

# CAREER DEVELOPMENT HANDBOOK

A guide for developing your professional self



Career  
Development  
Center

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## OUR MISSION

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*The Career Development Center at Minnesota State University Moorhead empowers all Dragons to transition from college to career with confidence and competence. We collaborate with students to further their understanding of themselves, their career goals, and the world of work. By providing resources, connections, and support, we inspire students to create a transformational and fulfilling future.*

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## OUR VISION

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*Career everywhere for everyone.*

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## OUR COMMITMENT

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*The MSUM Career Development Center is committed to providing resources and support that will help level the playing field for all Dragons in their transition from college to career. We pledge to foster an inclusive environment where Dragons with diverse experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds feel respected. To do this, we commit to:*

- celebrating the intersectional identities of our students and alumni and gain an understanding of their lived experiences.*
- providing opportunities for students and alumni to expand skills and networks.*
- empowering students and alumni to speak to their abilities and experiences confidently and competently.*
- challenging the processes and practices that create barriers and inequities within the world of work.*
- engaging in professional development and dialogue that moves our staff and services towards greater inclusion.*

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## CONNECT WITH OUR OFFICE

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*Flora Frick 151  
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# CONNECT WITH THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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Whether you're looking for guidance on selecting career planning, need your resume and cover letter reviewed, or need help preparing for an interview, the MSUM Career Development Center is your one-stop-shop for all things professional and career development.

**CONTACT US:** Flora Frick 151 | careers@mnstate.edu | 218.477.2131

## MAKE AN APPOINTMENT ONLINE

### 1. Log in to Handshake

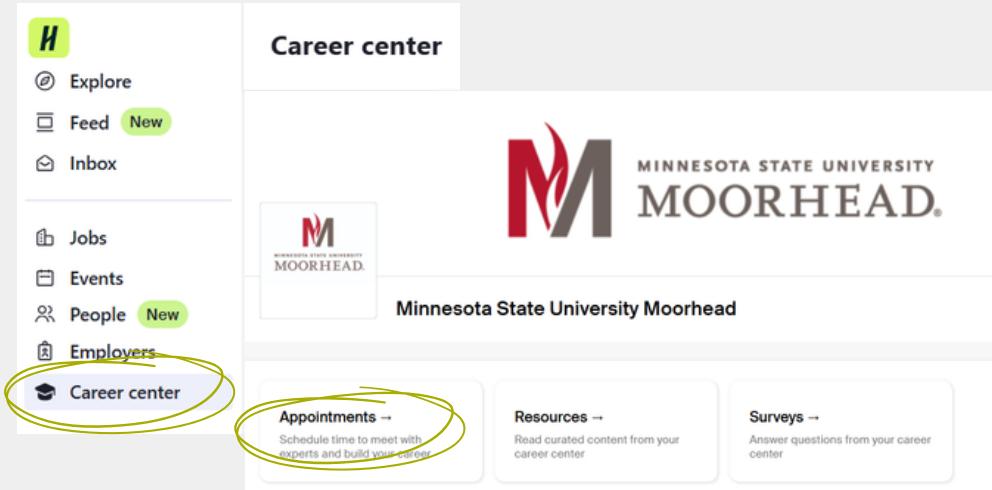
#### On your computer

We have already created an account for you. Go to <https://mnstate.joinhandshake.com> and use your StarID and password to sign in.

#### On your phone

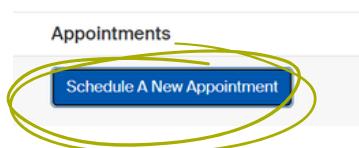
Download the free **Handshake Jobs & New Careers** on your phone's application store and use your student email address (firstname.lastname@go.mnstate.edu) to sign up. You will then get a temporary password emailed to you. Use that to log in.

### 2. Click Career Center on the left menu, then Appointments.



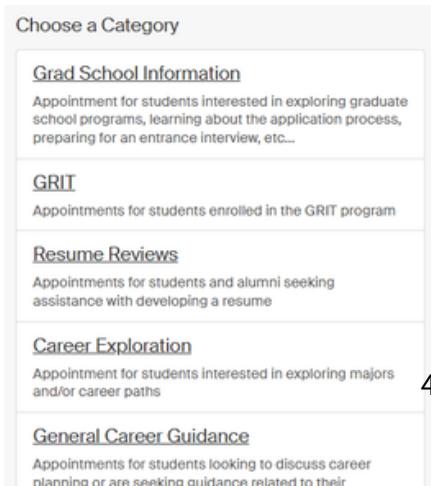
The image shows the Handshake mobile application interface. On the left, a vertical menu bar is visible with the following items: H (highlighted in green), Explore, Feed (with a 'New' badge), Inbox, Jobs, Events, People (with a 'New' badge), Employers, and Career center (which is circled in yellow). The main content area is titled 'Career center' and features the 'MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY MOORHEAD' logo. Below the logo, the text 'Minnesota State University Moorhead' is displayed. There are three buttons at the bottom: 'Appointments' (circled in yellow), 'Resources', and 'Surveys'.

### 3. Click Schedule A New Appointment



The image shows the 'Appointments' section of the Handshake mobile application. A large blue button labeled 'Schedule A New Appointment' is circled in yellow.

### 4. Select your Appointment Type



A list of appointment categories is shown in a sidebar. The categories are: Grad School Information (circled in yellow), GRIT, Resume Reviews, Career Exploration, and General Career Guidance. Each category has a brief description below it.

Choose a Category
<u>Grad School Information</u> Appointment for students interested in exploring graduate school programs, learning about the application process, preparing for an entrance interview, etc...
<u>GRIT</u> Appointments for students enrolled in the GRIT program
<u>Resume Reviews</u> Appointments for students and alumni seeking assistance with developing a resume
<u>Career Exploration</u> Appointment for students interested in exploring majors and/or career paths
<u>General Career Guidance</u> Appointments for students looking to discuss career planning or are seeking guidance related to their

## 5. Select date and then time. See who your appointment is with.

The screenshot shows a weekly calendar for February 2025. The days are listed from Sunday to Saturday. Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Saturday show 'No Appointments Available'. Wednesday and Friday show 'Appointments Available'. Thursday shows 'Appointments Available'. Below the calendar, the date 'Feb 05' is selected. To the right, a 'Time Zone' dropdown is set to 'Central Time (US & Canada)' with the time range '2:15 pm CST - 3:00 pm CST'. At the bottom, it says 'Julie Maahs - Feb 05 - GRIT'.

## 6. Choose appointment medium (in-person or Zoom). Tell us anything else we should know. Then click request.

The screenshot shows the 'Appointment Request Details' form. It includes a note that fields marked with an asterisk (\*) are required. There are two main input fields: one for 'Appointment medium' (with a dropdown placeholder 'Select an Appointment Medium') and one for 'What can we help you with?' (a large text area).

## 7. You will see an appointment confirmation page where you can add comments or cancel if needed.

The screenshot shows the appointment confirmation page. At the top, a green banner says '✓ Appointment was successfully requested.' The page is divided into sections for the 'STAFF MEMBER' (Mackenzie Kruta, krutama@mnstate.edu, Graduate Assistant) and the 'STUDENT' (Sue Bertsch, Alumni). It shows the appointment details: 'Requested by Sue Bertsch', 'HELP REQUESTED: I need help with my resume', and a 'Requested' status. A 'Cancel Appointment' button is available. Below this, there is a 'Comments' section with a text input 'Add a Comment...' and a 'Add Comment' button. At the bottom, a 'CREATE' message says 'You requested an appointment with Mackenzie Kruta' and 'Sue Bertsch - Thursday, February 21st 2019 2:09 pm'. The sidebar on the left lists 'Surveys' and other survey status: 'Student pre-appointment survey: N/A', 'Staff member survey: N/A', and 'Student post-appointment survey: Pending'.

# YOUR ROADMAP FOR PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS

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## ASSESS

Career readiness is measured by more than your just educational and professional experiences. Take time to identify your interests, skills, abilities, and values as you finalize your career goals.

- Set up an appointment with the Career Development Center. Meeting with a staff member for career coaching can help you define transferable skills that will be important as you get closer to graduation.
- Clarify your self-knowledge. Begin to ask yourself the following questions:
  - What type of work settings do I prefer? What type of values would I like my future employer to have? What types of positions will allow me to engage in work activities I enjoy? What skills do I possess that will allow me to succeed as a professional?

## EXPLORE

Whether you've decided on a major and career path or are still looking for the best fit, the Career Development Center can help.

- Take the FOCUS2, a free assessment available to all students. This web-based major & career exploration tool helps you explore options that align with your work interests, personality, values, and skills. Then, set up an appointment with our office to discover how to use this information to plan for your future.
- Visit **O\*Net** and **Career One Stop** and other online career exploration tools to help you get a better idea of how to use your education as you enter the workforce.
- Get a part-time job. Regardless of what the job is, you will begin to gain valuable real-world skills necessary for being successful in the workforce. Employers are looking for more than just a degree, they want employees who are critical thinkers, good communicators, have a firm understanding of technology, possess leadership skills, have a strong work ethic, understand one's strengths and weaknesses, and demonstrate inclusiveness.
- You can find more information and links to the sites we mentioned above on our website, [www.mnstate.edu/career](http://www.mnstate.edu/career)

## CONNECT

Begin building your network as soon as you arrive on campus. From the faculty teaching your courses to the business representatives you'll meet at employer events, connecting with others will help set you up for success in your future.

- Connect with your advisor. They are not only a great resource to help ensure you're staying on track academically, but they can also help you through the graduate school application and job search process.
- **Join a student organization.** Organizations allow you to develop many foundational skills that employers find necessary in those they hire.
- **Attend events that connect you to those outside of our campus community.** Mark your calendar for Internship & Career Fairs, Meet the Employer events, workshops, etc. These events allow you to broaden your network while gaining valuable skills.
- **Schedule informational interviews.** Connect with professionals in positions that interest you. Learn about their background, career path, and tips and tricks to help you achieve your career and professional goals.

## EXPERIENCE

Your education is only part of the puzzle. Experiences outside of the classroom provide an excellent way to get real-world experience while preparing you for your career.

- Obtain an internship. Although not all majors require an internship in order to graduate, the Career Development Center encourages all students to seek one out. They give you an unparalleled experience in your field and can help open doors in your professional future.
- Seek out leadership opportunities on campus. Whether you are elected to a leadership role in a student organization or apply for a student leadership position, these opportunities can help set you apart.
- Think of every opportunity you're offered as a chance to develop new skills. Part-time jobs, studying abroad, and taking part in research projects are exceptional ways to gain valuable experience outside of the classroom.

# FOUR-YEAR CAREER ACTION PLAN

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## FIRST YEAR

- Start taking LASC coursework as well as foundation and core courses related to your major. If you find yourself struggling with a class, check out **tutoring options with the Academic Success Center**
- Participate in a learning community, or get involved in your residence hall
- Join a major or interest-related **student organization**
- Explore the community and connect with a non-profit organization to volunteer
- Understand your interests, skills, and values and learn about career readiness competencies by taking the **FOCUS 2**, a free online assessment
- Create your **Handshake** account to assist in your on and off-campus job search
- Schedule an appointment with the **Career Development Center** to discuss your career action plan and to assist in creating a resume

## THIRD/FOURTH YEAR

- Schedule an appointment with your academic advisor to make sure you're on track for graduation
- Take inventory of your professional goals and determine if graduate school will be a necessary part of your future. Take the necessary exams and begin submitting applications to programs that will help you achieve your goals
- Develop leadership skills by applying for a Student Leadership Position or running for an officer position in a student organization
- Focus on networking. Attend on-campus events like **Job Fairs and Meet the Employer** and community events such as **Start-Up Brew, Creative Mornings, TedX, Chamber of Commerce Events**, etc... to connect with potential employers
- Find an internship or major-related part-time job in the community to learn the ins and outs of your chosen career
- Schedule an appointment with the **Career Development Center** to prepare your internship applications
- Schedule informational interviews with people in your field of study/interest

## SECOND YEAR

- Take a deeper dive into your major and begin to consider a minor or a certificate
- If you didn't find one your freshman year, search for an on-campus or part-time job in the community - research shows that students who work 10-20 hours per week actually have higher GPAs than their peers who don't work. Additionally, those who work *on-campus* graduate at higher rates than their peers who don't
- Join **LinkedIn** and begin building your professional network
- Look into faculty-guided research opportunities
- Explore career paths on **O\*Net** or the **Occupational Handbook**
- Meet with a Career Coach to start learning about transferable skills and ways you can best prepare for your future career
- Schedule informational interviews with people in your field of study/interest

## FOURTH/FIFTH YEAR

- Take the last few classes needed to complete your degree
- Make sure to submit your application for graduation
- Assess what experiences or skills are areas of growth for you and fill in gaps with volunteering, organizations, research, presentations, internships, or part-time employment
- Join a professional organization related to your field to gain access to research, continuing education, job boards, and message boards
- Network relentlessly by attending on and off-campus employer and networking events
- Schedule a final appointment with the **Career Development Center** to review your resume and cover letters, participate in a mock interview and ask any other career-related questions
- Schedule informational interviews with people in your field of study/interest

# CAREER READINESS SKILLS

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Most employers consider these 8 skills to be essential for success in the workplace. Developing your abilities in these areas will give you the foundational skills needed to thrive as you launch your career.



## DEFINITION

Proactively develop yourself and your career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of your strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities, and networking to build relationships.

## SAMPLE BEHAVIORS

- Show an awareness of your own strengths and areas for development
- Identify areas for continual growth while pursuing and applying feedback
- Develop plans and goals for your future career
- Professionally advocate for yourself and others
- Display curiosity; seek out opportunities to learn



Clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with persons inside and outside of an organization.

- Understand the importance of and demonstrate verbal, written, and non-verbal/body language, abilities
- Employ active listening, persuasion, and influencing skills
- Communicate in a clear and organized manner so that others can effectively understand
- Frame communication with respect to diversity of learning styles, varied individual communication abilities, and cultural differences



Identify and respond to needs based upon an understanding of situational context and logical analysis of relevant information.

- Make decisions and solve problems using sound, inclusive reasoning and judgment
- Gather and analyze information from a diverse set of sources and individuals to fully understand a problem
- Proactively anticipate needs and prioritize action steps
- Accurately summarize and interpret data with an awareness of personal biases that may impact outcomes
- Multi-task well in a fast-paced environment



Demonstrate the awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills required to equitably engage and include people from different local and global cultures. Engage in anti-racist practices that actively challenge the systems, structures, and policies of racism.

- Solicit and use feedback from multiple cultural perspectives to make inclusive and equity-minded decisions
- Actively contribute to inclusive and equitable practices that influence individual and systemic change
- Advocate for inclusion, equitable practices, justice, and empowerment for historically marginalized communities
- Keep an open mind to diverse ideas and new ways of thinking



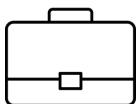
## LEADERSHIP

### DEFINITION

Recognize and capitalize on personal and team strengths to achieve organizational goals.

### SAMPLE BEHAVIORS

- Inspire, persuade, and motivate self and others under a shared vision
- Seek out and leverage diverse resources and feedback from others to inform direction
- Use innovative thinking to go beyond traditional methods
- Serve as a role model to others by approaching tasks with confidence and a positive attitude
- Motivate and inspire others by encouraging them and by building mutual trust



## PROFESSIONALISM

Knowing work environments differ greatly, understand and demonstrate effective work habits, and act in the interest of the larger community and workplace.

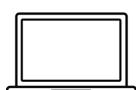
- Act equitably with integrity and accountability to self, others, and the organization
- Maintain a positive personal brand in alignment with organizational and personal career values
- Be present and prepared
- Demonstrate dependability (e.g., report consistently for work or meetings)
- Have an attention to detail, resulting in few if any errors in their work



## TEAMWORK

Build and maintain collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals, while appreciating diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities.

- Listen carefully to others, taking time to understand and ask appropriate questions without interrupting
- Effectively manage conflict, interact with and respect diverse personalities, and meet ambiguity with resilience
- Be accountable for individual and team responsibilities and deliverables
- Employ personal strengths, knowledge, and talents to complement those of others
- Exercise the ability to compromise and be agile
- Collaborate with others to achieve common goals



## TECHNOLOGY

Understand and leverage technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.

- Navigate change and be open to learning new technologies
- Use technology to improve the efficiency and productivity of your work
- Manage technology to integrate information to support relevant, effective, and timely decision-making
- Quickly adapt to new or unfamiliar technologies
- Manipulate information, construct ideas, and use technology to achieve strategic goals

**Employers want to hire college students and graduates who know how to use their talents, strengths, and interests. By mastering these career-readiness competencies, you will be prepared for a successful transition from college to career.**

*These competencies were developed by the National Association of Colleges and Employers.*

# MAJOR/CAREER EXPLORATION GUIDE

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www.mnstate.edu/career

The process of choosing a major or career may feel overwhelming, or even exciting. However you are feeling, the Career Development Center is here to guide you through it!

## STEPS OF THE MAJOR/CAREER PLANNING CYCLE

Here are steps we recommend you take when making a major or career choice. The Academic Success Center has resources, websites, and worksheets to support you through each step.



