

Career Guide



Files Produced in the Career Guide

Filename

*[Your initials]*Res1

*[Your initials]*Res2

*[Your initials]*Prospects

*[Your initials]*CvrLtr

*[Your initials]*AppInfo

Document

Résumé created using a Word Résumé Template

Résumé created using the Word Résumé Wizard

List of prospective employers

Cover letter (From scratch or using Word's Letter Wizard)

Information for use in filling out Employment Applications

Optional Documents

Thank you letter

Contact Reference Log

Contact Reference Card



Career Guide

OBJECTIVES

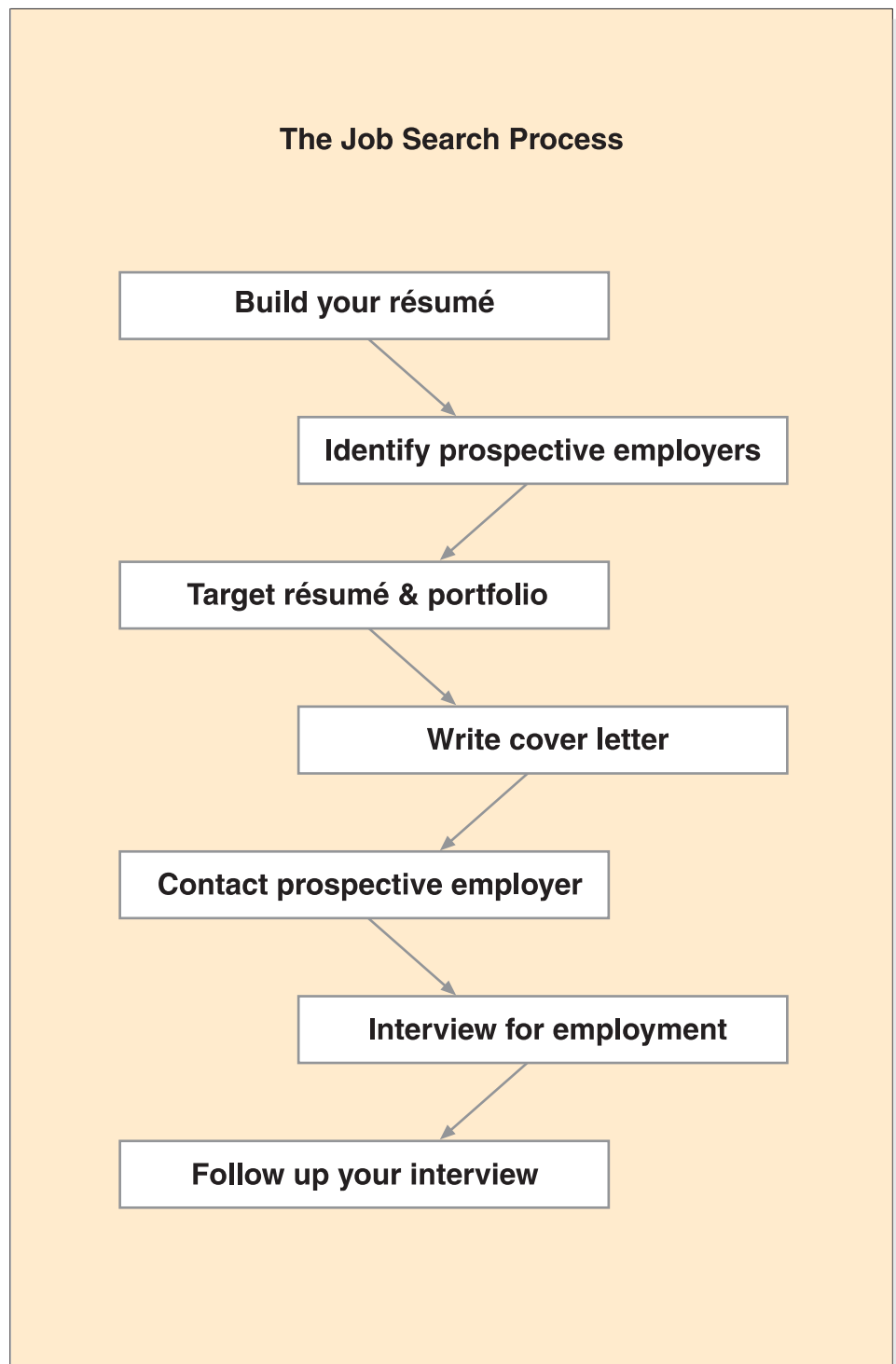
After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

