

2019 Employment Skills Resources

A. 10 Tips for Résumé & Cover Letter Development

1. Use the FFA Résumé Generator accessible through FFA.org only for assembling your skills and experiences and for obtaining the FFA emblem watermark on your résumé. Then download the generated résumé as an MS Word document, and customize it to your desired position and formatting preferences. Adhering strictly to template styles and content is counterproductive to a résumé's purpose – to showcase one's relevant qualifications and to set oneself apart from other applicants.
2. Match the font style of the résumé with the font style of the cover letter.
3. Font size should never be below 11 point in size and margins should create approximately a one-inch frame around each document.
4. Narrow the listing and descriptions of activities and awards on the résumé to those that are significant and relevant to the job objective. Eliminate or consolidate others.
5. Use lists within the résumé – not complete sentences. Never use “I”, “my”, or “me” in the résumé and minimize their use in the cover letter.
6. Consider all sources of experience and qualifications, including part-time and summer jobs, volunteer work, leadership experiences, class projects, and others.
7. Use strong words that show action throughout your documents.
8. Keep the cover letter to one page and the résumé to one page, if possible (does not include reference information).
9. Vary sentence structure and length within the cover letter and organize sentences into paragraphs around common main points.
10. Connect the job description to the résumé through providing supporting details and facts within the cover letter.

B. 10 Tips for Interview Preparation

1. Review the interview scorecard at the end of the contest guidelines to understand and practice all areas that will be evaluated.
2. Official dress is the dress code. How can you best present yourself in official dress? Are shoes polished? Do you have wild or bright nail polish? Is your skirt/slacks worn, faded or wrinkled? Are any jewelry and/or accessories of a minimalistic, conservative and professional nature?
3. Research the potential employer and the position. Know the employer's needs.
4. Practice good posture, a firm handshake, making eye contact, and good voice qualities.
5. Know what is presented and/or described in the job description, résumé and cover letter submitted. Anticipate questions about the content.
6. Control nervous gestures and fillers.
7. Respond to questions with more than one word.
8. Provide specific examples in answers that describe the use of relevant skills and abilities.
9. Prepare a list of questions to ask the interviewer in advance of the interviews.
10. Practice! Practice! Practice!

C. Cover Letter Rubric/Scorecard*

INDICATOR	Very strong evidence of skill is present 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill is present 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill is present 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
Format and General Appearance	Does not exceed one page without overcrowding; margins are acceptable; font size and style is readable (10-12 pt.); uses appropriate business format, date and address at top; addressed to appropriate person; appropriate signature block.	Does not exceed one page without overcrowding; margins are acceptable; font size and style is readable (10-12 pt.); uses appropriate business format, date and address at top; not addressed to appropriate person; inappropriate signature block.	Exceeds one page; margins are inappropriate; font style is unreadable; font size is too small or too large; no signature; no date or address; no inside address; not in appropriate business format.		X 4	
Introductory Paragraph	Identifies position for which he/she is applying; states how he/she heard about the position; states why he/she is interested in the position; uses wording to attract reader's attention.	Identifies position which he/she is applying; does not state how he/she found the job; vaguely describes why he/she is interested in the job; introduction is bland and not attention catching.	Does not clearly identify position he/she is seeking; no description of how he/she heard about the position; does not describe why he/she is interested in the job; does not grab the reader's attention.		X4	
Skills and Experiences	Identifies two to three strongest qualifications for the job; indicates how education has prepared him/her for this specific job; states why he/she is interested in the position; skills and experiences are consistent with resume; makes reference to resume.	Identifies one to two qualifications for the job; indicates how education has prepared him/her for this specific job; provides a vague explanation of why interested in the job; skills and experiences are somewhat consistent with resume; makes reference to resume.	Does not identify relevant qualifications for the job; does not indicate how education has prepared him/her for this job; does not state why they are interested in the job; skills and experiences are not consistent with resume; does not mention resume.		X4	
Closing Paragraph	Thanks reader for taking time to read; provides appropriate contact information;	Thanks reader for taking time to read; provides contact information, but makes	Does not thank reader; does not mention a plan for follow up; does not provide any		X3	

INDICATOR	Very strong evidence of skill is present 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill is present 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill is present 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
	makes appropriate provisions for follow up.	reader assume follow up process or responsibility.	contact information.			
Spelling/ Grammar/ Punctuation	Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are extremely high quality with two or less errors in the document.	Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are adequate with three to five errors in the document.	Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are less than adequate with six or more errors in the document.		X5	
TOTAL POINTS						