Adapted from Harris-Bowlsbey, Dikel, & Sampsons (2002)  
Career Planning Process

### STEP 1: REALIZE YOU NEED TO MAKE A MAJOR/CAREER DECISION

If you are looking at this guide, you have likely already realized you need to choose a major or career. Making this decision will take intentional thinking and information-gathering, but it will be worth it!

### STEP 2: LEARN ABOUT OR RE-EVALUATE YOURSELF

**This is the most important step!**

Knowing yourself well is absolutely essential when making major/career decisions. Learning about yourself includes knowing your values, interests, and skills.

**Focus2 Career** is a web-based major and career exploration tool that is available to all prospective and current MSUM students. Take the Work Interest Assessment to learn about your interests. Or take the Personality Assessment, Skills Assessment, or Values Assessment. We recommend meeting with a CDC staff member so they can review your results with you or recommend other activities for learning about yourself.

- [bit.ly/FOCUS2MSUM](http://bit.ly/FOCUS2MSUM)



**Skill or Values Cardsort Assessments:** Identify the skills you most want to use or the values that are most important to you in your future career. Meet with a Career Development Center staff member to complete a quick and easy card sorting activity.

**Record what you know (or learn) about yourself here:**

Your interests (list 3-6): Ex: working with people, solving problems, working on machines, working with records \_\_\_\_\_

Your skills or strengths (list 3-6): Ex: writing, teamwork, working with numbers, customer service \_\_\_\_\_

Your values (list 3-6): Ex: work life balance, helping others, learning something new, creativity \_\_\_\_\_

**Beyond knowing your interests, skills, and values, it's a good idea to identify your career wish list and career dealbreakers.**

**CAREER WISHLIST**

- Minimum annual salary:
- Location (where do you want to work):
- Ideal hours/schedule:

Check off other criteria you'd like to add to your wishlist

- Opportunity for advancement
- Being part of a team
- Working independently
- Stability and security
- High level of prestige
- Make a difference in your community
- Help people one-on-one
- Position allows for creative expression
- Position involves travel
- Other:
- Other:
- Other:

**CAREER DEAL BREAKERS**

Check off any career deal breakers:

- Having to move out of city/state
- Limited opportunity for advancement
- A commute longer than:
- A salary that is below target
- Schedule that conflicts too much with other life obligations
- The market for this career is too competitive
- The career is restrictive in terms of creative expression
- The career requires an education/experience I am not willing to obtain:
- The major requires a GPA I am not able to attain:
- The position involves travel
- Other:
- Other:
- Other:



## STEPS 3 & 4: IDENTIFY MAJOR/CAREER OPTIONS & GATHER INFORMATION

In this step, you'll focus on broadening your knowledge of your major/career options. As you research your options, record what you learn about each one. Use the [Comparing Career Options Spreadsheet](#) to organize your findings.

**Online resources for learning about major/career options:**

- **MSUM Course Requirements:** Look up the majors you are considering. Are you interested in the actual classes? Print the list of classes for your top major choices and star classes that sound interesting. Which majors have the most courses starred?
- **What Can I Do With This Major?:** Features 100 majors with information on common career paths, types of employers that hire in the field, and strategies to maximize opportunities.
  - [www.mnstate.edu/student-life/student-services/career/explore-majors-careers/](http://www.mnstate.edu/student-life/student-services/career/explore-majors-careers/)  
(Click Exploration Resources and then What Can I Do With This Major?)
- **Majors to Match Your Personality:** Complete the “Holland Code” assessment to identify your personality type. Then, access this website to see which MSUM majors are the best matches to that type!
  - <https://www.mnstate.edu/academics/majors/personality>

- **MSUM Careers & Outcomes:** Each major map on MSUM's website has a "Careers & Outcomes" page which lists common careers you can do with that major. It also includes a "College to Career Map" with common careers listed along the right side of the PDF.
- **FOCUS 2 Career:** After completing an assessment, view "Occupations Matching Your Results" or click "Combine Your Results" from the homepage.
  - [bit.ly/FOCUS2MSUM](http://bit.ly/FOCUS2MSUM)
- **Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH):** A website with information on hundreds of occupations in the United States. Using the OOH, you can explore different aspects of occupations including what workers do on the job, education and other qualifications needed to enter the occupation, pay, projected employment change and job prospects, state and area data, and similar occupations.
  - [www.bls.gov/ooh/home.htm](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/home.htm)
- **O\*Net:** Similar to the Occupational Outlook Handbook, O\*Net is a free database with hundreds of occupational definitions to help students, job seekers, businesses, and workforce development professionals to understand today's world of work in the U.S.
  - [www.onetonline.org/](http://www.onetonline.org/)

#### In-person resources for learning about career options:

- **The Academic Success Center:** The Academic Success Center can provide guidance with class selection, major exploration, and other academic needs until you find the right major for you. Once you declare a major, you will be assigned an advisor who teaches in your program of study.
  - [bit.ly/MSUMASC](http://bit.ly/MSUMASC)
- **The Career Development Center:** Are you a junior or senior who enjoys their major but isn't sure how it connects to careers? The Career Development Center is home to career coaches that can assist you in your career planning.
  - [bit.ly/MSUMCDC](http://bit.ly/MSUMCDC)
- **Your Advisor and Faculty:** Your faculty are experts in their areas and come with a great wealth of knowledge about potential career paths.
- **Major, Career, and Graduate School Exploration Fair:** Every September the ASC & CDC host a fair in which all MSUM professors, industry professionals, and area graduate schools staff tables to promote their degrees and career opportunities to MSUM students. Contact the CDC for information about this year's event.

## STEP 5: MAKE TENTATIVE CHOICES FROM MAJOR/CAREER OPTIONS

Look at your [Comparing Career Options Spreadsheet](#). On paper, which options line up best with what you are looking for? Do you have a gut feeling about which option seems right for you?

If you are having a hard time narrowing down options, this can be a good time to talk with others you trust (friends, family, faculty, etc.). Academic Success Center staff can also help you weigh out your options.

**Reminder for first/second years:** You do not need to know *exactly* what career you will do. At this stage, the goal is to choose a major that is related to industries of interest. It is rare for individuals to work in the same type of job for their whole career. There are many jobs that do not require a specific major and it is very common to change your career later in life.

## STEP 6: MAKE EDUCATIONAL CHOICES (if applicable)

Make your decision about your educational plan.

If needed, change your major or minor using the Major/Minor/Certificate Change Form: [www.mnstate.edu/registrar/forms/](http://www.mnstate.edu/registrar/forms/)



## STEP 7: GET CAREER-READY

Once your major decision has been made, you want to use the [College to Career Major Maps](#) to help you make a 4-year action plan to get from student to professional.

Use Career Development Center resources or visit with CDC staff to work on your resume, cover letter, interviewing, or job/internship search skills!



# INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

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When choosing what to do after graduation, it's essential to gather information about job titles, responsibilities, day-to-day tasks, how to enter the field, and what types of companies employ people like yourself. While researching job titles online is helpful, connecting with professionals currently in the field can be even more impactful.

An **INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW** is a conversation with someone working in an area of interest to you. It allows you to gain firsthand information about the realities of working within a particular field, industry, or position. Through these interviews, you can find out about career paths you did not know existed, get tips and insider knowledge about how to prepare for and land your first career position, learn what it's like to work at a specific organization, initiate a professional relationship, and expand your network of contacts in a specific career field. A word of warning, informational interviews are not an appropriate time for you to ask for a job.

## SIX STEPS OF INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

### Research Career Fields

- Start your research on career fields using tools like the **Occupational Outlook Handbook**, **O\*Net**, and **FOCUS2**

### Identify People to Interview

- Sort through your own contacts. People you already know, even if they are not in fields of interest to you, can lead you to people who are. This includes family, friends, professors, former employers, and organization members.
- Use LinkedIn. Search for companies you're interested in, or use keywords related to jobs you'd like to find folks to connect with. Or use LinkedIn's searchable database of MSUM's 37,000+ alumni on the platform by searching for Minnesota State University Moorhead and clicking "Alumni."
- Check with the Career Development Center. Staff at the CDC are connected to many organizations and businesses through the community. If you're struggling with figuring out whom to reach out to, set up an appointment with a career coach to narrow down your choices.

### Prepare for the Interview

- Be able to confidently introduce yourself and have an answer for the question "tell me about yourself"? We recommend following this formula when developing your answer: Present (*major/school year*) + Past (*experiences/jobs/involvement*) + Future (*goals/interest areas*).
- Prepare a series of open-ended questions. Here are a few ideas:
  - How did you begin your career?
  - How do most people get into this field? What are common entry-level jobs?
  - What are your main responsibilities as a...?
  - What is a typical day (or week) like for you?
  - What do you like most/least about your work?
  - How does your position fit within the organization/career field/industry?
  - What current issues and trends in the field should I know about/be aware of?
  - What are some common career paths in this field?
  - What related fields do you think I should consider looking into?
  - What advice would you give a college student/college grad looking for a job in this industry?
  - What kind of education, training, or background does your job require?
  - What skills, abilities, and personal attributes are essential to success in your job/this field?
  - Can I contact you again if I have further questions?

## Initiate Contact

- Contact the person via LinkedIn, email, or phone. Be open to connecting with them in person or via Zoom, Teams, or another virtual platform.

*Email template:*

SUBJECT LINE: Request for Informational Interview

Dear Mr. Smith,

My name is [first and last name] and I'm a current student at Minnesota State University Moorhead majoring in [major]. I'm currently exploring opportunities in [industry/field] and after researching companies potential career paths, I decided to reach out to you to learn more about your professional path and to ask a few questions to gain more insight as I prepare to enter the field.

I'm hoping you might have 20 to 30 minutes to meet with me in the next few weeks. Please let me know if this might be possible and what dates and times are most convenient for you.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks,

[first and last name]

*LinkedIn template:*

Dear first name last name,

I see we both went to MSUM (go Dragons!). I am a current MSUM student interested in [topic or job field] and would love to connect with you to learn more about what it's like to work for [company name].

Thanks so much,

[first and last name]

*After they accept your LinkedIn connection request, follow this up with something similar to the above email message.*

## Conduct the Interview

- Dress neatly and appropriately, as you would for a job interview.
- Arrive on time.
- Bring your list of questions and take notes.
- Restate that your objective is to get information and advice, not a job.
- Give a brief overview of yourself and your education and/or work background.
- Be prepared to direct the interview, but also let the conversation flow naturally, and encourage the interviewee to do most of the talking.
- Respect the person's time. Limit the meeting to the agreed-upon timeframe.
- Ask the person if you may contact them again in the future with other questions.
- Ask for names of other people to meet so as to gain different perspectives.

## Follow Up

- Keep records. Write down what you learned, what more you'd like to know, and what your next steps should be.
- Send a thank-you note or email within 1-2 days to express your appreciation for the time and information given.
- Keep in touch with the person, especially if you had a particularly nice interaction. Add them on LinkedIn. Let them know that you followed up on their advice and the outcome. This person could become an important part of your network.

# DEVELOPING YOUR RESUME

MSUM Career Development Center  
Flora Frick 151  
careers@mnstate.edu  
218-477-2131  
www.mnstate.edu/career

Think of your resume as a well-crafted marketing document for yourself. It's designed to catch the interest of a potential employer and highlight experiences and skills related to your career interests. It connects your story to future employers and includes your academic achievements, volunteer experiences, extra-curricular activities, job history, and internships. Follow these simple suggestions and how-to's to ensure you'll have a well crafted and effective resume.

[Watch a video on how to start your resume](#)



## THE 6 STEPS OF RESUME DEVELOPMENT

### Step 1: Brainstorm a List of Experiences

Create a detailed list of all your experiences/accomplishments. Think back through your education, jobs, volunteer experiences, projects, and involvement in student and community organizations. Don't sell yourself short, and remember, every experience you've had has allowed you to develop at least one skill. There's no such thing as a "pointless" job.

### Step 2: Categorize Experiences into Headings

Now that you've finalized your list of experiences/accomplishments, group them into headings such as Professional Experience, Education, Involvement, Related Coursework, Internships, and Research.

### Step 3: List Experiences in a Consistent Way

Follow a consistent format throughout your resume for listing your experiences. Choose one part to be the focal point (usually the position names or organizations) that will be bolded or in capital letters along the left side.

**Position Name** | Organization Name | City, State

Month 20XX–Month 20XX

#### **POSITION NAME**

Organization Name - City, State

20XX–20XX

**Position Name**, Organization Name, City, State

Month 20XX–Month 20XX

### Step 4: Identify Keywords

Your resume needs to be targeted to the position/field you're applying for. Never assume that the individual reading your resume knows anything about your skills and abilities. Use the position posting as a guide and jot down important keywords, skills or attributes. Start with the qualifications or skills section, and if there isn't much there, incorporate key skills from the job responsibilities. If an employer is looking for someone with communication skills and experience with CRMs be sure to use those words in your resume.

If you are creating your resume for the future, consider incorporating the NACE Career Readiness Competencies or reading about related positions on [O\\*Net](#).

### Step 5: Expand on Experiences by Writing Bullet Points

Now that you have identified important keywords and skills, it's time to focus on the experiences that are most relevant to the position(s) you're interested in and elaborate. Focus on the outcomes of your efforts, especially the skills you've developed and the positive impact you had. Quantify your results if possible. Set a goal of developing three to five bullet points for each experience you want to highlight on your resume.

### Step 6: Review and Get a Second Opinion

Read over your resume multiple times to check for spelling and grammatical errors and schedule a resume review appointment with the Career Development Center.

# LAYOUT BASICS

Name: 16-20pt, **bolded** and/or ALL CAPS

Professional Email

1-2 pages long

**SCORCH DRAGON**  
Moorhead, MN 56560 ◆ 218-555-5555 ◆ scorch.dragon@email.com ◆ [www.linkedin.com/in/sdragon](http://www.linkedin.com/in/sdragon)

**JOB TARGET: PUBLIC RELATIONS SPECIALIST**  
Graduating senior with public relations and marketing internships. Extensive experience writing promotional materials, including social media posts and press releases. Developed leadership and administration skills, training 30+ staff and managing \$30,000 budget.

**Skills**  
Spanish (conversational) ◆ German (proficient) ◆ Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram ◆ Adobe Photoshop ◆ Adobe Illustrator ◆ Adobe Dreamweaver

**EDUCATION**  
Bachelor of Arts in **Communication Studies** Expected May 20XX  
Minor in **Art**  
Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM), Moorhead, MN  
▪ GPA 3.6/4.0, Dean's List every semester

**RELATED EXPERIENCE**  
**Public Relations and Development Intern**, Fargo Non-Profit XYZ, Fargo, ND May 20XX-Present  
▪ Write and edit brochures and publications mailed to target donor audience  
▪ Manage social media, press, and video communication for 5 donor stewardship events

**.5-1 inch margins**

**Optional skills section:**  
Include "hard skills"

- languages
- computer programs
- skills unique to your major (care plans, data analysis)

**Lead with the most important information**

**Non-header text should be 10-12pt font.**  
Use fonts that are easy to read and used on most computers (Arial, Calibri, Cambria, Garamond, Georgia, Verdana, Tahoma, Helvetica,)

**Don't use textboxes to add blocks of color. Instead use shading.**

[Microsoft Word](#) [Google Docs](#)



## RESUME HEADING SUGGESTIONS

### **Education & Academics**

Education  
Relevant Coursework  
Certifications  
Training  
Professional Development  
Conferences  
Research  
Presentations  
Publications

### **Skills**

Skills  
Areas of Expertise  
Technical Skills

### Technology

Core Competencies  
Languages  
  
**Experience**  
Internship  
Experience  
Employment  
Professional Experience  
Relevant Experience  
Related Experience  
Additional Experience  
Work Experience

### **Involvement**

Involvement  
Volunteer Experience  
Volunteer Involvement  
Community Involvement  
Civic Engagement  
Leadership  
Professional Organizations  
Memberships  
Associations  
Activities

### **Honors & Awards**

Awards  
Honors  
Scholarships

# COMBINATION RESUME

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A combination resume is the most common format. Rather than only listing work experience, combination resumes can include classes, internships, student organizations, volunteerism, etc...

This example includes optional sections including a headline (Job Target: Public Relations Specialist), summary (typically 2-3 sentences), and skills section (featuring technical skills).

## SCORCH DRAGON

Moorhead, MN 56560 ◆ 218-555-5555 ◆ scorch.dragon@email.com ◆ [www.linkedin.com/in/sdragon](http://www.linkedin.com/in/sdragon)

### JOB TARGET: PUBLIC RELATIONS SPECIALIST

Graduating senior with public relations and marketing internships. Extensive experience writing promotional materials, including social media posts and press releases. Developed leadership and administration skills, training 30+ staff and managing \$30,000 budget.