1. Build a résumé.
2. Identify prospective employers.
3. Target your résumé and portfolio.
4. Write a cover letter.
5. Fill out an employment application.
6. Prepare for a job interview.
7. Follow up an interview.

Finding a job requires time and a desire to complete the steps necessary in the job application process. The number of applicants often exceeds the availability of jobs so it is important to distinguish yourself from other people interested in the same job. You need to show a prospective employer that you are the best candidate for the job.

This *Career Guide* helps you build a résumé that will present your education and work experience to prospective employers. The *Career Guide* also leads you through the job-search process, including contacting prospective employers, filling out an employment application, and creating follow up letters.

FIGURE 1
The job-search
process



The *Career Guide* will be helpful to you if you are planning to search for immediate employment. It is also a useful final project because it requires you to demonstrate skills you have gained. Even if you are not looking for a job, it will help prepare you for an eventual job search.

Building a Résumé

A résumé is a representation of your skills and experiences. It also provides a first impression of you to a potential employer.

Building a résumé is an exercise in self-discovery. To create one, you must review your experience, identify your skills, and focus on a goal. Once you have created a résumé that states your strengths and objectives, you can begin the process of marketing yourself to prospective employers.

Although a good résumé will not guarantee a job, it is a primary tool in the job-search process.

There are three types of résumés:

- The *chronological* résumé is the traditional type of résumé. It lists your work history, starting with your most recent job. It includes a brief description of the position and your accomplishments. This is a “where you’ve been” type of résumé.
- The *functional* résumé highlights your skills or areas of expertise. It is a “what you can do” type of résumé.
- The *combination* résumé highlights your skill areas *and* lists the jobs you have held.

The following pages illustrate these three kinds of résumés.

Chronological Résumé Description

Contact Information: Your name, address, and telephone number should appear at the top of the résumé. Spell out your address (do not abbreviate “Street” or “Avenue”). Include your ZIP Code. Use a telephone number where you can be reached during the day or where a message can be recorded. Include other forms of contact, such as an e-mail address or fax number, if available. Don’t use your current employer’s telephone or fax number.

Job Objective: Your job objective represents the specific field or job title that you are pursuing. If you are targeting a specific job, tailor your objective to that position. Include the job type, the industry, and the geographical area in your objective (example: “Marketing position with a computer software vendor in the Chicago area”). To keep your options open, write a broader objective.

Work Experience: Describe the jobs that you have held, beginning with your most recent position. List the years of employment, company names and locations, and specific job titles. Include current and past jobs, part-time work, self-employment, volunteer work, and internships, as appropriate. The job description should focus on quantified achievements and specific skills.

Education: List the schools and training programs that you have attended. List your most recent education—school, degree or program, and date completed. Omit information about your high school if you have a college degree. Include any additional information, such as continuing education, seminars, or special course work that is related to your objective. This section can appear before **Work Experience** if you are a recent graduate, or if your education or training is your most important qualifying factor.

Additional Information: Your résumé can contain additional information that may be relevant to the job you are pursuing. For example, a section on computer proficiency can be included. You can also include **Activities**, **Professional Organizations**, or **Honors/Awards** as separate sections.

References: References are often not included on a résumé, but are provided separately if requested. Create a list of references in advance. Include the name, address, telephone number, and title (if appropriate) of each reference. You can ask a previous employer for a letter of recommendation, which you can then photocopy.

