained in a cover letter that explains the portfolio?	Do I need multiple copies of the portfolio? Who are the individuals I can contact if I have questions?

You may feel like you have little to put in your portfolio at this time. After all, perhaps you've never had a paying job or won any state competitions. Don't let that stop you. If you've been actively participating in academics and in your school activities, you probably have plenty to include. The following are suggestions of what to include in your personal portfolio, which is dependent on its purpose and audience.

- **A copy of your personal mission statement and long- and short-term goals.** An admissions counselor, scholarship committee, or prospective employer would already know a great deal about you and what you value by reading your personal mission statement. Having stated goals and a plan of action for reaching those goals impresses others. It shows you have reflected on what is important to you (your values) and made decisions about how to live your life according to those values.
- **A copy of your résumé.** Even though you may not have had many paying jobs, you should include those you have held, as well as any volunteering you have done and projects you have worked on for organizations you belong to. For example, if you were the recording secretary for an organization for two years, you should list that. It demonstrates your commitment to the organization, as well as your leadership potential, organizational skills, and communication skills. Your résumé doesn't need to be elaborate, but it does need to be clearly written so that others can glean information about you from it.
- **Copies of transcripts, your diploma, and any certifications you have earned.** This information would be appropriate when applying for admission and scholarships; however, it might not always be appropriate. Use your best judgment when including this information.
- **Copies of any awards you have received.** If needed, include an explanation about the award. Often the award itself is explanation enough and is telling evidence of your personal character and abilities.
- **Copies of recommendation letters.** If you have excelled in particular classes or have done exceptional work for an individual, consider asking for a letter of recommendation. These letters could be rather general letters that describe the relationship you have with the individual (this person's student for two years, for instance), a description of the work you have accomplished, your skills, and general information about your character. If you need specific information for a specific purpose, don't hesitate to tell the person so the letter can be most effective.
- **Copies of names of references and their contact information.** References are people who will vouch for you and your skills. They may be contacted and asked specific questions about your abilities. Make sure the contact information—phone numbers, mailing address, e-mail address—is kept current. Also make sure you get permission to use them as references. It is an uncomfortable situation for someone to be called and asked to give a reference when that person is not expecting it. The opposite is also true: If the person named as reference is expecting to be called, he or she can be prepared to discuss your achievements and give a strong, positive profile of you.
- **Copies of your work samples.** Admissions counselors, scholarship committees, and prospective employers often want specific examples of work you have completed. Outstanding writing samples are very helpful, so you might consider including a copy of an essay or article you wrote. Group projects are also appropriate if you include a description of your participation and leadership in the project. Also consider including a piece of work that demonstrates your level of critical and creative thinking. Perhaps you designed an advertising campaign for your yearbook. Include copies of some of the work you created.

- **Any other requested information or materials that will showcase your skills.** For example, if you are planning on majoring in early childhood education, you would want to find a way to demonstrate your skills in working with children. You might write a summary of your experiences that describes how you've learned to effectively manage caring for children of various ages, how you've learned to solve problems, and how you completed a study on children's nutrition and snacks.

Your portfolio might look a little different every time you use it. Keep in mind the purpose of the portfolio when you are selecting items to include in it.

The following are some other suggestions to keep in mind:

- **Use cover letters.** If you are sending your portfolio to someone, include a cover letter that explains why you are sending the portfolio and a brief description that highlights the contents.
- **Put your materials in a logical order.** If you are responding to a specific scholarship application that asks for specific materials, put the materials in the order in which they are listed on the application.
- **Include the appropriate information and the appropriate amount of information.** You want the person reviewing your portfolio to get a clear and complete profile of you, but you don't want to overwhelm that person. If you make him or her wade through excessive information, that person may not bother to look at any of it. Be complete, but don't go over the limit.
- **Organize your materials.** If you include a great deal of information, find a way to make it accessible. For example, you might include tabs or staple sections separately.
- **Keep your materials current.** As you grow as a student, the work you produce will reflect that growth. Your thinking, writing, and leadership skills will strengthen, and you want the work in your portfolio to reflect that growth. Exchange your old examples for new ones.
- **Keep your references current.** For example, as you eventually move through college and get ready to enter the job market, you will replace the letter from your high school forensics coach with a letter from a college instructor. Likewise, when you work for different employers, always ask them for letters of recommendation or for permission to use them as references.
- **Make sure your portfolio looks neat and professional.** With today's easy access to computers, there really isn't a reason to include handwritten cover letters, resumes, or other information. This will be especially true when you approach graduation from college and will use your portfolio in the job market.
- **Get feedback.** Have your portfolio critiqued by an individual who can give you good advice. The process of assembling a portfolio is much the same as writing an essay. You should go through the process of having the portfolio critiqued and revised in order to present a high-quality profile of yourself.