#### Skills

Spanish (conversational) ◆ German (proficient) ◆ Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram  
Adobe Photoshop ◆ Adobe Illustrator ◆ Adobe Dreamweaver

## EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts in **Communication Studies**

Expected May 20XX

Minor in **Art**

Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM), Moorhead, MN

- GPA 3.6/4.0, Dean's List every semester

Could also include "Related Coursework:" and list 3-5 classes related to the industry

## INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

**Public Relations and Development Intern**, Fargo Non-Profit XYZ, Fargo, ND

May 20XX-Present

- Write and edit brochures and publications mailed to target donor audience
- Manage social media, press, and video communication for 5 donor stewardship events
- Correspond with donors regarding campaign feasibility study
- Contribute to annual PR/marketing plan for Foundation

**Marketing and Editing Intern**, National Public Radio: KZZT, Moorhead, MN

Jan. 20XX-May 20XX

- Edited and created 30% of content for quarterly program guide with circulation of 20,000
- Wrote and disseminated 5 newsletters, 3 media guides, and 10 press releases for clients
- Coordinated 50+ volunteers and tabulated donations during fundraisers

## LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

**Treasurer**, Campus Activities Board, MSUM, Moorhead, MN

Aug. 20XX-May 20XX

- Maintained \$30,000 account, the largest student organization budget on campus
- Led committee of 5 members in making budget decisions and reviewing policies
- Paid invoices for campus events including comedians, bands, and movies

## WORK EXPERIENCE

**Cashier/Swim Instructor**, Moorhead Parks & Recreation, Moorhead, MN

May 20XX-Aug. 20XX

- Trained up to 30 new cashiers, concession workers, and swim instructors per summer season
- Reconciled front desk and concession cash registers, often totaling \$5000+ per day
- Taught swimming lessons to 150+ children and monitored safety of pool patrons

## INVOLVEMENT

**Public Relations Student Society of America Member**, MSUM, Moorhead, MN

Jan. 20XX-Present

**United Campus Ministry Member**, MSUM, Moorhead, MN

Aug. 20XX-Present

**Dragons Give Volunteer**, MSUM, Moorhead, MN

April 20XX

# CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)

This example includes sections common for CVs that you don't always see on resumes (research interests, research experience, presentations, conferences). These sections are not required, so you don't need to include them if they don't align with your own experience. CVs for grad school are typically 1-3 pages. While job postings will typically require resumes, sometimes they will request a CV instead.

[Like this format?  
Download the template!](#)



## CHARLOTTE JONES

charlottejones@gmail.com | 555.555.5555 | Fargo, ND 58103

### CANDIDATE FOR MS IN ECOLOGY PROGRAM

Emerging researcher with record of academic achievement. Conducted undergraduate and independent research projects and presented results. Invested in professional development via co-curricular involvement and conference attendance. Expanded instructional abilities through teacher assistant role.

### EDUCATION

Bachelor of Science in <b>Biology</b>	Dec 20XX
Emphasis in <b>Ecology and Evolutionary Biology</b>	3.8 GPA
Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM), Moorhead, MN	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Received Nina Stevenson scholarship for academic ability and service to community.</li><li>Memberships: American Institute of Biological Sciences, American Society for Microbiology</li></ul>	

### RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Theoretical and field study of ecological communities.
- Environmental and physiological effects on behavior and its evolution.

### RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

<b>Impact of avian predation on Anole lizards</b>	Sept 20XX-Dec 20XX
Undergraduate Research in Biology Course, MSUM, Faculty Advisor: Dr. Jeannette Olson	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Analyzed spatial scale in models of predator-prey communities.</li><li>Demonstrated how species interactions impact underlying environmental trends.</li></ul>	
<b>Bacterial photosynthesis and photosynthetic reaction centers</b>	May 20XX-Aug 20XX
Summer Research Project, MSUM, Faculty Advisor: Dr. Nehemiah Wait	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Conducted isolation and spectral analysis of photosynthetic reaction centers.</li><li>Studied primary events of bacterial photosynthesis.</li></ul>	

[Watch our videos  
on how to  
master your CV](#)



### PRESENTATIONS

Feir, R., & **Jones, C.** (20XX, April 14). *Correlation of phone checking behavior and attention span* [Poster presentation]. Student Academic Conference, Moorhead, MN.

**Jones, C.** (20XX, Nov 28). *Nighttime habits of the northern cardinal* [Address]. Friday Research Exploration and Education, Fargo, ND.

*Format Presentations or Publications according to the citation style for your industry (APA, MLA, etc.)*

### EMPLOYMENT

<b>Learning Assistant</b> , MSUM Biosciences Department, Moorhead, MN	Sept 20XX-Present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Chosen via competitive selection process. Recognized for communication skills and academic excellence.</li><li>Graded assignments, providing personalized feedback on biology coursework.</li><li>Hosted office hours, aiding students with questions and providing additional examples.</li></ul>	

*Use a "Conferences" section when you attended a conference but didn't present at it.  
If you presented, use "Presentations."*

### CONFERENCES

<b>American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Conference</b> , Minneapolis, MN	Feb 20XX
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Expanded knowledge on assembly and organization of regulatory signaling systems via 3-day conference.</li></ul>	

# WORK EXPERIENCE FOCUSED RESUME

*Like this format?  
Download the template!*



This format for a resume is frequently used by individuals who have ample experience in their field. It includes an education section and work experiences listed from newest to oldest. When experiences relate to one another and when trying to show progression in responsibility, this format is an excellent choice.

## SCORCH DRAGON

218.555.5555 | scorch.dragon@email.com | Moorhead, MN 56560

### EDUCATION

#### Master of Science in Counseling, Emphasis in Clinical Mental Health Counseling

Anticipated May 20XX

Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM) | Moorhead, MN

- CACREP Accredited
- President, Member | Counseling Student Organization
- Vice President, Member | Chi Sigma Iota (Chi Sigma Alpha, MSUM Chapter)

#### Bachelor of Science in Psychology

May 20XX

Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM) | Moorhead, MN

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### Graduate Assistant | MSUM Career Development Center | Moorhead, MN

August 20XX-Present

- Used active listening while conducting 1:1 student appointments including resume and cover letter reviews, mock interviews, and social media reviews
- Planned and executed 3 outreach events, strengthening time management skills
- Wrote detailed appointment notes for each client, recording them via electronic records

#### Student Services Advisor | Trollwood Performing Arts School | Moorhead, MN

June 20XX-August 20XX

- Built and maintained friendly, approachable relationships with students to ensure all felt connected, accepted, and safe in creative environment
- Coordinated and supervised 8-week Student Leader and Students at Risk (STAR) Program
- Developed crisis intervention skills by assisting teachers with classroom behavior issues

#### Emotional Behavior Disorder Paraprofessional | Moorhead Public Schools | Moorhead, MN

June 20XX-January 20XX

- Provided support to 5 students with emotional behavior disorders, including anxiety disorder, ADHD, and oppositional-defiant disorder
- Oversaw student behaviors daily and document data as needed
- Aided students in de-escalation of their behaviors and taught coping skills for future situations

#### Behavioral Health Services Program Coordinator | Anne Carlson Center | Fargo, ND

June 20XX-January 20XX

- Generated and updated plans with client's treatment teams and met state deadlines
- Provided administrative support for 50+ families served by department
- Assisted team by stepping in as Behavior Technician when needed

#### Site Coordinator | YMCA of Cass and Clay Counties | Fargo, ND

July 20XX-June 20XX

- Organized 4 parent events that showcased children's unique talents and strengths
- Generated relationships among children, parents, staff, coworkers, and school personnel
- Provided 1 on 1 behavior management support and accessed resources for children with financial need

#### School Age Assistant | YMCA of Cass and Clay Counties | Fargo, ND

April 20XX-August 20XX

- Mentored children in lifelong skills such as leadership, teamwork, and empathy
- Communicated with children at developmentally appropriate level while leading recreational and academic activities

# COURSEWORK FOCUSED RESUME

*Like this format?  
Download the template!*



A related coursework section can be a great way to fill in your resume. Focus on related skills or knowledge you gained in the classroom. Include accomplishments such as extensive projects, research, or presentations.

This example includes an "Areas of Expertise" section (AKA Skills, Technical Skills, or Core Competencies) to highlight the relevant keywords mentioned elsewhere in the resume.

## DAVID JOHNSON

100 Dragon Lane South  
Moorhead, MN 56560  
djohnson@fakemail.com • 218.555.5555

### EDUCATION

#### **Bachelor of Arts in Psychology**

Expected May 20XX

Minor in Special Education

Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM), Moorhead, MN

- 3.85 GPA
- Dean's List three semesters

### AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Behavior Plans • Motivational Theories • SPSS • Data Analysis • Child & Adolescent Development

### EMPLOYMENT

#### **Server**, Cumberson Restaurant, Green Lake Township, MN

May 20XX - Present

- Gain communication skills by greeting and assisting customers in a friendly manner.
- Resolve conflicts with customers by listening to concerns and answering questions.

#### **Swim Instructor**, Dragon Swim School, MSUM

September 20XX - May 20XX

- Taught swimming skills in an age-appropriate manner to children ages 3-8.
- Informed parents about child progress and support needed.

### RELATED COURSEWORK

#### **Educational Psychology**, MSUM

August 20XX - December 20XX

- Applied motivational theories by designing behavior plans for case studies of elementary-aged students.
- Studied theories of personal, social, cognitive, and moral development and explored their implications for the classroom.

#### **Statistics for Behavioral Sciences**, MSUM

January 20XX - May 20XX

- Used SPSS to conduct t-tests and correlation, ANOVA, and regression analyses.
- Practiced defining and measuring variables and collecting data.

#### **Individuals with Exceptionalities**, MSUM

January 20XX - May 20XX

- Created 30-page handbook on various disabilities including main characteristics and potential adaptations to curriculum and assessment.
- Gained an understanding of disability laws within and outside of educational settings.

#### **Developmental Psychology**, MSUM

August 20XX - December 20XX

- Expanded knowledge about how parents and peers can impact the physical and socio-emotional development of children and adolescents.

# FIRST YEAR RESUME

*Like this format?  
Download the template!*



First year college students can include high school accomplishments, leadership positions, honors, and experiences on their resume. If you have no work history, think of things you have done such as babysitting, mowing lawns, etc. If you truly have no past work experience, leave the "Employment" section off and focus on your school involvement and volunteer work.

Include your major or write "Bachelor's Degree" if you haven't declared a major yet.

## SCORCH DRAGON

Moorhead, MN 56560 | 218.555.5555 | scorch@gmail.com

### EDUCATION

#### BACHELOR'S DEGREE

Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM), Moorhead, MN

Expected May 20XX

### EMPLOYMENT

#### SANDWICH ARTIST | Subway, Fargo, ND

June 20XX–Present

- Completed 3-hour customer service training and applied concepts to provide exceptional assistance
- Collaborate with 4-member team to efficiently meet strict drive-thru deadlines
- Use critical thinking to resolve customer order issues

#### COUNSELOR | YMCA Summer Camp, Fargo, ND

May 20XX–Aug 20XX

- Led games and crafts for 20 pre-teen campers, showcasing public speaking abilities
- Built relationships with campers, demonstrating interpersonal skills
- Exhibited responsibility, following safety protocols for pool and boat use

#### NANNY | Private Families, Fargo, ND

Sept 20XX–May 20XX

- Developed conflict resolution skills while supervising up to 5 elementary-aged kids

### INVOLVEMENT

#### CONCERT BAND, CONCERT CHOIR, GLEE CLUB

Smalltown High School, Smalltown, MN

Sept 20XX–May 20XX

- Selected to participate in all-state Honors Choir senior year

#### STUDENT COUNCIL TREASURER/MEMBER

Smalltown High School, Smalltown, MN

Oct 20XX–May 20XX

- Elected as Treasurer Oct 20XX
- Organized social event for 80+ attendees, coordinating advertising and decorations

### ATHLETICS

#### VARSITY VOLLEYBALL | Smalltown High School, Smalltown, MN

Sept 20XX–May 20XX

- Exhibited time management, balancing academics with 10 hours athletics per week

### VOLUNTEER

#### DOG WALKING VOLUNTEER | FM Humane Society, Fargo, ND

May 20XX–Present

- Demonstrate commitment to service, walking shelter dogs weekly

# TEACHING RESUME

*Like this format?  
Download the template!*



A teaching-focused resume is an excellent way for future educators to highlight your classroom experience gained through practicums and student teaching. Also include work experience, volunteerism, leadership, awards, honors, involvement, skills, etc. If you are specializing in a subject area (art, music, etc.) include any related experiences (ex: playing in bands, art exhibitions, etc.).

## Jamar Smith

100 Dragon Lane South, Moorhead, MN 56560 | 218.555.5555 | jsmith@fake.com

### Career Focus: Elementary Teacher

New teacher with coursework and practicums focused on serving English language learners and students with disabilities. Experience in curriculum development from 6-summer program leader experience.

### Education

Bachelor of Science in **Elementary Inclusive Education** Dec 20XX  
Minor in **Teaching English as a Second Language**  
Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM), Moorhead, MN - **3.95 GPA**

### Student Teaching & Practicum Experience

**Student Teaching: 4th Grade ELL**, Fargo North High School, Fargo, ND Aug 20XX - Dec 20XX  
• Created and implemented 6-week curriculum, collaborating with cooperating teacher and ELL teachers  
• Led team-building activities for students to gain language skills and build personal connections

**5th Grade**, Ellen Hopkins Elementary School, Moorhead, MN Jan 20XX - May 20XX  
• Taught 20 students for 3 weeks, modifying instruction for 7 students with IEPs  
• Differentiated instruction for reading groups and reading recovery and gained experience with Everyday Mathematics

**2nd Grade**, Madison Elementary School, Fargo, ND Aug 20XX - Dec 20XX  
• Developed 2 weeks of meaningful inquiry-based lessons by collaborating with 2 student teachers  
• Became familiar with the school-wide discipline plan, "Nurtured Heart," including positive reinforcement, praise, and being proactive with student behavior

**6th Grade**, Fargo South High School, Fargo, ND Jan 20XX - May 20XX  
• Promoted student engagement by creating interactive game for ELL students to review test material and highlight language skills  
• Taught students in 5 sheltered instruction classes including: Economics, Western Civilization, U.S. Government, Political Science, and Intro to Social Studies

**1st Grade**, Cheney Middle School, West Fargo, ND Aug 20XX - Dec 20XX  
• Executed hands-on social studies lesson plans that utilized PowerPoint and Smart Board

### Classroom Experience

**ELL Tutor**, Lincoln Elementary School, Fargo, ND Aug 20XX - Dec 20XX  
• Tutored caseload of 7 students, 3 days a week, to help students reach academic goals

**ELL Tutor**, Fargo South High School, Fargo, ND Aug 20XX - Dec 20XX  
• Empowered student to raise science grades from C+ to A, personalizing approach to their individual learning style

### Related Experience

**Recreation Leader and Coach**, Parks and Recreation, Underwood, MN May 20XX - Aug 20XX  
• Planned curriculum 6 consecutive summers for children ages 3-12 in day camp environment  
• Measured effectiveness of program, building in daily formative assessments  
• Co-created and implemented Tiny Tots Sports Program; coached ages 3-4

**First Year Mentor**, First Year Programs, Moorhead, MN Aug 20XX - May 20XX  
• Provided individualized support for 25+ incoming college students throughout academic year

# BUILDING BETTER BULLET POINTS

Bullet points don't just tell the reader what you did in your previous positions, but what skills you used and what were the outcomes. They help those that are reading your resume to understand why you may be a good fit for their organization.

Using the steps below, you can take your resume up to the next level, making sure your skills and accomplishments are shown in the best light.

[Watch a video  
on how to write  
bullet points](#)



## 1 BRAINSTORM

- Choose an experience and list ALL of your responsibilities/accomplishments
- Also list skills you developed or needed to do your job successfully, especially ones needed for your target field/jobs
- Choose one skill/responsibility/accomplishment for your first bullet point

\* I led meetings

Teamwork

I created a binder with notes for the next person in the role

## 2 START WITH AN ACTION VERB

Write a sentence that starts with "I." Then take the "I" out and make sure it starts with a verb.

I led meetings → Led meetings

## 3 ANSWER A QUESTION TO ADD DETAILS

How did you do it? Why did you do it? What was the result? Who was involved?

Led meetings  
with team members (who)  
to plan learning objectives and activities (why)

## 4 ADD NUMBERS (IF APPLICABLE)

Ex: # of attendees, size of budget, amount of \$ raised, # of people trained, % increased, frequency (daily, weekly, monthly)

Led **biweekly** meetings with **4** team members to plan learning objectives and activities

## PRACTICE

Now it's your turn! Using the steps above and the list of action words on the next page, practice writing bullet points that highlight your skills, responsibilities, and accomplishments.