FIGURE 2 Chronological résumé*

12 Juniper Drive Any Town, State 00000	(000) 000-0000 E-mail: dmartin@xxx.xxx																											
<h2>Donald Martin</h2>																												
Objective	Seeking position as microcomputer sales person in dynamic retail environment.																											
Experience	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">2001—Present</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Electronic Depot</td> <td style="width: 30%;">Any Town, State</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Sales Associate</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized in sales of computer hardware and software in busy retail outlet. • Selected Salesperson of the Year for Midwest region. • Established customer training program for computer sales that produced \$80,000 in the first year. </td> </tr> <tr> <td>1999—2001</td> <td>Video Time</td> <td>Any Town, State</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Assistant Manager</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed video-rental store during most heavily trafficked hours (evenings and weekends). Effectively handled as many as 250 customers per day. • Managed 250 sales representatives in 10 Western states. • Started Old Time Cinema Club that boosted sales of backlist videos by 50%. </td> </tr> <tr> <td>1998-1999</td> <td>Fairway Department Store</td> <td>Any Town, State</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Senior Assistant</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisted customers in busy Electronics Department. • Handled more than \$2,000 per day in cash sales. • Completed sales training program. </td> </tr> </table>	2001—Present	Electronic Depot	Any Town, State	Sales Associate			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized in sales of computer hardware and software in busy retail outlet. • Selected Salesperson of the Year for Midwest region. • Established customer training program for computer sales that produced \$80,000 in the first year. 			1999—2001	Video Time	Any Town, State	Assistant Manager			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed video-rental store during most heavily trafficked hours (evenings and weekends). Effectively handled as many as 250 customers per day. • Managed 250 sales representatives in 10 Western states. • Started Old Time Cinema Club that boosted sales of backlist videos by 50%. 			1998-1999	Fairway Department Store	Any Town, State	Senior Assistant			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisted customers in busy Electronics Department. • Handled more than \$2,000 per day in cash sales. • Completed sales training program. 		
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Education	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">2000</td> <td style="width: 50%;"> Fargo Technical College</td> <td style="width: 30%;"> Any Town, State</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A.A., Microcomputers Systems Technology • G.P.A. 3.93. </td> </tr> </table>	2000	Fargo Technical College	Any Town, State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A.A., Microcomputers Systems Technology • G.P.A. 3.93. 																							
2000	Fargo Technical College	Any Town, State																										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A.A., Microcomputers Systems Technology • G.P.A. 3.93. 																												
Software/Hardware Trainings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proficiency in all Microsoft Office applications on both the PC and Macintosh computers. • Can perform diagnostics on PCs and peripheral equipment, and can install/upgrade PC components such as network cards, memory chips, disk drives, and modems. 																											
References	Available upon request.																											

*Created using Word's Contemporary résumé style.

Functional Résumé Description

Contact Information: Your name, address, and telephone number should appear at the top of the résumé. Spell out your address (do not abbreviate “Street” or “Avenue”). Include your ZIP Code. Use a telephone number where you can be reached during the day or where a message can be recorded. Include other forms of contact, such as an e-mail address or fax number, if available. Don’t use your current employer’s telephone or fax number.

Job Objective: Your job objective represents the specific field or job title that you are pursuing. If you are targeting a specific job, tailor your objective to that position. Include the job type, industry, and geographical area in your objective (example: “Marketing position with a computer software vendor in the Chicago area”). To keep your options open, write a broader objective.

Functional Sections: In a functional résumé, these sections provide the bulk of the information about you. Include two to four sections that describe a particular area of expertise or involvement. These areas should be directly related to the position you are pursuing. (In this résumé, the functional sections appear with the headings **Casework**, **Document Drafting**, and **Computer Skills**.) As an alternative to creating job-specific sections, create functional sections with the headings **Qualifications** and **Accomplishments**. Under these headings, list concise action statements that will catch the attention of a prospective employer.