Building a Portfolio

Do you remember the old adage, "Rome wasn't built in a day"? The same is true for effective portfolios. You may have tried to write a paper the night before it was due or study for a test an hour before taking it. What was the result? Was the paper the

best it could be? Did you get every question on the test correct? Probably not. Building a strong portfolio also takes time, and like a paper you write for your English class, it probably will need to be revised—possibly more than once.

As you begin to create your portfolio, think of its purpose in general terms. This should be a collection that you can pick and choose from when you are assembling portfolios for specific reasons.

You should probably consider investing in a small file in which you can keep your materials. Most of the time, you will want to send copies of documents, instead of originals, so you should have separate folders for each document. Make sure you mark the original in some way so that you won't accidentally send it away. Keep a few copies of the original ready in case you need to assemble multiple copies of the portfolio at one time. This is especially helpful if you are going to apply for admission to several different colleges or for multiple scholarships.

You should spend some time brainstorming your accomplishments and activities. At this point in the process, don't edit yourself or leave anything out. It's best to gather as much information as possible before you decide what is important and what isn't. When law enforcement agencies are investigating a crime, they are required to collect every type of information possible before they actually present the case. Think of your portfolio as evidence that proves your abilities; you also should collect as much information as possible before presenting your case.

The following are suggestions for collecting information:

- **Fine-tune your personal mission statement, and keep a copy in your files. Even if you don't use it in all the portfolios you send out, having it and using it will keep you focused on your goals.**
- **Get copies of transcripts and test scores from your school.**
- **Begin drafting your résumé. If you don't know how to write a résumé, check with your counselor or English teacher, who should have a packet of information for you. Or you can purchase one of the many how-to books at your local bookstore.**
- **Consider carefully whom you might ask to write a letter of recommendation for you. Choose three or four individuals and talk to them personally about what your goals are and why you would like them to write a letter for you. You might consider asking teachers, employers, club or activity sponsors, or adults who know you well. When they have written their letters, be sure to thank them.**
- **List all the awards you have earned and make copies of the certificates that accompany the awards. Don't forget to include community service recognition as well as school activities.**
- **Sort through completed school assignments that demonstrate your academic abilities. Choose ones that emphasize your thinking and writing abilities.**

After you have a collection of materials ready, create a sample portfolio that you can have critiqued. Teachers or counselors who know you well would be good people to ask because they may remember something you've done but haven't included. After they have looked at it and given you suggestions for improvement, begin to revise. If your reviewers are willing to look at it again, let them. When you are happy with the materials, file them away until you need to assemble a portfolio for a specific purpose.

After completing your portfolio, you should be able to reflect on your accomplishments with a sense of pride and confidence. You will discover how valuable your work as a student, volunteer, participant, and leader has been. By creating a portfolio, you showcase not only your accomplishments as an individual but also your qualities and character. This should give you the motivation and self-confidence to move ahead with your life.

Keeping Your Portfolio Strong

Even when you get accepted into college or get the scholarship or job you want, your work with your portfolio won't be over. You should consider your portfolio a living document that needs to steadily grow as you do. As you improve your skills and your thinking and as you participate in new experiences, you should document these accomplishments and add this evidence to your growing portfolio file. And as your older material becomes out-of-date and irrelevant, remove it from your files.

One way to keep your portfolio growing is to create and then take advantage of opportunities that you excel in. For example, you could find a campus organization to participate in and volunteer to be an officer, or you could join a community service organization. And, of course, you could take a co-op, internship, or job that will prepare you for the career you want after college graduation.

Creating a portfolio now will keep you organized and ready for any opportunity that may come your way.

Preparing a Winning Résumé

The purpose of the résumé is to get an interview. Similar to an advertisement, the résumé should attract attention, create interest, describe accomplishments, and provoke action. Brevity is essential; one page is best, and two pages are the limit. The résumé tells the prospective employer what you can do and have done, who you are, and what you know. It also indicates the kind of job you seek. The résumé must provide enough information for the employer to evaluate your qualifications, and it must interest the employer enough so that you will be invited for an interview.

Writing a well-constructed résumé requires that your research be completed before compiling the résumé. You need to keep in mind the type of employer and position as well as the general job requirements in order to tailor your résumé to the specific requirements and personality of the employer. To be most effective, your résumé should be designed to emphasize your background as it relates to the job being sought. It should also look neat, clean, and organized. This means word-processed with no errors and then laser-printed or photocopied on high-quality paper (see Figure 9.2.1).