D. Resume Rubric/Scorecard*

INDICATOR	Very strong evidence of skill is present 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill is present 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill is present 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
Contact Information	Includes name, address, email address, and phone number; name stands out on resume; provides professional e-mail address.	Name does not stand out; email address is too casual.	Missing name, address, email address, or phone number; email used is inappropriate or unprofessional.		X 2	
Employment Objective	Focused objective that states how candidate will help the business/ organization/ company achieve its goals.	Focused objective that states what candidate wants from the business/ organization/ company.	No objective identified.		X2	
Education or Relevant Coursework	Contains complete information listed in reverse chronological order (school, location, completion dates, etc.), relevant courses listed, dates formatted correctly, GPA listed in correct format (if appropriate), includes appropriate honors and awards.	Contains information listed in reverse chronological order (school, location, completion dates, etc.), relevant courses listed, dates formatted correctly, may show gaps in education; inappropriate GPA listed, includes appropriate honors and awards.	Information not listed in reverse chronological order, important information missing, information not listed in correct format.		X7	
Relevant Experience and Skills	Entries are listed in reverse chronological order; business/ organization/ company name, title, location, and dates are included; strong action verbs used with correct verb tense; personal pronouns and extraneous words are omitted; bullets are concise, direct and indicate one's impact/	Entries are listed in reverse chronological order; entries have a pattern of one type of error; action verbs are weak; verb tenses are inconsistent; bullets are not concise or direct and do not indicate impact/ contributions/ accomplishments; bullets are written in complete sentences.	Entries are not in reserve chronological order; most entries do not include business/ organization/ company name, dates, location, or position title; bullets are written in complete sentences; verb tenses are inconsistent; bullets are wordy, vague, and/or do not indicate one's impact/ contributions/		X9	

INDICATOR	Very strong evidence of skill is present 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill is present 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill is present 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
	contributions/ accomplishments; results are quantified; bullets are listed in order of importance.		accomplishments; bullets are not listed in order or importance to the reader; results are not quantified when appropriate; irrelevant or outdated information is listed.			
Achievements and Honors	Appropriate and relevant achievements and honors listed; achievements and honors related to career goal; provides specific details related to achievements and honors; listed in reserve chronological order.	Appropriate and relevant achievements and honors listed; achievements and honors related to career goal; lacks specific details related to achievements and honors; listed in reserve chronological order.	Achievements and honors not listed in reverse chronological order; inappropriate or irrelevant achievements listed; and/or no achievement or honors are listed.		X5	
References	Listed appropriate references and provided complete contact information for references.	References are listed, but not all may be appropriate or not all contact information for references is included.	Inappropriate references are listed; no references listed; and/or no contact information listed.		X2	
Spelling/ Grammar/ Punctuation	Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are extremely high quality with two or less errors in the document.	Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are adequate with three to five errors in the document.	Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are less than adequate with six or more errors in the document.		X5	
Format and General Appearance	Does not exceed two pages without overcrowding or excessive spacing; margins are acceptable; font size and style is readable (11 point or greater); formatting is consistent; headings reflect content and content substantiates headings; content is	Does not exceed two pages; appears overcrowded or empty/void of content; margins are acceptable; font size and style is readable (11 point or greater); formatting is mostly consistent; headings don't necessarily reflect content or content	Exceeds two pages; margins are inappropriate; font style is unreadable; font size is too small or too large; formatting is not consistent; content is not logically organized in targeted way.		X8	

INDICATOR	Very strong evidence of skill is present 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill is present 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill is present 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
	well-organized in targeted way.	substantiate headings; content is well-organized in targeted way.				
TOTAL POINTS						

E. Employment Application Rubric/Scorecard*

Indicator	Very strong evidence of skill is present 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill is present 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill is present 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
Consistent with Resume	Name, education, experience and other personal information matches information provided on resume.	Name, education, experience and other personal information generally matches information provided on resume.	Name, education, experience and other personal information do not match information provided on resume.		X4	
Grammar/ Punctuation/ Spelling	Spelling, grammar and punctuation are extremely high quality with two or less errors in the document. Abbreviations were used appropriately and consistently.	Spelling, grammar and punctuation are adequate with three to five errors in the document. Most abbreviations were used appropriately and consistently.	Spelling, grammar and punctuation are less than adequate with six or more errors in the document. Abbreviations were not used appropriately and/or consistently.		X6	
Form Completed	Entire application was completed with “N/A” indicated where appropriate.	Majority of the application was completed with few blank fields.	Contains several blank spaces and missing information.		X4	
Overall Impression	Application was consistent and appropriately highlighted candidate’s qualifications for the position.	Application was consistent and generally highlighted candidate’s qualifications for the position.	The application was not consistent and did not highlight candidate’s qualifications for the position.		X6	
TOTAL POINTS						