Work Experience: A functional résumé lists your job history by date, company name and location, and title, beginning with the most recent position. Job descriptions are not included, as the résumé focuses on qualifications and skills, not work history.

Education: List the schools and training programs that you have attended. List your most recent education—school, degree or program, and date completed. Omit information about your high school if you have a college degree. Include any additional information, such as continuing education, seminars, or special course work that is related to your objective. This section can appear immediately below your **Objective** if you’re a recent graduate, or if your education or training is your most important qualifying factor.

Additional Information: Your résumé can contain additional information that may be relevant to the job you are pursuing. For example, you can include sections with the following headings: **Activities**, **Professional Organizations**, **Honors/Awards**. The heading **References** may be listed at the bottom, followed by the text “Available on request” (see “Chronological Résumé Description” for more information).

FIGURE 3 Functional résumé*

8809 Orange Terrace
Any Town, State 00000

Telephone (000) 000-0000
Fax (000) 000-0000

Lesley Brown

Objective	Paralegal position in computer or patent law	
Casework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Researched state and federal computer and patent laws. Wrote briefs for attorneys. ■ Prepared preliminary arguments and pleadings in computer law. ■ Obtained affidavits. 	
Document Drafting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Drafted contracts under the supervision of an attorney. ■ Prepared tax returns, incorporations, patent filings, and trust agreements. ■ Prepared reports and schematic diagrams. ■ Assisted computer law specialists in preparing hardware and software patents, contracts, applications, shareholder agreements, and packaging agreements. 	
Computer Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Word-processing software (Microsoft Word) ■ Advanced use of database software (Microsoft Access) and spreadsheet software (Microsoft Excel). ■ Researched on-line databases using Internet search engines. 	
Employment	1998–Present Collimore & Hapke, Attorneys-at-Law Legal Assistant	Any Town, State
Education	2002 Associate Degree, Paralegal Technology	York State Technical College Any Town, State
Activities	Legal Eagles Volunteer coordinator of weekly youth discussion group that teaches basic law principles.	Public Library

*Created using Word's Professional résumé style.

Combination Résumé Description

Contact Information: Your name, address, and telephone number should appear at the top of the résumé. Spell out your address (do not abbreviate “Street” or “Avenue”). Include your ZIP Code. Use a telephone number where you can be reached during the day or where a message can be recorded. Include other forms of contact, such as an e-mail address or fax number, if available. Don’t use your current employer’s telephone or fax number.

Job Objective: Your job objective represents the specific field or job title that you are pursuing. If you are targeting a specific job, tailor your objective to that position. Include the job type, the industry, and the geographical area in your objective (example: “Marketing position with a computer software vendor in the Chicago area”). To keep your options open, write a broader objective.

Functional Sections: Include two or three sections that describe a particular area of expertise or involvement, or that summarize your qualifications and accomplishments. Use concise statements that are easy to read.

Work Experience: As in the chronological résumé, list and describe the jobs that you have held, beginning with your most recent position. Include the years of employment, the company names and locations, and the specific job titles. You can include current and past jobs, part-time work, self-employment, volunteer work, internships, and so on, as appropriate. The job description should focus on quantified achievements and specific skills. Be careful not to repeat the same information here that you have listed in the Functional Sections.

Education: List the schools and training programs that you have attended. List your most recent education—school, degree or program, and date completed. Omit information about your high school if you have a college degree. Include any additional information that might be relevant, such as continuing education, seminars, or special course work. This section can appear above **Work Experience** if you’re a recent graduate, or if your education or training is your most important qualifying factor.

Additional Information: Your résumé can contain additional information that may be relevant to the job you are pursuing. For example, you can include sections with the following headings: **Activities**, **Professional Organizations**, **Honors/Awards**. The heading **References** may be listed at the bottom, followed by the text “Available on request” (see “Chronological Résumé Description” for more information).