Portfolios

The portfolio is an expanded résumé. It is usually a folder containing the basic résumé and samples of your work related to the job objective. It is a good idea to be storing work samples now. For instance, a marketing specialist will send a potential

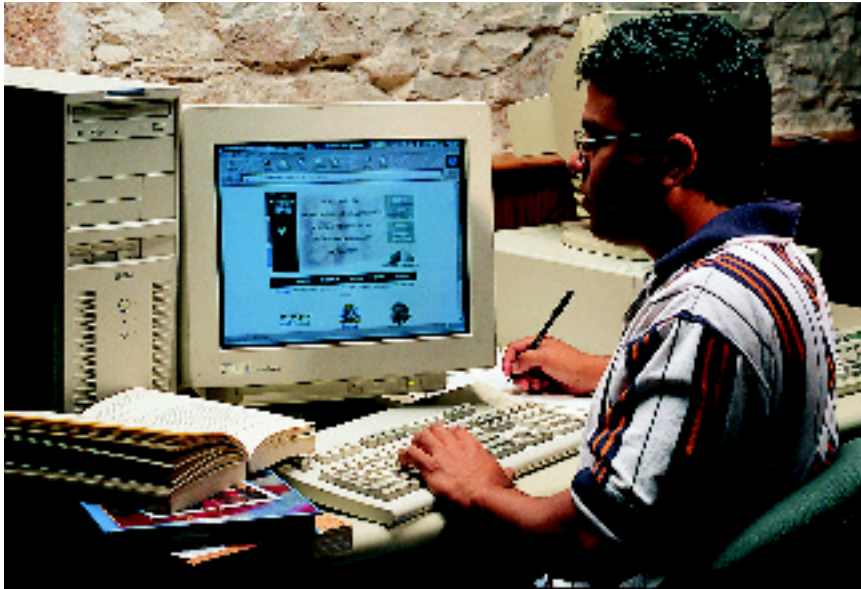


Figure 9.2.1: This student is using the computer and the Internet to develop and proof his résumé.

Courtesy of Bob Daemrich/The Image Works.

employer a résumé along with fliers, brochures, and ads created in past jobs. For a marketing student with limited experience, the folder could include copies of term papers, proposals completed for classes, and homework assignments related to the job objective. Portfolios are useful to have during information interviews, when you are at association meetings and networking, or upon request in an interview.

Preparation for Composing Your Résumé

Although stating an objective is considered optional by some experts (because it can be stated in your cover letter), it is to your advantage to include it on the résumé. In actuality, one résumé should be designed for each job objective. Remember, there are no jobs titled “anything.”

The job objective is a concise and precise statement about the position you are seeking. This may include the type of firm in which you hope to work, such as a small, growing company. A clear objective gives focus to your job search and indicates to an employer that you’ve given serious thought to your career goals. When time does not allow you to develop a résumé for each of several different jobs that interest you, the job objective may be emphasized in the cover letter, which will be discussed at the end of this chapter, and omitted from the résumé.

A job objective is sometimes referred to as a goal, professional objective, position desired, or simply objective. It can be as specific as “community worker,” “personnel assistant,” or “junior programmer”; it can be as general as “management position using administrative, communications, and research skills” or “to work as an administrative assistant in a creative atmosphere and have the opportunity to use my abilities.” The more specific the objective statement the better; a clear objective enables you to focus your résumé more directly on that objective. The effect is pointed, dramatic, and convincing.

A résumé summarizes your particular background as it relates to a specific job. It summarizes your career objectives, education, work experience, special skills, and interests. Visualize a pyramid or triangle with the job objective at the top and everything beneath it supporting that objective.

In writing the rough draft of your résumé, prepare 5" x 3" index cards for each job you've held (see Figure 9.2.2).

The front of your index card should contain the following information:

- **Name, address, phone number of employer, and immediate supervisor at work site**
- **Dates employed (month/year to month/year)**
- **Job title**
- **Skills utilized**

Figure 9.2.2: Front and back of the résumé index card. The format can be easily adapted for use in creating a computer file.

Reprinted from *The Career Fitness Program: Exercising Your Options*, sixth edition, by Diane Sukiennik, William Bendat, and Lisa Raufman (2001), Prentice Hall, Inc.

Elaine's Espresso House
 555 Stevens Circle April 2000–December 2000
 Roanoke, VA 23640
 (540) 555-1211

Supervisor: Joe Smith Position: Bookkeeper & Shift Supervisor

Skills Utilized:
 Related well with continuous flow of people. Attentive to detail; organized; energetic.
 Bilingual—Spanish/English

Functions:

Management	—Coordinated service with customer needs, payroll, scheduled employees.
Communications	—Welcomed guests. Directed staff in performing courteous and rapid service. Responded to and resolved complaints.
Bookkeeping	—Maintained records of financial transactions. Balanced books. Compiled statistical reports.

The back of the card should show the duties divided into functional areas.

When choosing information to include in your résumé, avoid anything that may not be considered in a positive light or that has no relationship to your ability to do the job, such as marital status, number of children, political or religious affiliation, age, photos. When in doubt, leave it out.