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# ACTION WORDS

## Leadership Skills

administered  
analyzed  
appointed  
approved  
assigned  
attained  
chaired  
consolidated  
contracted  
converted  
coordinated  
developed  
directed  
eliminated  
emphasized  
enforced  
enhanced  
established  
executed  
generated  
handled  
headed  
hired  
hosted  
improved  
incorporated  
increased  
initiated  
inspected  
managed  
merged  
motivated  
organized  
originated  
oversaw  
planned  
presided  
prioritized  
produced  
reviewed  
strengthened

## Communication Skills

advertised  
arbitrated  
arranged

## Technical Skills

adapted  
assembled

authored  
clarified  
collaborated  
communicated  
composed  
condensed  
conferred  
consulted  
contacted  
conveyed  
corresponded  
debated  
defined  
described  
developed  
directed  
discussed  
drafted  
edited  
elicited  
enlisted  
explained  
expressed  
formulated  
furnished  
incorporated  
influenced  
interacted  
interpreted  
interviewed  
involved  
joined  
judged  
lectured  
listened  
marketed  
mediated  
moderated  
negotiated  
observed  
outlined  
participated  
persuaded  
presented  
promoted

built  
calculated  
computed  
conserved  
constructed  
converted  
debugged  
designed  
determined  
developed  
engineered  
fabricated  
fortified  
installed  
maintained  
operated  
overhauled  
printed  
programmed  
rectified  
regulated  
remodeled  
repaired  
replaced  
restored  
solved  
specialized  
standardized  
studied  
upgraded  
utilized

## Data Skills

administered  
adjusted  
allocated  
analyzed  
appraised  
assessed  
audited  
balanced  
calculated  
computed  
conserved  
corrected  
determined  
developed  
estimated  
forecasted  
managed  
marketed  
measured  
planned  
programmed  
projected  
reconciled  
reduced  
researched  
retrieved

## creative skills

acted  
adapted  
began  
combined  
conceptualized  
created  
customized  
designed  
developed  
directed  
drew  
entertained  
established  
fashioned  
formulated  
illustrated  
integrated  
invented  
modeled  
modified

## Helping skills

originated  
performed  
photographed  
planned  
shaped  
solved  
adapted  
advocated  
aided  
assessed  
assisted  
cared for  
clarified  
coached  
collaborated  
contributed  
demonstrated  
encouraged  
ensured  
expedited  
facilitated  
familiarize  
furthered  
guided  
helped  
insured  
intervened  
motivated  
provided  
referred  
rehabilitated  
presented  
resolved  
simplified  
supported  
volunteered

## Organization Skills

spearheaded  
approved  
arranged  
cataloged  
categorized  
charted  
classified  
coded  
collected  
compiled

originated  
corresponded  
distributed  
executed  
generated  
implemented  
logged  
maintained  
monitored  
obtained  
operated  
organized  
prepared  
processed  
provided  
recorded  
reserved  
reviewed  
scheduled  
screened  
set up  
submitted  
supplied  
standardized  
updated  
validated  
verified

## More verbs for Accomplishments

achieved  
completed  
expanded  
exceeded  
improved  
pioneered  
reduced (losses)  
resolved (issues)  
restored

# WRITING A SUMMARY FOR YOUR RESUME

Employers review your resume in 8 seconds or less (Ladders, 2018). Having a strong summary helps you capture your reader's attention from the start and share your strongest selling points.

Like the summary of a book, your resume summary should be an overview of what your reader will read later. It should not include any super-specific details.

[Watch a video on how to write a summary](#)



## 1 COMMUNICATE YOUR LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE

Doing this in your first sentence helps the employer understand who you are. This could be...

- Your standing in college
  - **Current student** with strong communication skills from co-curricular leadership roles.
  - **Graduating senior** with public relations and marketing internships.
  - **New graduate** with project management certificate.
- The number of years' experience you have (even if you are still a student!)
  - Energetic relationship-builder with **1 year sales experience**.
- Or both
  - **Aspiring Registered Dietitian with 2 years' experience** in community nutrition.

## 2 IDENTIFY BIG PICTURE FACTS YOU MOST WANT YOUR AUDIENCE TO KNOW

This could be...

- Information that helps you stand out from your competition
  - Ex: Fluent in a language, leadership roles, special training or certifications, winning an award
- Experience using skills (especially technical skills) needed for the role. Even better if you've developed them across multiple experiences/classes.
  - Ex: communication, SEO, interpersonal skills, event planning, data analysis, teamwork, customer service
  - Include evidence for each skill mentioned

## 3 TURN BIG PICTURE FACTS INTO SENTENCES

- Each sentence should start with the imaginary word "I," "I have," or "I am." For example, a sentence could start with "Managed" but not "Manages."
- Back up any skills mentioned with evidence. You need to avoid mentioning specific roles. However, you can reference a role more generally, or summarize what you gained from multiple experiences.

Examples:

- Demonstrated ability to work on a team through multiple campus leadership positions.
- Experience writing promotional materials, including social media posts and press releases.
- Attained interpersonal skills from customer service roles over 2 years.
- Conducted undergraduate research, using critical thinking.
- Completed extensive conflict resolution training.
- Three years' patient-care experience, specializing in working with children and families.
- Received awards for leadership and involvement.

Note that these examples don't name the positions/job titles, trainings, or awards. Those specific details will come later in the resume.

## 4 PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

Communicate level of experience

Number of years' experience or most relevant/impressive fact

Graduating senior with public relations and marketing internships. Extensive experience writing promotional materials, including social media posts and press releases. Developed leadership and administration skills, training 30+ staff and managing \$30,000 budget.

Fill in with your other facts, all starting with imaginary "I" statements

# DEVELOPING YOUR COVER LETTER

MSUM Career Development Center  
Flora Frick 151  
careers@mnstate.edu  
218-477-2131  
www.mnstate.edu/career

A cover letter serves as a bridge connecting your resume to the specific job opportunity you're applying for. Each letter you submit should be unique, addressing specific requirements that are listed in a job posting, and should clearly explain why you are interested in **that** job at **that** company.

[Download the template!](#)

While every cover letter you submit will vary in content, here is a general guide of what to include:



## YOUR NAME

555-555-5555 | firstlast@email.com | City, state | LinkedIn URL/online portfolio (if complete)

The date you're submitting your application (January 25, 20XX)

Hiring manager's name & title  
The company  
The company's street address  
City, state, zip

Re: Position Title Opportunity (Accounting Intern Opportunity)

Dear Hiring Manager's Name (First and Last):

**First Section - Why them?:** Grab the employer's attention with a first sentence that could only be written by you. Tell them why you are interested in this position and/or organization. Connect their mission, values, or initiatives to yourself by sharing a related experience from your life. Or share a key past achievement that relates to the role.

**Middle Section - Why me?:** Introduce a bulleted list of 3-5 skills or accomplishments. Ex: "Key skills I would bring to the position include:" or "Notable accomplishments include:"

- Use the position posting as a guide for deciding which skills you choose to highlight.
- Provide an example of how you have demonstrated each skill listed. Even better, sum up a few experiences to show a track record of success in that area.
- Examples could come from your academic, work, volunteer, or co-curricular experiences.
- Optional: Include a unique skill or strength you possess that helps you stand out from other applicants.

Applicants with a tailored cover letter receive  
**31%**  
more callbacks than those with a generic cover letter

**Last Section - Next steps:** State your interest in the next step, usually an interview or discussing the opportunity further. Thank them for considering you for the position.

Sincerely,

Your written signature (If submitting online you do not need to sign it, just leave 2-3 blank lines)

Full Name

# COVER LETTER TIP: USE AN OUTLINE

Plan your cover letter by brainstorming an outline before you write your first draft.

## Why them?

Why am I interested in this position/organization?

- I care about the mission
- I like their values of "service" and "commitment"

Experiences or accomplishments related to those interests:

- Growing up in low-income housing
- Volunteering through college

## Why you?

Skill #1: Event Planning

Example: Event planning coursework

Skill #2: Communication

Example: Customer service jobs

Skill #3: Community Outreach

Example: Working with orgs through Community Engagement Club + Dragon Communicators

## SALLY JONES

Fargo, ND 58103 | 701.555.4564 | sjones@dragon.edu

December 14, 20XX

Gerald Brown, Assistant Director  
FM Housing Group  
555 Dragon Drive  
Fargo, ND 58103

Re: Event Planning and Outreach Intern Opportunity

Dear Gerald Brown:

Having grown up in low-income housing, I am intimately familiar with many of the situations your clients face. Because of this experience, I have a deep appreciation for the mission of FM Housing Group and the incredible work your organization does for the Fargo-Moorhead community. Furthermore, I resonate with your values of "service" and "commitment." I have a deep commitment to making a difference and have volunteered over 300 hours at non-profit organizations throughout my time in college.

In addition to my deep appreciation for the mission and values of FM Housing Group, notable competencies I would bring include:

- **Event Planning:** Developed understanding of project management process, contract negotiation, and best practices for promotion through coursework.
- **Communication:** Refined oral communication through 3 years in customer service roles.
- **Community Outreach:** Collaborated with 10+ local organizations as Vice President of Community Engagement Club and as member of Dragon Communicators.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss my qualifications in an interview. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sally Jones

[Watch a video on how to write a cover letter](#)



Same contact information format as your resume

If you don't know the hiring manager's name, just address the company

It's best to address your letter to an individual, but "hiring manager," "search committee," or "(company name) team" will do

AI PROMPTS

### First Section: Why Them?

- I'm brainstorming ideas for my cover letter. What connections could I make between my past experience and the company based on their mission/values? [paste company mission/values and your resume without contact info]

### Middle Section: Why Me?

- I'm brainstorming ideas for my cover letter. What are 3 things that make me qualified for this role based on my resume that I could write about in a cover letter? [paste job description and resume without contact info]

# APPLICANT TRACKING SYSTEMS (ATS)

MSUM Career Development Center  
Flora Frick 151  
careers@mnstate.edu  
218-477-2131  
www.mnstate.edu/career

An Applicant Tracking System (ATS) is a software application that collects and sorts through documents submitted by applicants. Frequently, these systems scan documents to find keywords, making sure the only candidates that make it to the desk of a hiring manager have the minimum skills necessary for success in the role. Because of this, it is essential to individualize your resume and cover letter to each unique position you apply for. Follow the tips and tricks below and you're one step closer to landing an interview.

**75%** of recruiters use recruiting or applicant tracking software

(Jobscan, 2024)

## 1 Include the right keywords

On a very basic level, applicant tracking systems are programmed to read application material, scanning for keywords to decide if you're a good match for the position you applied to. So, how do you know what those keywords are? Look through the position posting and find the skills, qualifications, experience, or qualities listed.

If a company states they are looking for a bachelor's degree in business, a good team player and three years of experience working with CRM's, you should address these three topics in your resume and/or cover letter.

## 2 Choose the right file type

When it comes to saving and submitting your application documents, you have two options: .docx or .pdf. Documents saved and submitted as PDFs are your best bet to ensure your information stays intact, but it's been found ATSs have an easier time reading documents saved and submitted as .docx.

While there is no definitive right or wrong way, keep these tips in mind. And always, ALWAYS, follow directions. If a listing asks for a certain file type, do as they say.

## 3 Make your documents easy to read

Whether the company or organization you're applying to utilizes an ATS or not, you need to format your resume in a way that is easy to read. Both humans and ATS typically read left to right, top to bottom, so format your resume in that way. The most important information should be at the top - your contact information. Then list your education, employment or internship, volunteering and involvement, additional skills, and so on.

## 4 Avoid over-formatting

While fancy templates and heavily designed resumes may look nice at first glance, they can cause a number of issues. They are just more difficult to read - both by humans and ATS. In order to scan your resume, an ATS will likely convert your documents to a text-only file. At best, your design and formatting will be lost. At worst, the ATS won't be able to read your document. It won't matter if you're the most qualified candidate or not, you won't make it on to the next round.

### Things to avoid

- Tables and text boxes (Canva and Photoshop use text fields and should be avoided - use Microsoft Word or Google Docs instead)
- Logos, images, graphs, or other visuals
- Columns
- Headers and footers

### Other things to think about when creating your resume

- Apply for jobs you're qualified for
- Include a skills section
- Use basic language
- Stick to ATS-friendly fonts (Arial, Calibri, Cambria, Garamond, Georgia, Verdana, Tahoma, Helvetica, Times New Roman)

# IDENTIFYING KEYWORDS

MSUM Career Development Center  
Flora Frick 151  
careers@mnstate.edu  
218-477-2131  
[www.mnstate.edu/career](http://www.mnstate.edu/career)

A typical company job opening receives 250 resumes on average (The Muse, 2020). Because recruiters have limited time, they rely on Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) to reduce applicant pool to a reasonable size. **Recruiters often decide who moves on and who gets rejected by searching for keywords using ATS.** This means you could be a great candidate, but still have your resume rejected due to not including the correct keywords or enough of them.

ATS screens out qualified applicants in 88% of companies because jobseekers do not include the right keywords in their resumes. (Harvard Business School, 2021)

Even if you are applying to a company that does not use ATS, including **keywords can help your resume appeal to a human reader.** Hiring managers want to know that you have the skills they are asking for in the job posting. Matching their language can make it easier for them to recognize those connections.

## WHAT ARE KEYWORDS?

Keywords are typically job titles, technical skills, or soft skills. Soft skills are non-technical skills, including how you interact with coworkers, solve problems, and manage work. Depending on your industry, keywords could also be degrees, certifications, or licenses.

Examples of keywords:

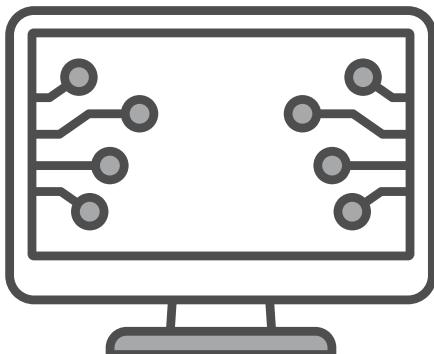
- **Job Titles:** Marketing Specialist, Data Analyst, Administrative Assistant
- **Technical Skills:** SEO, crisis intervention, Microsoft Excel, statistics, Python
- **Degrees/Certifications:** Business, Social Work, Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), BLS Certification
- **Soft Skills:** Detail-oriented, communication, leadership



Soft skills are typically less important than the other categories, so focus on including the job title, technical skills, or required degrees/certifications first.

## HOW CAN I IDENTIFY KEYWORDS USING AI?

The easiest way to identify keywords is using AI. Start by identifying the top keywords for the top industry/job title you are interested in. Tailor your resume to that field by including those words/phrases. Then if there are job postings you are especially interested in, identify the keywords for that specific posting and incorporate them into your resume as well. Here are some prompts to try:



- **Keywords for an industry:** Generate a list of the top 15 keywords I should include in my resume if I want to work as a *[job title]*.
- **Keywords for a job posting:** Generate a list of the top 15 keywords I should include in my resume based on this job posting. *[paste job posting]*
- **Follow up prompt:** Which of those keywords are missing from this resume? *[paste resume without contact info]*

If you don't want to use AI, you can also identify keywords manually (see next page).

## HOW CAN I IDENTIFY KEYWORDS MANUALLY?

If you are applying to a specific job posting, start by printing it or putting it into a text document. Build a “checklist” of keywords to include in your resume by highlighting the following in your document:

### 1. Job Title

### 2. Keywords listed in the Requirements/Qualifications/ Skills section

This could include technical skills (computer applications, industry-specific skills, business processes), soft skills, or degrees/certifications.

### 3. Keywords listed in the Responsibilities/Job Duties/other sections

Start with words or phrases that are repeated multiple times.

TIP

Copy and paste the job description into a word cloud generator to see repeating words

### Public Relations Specialist

XYZ Company is a national leader in the design, manufacture, and sales of widgets. Founded 50+ years ago, with corporate headquarters in Minneapolis, MN, join a company that knows its greatest resource is its people.

We have a **Public Relations Specialist** role open. This position is responsible for media relations, publicity, and **internal/external public relations** communication.

#### Job duties include:

- Plans, coordinates and implements an effective **internal and external public relations program** designed to keep the public informed
- **Research**, write, and edit copy to be used across **communications** channels (website, **social media**, email, newsletter, etc.).
- **Research** requirements/background/goals and develop plan for each job story, news release or video. Develop outline for **interviews** and perform **interviews**.
- Collect and report on relevant **social media**, **newsletter**, and **website analytics** to inform future **communication** efforts.

#### Required Qualifications:

- **Bachelor's degree** in journalism, **communications**, **public relations**, or related field
- Demonstrate strong **writing**, **editing**, and **interviewing** skills
- Possess excellent **organization** and **prioritization** skills

#### Preferred Qualifications:

- Command of **website design** and **content management systems (CMS)**
- Experience with **Google Analytics**

## WHAT IF I'M NOT APPLYING TO A SPECIFIC JOB RIGHT NOW?

### 1. Incorporate keywords from multiple postings

Look up a few job postings that relate to your industry or the type of job you might want to do in the future. Include keywords you see repeating across multiple postings.

### 2. Use O\*Net or the Occupational Outlook Handbook

Search for job titles related to your future industry on O\*Net or BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook to learn about common tasks or skills used in that role.

### 3. Include keywords commonly demanded by most employers

These include communication, critical thinking, leadership, professionalism, teamwork, technology, organization, time management, work ethic, and detail-oriented.

## MY KEYWORD CHECKLIST:

#### Most Important to Include:

#### (**job title and qualifications**)

- public relations specialist
- bachelor's degree
- journalism
- communications
- writing
- editing
- interviewing
- website design
- content management systems (CMS)
- Google Analytics
- organization
- prioritization

#### Include if Have Time:

#### (**keywords from rest of posting**)

- internal and external public relations
- research
- website analytics
- social media
- interviews
- newsletter

Watch a video  
on how to include  
keywords



## WHERE CAN I PUT KEYWORDS IN MY RESUME?

**SCORCH DRAGON**  
Moorhead, MN 56560 ◆ 218-555-5555 ◆ scorch.dragon@email.com ◆ [www.linkedin.com/in/sdrag...](http://www.linkedin.com/in/sdrag...)