F. Personal Panel Interview Rubric/Scorecard*

INDICATOR	Very strong evidence of skill is present 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill is present 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill is present 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
Appearance	Professional dress/groomed: Follows standard dress code; polished shoes, clothes pressed, conservative accessories, personal grooming is appropriate and professional.	Dress appropriate: Just not as professional and “put together;” shoes clean but not polished, personal grooming not as on point (i.e., hair in face, chipped nail polish, etc.), cologne or perfume is distracting.	Very disheveled: Dirty shoes, not wearing black shoes., wrinkled attire, messy hair, overwhelming cologne or perfume, etc.		x 10	
First Impression	Greeting: Appropriate salutation and firm handshake. Introduction: States name Body language: Smiling and pleasant, does not sit until invited, posture is good, confident in manner.	Greeting: Appropriate salutation, confident but uneasy, soft handshake. Introduction: States name only when asked. Body language: Rarely smiles, posture not as confident, sits before invited to do so.	Greeting: Does not use salutation, very informal. Introduction: Fails to introduce self, fails to shake hands with interviewer. Body language: Poor posture, lackadaisical or obnoxious, chewing gum.		x 15	
Response to Questions	Used appropriate language for career: Cited relevant examples; evidence knowledge of career field (talk the talk); knows education and experience required for position; discussed skills gained through school or past jobs and how they are relevant to position for which applied; abilities described matched the resume; responses concise and logically communicated;	Seemed to know terms associated with career: Some holes; cited several relevant examples; but list is incomplete, knew about career, but conveyed incomplete picture; unsure of education or experience required for position; incomplete list of skills gained through school and past jobs and relevance to position for which applied; abilities mostly matched resume; responses seemed	Knew some of the language of position, but used incorrectly or did not show understanding of terms: Unable to cite or few relevant examples; position education and qualification requirements not known or do not match applicants skill set; unable to relate skills learned in school or past jobs and relevance to position applied; abilities hardly match		x 30	

INDICATOR	Very strong evidence of skill is present 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill is present 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill is present 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
	<p>responses do not sound “canned;” provided in-depth description of skills, not just a list; provided in-depth response to questions, not yes/no responses to questions; established a “theme” that overall describes their abilities.</p>	<p>rehearsed and/or somewhat disorganized; provided some depth to description of job skills; provided some depth to responses to questions; provided some yes/no responses; was able to tie some abilities together to form a picture of qualifications.</p>	<p>resume; responses seemed “canned” with little logical progression; mainly provided list of skills with little explanation; provided yes/no responses; unable to see an overall theme of person’s abilities.</p>			
<p>Communication Skills</p>	<p>Persuasive: Led the interview in a direction that enabled them to expand so their skills were expressed, took initiative to add information beyond question asked.</p> <p>Confident: Exhibited self-confidence both with body language and verbally</p> <p>Appropriate volume: Spoke with proper volume for room to be heard clearly; not too loud, not too soft.</p> <p>Enunciation/grammar : Avoided words like “git” versus “get” and “agin” versus “again;” used proper words when speaking (didn’t use 10 dollar words when a five-dollar word will do).</p> <p>Concise: Avoided run-on sentences and answered with logical and organized thoughts.</p>	<p>Persuasive: Was able to expand somewhat on skills that are a fit for the position; volunteered some additional information to questions asked.</p> <p>Confident: Exhibited some nervousness, but covered well; voice and body language showed some uncertainty.</p> <p>Appropriate volume: Did not modulate volume to express answers; could hear sometimes; but quiet when unsure of response and hard to hear OR volume was occasionally overbearing needed tempered.</p> <p>Enunciation/grammar : Some language not appropriate for position applied, used some slang and exhibited some “dialect.”</p> <p>Concise: Some</p>	<p>Persuasive: Answered yes or no to most questions; did not expand on skill set.</p> <p>Confident: Did not appear comfortable; obviously nervous or disengaged, slouched in chair, etc.</p> <p>Appropriate volume: Hard to hear answers or volume too loud for room.</p> <p>Enunciation/grammar : Used overly complex or simplistic language, sprinkled in words like “git” versus “get” and “agin” versus “again.”</p> <p>Concise: Rambled and used run on sentences. Answers were poorly organized or unrelated, and thoughts not clearly expressed.</p> <p>Sincere: Seemed uninterested in the position and distracted.</p> <p>Poise: Demonstrated</p>		<p>x 30</p>	