Using Action Words

Remember that your writing style communicates the work activity in which you have been involved. Use phrases and document experiences that both involve the reader and make your résumé outstanding and active. The following are basic guidelines for selecting your “power” words:

- **Choose short, clear phrases.**
- **If you use sentences throughout, keep them concise and direct.**
- **Use the acceptable jargon of the work for which you are applying. Remember, you want your prospective employer to *read* your résumé.**
- **Avoid general comments such as “My duties were . . .” or “I worked for . . .” Begin with action words that concisely describe what your tasks were. For example,**
 - **Developed more effective interviewing procedure.**
 - **Evaluated training program for new employees.**
- **List the results of your activities. For example,**
 - **Reduced office filing by 25 percent.**
 - **Developed interview evaluation summary form.**
 - **Increased efficiency in delivering services.**
- **Don’t dilute your action words with too many extraneous activities. Be *selective* and sell your *best* experiences.**
- **Target your words to the employer’s needs.**

The following are examples of action words that could be used in your résumé:

accomplished	evaluated	negotiated
achieved	expanded	organized
analyzed	facilitated	oriented
arranged	guided	planned
built	implemented	processed
controlled	improved	produced
created	increased	proved
demonstrated	initiated	raised profits
designed	inspired	reduced costs
developed	interpreted	researched
directed	invented	sold
effected	led	supervised
encouraged	managed	supported
established	motivated	wrote

Using the Correct Key Phrases

In many large companies, human resources personnel now scan résumés into computer files and databases for storage and later retrieval. According to a poll by a management consulting firm, 31 percent of 435 human resource professionals indicated their firms used résumé banks for recruiting. Many experts say the percentage of large and midsize companies using such programs is far higher, with employers such as The Walt Disney Company and MCI Inc., leading the way in their use of résumé banks. A growing biotechnology firm, Amgen, Inc., receives more than 225 résumés a day, about 60 percent in conventional paper format and 40 percent by e-mail or fax. All end up in an automated tracking system. The manager of employment systems at Amgen, Inc., says automated tracking allows the company to consider all applicants for all available jobs, which is especially important in a growing company. When an opening occurs, employers search their banks and databases for résumés using certain key phrases relevant to the position. For example, a company looking for “B.S., Information Systems, dBase, Lotus 1-2-3” would first retrieve résumés containing these key words.

Depending on the field in which you hope to work and the type of companies to which you will apply, this information may be vital to your writing a résumé that gets retrieved during a key word search. In such cases, the appearance and style of your résumé will be less significant than the manner in which you describe your specific skills; be certain to use concrete nouns to summarize past experience.

References

The expression *References available on request* is usually sufficient on a résumé and is typically placed at the end. Although you don't have to list specific names on the résumé, you should have at least three people in mind who can talk about your work habits, your skills, and your accomplishments. When you are job hunting, ask these people in advance if you may use them as references, informing them of your job objective so they will be prepared if a prospective employer calls. Many college placement centers act as a clearinghouse for the collection of résumés and references. You establish a file, and the center sends out your résumé and references when you make a request. The placement center often makes this service available for alumni, and it may have reciprocal agreements with other colleges across the country.

The Appearance of Your Résumé

The appearance of this document is important. Your résumé must be typed clearly, spaced well, and visually attractive. Remember that many employers skim only the first page of a résumé. Thus, it is crucial that your material be strategically placed so that what is most likely to be read is most relevant to the job desired. Employers have been known to receive hundreds of résumés each day, giving them only minutes to review each one. Therefore, even if you must use two pages, the first is more crucial. Experts advise against using a résumé preparation service. An employer can usually spot a canned résumé and might assume that the applicant lacks initiative or self-confidence. The time you spend writing your résumé will be time well spent. It will give you the opportunity to summarize what you have to offer to an employer.

Personal computers and résumé writing or word processing software can help turn an average-looking résumé into a class act. If possible, store your résumé and cover letter on a floppy disk or in hard-drive memory for easy retrieval and updating. Many duplicating shops have personal computers available for an hourly fee.

Although offset printing was once the preferred method of producing résumés, quick copies made at professional copy centers are now acceptable if they are reproduced on high-quality equipment and are clean and free of smudges. Use an attractive bond paper for these copies of your résumé; usually a neutral color such as ivory or white is best. Copy centers typically have a wide selection of stationery available. It is often useful to have a career counselor, potential employer, family member, or friend review a draft of your résumé before duplicating your final copy. Ask for a careful check of content, format, grammar, spelling, and appearance. Even if you plan to send your résumé electronically via computer, make sure it is completely error-free.

Electronic Résumés

Whether you prepare your résumé yourself or have it prepared professionally, after you have a document you can be proud to send to potential employers, you will need to make slight modifications to create the scannable version. Electronic résumés are entered into a résumé bank, which means they are subject to electronic, as well as human, scanning. You may need to create two or more versions of your résumé, emphasizing various skills and key words. You may also seek assistance from students who have prepared effective résumés (see Figure 9.2.3).

Guidelines for preparing and submitting electronic résumés

When preparing a résumé, keep the following in mind:

- Your résumé will be viewed with 80-character lines and 24 lines to a screen page.
- Use an 8½" x 11" page format. (If you plan to fax it, print it on white paper.)
- Use an easy-to-read typeface (font), such as Times, Helvetica, or Palatino, at a point size of 10 or 12.
- Avoid tabs (use the space key), underlines, boxes, columns, italics, and shading.
- Use boldface type and bullets to emphasize words.
- Use key skill words from a job description or advertisement.
- Some résumé banks offer fill-in-the-blank templates, complete with instructions.
- E-mail a copy of your résumé to yourself to see what it looks like. (You can do this from an Internet site that allows you to create your own résumé using its format.)