**JOB TARGET: PUBLIC RELATIONS SPECIALIST**

Graduating senior with public relations and marketing internships. Extensive experience writing promotional materials, including **social media** posts and press releases. Developed **organization** skills by managing \$30,000 budget.

**Skills**

Spanish (conversational) ◆ German (proficient) ◆ Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram ◆ Google Analytics ◆ **Content Management Systems (CMS)** ◆ Adobe Dreamweaver

**EDUCATION**

Bachelor of Arts in **Communication Studies** ◆ Expected May 20XX  
Minor in **Art**  
Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM), Moorhead, MN  
■ GPA 3.6/4.0, Dean's List every semester

**RELATED EXPERIENCE**

**Public Relations and Development Intern**, Fargo Non-Profit XYZ, Fargo, ND ◆ May 20XX-Present  
■ Use **writing** and **editing** abilities to create **newsletter** publications mailed to target donor audience  
■ Manage **social media**, press, and video communication for 5 donor stewardship events  
■ Correspond with donors regarding campaign feasibility study  
■ Contribute to annual PR/marketing plan for Foundation

**Marketing and Editing Intern**, National Public Radio: KZTT, Moorhead, MN ◆ Jan. 20XX-May 20XX  
■ Created 30% of content for quarterly program guide with circulation of 20,000  
■ Demonstrated **prioritization** skills while writing and disseminating 5 newsletters, 3 media guides, and 10 press releases for clients

The “Job title” keyword can go in the headline.

Technical skills (not soft skills) can go in a skills section. Also include them in your bullet points to provide evidence.

Bachelor’s degree can be shown by writing “Bachelor of...” (Arts/Science, etc.).

Bullet points are a fantastic place to include keywords, even bullet points for relevant coursework. Provide evidence of how you used/developed any skills mentioned.



Not necessarily. Start by tailoring your resume to the common keywords for your industry or to the job postings you are MOST interested in. If you run out of time, send your general resume to the openings you are less interested in.

## IS THERE ANYWHERE ELSE I SHOULD USE KEYWORDS?

### Cover Letter

- Incorporate a few keywords into your cover letter to catch the eye of the hiring manager. See our page on cover letters for examples of how to include bolded keywords in the middle section of your cover letter.

### LinkedIn

- Include keywords that are common for your industry on your LinkedIn page. You could include them in your headline, about, skills, or work history descriptions.

### Interviewing

- Practice answering interview questions that relate to the keywords for the job.
  - Ex: Tell me about a time you used *prioritization* skills? What have been your experiences using *content management systems*?
- Use keywords from the posting when asked: What are your strengths?
  - Ex: One of my top strengths is my *organization* skills. For example, I kept transactions organized while managing a \$30,000 budget for campus activities board. Another one of my strengths is *writing*. I wrote and edited newsletter publications while working as a Public Relations and Development Intern.

## TARGETING YOUR RESUME & COVER LETTER

The most important thing you can do when applying for jobs is to target your documents to the unique needs and requirements listed in each position description. The reason? Many companies utilize an applicant tracking system to scan your resume to make sure you're a good fit before having a human review it. Scan the job description for skills, qualities, and other keywords, then update your bullet points to describe your experiences, skills, and background that meets their needs.

Requirements, preferred skills, key words in job description	Applying it to my experience
<i>Ex. Strong organization, multitasking, and time management skills</i>	<i>Ex. Successfully managed part-time employment alongside campus involvement, volunteering, and class schedule while maintaining a high GPA</i>

# USING AI IN YOUR JOB SEARCH



## GETTING STARTED WITH AI

Before utilizing AI in your job search activities, you must choose what platform you want to use. One great option is Claude.ai.



## WHERE AI FLOURISHES

When it comes to the job search, AI is most useful for:



**Brainstorming Ideas:** What are the top 10 keywords I should highlight on my resume or cover letter if I want to work as a *[job title]*.



**Making Connections:** I work as a *[current job]*. What skills would I develop through that role that relate to being a *[job goal]*?



**Generating Feedback:** Act as my Career Coach. How could I improve my answers to these interview questions? *[paste questions and answers]*



## WHERE AI FLOPS

Having AI write large sections of your resume, cover letter, or interview responses leads to:

- **Fluffy Content:** AI often fills your documents with vague, generic phrases like “proactively leverage dynamic solutions to drive impactful outcomes.” These sound impressive on first glance but don’t show real accomplishments, skills, or results.

If you don’t tell AI your accomplishments, skills, or duties, it will make up something vague to fill the page.

**Be as specific as possible when writing your first drafts.**

- **Hallucinations:** AI can make up details that aren’t true, such as skills or accomplishments you don’t have. This can create inaccuracies and even ethical issues.
- **Lack of Awareness:** If you let AI write your whole resume or cover letter, you may not fully understand what’s in it. That can make it harder to discuss your experiences confidently during interviews.
- **Missed Reflection:** Writing your own resume or cover letter helps you reflect on your strengths, growth, and achievements-insight that’s essential for strong interview answers and career decisions.
- **Wrong Voice:** AI often uses words or phrases that you would never use. Some of these words can be a dead giveaway to recruiters that you didn’t write it yourself. (ex: overuse of “leverage,” “delve,” or the em dash: —)

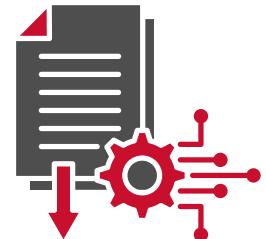


## RESUME PROMPTS

### Prompts for identifying important skills to include in your resume:

#### Technical Skills

- Generate a list of the top 15 keywords I should include in my resume based on this job posting. *[paste job posting]* OR Generate a list of the top 15 keywords I should include in my resume if I want to work as a [job title].
  - Which of those keywords are missing from this resume? *[paste resume without contact info]*



#### Transferable Skills

- I work as a *[current job or experience]*. What skills would I develop through that role that relate to being a *[job goal]*?"
- What are the top 10 soft skills I should include in my resume if I want to be a *[job title]*?

### Prompts for revising your resume:

- Suggest improvements to my resume based on this job description. *[paste job description]* OR Suggest improvements to my resume if I want to work as a *[job title]*.
- Rewrite each resume bullet. Write the bullets in assumed first person, past tense, no personal pronouns and no grammar identifiers. Start each bullet with the outcomes, results, value, or contribution first if there is one, followed by the skill in action. (Powner, 2024)
  - **TIP ▶** This prompt will only work well if you have facts in your document. Otherwise you will get vague, fluffy statements that lack substance. Be as specific as you can about relevant skills, duties, and accomplishments before using this prompt.



## COVER LETTER PROMPTS

Resist the temptation to use a prompt like “Write me a cover letter for *[company name or this job description]*.” Not only could this result in a generic cover letter that lacks your unique skills/accomplishments, but it could lead to your letter having the same phrases or concepts as someone else.

AI can be a fantastic brainstorming tool to help you write a cover letter unique to you. Here are the two big ideas a cover letter should address, along with corresponding prompts to help your brainstorm ideas for each:



#### Why are you interested in this job?

- Prompt: I’m brainstorming ideas for my cover letter. What connections could I make between my past experience and the company based on their mission/values? *[paste company mission/values and your resume without contact information]*

#### Why should we choose you for this job?

- Prompt: I’m brainstorming ideas for my cover letter. What are 3 things that make me qualified for this role based on my resume that I could write about in a cover letter? *[paste job description and resume without contact information]*



## PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS



### LOG IN TO AN AI

Log in to your AI of choice. Haven't used AI yet? Try claudie.ai or chatgpt.com and sign up with your email or log in with a Google account.



### IDENTIFY POTENTIAL QUESTIONS

**Practice for your career field.** Prompt: What are the top 10 most likely interview questions for *[marketing specialists]*.

**Practice for a specific position.** Prompt: What are the top 10 most likely interview questions for this job description? *[paste job description]*

**Practice for any field.** Prompt: What are the top 10 most common interview questions in America.



### BRAINSTORM POTENTIAL ANSWERS

Make notes on how you could answer the questions generated. Make sure to include evidence/related experiences in each answer. As much as possible, include stories that follow the **STARR Method**.

**Situation** – Describe the event or situation that you were in

**Task** – Explain the task you had to complete

**Action** – Describe the specific actions you took to complete the task

**Result** – What were the result of your efforts

**Relate** – What did you learn? Identify the big picture and connect it to your future work/study.



#### Prompts for brainstorming answers:

- Ask me questions to help me prepare an answer to the question "Tell me about yourself." Use the present, past, future format.
- Generate a list of the top 5 behavioral interview questions for *[job title]*. Ask me questions to help me generate an answer for each following the STARR method.



### RECEIVE FEEDBACK ON WRITTEN ANSWERS

Type: Act as my Career Coach. How could I improve my answers to these interview questions? *[paste questions and answers]*

Optional: Share your resume (without your contact information) for more personalized ideas.



### RECEIVE FEEDBACK ON VERBAL ANSWERS

Practice putting it all together by answering questions out loud in real time!

Use ChatGPT on your phone or Claude's phone app. Click the microphone icon and say, "Please interview me like a Career Coach for a job as a *[job title]*."

After practicing the questions, ask "Please give me feedback to improve my interviewing responses."



## JOB SEARCH PROMPTS

- Generate a list of the most commonly used job titles when companies post *[job title]* positions.
- Generate a list of the top 10 employers who hire *[job title]* in *[location]*. (the larger the geographic area the better this prompt will work)



## CAREER PLANNING PROMPTS

Try using these prompts to get personalized guidance on which experiences will best prepare you for your future career or grad school. Just fill in your major and the role or program you're aiming for.

- **Career Prompt-Current Student:** I want to be a *[job title]* and am a current university student majoring in *[major]*. What kind of experiences should I do during college to be best qualified for that kind of role when I graduate?
- **Career Prompt-Career Changer:** I want to be a *[job title]* and am a *[current job title]*. What kind of experiences would help me transition to that field?
- **Grad School Prompt:** I want to go to grad school for *[program name]* and am a current university student majoring in *[major]*. What kind of experiences should I do during college to be a competitive candidate for that kind of program?



## CHOOSING A CAREER PATH PROMPTS

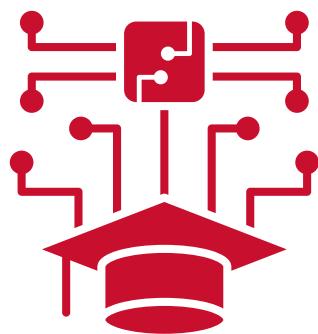
### General Career Exploration Prompts:

- I am great at X and passionate about Y. What are 10 specific career paths that fit my skills and interests?
- Generate a table that ranks these roles according to the following criteria: VALUE 1, VALUE 2, and VALUE 3 (ex: skills, interests, pay, job demand, etc.).
- I have a background in *[industry]*. I'm interested in *[list fields]*. Which would be the easiest for me to transition into?
- Act as a career coach. Ask me questions to help me decide...
- What are common career paths for *[major name]* majors?

### Using Assessment/Personality Quiz Results

Have you taken the Myers Briggs, Focus2 Work Interest Assessment, CliftonStrengths (StrengthsFinder), or another assessment? The more you can include about your strengths, interests, or personality the better AI's suggestions will be.

- Take the free Focus2 Work Interest Assessment to learn your Holland Code: <http://bit.ly/FOCUS2MSUM>
- Take a free personality assessment from 16 personalities to learn your Myers Briggs: <https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test>



### Assessment-Related Prompts:

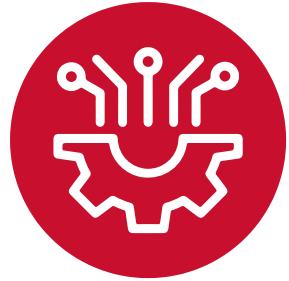
- My *[assessment name]* result is *[assessment result]*. I have work experience as a *[job title]*. I liked *[things you liked about it]* but I didn't like *[things you didn't like]*. Suggest job titles I might enjoy.
- My *[assessment name]* result is *[assessment result]*. What job titles or majors might be a good fit for me?

# AI CAREER APPS

Whether you're trying to tailor your resume to a job or prepare for an interview, AI can help! The MSUM Career Development Center has created AI tools just for you - to help you save time and be more intentional as you prepare for your job search.

These free tools were created in PartyRock (a product of Amazon). You'll need a Google, Apple, or Amazon account to log in.

**Note: Don't put your contact information (address, phone, etc.) into AI.**



## RESUME TOOLS

After you apply to a job, it is common for recruiters to search their applicant pool for industry-specific keywords. AI can help you identify which keywords you should include in your resume. You likely won't have experience with all of the keywords and that is normal. Only include keywords that actually relate to your past experiences.

**KeywordGenie - Job Title:** Enter a job title, which AI will analyze to generate the top 20 keywords you should include in your resume for that field. 10 of the keywords will be technical skills and 10 will be soft/transferable skills.

**KeywordGenie - Job Description:** Paste a job description, which AI will analyze to generate the top 15 keywords you should include in your resume.

**Industry Fit Scanner:** Upload your resume (without contact information) and enter a job title. AI will identify the most in-demand skills for that field and analyze your resume to determine which common keywords you are missing.

**Job Fit Scanner:** Upload your resume (without contact information) and paste a job description. AI will analyze both to identify which keywords you are missing in your resume for this specific job opening.

## INTERVIEW TOOLS

**Interview Question Predictor - Job Description:** Paste a job description, which an AI will analyze to generate the top 15 most likely interview questions for that role.

**Interview Question Predictor - Industry:** Enter a job title, which an AI will use to generate the top 15 most likely interview questions for that role.

**Salary Negotiation Advisor:** This tool will help you determine if the salary offer you received is fair and advise you on whether you should consider negotiating for a higher salary based on market data.

## CAREER EXPLORATION TOOLS

**CareerExplorer:** This app helps you explore potential career options. Enter a job title and get key information about that career such as typical duties, education required, salary, and values. You can also ask follow up questions to dig deeper!

# INTERNSHIP PREPARATION CHECKLIST

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Internships are a great way to explore career options and gain skills. Beyond that, research shows that students who participate in at least one internship are invited to more interviews, have a shorter job search after graduation, and are paid more than their peers who didn't intern.

To help you feel prepared, we've created this step-by-step **INTERNSHIP PREPARATION CHECKLIST** to highlight the resources you have available to make your internship search simple.

## Step 1

Assess yourself & your options

- Assess your interests. Use tools like the [FOCUS 2](#), [CareerOneStop](#), [What Can I Do With This Major](#), and [O\\*Net](#), or talk with a career coach to help you organize your thoughts.
- Identify a target industry, set of companies, location, and semester you would like to intern in.
- Reflect on your financial situation. Are you open to an unpaid internship? Will you need to continue working a second job during your internship? Are you able to temporarily move to a new city to complete your internship?
- Remember, it's never too early to begin your internship search. Some internship programs require applications as much as six months ahead of time.

## Step 2

Finalize your documents

- Update your resume and create a cover letter template. Make sure to have them reviewed by a career coach. Not sure where to start? Take a look at our [Career Development Handbook](#).
- Complete a mock interview with the Career Development Center.
- Identify who your recommendations will be. Typically, positions will require three recommendations (not friends or family members) that can speak to your work experience and/or education.
- Download a copy of your unofficial transcript from [eServices](#).
- Complete your [Handshake Profile](#). Make sure to include all previous work experiences, relevant classes, projects, research, volunteerism, involvement, etc...
- Create a LinkedIn profile using the same information from your resume and Handshake profile.

## Step 3

Start your search

- Set an internship search schedule. For example, every Monday, you will search for openings on Handshake, Tuesday will be for LinkedIn, Wednesdays will be for Indeed, etc... Make sure to cast a wide net and apply for multiple opportunities, but be sure to tailor your resume and cover letter to each.
- Continue networking. Use tools like [LinkedIn Alumni](#) to find people with similar backgrounds, education, and work interests and connect. Attend campus Employer Visits and make sure to collect contact information. Look for community events such as [Start-Up Brew](#) and [Creative Mornings](#) to help you broaden your network.

## Step 4

### Interviewing & beyond

- Join industry-specific professional organizations. This will be a great addition to your resume and most have job and internship boards for you to use.
- Go directly to the websites and social media accounts of the companies you would like to intern with. This is a great way to find the newest opportunities and research the company in preparation for interviews.
- Connect with your family, friends, and faculty to see if they have any leads on opportunities.

- Make sure to check all the boxes if you're taking an internship for credit. Meet with your advisor for specific details.
- Remember, interviews aren't just a time for the company to make sure you're a good fit. They're also a time for you to make sure the company and opportunity align with your interests and goals.
- As you interview, make sure to collect contact information and follow up within 48 hours of the interview with a thank you note or email.
- Has it been longer than two weeks since your interview and you still haven't heard back? Reaching out via email to let the company know you're still interested may be a good idea.
- If you feel like you're not getting as many interviews as you thought, reach back out to the Career Development Center to review your resume and cover letter.