INDICATOR	Very strong evidence of skill is present 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill is present 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill is present 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
	<p>Sincere: Expressed true interest in the position they are seeking.</p> <p>Poise: Avoided distracting mannerisms, such as drumming fingers or overuse of “uhm,” “like,” and “you know.”</p> <p>Discretion/Tact: Shared appropriate information and did not create an awkward situation through responses.</p>	<p>questions answered in a rambling fashion, but point was able to be made. Thoughts were logical, but somewhat disorganized.</p> <p>Sincere: Expressed interest in the position they are seeking, but not 100% convincingly.</p> <p>Poise: Seemed comfortable with some nervousness; caught self before exhibiting distracting mannerisms; rarely used “uhm,” “like,” and “you know.”</p> <p>Discretion/Tact: Mostly professional in tone and shared information that created little, if any, awkwardness.</p>	<p>distracted mannerisms such as tapping foot, drumming fingers, cracking knuckles, etc.;</p> <p>Excessive use of “uhm,” “like,” and “you know.”</p> <p>Discretion/Tact: Shared information that may be seen as personal about self or someone else that created awkwardness; appeared unprofessional.</p>			
Conclusion	<p>Posed appropriate questions of interviewer: Questions were thoughtful and relevant to the interview that transpired (e.g., when notification of when selection will occur and how fi not mentioned, etc.); clarified next steps or inquired as to next step in interview process (e.g., if there will be additional interviews, etc.)</p> <p>Appropriate thanks and exit: Asked for business card, thanked</p>	<p>Questions posed were somewhat appropriate: Some questions had no relevance to interview; incomplete inquiry of the next steps in the interview process; asked for business card; thanked interviewer(s) and shook hands, but seemed uncertain how to end the interview and exit.</p>	<p>Asks no questions: Questions asked (if asked) had no relevance to next steps in the interview process; ended interview abruptly or awkwardly; exited without thanks or shaking hands.</p>		x 15	

INDICATOR	Very strong evidence of skill is present 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill is present 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill is present 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
	interviewer(s), stood and shook hands prior to exiting room.					
TOTAL POINTS						

G. Follow Up Correspondence Rubric/Scorecard*

INDICATOR	Very strong evidence of skill is present 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill is present 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill is present 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Score
Format	The document was directed to the appropriate person with an appropriate address and salutation. The level of formality was appropriate for the type of correspondence.	The document was directed to the appropriate person with an appropriate address and salutation, with minor errors. The level of formality was generally appropriate for the type of correspondence.	The document was not directed to the appropriate person. No address or salutation was included. The level of formality was not appropriate.		X 2	
Content	Effectively expressed appreciation and appropriately reiterated their qualifications. Expressed interest and appropriately stated provisions for follow-up.	Attempted to express appreciation and generally reiterated their qualifications. Generally expressed interest and attempted to state provisions for follow-up.	Did not attempt to express appreciation. Did not attempt to reiterate their qualifications. Did not attempt to express interest or state provisions for follow-up.		X3	
Grammar/ Punctuation/ Spelling	Spelling, grammar and punctuation are extremely high quality with two or less errors in the document.	Spelling, grammar and punctuation are adequate with three to five errors in the document.	Spelling, grammar and punctuation are less than adequate with six or more errors in the document.		X2	
Overall Impression	Writing (when appropriate) was legible and length was appropriate.	Writing (when appropriate) was difficult to read and length was generally appropriate.	Writing (when appropriate) was illegible. Length was inappropriate.		X3	
TOTAL POINTS						

*All Oklahoma FFA Employment Skills rubrics/scorecards are consistent with rubrics developed and used for the National FFA Employment Skills LDE, with only minor modifications.

OK CDE 2019

National FFA Organization. (2016). *Employment Skills Handbook: 2017-2021*. Indianapolis, IN: Unknown. Retrieved from https://www.ffa.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/cde_e