You will find this process easier if your résumé is on computer disk. You are then free to copy it and make changes to the copy. This allows you to keep your hard work safe and protected in the original file. If your résumé is prepared professionally, you may also want to have the service prepare an electronic version. It will provide you with a disk containing the file, so you may create the electronic version yourself if you feel competent to do so. The key is to work from a copy, not the original.

Figure 9.2.3: Other students that have been through the process of developing an electronic résumé can be of great assistance.

Courtesy of Loren Santow/Tony Stone Images.



Another reason to have your résumé on disk is that employers and online résumé distribution services often have different requirements for file formats and design specifications. The Web site for an online résumé distribution service or potential employer will provide you with company-specific details; it may also offer assistance in preparing this very important promotional piece about you. The human resources department of a potential employer may also be able to provide you with electronic résumé information.

Although it is highly recommended that your traditional résumé be no more than one page, your electronic résumé may be longer. The computer will easily scan more than one page. It uses all the information on your résumé to determine if your skills match available positions. The computer searches for key words. Those key words can often be found in a general job description matching the position title for which you are applying. They also appear in classified ads and job postings. Or you may be able to glean some during information interviews. Be sure to write your résumé to reflect the skill needs of the position, which is another reason why you may want to prepare multiple versions of your résumé.

Refer to the Guidelines for Preparing and Submitting Electronic Résumés on page 285 for detailed how-to information. You may want to learn more about electronic résumés. Your career center will have many books on the subject, and résumé Internet sites are excellent sources for additional information.

Types of Résumés

There are three general types of résumé: functional, chronological, and combination. Comparing the following two sample work experience entries will give you some idea of the basic difference between functional and chronological résumés, which are referred to in Figure 9.2.4.

The next part of this lesson discusses all three types in detail. The combination résumé, as the name implies, is a combination of functional and chronological.

The Functional Résumé

A functional résumé presents your experience, skills, and job history in terms of the functions you have actually performed rather than as a simple chronological listing of the titles of jobs you have held. Similar to any résumé, it should be tailored to fit the main tasks and competencies required by the job you are seeking. Essentially, you redefine your past experiences according to the functions in the job for which you are applying. You should select and emphasize those activities from previous employment that relate to the specific job sought and deemphasize or omit irrelevant background.

	NAME Address Phone Number
Job Objective	State and describe as specifically as possible. Refer to the <i>Dictionary of Occupational Titles</i> for appropriate descriptive vocabulary.
Education	Depending on your job objective and the amount of education you have had, you may want to place this category directly after Job Objective. (However, if your job experience is more relevant to the position being applied for or if your education is not recent, you will want to list job experience prior to education.) Most recent education should be listed first. Include relevant credentials and licenses. Example: As employers, educational institutions are usually more concerned with appropriate degrees than other employers. Include special workshops, noncredit courses, and self-taught skills when they are appropriate to your job objective.
Experience	Describe <i>functionally</i> (by activities performed) your experience relevant to the particular job for which you are applying; start with the most relevant and go to the less relevant. Include without distinction actual job experience, volunteer experience, your work on class projects, and school and class offices held. Alternatively, show your experience <i>chronologically</i> , listing your most recent professional experience first. There is no need to stress dates unless they indicate that you have been continuously advancing toward this job objective. Use action verbs; do not use full sentences, unless you decide to write your resume as a narrative. Use the <i>Dictionary of Occupational Titles</i> to help you describe accurately what you have done, always keeping in mind how your experience relates to your job objective. Remember to use words and skills related to your job objective to describe yourself in the cover letter and during the interview.
Special Skills	Put this optional category directly after Job Objective if you feel that your professional experience does not adequately reflect the talents you have that best support this job objective. Examples: Facility with numbers, manual dexterity, patience, workshops you have led, writing ability, self-taught skills, language fluency.
References	Available on request. (Use references only if you have space and if the names are well known to potential employers.)

Figure 9.2.4: Résumé guidelines.

Reprinted from *The Career Fitness Program: Exercising Your Options*, sixth edition, by Diane Sukiennik, William Bendat, and Lisa Raufman (2001), Prentice Hall, Inc.

For example, an administrative assistant might perform some administration, communications, and clerical functions. A secretary for an elementary school rewrote his résumé to highlight these categories. To better define the skills used in his secretarial job, he researched the job description of executive secretary and office manager in his school personnel manual and located the description of administrative assistant in the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*. He then compiled his résumé to show how his executive secretarial responsibilities related to the administrative assistant position desired. Assess how your past work or life experience can be described in such categories as marketing, human resources, finance, community services, or research and development.