Ready to start your search? Connect with the Career Development Center for guidance.

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# NAVIGATING YOUR JOB SEARCH

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## BEFORE YOU START SEARCHING

Before you start researching career pathways, it's a good idea to reflect on your strengths, areas for growth, desire to continue your education post-graduation, career wish list, and job deal breakers.

Your strengths (list 3-6): \_\_\_\_\_

Your areas for growth (list 3-6): \_\_\_\_\_

## CAREER WISHLIST & DEAL BREAKERS

- Minimum annual salary:
- Location (where do you want to work):
- Commuting
- Work/life balance
- Predictable schedule
- Varied schedule that includes nights and/or weekends
- Opportunity for advancement
- Being part of a team
- Working independently
- Stability and security
- High level of prestige
- Make a difference in your community
- Position that allows for creative expressions
- Position that involves travel
- Requiring continued education
- Other:

## WORK INTERESTS

What types of industries are you interested in working in? \_\_\_\_\_

What are some job titles/roles you would be interested in? \_\_\_\_\_

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

- **Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook:** The Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) is an online publication that has information on hundreds of occupations in the United States. The OOH is a rich resource for those seeking career guidance. Using the OOH, you can explore different aspects of occupations including what workers do on the job, work environment, education, training, and other qualifications needed to enter the occupation, pay, projected employment change and job prospects, state and area data, similar occupations
  - [www.bls.gov/ooh/home.htm](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/home.htm)
- **O\*Net:** Similar to the Occupational Outlook Handbook, O\*Net is a free database with hundreds of occupational definitions to help students, job seekers, businesses, and workforce development professionals to understand today's world of work in the U.S.
  - [www.onetonline.org/](http://www.onetonline.org/)
- **Your Advisor and Faculty:** Your faculty are experts in their areas and come with a great wealth of knowledge about potential career paths.
- **FOCUS 2-Self Assessment:** A web-based major and career exploration tool that is available to all prospective and current MSUM students and alumni. It will help you learn about yourself through self-assessments and explore career fields and occupations that may align with your interests, skills, and personality.
  - [bit.ly/FOCUS2MSUM](http://bit.ly/FOCUS2MSUM)
- **The Career Development Center:** The Center is home to career coaches that can assist you in your career and/or major exploration. Whether it's interpreting your results from the FOCUS 2, or guided one-on-one exploration appointments, we're here to help
  - [bit.ly/MSUMCDC](http://bit.ly/MSUMCDC)

## START YOUR JOB SEARCH

### HELPFUL ONLINE JOB SEARCH TOOLS



A powerful job searching tool that students and alumni at MSUM have access to. We have connected to thousands of employers from the community, region, and country and they post hundreds of jobs per day.



The world's largest professional network on the internet. You can use LinkedIn to find the right job or internship, connect and strengthen professional relationships, and learn the skills you need to succeed in your career.



The largest regional career search site across the Upper Midwest, with 35 media websites contributing to its vast network of employment offerings.



Indeed is a free service to job seekers, where you can upload a resume, create job alert emails, search for jobs, save them and apply to them directly.



Monster is a global leader in connecting people and jobs. Every day, Monster aims to make every workplace happier and more productive by transforming the way employers and candidates find the right fit.



As the #1 job site to find the best remote, work from home, and flexible jobs for over 14 years, we know how to help you have a faster, easier, and safer job search. Just as we've helped millions of people, let us help you!



Offers insights into the employee experience powered by millions of company ratings and reviews, CEO approval ratings, salary reports, interview reviews and questions, benefits reviews, office photos and more, combined with the latest jobs.



Empowering job seekers with the tools they need to stand out and get hired. Like a personal recruiter, we track down relevant opportunities in our marketplace, proactively pitch job seekers to hiring managers at top companies, and deliver status updates along the way.

- Company or organization websites
- Professional Association or Organization Job Boards
- Industry Specific Sites
  - [USA Jobs](#) - government jobs
  - [Idealist](#) - non-profit jobs
  - [AngelList](#) - jobs at startups
- [O\\*Net](#)
- [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

## DEVELOP YOUR JOB SEARCH SCHEDULE

Finding a job can be a job itself. Creating a routine can help ensure you're staying on top of job postings and can give you the structure needed to help you achieve your goals (getting a job).

### DEVELOP YOUR OWN SCHEDULE

#### Monday

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Tuesday

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Wednesday

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Thursday

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Friday

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

## ORGANIZE YOUR JOB SEARCH

Before you can begin to submit applications, you need to make sure that your professional documents are prepared.

- Resume
- Cover letter tailored to each position
- Certifications/transcripts
- Name, email, phone number, company name, position title, and address for three to five professional references

We encourage you to cast a wide net when it comes to your job search, so keeping track of all the positions you apply for is important! Create a table that keeps track of the positions you apply for and important details for you to remember.

Application Submission Date	Company	Job Title	Position Description, Requirements, Preferred Qualifications - include URL	Position Closing Date

## NETWORKING

Building a professional network is an important part of your job search. Your network is a group of people that you have worked with, taken a class with, or from, advisors, supervisors, organization members, friends, family, etc... who may play a role in you landing your next job. Take some time to reflect on your current network and what steps you can take to broaden it.

**Professors or Staff from MSUM:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**Coworkers & Supervisors:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**Classmates:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**Classroom/Event Presenters:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**Friends & Family Members:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**New ways to broaden your network:** \_\_\_\_\_

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# USING HANDSHAKE TO SEARCH FOR INTERNSHIPS & JOBS

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With thousands of employers posting jobs on the platform, Handshake is a powerful tool for your job search needs! Follow these simple steps below to help you harness the power of Handshake to land a part-time position.

## 1 - LOG IN TO HANDSHAKE

### On your computer

We have already created an account for you. Go to <https://mnstate.joinhandshake.com> and use your StarID and password to sign in.

### On your phone

Download the free **Handshake Jobs & Careers** on your phone's application store and use your student email address (firstname.lastname@go.mnstate.edu) to sign up. You will then get a temporary password emailed to you. Use that to log in.

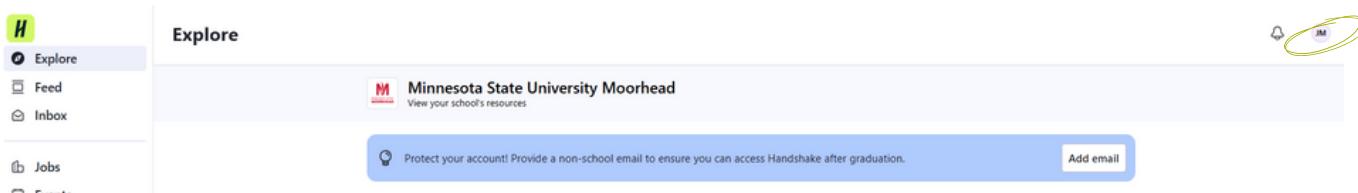
## 2 - UPDATE YOUR PROFILE

There are many benefits to filling out your profile in Handshake. For example, Handshake will provide you with personalized job recommendations based on the information you enter on your profile — This allows you to discover jobs and internships that are relevant to you! Employers are also more likely to proactively reach out to you with job opportunities and event invitations if your profile is complete.

To complete your profile, you'll need to add the following information:

- Primary Education
- Work & Volunteer Experience
- Organizations
- Skills
- Documents
- Courses
- Profile Picture
- Journey
- Projects

To update your profile, click on the icon in the upper right corner.



You can also update your profile directly from your resume.

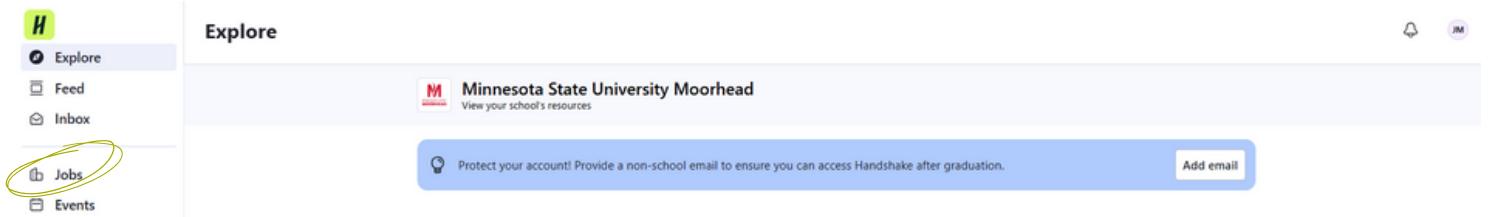
1. Click on your account icon in the upper-right corner of Handshake, then click **My Documents**.
2. All uploaded documents will be listed — click on the name of the document you'd like to build your profile from.
3. On the document overview page, a PDF of your document is available — click on the blue button **Build Profile from Resume**, located to the right of the page.

You're now ready to review and add the uploaded information! For more information on this process, [click here](#).

### 3 - SEARCH FOR INTERNSHIPS & JOBS

Now that you've completed your Handshake profile, it's time to start your internship search.

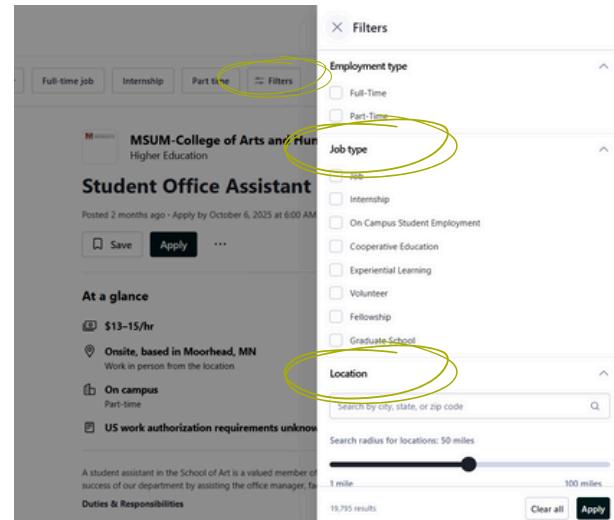
To begin, click "Jobs" on the left navigation menu — this will load the Jobs default page.



Use the filters to narrow your search.

We recommend selecting your job type (job, internship, on-campus student employment, etc.) and location.

We also recommend setting paid/unpaid, on-site/remote, industry (if applicable), and, if you're an international student, work authorization preferences.



Using the left-hand results section, click through positions, and read the full descriptions and qualifications sections of postings.

As you review your search results, you will be able to save positions to apply for at a later date or apply.

When applying for a job, click on the apply button and read the instructions carefully. Some companies may ask you to upload a resume on Handshake while others may direct you to an external link to complete an application.

To come back to the positions you've saved, click on the "saved" link at the top of the page.

If you're interested in learning more about a company, you can review their profile by clicking on their company information.

Here, you may find contact information, a list of students who have worked there, student reviews, and tips on the interview process.



# HOW TO PREPARE FOR A CAREER FAIR

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Review the companies on Handshake to determine who you want to talk to



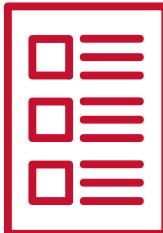
Know what they do!  
Know their history, customers, and/or clients



Visit their company website to review job description & required skills



Plan your time wisely.  
Select your top five companies and make sure you see them first



## CREATE A STANDOUT RESUME

Think of your resume as a well-crafted marketing document for yourself. It's designed to catch the eye of a potential employer and highlight experiences and skills related to your career interests. It connects your story to future employers and includes your academic achievements, volunteer experiences, extra-curricular activities, job history, and internships. Make sure to print enough copies to hand out to recruiters you connect with.

## PERFECT YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH



How would you answer the question "So, tell me about yourself"? Your personal introduction should be brief, professional, and make the person you're speaking with want to continue the conversation.

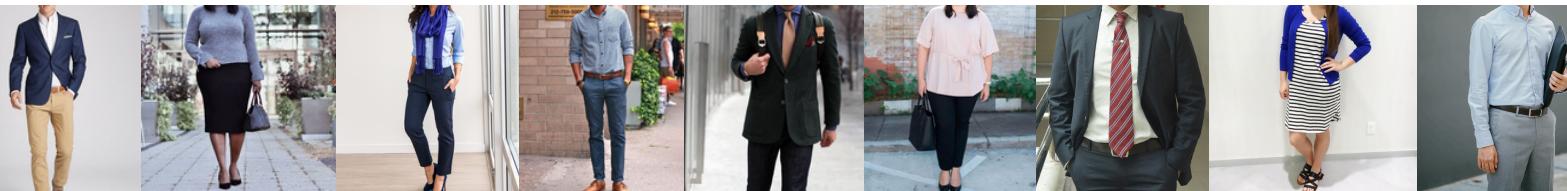
Still at a loss for what to say? Follow this simple equation:

**Present (major/school year) + Past (experiences/jobs) + Future (goals) + Why This Company/Job**  
**= Your Elevator Pitch**

## DRESS FOR SUCCESS

- Professional dress is required
- Hygiene is important. Avoid strongly scented cologne and perfume
- Be mindful of piercings, tattoos, and what accessories you choose to wear. Some businesses/organizations are more conservative than others

- Nails should be well-kempt as should nail polish if you choose to wear it
- Hair should be polished but worn in a comfortable style
- Bring a notebook or portfolio/padfolio to write down company information, recruiter information and to hold printed copies of your resume





## AT THE FAIR

You've updated and printed off copies of your resume, perfected your elevator pitch, and put on your most professional outfit, so check-in using your Dragon ID and grab a map of the employers/schools and get to networking!

- Be confident in approaching companies. Start off with a smile, a handshake, and an introduction
- Once you've both introduced yourselves, utilize your elevator pitch to let them learn important information
- Use your time with recruiters to learn more about their company, what positions they have open, what kind of person they want to join their team
- Don't expect an interview or to be hired right on the spot. Do your best to leave a great first impression
- Prepare a few questions to ask recruiters to gain a better understanding of their company and its opportunities
- Make sure to take a business card, or at least get their contact information so you can follow up with a note or email after the event

## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE RECRUITERS

- What are you looking for in the employees you hire?
- What are the characteristics of your most successful employees in \_\_\_\_\_ role?
- What are the goals your company/team has set for the upcoming year?
- Can you tell me more about your company's culture **or** what do you like about your company's culture?
- What made you choose to work for this company and why do you stay?
- Do you have a favorite work experience **or** what do you like most about your current role?
- What is one thing you wish you would have done early in your career?



## FOLLOWING UP

Whether you send a snail mail thank you or a quick email, it is imperative that you follow up with the individual(s) whom you connected with at the fair within 24 hours. This helps them keep you top of mind and allows you to continue the conversation you started the day before.



Dear [Representative's Name],

*It was great connecting with you at the MSU Moorhead Career Fair yesterday. I enjoyed learning more about your company/organization/team, and I'm very excited about the [title of the role you plan on applying to] position we discussed. I plan on submitting an application by the end of the week.*

*I look forward to hearing about the next steps in the hiring process. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or if you would like additional information on my education, skills, and previous experiences.*

Best regards,

[Your Name]

# PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS

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Interviews give employers an opportunity to make sure candidates will be able to complete the responsibilities and tasks of the job. They also give candidates an opportunity to make sure that the role and company are a good fit for their own values, needs, and goals.

## COMMON INTERVIEW FORMATS



### Phone

Frequently used as a first-round screening tool  
Have a professional voicemail message  
Be somewhere quiet



### Group

3+ people interviewing for same role at same time  
For internships, grad school, or when company is hiring multiple people



### Video

Check your technology in advance  
Prop up your laptop to eye level  
Have a simple background



### Panel

2+ people interviewing you  
Includes future coworkers, management, HR, etc.



### 1:1 In Person



### Technical/Working

Shows your skills in action (ex: solve a job-related problem, give a presentation, complete a project, etc.)



### Lunch

Assesses your social skills  
Can be a more laid back environment

## COMMON QUESTIONS

### Resume/Experience Based Questions:

Questions about your experience overall. Often includes questions that come up while the employer walks through your resume.  
(ex: Tell me about your research project.

- Tell me about yourself.
- Tell me about how your past experience relates to this role.

### Behavioral Questions

The most common type. Employers ask about your past performance to get an idea of how you will respond in the future. To answer, tell a story from your past experience.

- Tell me about a time you collaborated with others.
- Tell me about a time you had to step up as a leader.
- Describe a situation when you had a conflict at work.
- Tell me about a time you had to solve a difficult problem.

### Self-Analysis Questions

Relate to your view of yourself, your strengths, and your goals.

- Why do you want to work here? In this role?
- What are your three greatest strengths?
- What is your greatest weakness?
- Why should I hire you?
- What is your proudest accomplishment?

(Big Interview, 2023)

## TIPS

- **Research the company:** 47% of employers say they will reject candidates if they don't know much about the company (Twin Employment). Learn about their mission/values (on their website), recent news, and culture (via social media). Think about how you and your experience connects with what you learned.
- **Brainstorm related questions:** Turn qualifications from the job posting into behavioral questions. Ex: Tell me about a time you demonstrated \_\_\_\_\_ skills.
- **Choose your attire:** Dress one notch more formal than a typical day on the job. Look at social media or watch the main office door to get a sense of typical attire.

## TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

### PRESENT

Describe your current situation

### PAST

Work backwards by highlighting 2-3 key points along your professional and/or educational journey. Could be jobs, volunteering, co-curriculars, classes, etc.

### FUTURE

Connect your background, interests, or qualifications to the job.



Examine the job description



Reflect on your resume, cover letter, skills, and experiences



Research the company and position



Review common interview questions



Practice your speaking voice and body language



Prepare several questions to ask the interviewer



Practice - conduct mock interviews & test-run the drive



Finalize your outfit. Bring resume copies, pen, notepad/padfolio

## STARR METHOD FOR BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

**Sample question:** Tell me about a time you failed.

**Situation:** My first semester in college I earned a grade that I was disappointed with in my history class.

**Task:** I am very committed to excellence and set a goal to earn an A on the next exam. My understanding of the material was even more important than my grades, so I resolved to comprehend the information.

**Action:** I began to review my notes daily and used timelines and charts to organize the information. I met with the professor to communicate my commitment to his class and identify if he had any additional suggestions. I created flashcards for myself and formed a study group the week before the exam.

**Result:** I earned an A on my next exam and in the class. Since that time, I have been satisfied with my academic achievement and, have made the Dean's list every semester.

**Relate:** This will help me as a teacher because I learned how to teach myself, manage my time, and be persistent. The experience also cultivated a sense of empathy for students who are failing and about to give up.



## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER (PREPARE AT LEAST 3)

- What do you personally like most about working for this company?
- What characteristics best describe individuals who are successful in this position?
- What are the most important priorities for the company/department/ team right now?
- Can you tell me a little bit about the training associated with this position?
- How is job performance evaluated?
- How would you describe the culture of your company?
- What has to happen for you to know you've hired the best person?
- What have others found challenging about this position in the past?
- What is your timeline for making a decision?

\*Don't ask about salary/benefits until you have a job offer

## FOLLOWING UP

Whether you send a handwritten thank you or a quick email, it is imperative that you follow up with the individual(s) who interviewed you within 24 hours of your interview. Below is an example of a well-written thank you.

Dear [Interviewer Name],

*Thank you so much for meeting with me today. It was such a pleasure to learn more about the team and position, and I'm very excited about the opportunity to join [Company Name] and help [bring in new clients/develop world-class content/anything else awesome you would be doing] with your team.*

*I look forward to hearing from you about the next steps in the hiring process, and please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide additional information.*

Best regards,  
[Your Name]

# SALARY NEGOTIATION

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Salary negotiation is not just for seasoned professionals with years of experience. The confidence to negotiate earnings and benefits is something that *EVERYONE* should possess. So, do your research, define your value, and practice your pitch and you will be primed to negotiate with confidence.

## WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO NEGOTIATE YOUR SALARY AND BENEFITS

Congratulations! You've been offered a job at your dream company. While you may be inclined to say "yes" to any salary and benefits package you're being offered, this is the perfect time to utilize your negotiating skills to ensure you're getting a compensation package you're comfortable with.

- **Negotiating just a few thousand dollars can lead to hundreds of thousands of dollars more over your lifetime.** The salary/benefits you receive from your first position outside of college set the stage for the rest of your professional life.
- **The wage gap is real.** Women on average are paid just 80% of what men are paid. Factor in race and the difference is staggering. If you identify as a woman and/or are a person of color, negotiating your salary and benefits package can help you decrease the wage gap, not only for yourself, but others as well.

## UNDERSTAND YOUR EXPERIENCE

It's easy to think that the part-time jobs, volunteer experiences, and classes you've taken won't matter once you've graduated and entered the workforce, but that just isn't the case. Every single experience you've had is valuable and can help set you up for success when it comes time to discuss wages.



**Make a list of the accomplishments, education, skills, recognitions, and other experiences that show the value you are bringing to the company.** For example, maybe you held a leadership role in a student organization or made a company process more efficient.

## DEVELOP YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION

Next, turn the list you brainstormed into 3-5 statements that you could use during a negotiation to show your value. Each statement should include an accomplishment/result and the skill you used to make it happen.

I **[accomplishment/result, starting with an action verb]** using my **[skills]**

I increased social media traffic 5%, using my marketing and technology skills.

## RESEARCH SIMILAR POSITIONS

Having an understanding of what others are making in comparable positions can give you a leg up during the negotiation process. There are a number of websites and organizations that can help.

- US Department of Labor - [www.onetonline.org/](http://www.onetonline.org/)
- [www.payscale.com](http://www.payscale.com) or [www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com)
- The MSUM Career Development Center
- [Salary Negotiation Advisor \(AI Tool\)](#)

Having trouble brainstorming value propositions? No problem! The next step will walk you through gathering market research, which you can use instead of (or in combination with) value propositions.

(AAUW, 2018)

## APPLYING TO NON-PROFITS, SCHOOLS, OR GOVERNMENT?

Recognizing the financial capacity and limitations of these organizations can help you be realistic and have less frustration in the negotiation process.

## DECIDE ON A TARGET SALARY & WALK-AWAY POINT

Based on your research, set your target salary, target salary range, and walk-away point.



**Target Salary:** *The salary you hope to have at the end of the negotiations.* You should set this based on your research from the previous step. Target salaries are typically at or near the median salary for the job/region. Make sure to use statistics from the city where the job is located.

**Target Salary Range:** *You'll use this when sharing your desired target salary with the employer.* The bottom of the range should be your target salary. Usually jobseekers set the bottom of the range as the median salary for the job/region and set the top of the range as 10%-15% above that median.

**Walk-Away Point:** *This is the lowest salary you will accept.* You'll likely want to set it below the median salary. Keep in mind your own personal budget, debts, and saving goals. Make sure to factor in the cost of living for the area you will live as the cost of rent, food, etc. can vary from place to place. Having a walk-away point helps prevent you from accepting an offer you might regret.

## THINK BEYOND SALARY

An offer for employment is more than just a salary. It will also include benefits/perks that can increase your benefits package and reduce living costs, making it easier for you to be more flexible with your minimum salary. Employers will often use the term "total compensation" or "total reward" when discussing an offer that includes both salary and benefits. Be sure to clarify salary vs. benefits. They may say your total reward is \$75,000, but your salary is only \$55,000.

### Standard Benefits

- Healthcare, vision, dental, and other insurance plans
- Retirement match
- Paid time off/vacation/sick time
- Parental/family leave

### Non-Standard Benefits (more likely to be negotiable)

- Sign-on bonus
- Relocation expense coverage
- Flexible working hours or the ability to work remote
- Gym or wellness reimbursement
- Professional development funds

## 5-STEP SALARY PITCH

1. Thank them for the offer or for meeting with you
2. Say something positive
3. Share your accomplishments using a value proposition
4. Make your ask
5. And then stop talking!

Thank you so much for the salary offer. I am so excited about the opportunity to work with you as a member of your team. In addition to my English degree, I have completed coursework in technical writing which would give me unique skills for this role. When researching similar positions, I have seen that the market rate is \$64,000-\$70,000 per year. Is there any flexibility when it comes to the salary for this position?

Thank you for meeting with me today. I am looking forward to the opportunity to improve children's lives by communicating your organization's mission. In my last role I increased social media traffic 5%, so I know I would bring a lot to the table with my marketing skills. In my research I have found that the market rate in the area for someone in this position is \$58,000-64,000 per year. Would you consider an offer within that range?

## GET THE TIMING RIGHT

If possible, **avoid discussing your salary until you have received a job offer.** That is the point in which you have the most negotiating power, because you know that you are their top choice! Discussing salary too early could make you feel pressured to share a lower number to stay in the running.

(AAUW, 2018)

Here are some ideas for deflecting salary questions until you have an offer:

*What are your salary expectations for this role?*

"Before we discuss my salary requirements, I would like to learn more about this role, its responsibilities, and to make sure I'm a good fit."

"I'm flexible and I'm sure we could come to an agreement if you were to decide I was the best person for this role."

*Can you share your salary history with me?*

"I'd appreciate it if you could make me an offer based on whatever you have budgeted for the position, and we can go from there."

"This position is not exactly the same as my last job. So, let's discuss what my responsibilities would be here and then determine a fair salary for this job."

**TIP:** If a job application requires you to enter your past salary, consider leaving it blank or entering “-” or “0”

## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Don't assume that the negotiation process will be negative or combative. There is no way to know how it will end, so go into the conversation positive and open-minded. That being said, it's OK to prepare for different scenarios.

*Pretend you've just been made an offer 20% below your target salary. While this would be above your walk-away point, you're hoping to increase it by at least 10%. How would you respond to that initial offer?*

"Thank you for that offer. Based on my previous experience in the field and my education as well as the research I've done on compensation packages for positions similar in the region, I was hoping to make \$XXX-\$XXX per year."

*The hiring manager responds well and agrees to increase the offer by 12%. You could simply say thank you and begin talking about your start date, but we encourage you to inquire about other benefits.*



"I appreciate you being flexible in your offer. While it's not at my target, I am comfortable with that salary. I'm also interested in discussing other benefits available for this position.

Do you offer opportunities for professional development? Continuing education is important to me and I'm looking to work for a company that is interested in supporting their employee's growth"

At this time, be sure to reiterate your thankfulness for their flexibility and request the offer in writing.

## NEGOTIATING A RAISE/PROMOTION ONCE YOU'RE IN THE ROLE

Negotiation isn't just a skill for those who are seeking a new position. It can also come in handy when you've made significant contributions to your employer's success, you've taken on additional responsibilities, your role has changed, or you've been sought out by another organization.

Follow the same tips and tricks listed for those who are being offered a position with a new company/organization, but **focus on sharing the positive changes you've made** in your current role. Be specific. Have you increased sales, increased usage of your product or service, or saved a sizable amount of money? Discussing the impact you've made will play in your favor.

(AAUW, 2018)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Career Development Center - [www.mnstate.edu/career](http://www.mnstate.edu/career)
- Your academic advisor and other faculty members
- American Association of University Women Work Smart Program - [www.salary.aauw.org](http://www.salary.aauw.org)
- Company Reviews and Salary Calculator - [www.glassdoor.com](http://www.glassdoor.com)
- LinkedIn Salary Tool - [www.linkedin.com/salary/](http://www.linkedin.com/salary/)
- Salary Calculator - [www.jobsearchintelligence.com/salary-calculator-intro-etc](http://www.jobsearchintelligence.com/salary-calculator-intro-etc)
- Transparent Career - [www.transparentcareer.com/](http://www.transparentcareer.com/)

# STARTING YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE

## WHY USE LINKEDIN?

LinkedIn can help you connect with others in your field and help you stand out in your job or internship search. **Applicants with a comprehensive LinkedIn profile have a 71% higher interview callback rate (ResumeGo, 2019).**

97%

of HR and staffing professionals use LinkedIn in their recruiting efforts. (Product London Design, 2024)

While your resume needs to be short and focused on accomplishments, you have much more space on your LinkedIn profile to share your personality, motivations, or values.

**TIP** Write in first person (I/my) and share stories to help employers learn more about what makes you who you are.

## STEP 1: GET STARTED

Visit [www.linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com). You can sign up using an email address or existing Google account. Use a personal email, not your go.mnstate.edu email.

## STEP 2: MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION



### Matt Payette

Aspiring Public Relations Specialist | Passionate about Corporate Communication



### Public profile & URL

[www.linkedin.com/in/ mattpayette](https://www.linkedin.com/in/mattpayette)

### TIP

Personalize your URL to something that incorporates your name. Then you can easily include it on your resume!

Try variations such as: first.last, firstmiddlelast, lastfirst, firstmiddleinitiallast, last-first, etc.

### HEADSHOT

Headshot Checklist:

- Background isn't too busy
- Photo is from the waist or shoulders up
- Not a selfie

- Looking at the camera (not off to the side)
- Wearing an outfit you could wear to a networking event in your industry
- Photo is of just you

### HEADLINE

Write something more specific than "Current Student" for your headline.

What field do you want to work in? What are you passionate about or skilled at?

Ideally your headline will get the reader interested in your profile and motivate them to scroll down to learn more about you.

What are the top things you want employers or other contacts to know about you? This might include industries/job titles you are interested in or your skills, values, or personality.

How you want people to see you = your personal brand

Keep these "top things" in mind as you plan your headline, background photo, summary, and experiences. Try to incorporate them into each section.

## Your headline might include:

Job titles or industries of interest: \_\_\_\_\_

- Could be future job title you hope to have (Ex: Aspiring Healthcare Leader, Future Elementary Teacher)
- Or could be your current job title/field if applicable to what you want to do in the future (ex: Communications Specialist, Accounting Whiz)

Areas of expertise or interest: \_\_\_\_\_

- *Passionate about Customer Service + Data*

Relevant experiences or accomplishments: \_\_\_\_\_

- *Experience working in NICUs and Emergency Departments*

Skills, keywords, or personality: \_\_\_\_\_

- *Proficient in SQL and Tableau*
- *Energetic and Engaging*

Or a combination of multiple elements:

- *Aspiring Healthcare Leader: Passionate about Customer Service + Data*
- *Registered Nurse | Experience working in NICUs and Emergency Departments*
- *Data analyst with proficiency in SQL and Tableau*



## BACKGROUND IMAGE

Choose an image that aligns with your personal brand (aligns with your industry, skills, values, or personality).



**Business Example**



**Education Example**



**Relationship Building Example**

[Pexels.com](https://Pexels.com) and [Unsplash.com](https://Unsplash.com) are great resources for free stock photos.

## STEP 3: ADD YOUR EXPERIENCES

Include your jobs (including part-time) and what you accomplished at each. You can copy and paste bullet points from your resume (see example #1). Or, take advantage of an opportunity to go more in depth than your resume by adding context - what was the challenge/problem/situation? What did you learn from this experience that will make you better at your future career? Add skills that relate to the work you want to do in the future. (see example #2)

### *“Experience” Section Example #1*

- Developed customer service skills while answering student, faculty, and staff questions about department
- Demonstrated critical thinking skills, helping students connect with appropriate resources on campus
- Used Microsoft Outlook to respond to emails and Microsoft Word to update office records

### *“Experience” Section Example #2*

As a Career Peer, I helped students reach their goals by teaching them how to write well-formatted resumes and cover letters. My experience at the Career Development Center helped me recognize how much I enjoy providing customer service and discovering how I can best serve others. I also greatly expanded my technological skills while using the Handshake platform and providing written feedback via Microsoft Word.

- Used interpersonal communication skills to facilitate 100+ appointments with students.
- Planned career readiness event for 25+ students, creating marketing materials and coordinating catering.

**Skills:** Customer Service · Interpersonal Communication · Organization

## STEP 4: ADD EDUCATION

Only include your GPA if above 3.5.

## STEP 5: WRITE “ABOUT” SECTION

Your “About” section can include your goals for the future, areas of expertise/interest, relevant experiences/accomplishments, values, or skills. Look back at the “Your headline might include” section for ideas.

Make sure to include keywords for your industry (if applicable) and to write it in the first person (“I/my”).

### “About” Section Example #1

**Area of interest** As a second-year art student, my passion for graphic arts brought me to the MSUM School of Art, where I am working on my BFA in Graphic Design.

**Relevant experience** Last semester I completed the Foundation program, which covers drawing, sculpture, painting, and printmaking.

**Keywords** This year I have mastered Photoshop, InDesign, Illustrator, and HTML. I continue to build skills in UI/UX. Next year, I hope to complete a studio internship that will provide real-life experience and

**Goal for the future** important technological skills.

### “About” Section Example #2

**Goal for the future** Ever since I taught my little brother how to tie his shoes, I knew I wanted to be a teacher. There's nothing like that “light bulb” moment when a child understands something they didn't know just a few minutes before. I love that.

**Relevant experience** Between helping my high school teachers after school, working at the MSUM Tutor Center, and the 15 years of my own education, I've spent thousands of hours in the classroom. I especially love working with younger children as they develop important skills.

Now that I am finishing my senior year at MSUM, I hope to be an elementary teacher who inspires my students and leaves them feeling great about themselves!

Limit paragraphs to 1-3 sentences to keep them short and sweet.

TIP

## STEP 6: ADD ADDITIONAL SECTIONS

### (if applicable)

- **Projects:** Whether you had a significant project for class or completed a project on your own, write about what you did and how you did it.
- **Courses:** Are you a marketing student who took a class in programming? Or interested in sales and know Spanish? List the classes that show off unique skills or high expertise in an area. Do not list all of your courses.
- **Recommendations:** Ask supervisors, professors, or others who have worked with you closely to write a positive recommendation. Ask them in person first instead of sending a request directly through LinkedIn.
- **Organizations or Volunteer Experience:** Even if you weren't paid for an experience, be sure to list it. Employers care more about the skills you've developed than if you were paid.
- **Honors & Awards**
- **Skills:** Include at least 5 skills. Start with skills most demanded for the industries you're interested in. Identify relevant skills by looking at postings for jobs of interest. Which skills are commonly asked for? Or look at profiles of individuals working in those areas. What skills do they include?