Suggestions for Job Descriptions

Descriptions in the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* and in some personnel manuals provide a source of helpful phrases and statements to use in describing your own job history and experience. The following two descriptions, for example, would be useful to you in composing a functional résumé for a job in business. However, you would use only relevant sentences, adapting them to your personal background.

Office Manager

- **Coordinates activities of clerical personnel in the organization.**
- **Analyzes and organizes office operations and procedures such as word processing, bookkeeping, preparation of payrolls, flow of correspondence, filing, requisitioning of supplies, and other clerical services.**
- **Evaluates office production, revises procedures, or devises new forms to improve efficiency of work flow.**
- **Establishes uniform correspondence procedures and style practices.**
- **Formulates procedures for systematic retention, protection, retrieval, transfer, and disposal of records.**
- **Plans office layouts and initiates cost reduction programs.**
- **Reviews clerical and personnel records to ensure completeness, accuracy, and timeliness.**
- **Prepares activity reports for guidance of management.**
- **Prepares employee ratings and conducts employee benefits and insurance programs.**
- **Coordinates activities of various clerical departments or workers within department.**

Administrative Assistant

- **Aids executive in staff capacity by coordinating office services such as personnel, budget preparation and control, housekeeping, records control, and special management studies.**
- **Studies management methods in order to improve work flow, simplify reporting procedures, and implement cost reductions.**
- **Analyzes unit operating practices, such as recordkeeping systems, forms control, office layout, suggestion systems, personnel and budgetary requirements, and performance standards, to create new systems or revise established procedures.**
- **Analyzes jobs to delineate position responsibilities for use in wage and salary adjustments, promotions, and evaluation of work flow.**

- **Studies methods of improving work measurements or performance standards.**

If you are applying for a specific job, ask the human resources department for a copy of the job description; then tailor your résumé to the skills listed in that description.

Creating a Functional Résumé

Beginning or returning workers who have had no paid experience often find it particularly hard to make their activities sound transferable to the world of work. They dismiss their experience as academic work or homemaking, which they mistakenly think differs markedly from work in business; however, they usually have been performing business functions without realizing it. People without paid work experience and people returning to the job market after taking time out to be homemakers can persuade employers to recognize their ability and practical experience if they describe their life in categories like the following:

Management

- **Coordinated the multiple activities of five people of different ages and varying interests, keeping within tight schedules and continuous deadlines.**
- **Established priorities for the allocation of available time, resources, and funds.**

Office Procedures

- **Maintained lists of daily appointments, reminders, items to be purchased, people to be called, tasks to be accomplished.**
- **Handled all business and personal correspondence; answered and issued invitations, wrote stores about defective merchandise, made hotel reservations.**

Personnel

- **Recruited, hired, trained, and supervised household staff; negotiated wages.**
- **Motivated children to assume responsibilities and helped them develop self-confidence.**
- **Resolved problems caused by low morale and lack of cooperation.**

Finances

- **Established annual household budget, and monitored costs to stay within expenses.**
- **Balanced the checkbook and reconciled monthly bank statements.**
- **Calculated take-home pay of household staff, made quarterly reports to the government on Social Security taxes withheld.**

Purchasing

- **Undertook comparison shopping for food, clothing, furniture, and equipment, and purchased at various stores at different times, depending on best value.**
- **Planned meals according to savings available at different food stores.**
- **Shopped for insurance and found lower premiums than current coverage, resulting in substantial savings.**

Pros and Cons of the Functional Résumé

The functional résumé is especially useful if you have limited work experience or breaks in your employment record. If you are changing fields, you need not include dates or distinguish paid activities from nonpaid volunteer activities. By omitting or deemphasizing previous employers' names, you downplay any stereotyped assumptions that a prospective employer may make about previous employers (McDonald's, the PTA, a school district). Similarly, highlighting skills and deemphasizing job titles help direct the future employer to the fact that you are someone with specific abilities that may be useful in the present job opening. This format also can emphasize your growth and development.

To use this format effectively, you must be able to identify and write about your achievements. This sometimes requires the assistance of an expert résumé writer. Additionally, some employers may prefer résumés that include exact dates and job titles.

The Chronological Résumé

The chronological résumé is the traditional, most often used résumé style. It lists your work history in reverse chronological order, meaning the most recent position or occupation is listed first. The work history should include dates employed, job title, job duties, and employer's name, address, and telephone number.

Pros and Cons of the Chronological Résumé

The chronological résumé is most useful for people with no breaks in their employment record and for whom each new position indicates continuous advancement or growth. Recent high school and college graduates also find this approach simpler than creating a functional résumé.

As dates tend to dominate the presentation, any breaks or undocumented years of work may stand out. If your present position is not related to the job you desire, you may be eliminated from the competition by employers who feel that current experience is the most important consideration in reviewing résumés. However, if you emphasize skills in your present job that will be important to the new position, this will be less of a problem.

The Combination Résumé

If you have major skills important for success in your desired job in addition to an impressive record of continuous job experience with reputable employers, you can best highlight this double advantage with a combination of the functional and chronological styles of résumé. This combination style usually lists functions followed by years employed with a list of employers. The combination style also satisfies the employer who wants to see the dates that you were actually employed.

Cover Letter Guidelines

One sure way to turn off a prospective employer is to send a résumé with no cover letter. Other turnoffs are sending a form letter addressed to the Personnel Manager or addressing your letter Dear Sir, only to have it received by a female manager.

A cover letter is used to announce your availability and introduce the résumé. It is probably one of the most important self-advertisements you will write.

The cover letter should indicate you have researched the organization and are clearly interested in a position there. Let the person to whom you are writing know what sources you used and what you know about the firm in the first paragraph—to get his or her attention and show your interest.

You may have heard people say, “It’s not what you know, but who you know that counts.” This is only partly true, but nonetheless important. You can often get to know someone with only a little effort. Call or, better yet, visit the organization and talk to people who already hold the job you want. Be tactful and discreet, of course. You’re not trying to take their position from them. Ask about training, environment, salary, and other relevant issues; then in your cover letter, mention you talked with some of the firm’s employees, and these discussions increased your interest. You thereby show the reader you took the initiative to personally visit the company and that you know someone, if only casually.

Basic principles of letter and résumé writing include being self-confident when listing your positive qualities and attributes, writing as one professional to another, and having your materials properly prepared. Figure 9.2.5 shows résumé cover letter guidelines.

	Address City, State Zip Date
Name of Person Company Name Street Address or P.O. Box City, State Zip	
Salutation: (Dear M _____: or Greetings:)	
	The first paragraph should indicate what job you are interested in and how you heard about it. Use the names of contact persons here, if you have any.
Sample Entry	Your employment advertisement in Tuesday’s <i>News Chronicle</i> indicating an opening for an administrative assistant is of special interest to me. Mary Smith, who is employed with your firm, suggested I write to you. I have heard that Rohn Electronics is a growing company and needs dynamic employees who want to learn and contribute to the firm.
	The second paragraph should relate your experience, skills, and background to the particular position. Refer to your enclosed resume for details, and highlight the specific skills and competencies that could be useful to the company.
Sample Entry	During the last five years, I worked as office manager. In this position, I improved office efficiency by investigating and selecting word processing equipment. I understand that your opening includes responsibilities for supervising and coordinating word processing procedures with your home office. I was able to reduce my firm’s operating costs over 30 percent by selecting the best equipment for our purposes.
	The third paragraph should indicate your plans for follow-up contact and that your resume is enclosed.
Sample Entry	I would appreciate the opportunity to apply my skills on behalf of your company. For your examination, I have enclosed a resume indicating my education and work experience. I will call your office early next week to determine a convenient time for an appointment to further discuss possible employment opportunities.
Sincerely,	NOTE: Don’t forget to sign the letter.
Your first and last name Enclosure (or Attachment)	

Figure 9.2.5: Résumé cover letter guidelines.

Reprinted from *The Career Fitness Program: Exercising Your Options*, sixth edition, by Diane Sukiennik, William Bendat, and Lisa Raufman (2001), Prentice Hall, Inc.

If at all possible, address your letter to a specific person, with the name spelled correctly and with the proper title. These details count. Your opening paragraph should contain the “hook.” Arouse some work-related interest. Explain (very briefly) why you are writing. How did you become interested in that company? Summarize what you have to offer. Details of your background can show why you should be considered as a job candidate. The self-appraisal that went into preparation of your résumé tells what you can and like to do and where your strengths and interests lie. Your research on the prospective employer should have uncovered the qualifications needed. If your letter promises a good match—meaning your abilities matched with the company’s needs—you’ve attracted attention.

Keep your letter short and to the point. Refer to your résumé, highlighting relevant experiences and accomplishments that match the firm’s stated needs. Ask for an interview. Indicate when you will be calling to confirm a convenient time for the interview. Let your letter express your individuality but within the context of the employment situation.

The cover letter should be individually typed for each job desired. Always review both cover letter and résumé for good margins, clarity, correct spelling, and accurate typing. Appearance does count.

Application Forms

A final type of form, accepted sometimes as a substitute for a résumé, is an application form. The **employment application** is a form used by most companies to gain necessary information and to register applicants for work (see Figure 9.2.6). This information becomes a guide to determine a person’s suitability for both the company and the job that needs filling. You should observe carefully the following guidelines.

You will probably be asked to fill out an employment application form, usually before the **interview** takes place. With this in mind, it is good practice to arrive at the employment office a little ahead of the time of your interview. Bring along a pen and your résumé or personal data sheet. You will be asked to provide your name, address, training or education, experience, special abilities, and possibly even your hobbies and interests. Practically all application forms request that you state the job you are seeking and the salary you have received in the past. Most firms require an applicant to complete an application form.

Many times the employer wants to make certain rapid comparisons and needs only to review the completed company employment application forms on file. For example, Ms. Ford needed a stenographer who could type fast. She examined many application forms of people who had word processing skills. By referring to the same section each time, she quickly thumbed through dozens of applications, eliminating all candidates who had only average speed. Thus, there was no need for her to examine résumés or read dozens of letters to find out exactly how fast each candidate could type.