TIP

Include pictures or examples of your work to bring your profile to life! Add media throughout your profile such as in your education, experience, volunteer, or projects sections.

## STEP 7: CONNECT!

- Start by adding classmates, friends, supervisors, coworkers, and professors as connections.
- Join groups related to your industry and follow companies of interest.
- As you attend fairs or networking events, add industry professionals you meet as connections.
- Post industry-related content and like or comment on posts of others.

# CHOOSING A GRAD PROGRAM

MSUM Career Development Center  
Flora Frick 151  
careers@mnstate.edu  
218-477-2131  
www.mnstate.edu/career

## SHOULD I GO TO GRAD SCHOOL?

Continuing your education is not something that should be taken lightly. Graduate and doctoral degrees cost money and take time, so before you start submitting applications, we encourage students to answer the following questions.

- **Do you have a clear purpose and goal for attending graduate school?**

*What are your long and short term goals?*

*What is necessary for you to achieve these goals?*

*How will a graduate degree add or enhance my career path?*

- **What are your values, interests, and priorities for your career and life?**

*What kind of work and experiences do you find meaningful?*

*What skills do you already have? Do you need to expand upon these to land a meaningful job in your chosen field?*

- **Have you researched all of your graduate school options?**

*Do you know all of your options when choosing a graduate program?*

*If you have mentors, ask them for their perspectives and advice.*

*Do you have the capacity to take on additional time and financial investments for a graduate degree?*

*What is your potential for success in a graduate program?*

*Is it necessary for you to continue your education to be employed in your field?*

## WHAT FACTORS SHOULD I CONSIDER?

You've weighed the pros and cons and have decided that continuing your education is the right fit for you. Now it's time to start researching universities to find the best fit. A few things to consider when determining your top choices:

- Faculty (reputation/connection with them)
- Quality of the program
- Financial cost & financial aid
- Admission requirements (average test scores/GPA)
- Academics (courses, projects, internships, capstones)
- Employability of graduates
- Facilities
- Geographic location
- Student life

## WHERE CAN I RESEARCH PROGRAMS?

- [Petersons.com](http://Petersons.com)
- [GradSchools.com](http://GradSchools.com)
- [PrincetonReview.com](http://PrincetonReview.com)
- [USNews.com](http://USNews.com)

## WHAT ARE TYPICAL REQUIREMENTS?

After you've decided on your top three to five universities/programs you intend on applying to, you will need to get familiar with the unique admissions requirements for each program. Typically, requirements include:

- Application and application fee
- Official transcripts from all colleges/universities you've attended
- A baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution
- A minimum GPA
- An essay, personal statement, or letter of intent. Some programs will list questions you must address in your personal statement, while others simply ask why you're interested in the program
- Professional resume or CV. Have it reviewed by a faculty member and the Career Development Center.
- Test results (GRE, GMAT, LSAT, etc...). Keep in mind, not every program will require tests results
- Letters of recommendation.
- Application deadline

This information can be found online on graduate school admission's pages or by contacting program representatives.

# ADMISSIONS ESSAYS

## PERSONAL STATEMENTS & STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

MSUM Career Development Center

Flora Frick 151

careers@mnstate.edu

218-477-2131

[www.mnstate.edu/career](http://www.mnstate.edu/career)

### HOW SHOULD I FORMAT MY ADMISSIONS ESSAY?

#### IF THE PROGRAM GIVES PROMPTS, ANSWER THEM IN ORDER!

If there is no prompt, look at what kind of essay it asks for (personal statement, statement of purpose, etc.). [See the next page for possible formats.](#)

Follow their length and formatting requirements. If there is no length requirement, the essay will typically be 2-3 pages, double spaced, Times New Roman.

### PERSONAL STATEMENT VS STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Personal statements and statements of purpose have different focuses:

	<b>Personal Statement</b> <i>who you are</i>	<b>Statement of Purpose</b> <i>what you want to achieve academically and professionally</i>
<b>Focus</b>	Motivations and personal experiences	Academic/career goals and how the program aligns with them
<b>Content</b>	Stories Discusses your background, life experiences, and obstacles you've overcome	Discusses academic background, research interests, professional experience, future goals, faculty you want to work with.
<b>Tone</b>	Reflective/narrative	Formal/focused

### APPLICATION TIPS

- When possible, submit your application 30 days before the deadline. Some programs begin screening early or admit students prior to the deadline.
- Get the inside scoop: Visit campus, attend an information session, or set up a call with a faculty member or student. This helps you tailor your materials to their culture/values.
- Aim to ask 2-3 faculty members to provide written recommendations at least a month in advance. Give them your resume.
- Double check every step of your application that depends on other people's actions.
- Once you have completed your application, verify with the institution that your application is complete and that they have everything they need.
- Keep a record of when you sent materials, in case there is a mix up.



(Asher, 2012)

## PERSONAL STATEMENT FORMAT

### Motivation

- What got you interested in your topic area?
- Why do you want to pursue this career path?

### Experience

What personal characteristics or experiences do you have that will help you succeed in graduate school? Pair every characteristic mentioned with evidence.

- Experiences in college, grades, your academic records, research
- Jobs, clubs, things that expanded your interest

### Goals

- What do you want to do in the future? (ex: careers, settings, populations you want to work with, etc.)
- How will this graduate program prepare you to do that?
- Show willingness to be flexible/open in your plans

### Links to School

- Why this specific graduate school? (mention it by name if possible)
- What are the positive attributes the school has that made you decide to apply?
- Connect *what they are about* to *what you are about*
- Can include specific faculty/research conducted at the institution here

### Conclusion

Optional, could do any of the following:

- Summarize essay
- Restate interest in specific program
- Wrap up essay by connecting back to a “theme”

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FORMAT

### Motivation - KEEP IT BRIEF!

- What got you interested in your topic area?
- Why do you want to pursue this career path?

### Academic Background

- Relevant academic achievements, degree, research projects, coursework that prepared you for graduate study - be **specific** when talking about your research
- Special recognitions related to academics

### Experience

- Highlight work, internships, volunteer experiences related to your field.

### Career Goals/Academic Interests

- What are your specific career goals? (could include future job titles (if its not obvious), populations you want to work with, geographic locations you want to work) AND/OR
- What research do you want to do? What do you want to study?

### Links to School

- How will this specific program help you reach those goals? (connect to their strengths, specific faculty/research done there, courses, etc.)
- In most cases you should mention specific faculty by name, or at least mention specific research conducted at the institution
- Why are you interested in this specific graduate school?
- Connect *what they are about* to *what you are about*

### Conclusion

Optional, could:

- Summarize your essay (passion, preparation, goals)
- Restate interest in specific program



# WHAT ARE THE 5 STEPS OF WRITING AN ADMISSIONS ESSAY?

## 1. BRAINSTORM

Don't start writing until you do this step! There is nothing more frustrating than needing to re-write your essay because you realized you forgot to include something. Brainstorming helps you identify the most important and persuasive ideas to include in your essay.



Don't be critical at this point. Every idea has the potential to lead to an even better one!

Answer each of these questions. You won't include every answer in your essay, but answering the questions will help you think about your accomplishments and what makes you stand out.

- When did you initially become interested in this career? How has this interest developed? When did you become certain that this is what you wanted to do? What solidified your decision?
- What makes you unique, or at least different from, any other applicant?
- What attracts you to your chosen career? What do you expect to get out of it?
- What are your intellectual influences? What writers, books, professors, concepts in college have shaped you?
- How has your undergraduate academic experience prepared you for graduate/professional school? What are 2 or 3 of the academic accomplishments which have most prepared you?
- What research, shadowing, or clinicals have you done? What did you learn from it?
- What non-academic experiences contributed to your choice of school and/or career? (work, volunteer, co-curriculars, family)
- To get where you are today, have you had to overcome any hardships or obstacles? If so, how has this influenced your motivation for advanced education?
- Do you have specific career plans? How does graduate school pertain to them?
- What's the most important thing the admissions committee should know about you?
- Think of a professor in your field that you've had already and that you like and respect. If this person were reading your application essay, what would most impress him or her?

## 2. WRITE FOR YOURSELF (FROM THE HEART)

Make your first draft as genuine, honest, and heartfelt as possible. A good essay is authentic, and it is hard to build that in later! Write the first draft for yourself only. We'll start thinking about what admissions readers might think in step 3.

- Write in the first person (I, my)
- Start by writing a draft for the school you MOST want to get into OR start with one that seems to have prompts in common with many other programs
- Answer the prompts in order OR follow our format on the previous pages of they don't have prompts
- Focus on depth, not breadth (a few ideas, explained well)
- If you are writing a personal statement, focus on stories and feelings in your writing



## 3. WRITE FOR THE ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE

Read your draft as if you were on the admissions committee. What would they think?

- Are there any red flags?
- Are there sections where you use negatively-toned language or put an overly negative spin on something?
- Did you follow their prompts, and follow them in order?



## Tailor Your Essay to Their Program

What is important to them? Diversity/equity? Service? Leadership? Innovation? To figure that out:

- Look up their program mission/values or institutional mission/values
- Look through their website
- Set up a call with a current student or faculty member. Or do a campus visit.

Are there any natural connections you could make to any of those concepts in your essay?



## 4. SPICE IT UP

In this step, we want to make your essay as engaging and appealing as possible.

### “SHOW DON’T TELL”

#### Which would you rather read?

“I harness salient people skills to connect deeply with others”

OR

“Because I’m quite curious, I often engage with customers at my Target register who chat with me about their beloved, rambunctious grandkids. I’ve asked questions that lead to stories about all kinds of pranks and family trips where these grandparents spoil their descendants. My customers remember me because I always remember them.”

If you are like most people, you prefer the second one! That is because it SHOWS the author connects with others, it doesn’t just TELL it.

#### Show don’t tell = including stories

- Instead of saying you are “intelligent, compassionate, or caring” describe a scene or event where you act in that manner.
- Less is more. If it is worth mentioning at all, it is worth illustrating for the reader.
- Avoid long paragraphs sharing your personal thoughts or values. Instead, tell a story that shows them in action!

### TRY IT

Think about when you became interested in this career. What could you write about to build that scene or story? Include senses, proper names, active verbs, or feelings.

## 4 STRATEGIES TO “SHOW DON’T TELL”

#### Add any of the 5 senses

Sight, touch, hearing, taste, even smell!

- “A dusty, dry wind brings tears to my eyes”

#### Add specific or proper names

- “Just two weeks in and our first plants began to sprout: rainbow chard, broccoli, spinach, tomatoes, and lettuce.”

#### Add specific, active verbs

- “I slip out of my chair and see the guard on duty backing away from the ruckus. I also see two men on the pool deck, tensing their muscles, ready to pounce. I freeze.”

#### Add feelings

- “My heart raced in my chest as I went to meet with the athletic director. Would Coach kick me off the team for going behind his back? Would he take away playing time? Would he make fun of me too? Even though my coach’s behavior didn’t improve, I am still proud of myself.”

“Show don’t tell” is especially helpful when writing a personal statement, as that type of essay tends to be narrative-focused.

## “SHOW DON’T TELL” & STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

Starting your essay with a short scene or story that highlights your motivation can still be a great way to start your essay, even if it is a statement of purpose. Just make sure it isn’t too long (limit it to 1 paragraph).

Even if you don’t include a lot of stories, you can still **avoid vague and overused language** in your essay by applying the concept of “show don’t tell.” Consider these examples:

I am passionate about my community and define community in many ways.



I realized ‘community’ was more than the people whose names I knew—it was the bus driver I’d say hello to each morning, the street cleaner I’d never met, even my neighbors’ pets were part of my extended community.

I’ve always wanted to be a doctor.



My path to medicine was affirmed while working as a certified nurse’s aide. From bathing to shaving to feeding, I’ve been involved with patients in many capacities. No matter what I was doing I tried to connect with patients, listen to their stories, and maybe bring out a smile. Being able to provide emotional and social support was very satisfying.

In a statement of purpose, you’ll also want to avoid turning your essay into your resume (which they already have!). So how do you avoid a list when talking about your academic background and experience?

### In a statement of purpose, focus on explaining:

- What did you do, specifically? (research techniques used, specific topics studied)
- Why was this experience significant?
- How did this experience prepare me for graduate study?
- What lessons did I learn? What challenges did I overcome?
- How did this experience shape my goals?

Want to learn more about person first language?  
View [Minnesota State’s Inclusive Language Guide](#).



## USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

When possible, use “person-first language.” This puts the emphasis on the person rather than the disability or identity.

From working with homeless people, I learned...



From working with people experiencing homelessness, I learned....

## ADD ACADEMIC LANGUAGE

We want to show the admissions committee that you have strong writing skills. Look for opportunities to make your writing more academic.

I got a job working at Frasier, Inc...



I accepted a position at Frasier, Inc...

## 5. PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD

Have multiple people read your statement. This could include faculty, University Writing Support Center staff, and Career Development Center staff.

Double check. Are you...

- answering their prompts?
- following their length guidelines? (otherwise 2-3 pages, double spaced, Times New Roman)
- connecting to their program’s mission/values and sharing why you want to study there?



## ADDRESSING YOUR GPA

Do you meet the program's required or average GPA score? If not, you may want to consider briefly addressing your GPA in the personal statement. Only address your low GPA if it was caused by a problem that:

- is in the past
- is now resolved
- is unlikely to repeat in grad school

Use a [GPA Calculator](#) to find your GPA in these ways, to see if the statistics could be in your favor in some way:

- Major GPA
- In a specific related subject that you are studying in the future
- Excluding a specific subject that you did poorly in and won't need to take again
- Year by year
- Semester by semester
- Over the last four semesters
- Years since your first year

Use your GPA calculations to look for patterns to identify problem areas that are unlikely to repeat in grad school.

Here are some examples of what it might like to address your GPA in a personal statement. Don't just take the language below, you need to describe **your individual situation** and why it is unlikely to recur. Be brief and factual, and avoid making lengthy excuses.

“My father experienced some unexpected business reversals in the spring of my freshman year, and I took a full-time job in order to complete the academic term. By the spring of my sophomore year, I qualified for financial aid, and was able to drop down to a part-time job. If you do not count the year when I was working full time and going to school full time, my GPA would be 3.35 overall and 3.53 in my major.”

“Finally, I would like to address the issue of my academic career. As you have my transcripts, you can see that I was not especially serious in my first two years as an undergraduate, and you can also see that I have improved dramatically. I have a 3.9 GPA for my last two years, and I expect to continue to do well in graduate school.”

(Asher, 2012)

## RESOURCES

### • Career Development Center

The Career Development Center is here to help you be a prepared professional. Whether that is assistance with your resume and cover letter, or helping you in the graduate school application process, there are many ways their experienced staff can provide support.

[Connect on Handshake](#) | Flora Frick 151 | [careers@mnstate.edu](mailto:careers@mnstate.edu) | 218-477-2131

### • MSUM Library

The MSUM Library offers ample resources for students who are interested in continuing their education including test preparation books to check out as well as online practice tests and resources for the GRE, GMAT, and the MCAT.

[Click for Online GRE resources](#) | [Click for Online GMAT resources](#)

[Click for Online MCAT resources](#) (enter MCAT info in the search bar. Sign in using your StarID & password))

Livingston Lord Library | [refdesk@mnstate.edu](mailto:refdesk@mnstate.edu) | 218-477-2922

### • Advisor & Faculty

Your faculty and advisor are all great resources when it comes to education and career planning. They have first-hand experience in your chosen field and can offer insights into your specific profession.

### • University Writing Support Center

The University Writing Center is run by student tutors—undergraduates with a strong background in writing and formal training in tutoring. They offer valuable feedback on a wide variety of writing issues, ranging from content to organization to style and mechanics. They are a great resource for your personal statement.

Livingston Lord Library room 111 | <https://mnstate.mywconline.com/>

# COMPONENTS OF TYPICAL GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

This list is intended to help you plan for graduate school however it is imperative that you check with each program you intend on applying to to learn the details of their specific requirements.

	Academic MA or PHD Program	Graduate Certificate Program	Professional Degree	Business	Law	Medical or Dental School
<b>Deadlines</b>	Nov - Jan	Rolling	Nov - Jan	Late Oct - Nov	Nov (rolling)	June (rolling)
<b>Centralized Application</b>	Not Common	Not Common	Not Common	Not Common	CAS (LSAC)	AMCAS (AAMC)
<b>Application Form</b>	Usually	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Transcript</b>	Official Transcript					
<b>Entrance Exam</b> (not all programs require an exam)	GRE	GRE or Other Relevant	GRE or Other Relevant	GMAT or GRE	LSAT	MCAT
<b>Personal Statement</b>	Personal Statement or Statement of Purpose	Yes	Yes	Personal Essays	Yes	Yes and Essays
<b>Letters of Recommendation</b>	Typically 3	Varies	Typically 3	Typically 2-3	Typically 3	Typically 3
<b>Resume or CV</b>	CV	Resume	Varies, Typically Resume	Resume	Resume	Resume
<b>Field Specific Writing Samples</b>	Sometimes	No	No	No	No	No
<b>Application Fee Per School</b>	\$50-125	\$30-125	\$30-175	\$100-265	\$50-100	\$75-100



Career  
Development  
Center

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