Key Note Terms

employment application – a form used in making a request to be considered for a job position

interview – a formal face-to-face meeting, especially one conducted for the assessment of an applicant

Date _____

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

Name _____
 Last First Middle

Address _____
 Street City State Zip

Telephone Number (____) _____ Are you over 17 years of age? Yes No

POSITION WANTED:

Job Title _____ Date Available _____ Salary Desired _____

Check any that apply: Full Time Part Time Day Shift Night Shift

EDUCATION:

Begin with high school; include any military school you may have attended:

NAME OF SCHOOL	LOCATION OF SCHOOL	DEGREE OR COURSE OF STUDY
_____	_____	_____

List any Academic Honors or Professional Associations: _____

WORK EXPERIENCE:

List last three employers. Start with the current or most recent.

Name and Address of Employer _____

Dates Worked _____ Pay _____ Reason for Leaving _____

Job Title _____ Job Description _____

Name and Address of Employer _____

Dates Worked _____ Pay _____ Reason for Leaving _____

Job Title _____ Job Description _____

Name and Address of Employer _____

Dates Worked _____ Pay _____ Reason for Leaving _____

Job Title _____ Job Description _____

Computer Skills (describe) _____ Typing Speed _____ *wpm*
 (if applicable) (if applicable)

Do you have any physical condition or handicap that may limit your ability to perform the job applied for? Yes No
 If yes, what can be done to accommodate your limitation?

Have you ever been convicted of a felony? Yes No If yes, give kind and date.
A conviction will not necessarily disqualify you from employment.

Are you legally entitled to work in the U.S.? Yes No Can you provide proof of citizenship after employment? Yes No

Are you a veteran? Yes No If yes, give dates:

List the names of three references whom we may contact who have knowledge of your skills, talents, or technical knowledge:

(1) _____	(2) _____	(3) _____
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Name and Relationship
 (Supervisor, Teacher, etc.) _____

Address _____

Telephone & Area No. _____

I certify, by my signature below, that any false or omitted important facts in my answers on this application may be cause for dismissal.

Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

Figure 9.2.6: Sample employment application.

Reprinted from *The Career Fitness Program Exercising Your Options*, sixth edition, by Diane Sukiennik, William Bendat, and Lisa Raufman (2001), Prentice Hall, Inc.

Neatness Counts

The way in which an application form has been filled out indicates the applicant's level of neatness, thoroughness, and accuracy. If two applicants seem to have equal qualifications but one form is carelessly filled out, the application itself might tilt the balance in favor of the other applicant. Unless your handwriting is especially clear, print or type all answers. Look for "please print" instructions on the form.

Sometimes you may apply for a job by mail, and a form will be sent to you. The application form should be carefully, completely, neatly, and accurately filled out. You should then return it to the company, and you may also attach a copy of your résumé. When you have completed the application, go over it again. Have you given the information asked? When an item asked for is not applicable, have you written in N/A (not applicable or not available)?

Filling out application forms

1. Fill out the application form in ink or use a typewriter.
2. Answer every question that applies to you. If a question does not apply or is illegal you may write N/A, meaning not applicable, or draw a line through the space to show that you did not overlook the question.
3. Give your complete address, including zip code.
4. Spell correctly. If you aren't sure how to spell a word, use the dictionary or try to use another word with the same meaning.
5. A question on job preference or "job for which you are applying" should be answered with a specific job title or type of work. Do not write "anything." Employers expect you to state clearly what kind of work you can do.
6. Have a prepared list of schools attended and previous employers. Include addresses and dates of employment.
7. Be prepared to list several good references. It is advisable to ask permission of those you plan to list. Good references include
 - a. A recognized community leader
 - b. A former employer or teacher who knows you well
 - c. Friends who are established in business
8. When you write or sign your name on the application, use your formal name, not a nickname. Your first name, middle initial, and last name are usually preferred.
9. Be as neat as possible. Employers expect that your application will be an example of your best work.

Conclusion

This lesson provided various examples of résumés, cover letters, letters of introduction, and application form reminders. If you have not already started on a career development portfolio before this school year, start now! Create a portfolio that is responsive to your future needs and interests. To be complete, it should contain documentation on your goals; educational development; career exploration; planning; and self-analysis. Start today by planning what you want to accomplish along with the how and when you can complete it. Use a portfolio to organize your school accomplishments and career planning and to help you achieve success. Putting the résumé together is now your job. With a little work and some advice from family and friends, you can put together a professional-looking résumé and cover letter that will “wow” a potential employer.

Next, you will be introduced to the many opportunities you have in military careers.

Lesson Review

1. What are the different types of résumés covered in this lesson?
2. Why do you need different résumés for different job applications?
3. What information should you include in a cover letter?
4. What is the point of an employer having you fill out an application, even though you have a résumé?