FIGURE 4 Combination résumé*

ANNA LUPONE

OBJECTIVE

Corporate Administrative Assistant

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Four years experience in administrative/clerical support positions.
- Excellent problem-solving, project management, decision-making, and time management skills.
- Proven ability to prioritize and complete multiple tasks, independently and with little supervision.
- Bilingual: English/Spanish.

COMPUTER SKILLS

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ■ Operating System: | Microsoft Windows |
| ■ Word Processing: | Microsoft Word |
| ■ Graphics: | Microsoft PowerPoint |
| ■ Database and Spreadsheets: | Microsoft Access, Microsoft Excel |
| ■ Keyboard Speed: | 85 wpm |

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1999–Present GAG Inc. Any Town, State
Administrative Assistant

- Analyze sales volume and profit.
- Develop forecasting reports for annual sales of \$100 million.
- Monitor monthly spending and reconciliation for \$8 million budget.
- Manage \$200,000 in advertising and promotional materials.

EDUCATION

2001 Blake Business Institute Any Town, State
A.S. Administrative Office Technology

- Dean's List, 4.0 GPA

REFERENCES

Available upon request.

FAX (000) 000-0000 • E-MAIL 0000000@000000.COM
1002 LOOKOUT POINT • ANY TOWN, STATE 00000 • PHONE (000) 000-0000

*Created using Word's Elegant résumé style.

Choosing a Résumé Format

What type of résumé is right for you? Consider the following:

TABLE 1 Choosing a Résumé Type

RÉSUMÉ TYPE	PREFERABLE IF:
Chronological	You have a history of steady work that reflects growth, and you are looking for a job in the same field or a related field.
Functional	You are new to the workforce, have gaps in your work history, or are changing careers.
Combination	You have some work history that is worth showcasing and want to highlight your marketable skills.

Be aware that the chronological résumé is the most traditional and conservative type of résumé. It is also the easiest to prepare. The functional and combination résumés, which use more innovative approaches, require greater thought, planning, and creativity.

Tips on Résumé Writing

When preparing your résumé, give yourself plenty of time, and keep in mind the following basics:

Content

- Everything in your résumé should support your job objective. Omit anything that doesn't.
- Be clear about what your skills are, both in your own mind and on paper. Your résumé should answer the question, "Why should I hire you?"
- Your résumé should convey the impression that you are focused. It should be targeted to a specific occupation or career field.
- Don't shortchange yourself. Emphasize any accomplishments, awards, and recognition you have received that support your job objective.
- Mention promotions, raises, and bonuses, if appropriate, to prove your track record.
- Don't misrepresent yourself. Lying or exaggerating can only hurt—not help—you.
- Stress the positive—never include negative information about yourself. Your résumé should reflect what you *can* do, not what you can't.

Writing Style

- Strive for crisp, concise writing. Use short, easy-to-understand sentences.
- Use action words and phrases in your job and skill descriptions. For example, begin each description with words such as “Analyzed,” “Administered,” “Developed,” “Initiated,” “Organized,” and so on.
- Use buzzwords and terminology that relate to the job you are pursuing.
- Proofread your résumé thoroughly for typographical, grammatical, or punctuation errors.

Appearance

- Your résumé should look professional. It should have an attractive layout, an easy-to-read format, and enough “white space” so that it is not too text-heavy.
- Use a good-quality printer to print your résumé. Avoid sending out photocopies, if possible.
- Limit your résumé to one page, unless you have substantial work experience that is relevant to your current job objective.

Getting Help

- Attend résumé and career workshops offered at your school or in your community.
- Read books about résumé writing to learn how to identify your skills, document your experience, and deal with special problems. Review résumé samples.
- Ask someone whose judgment you trust to read your résumé before you mail it.

Résumé Templates and the Résumé Wizard

Microsoft Office Word provides three résumé templates and a Résumé Wizard to help you create a résumé.

EXERCISE

1

Use a Résumé Template

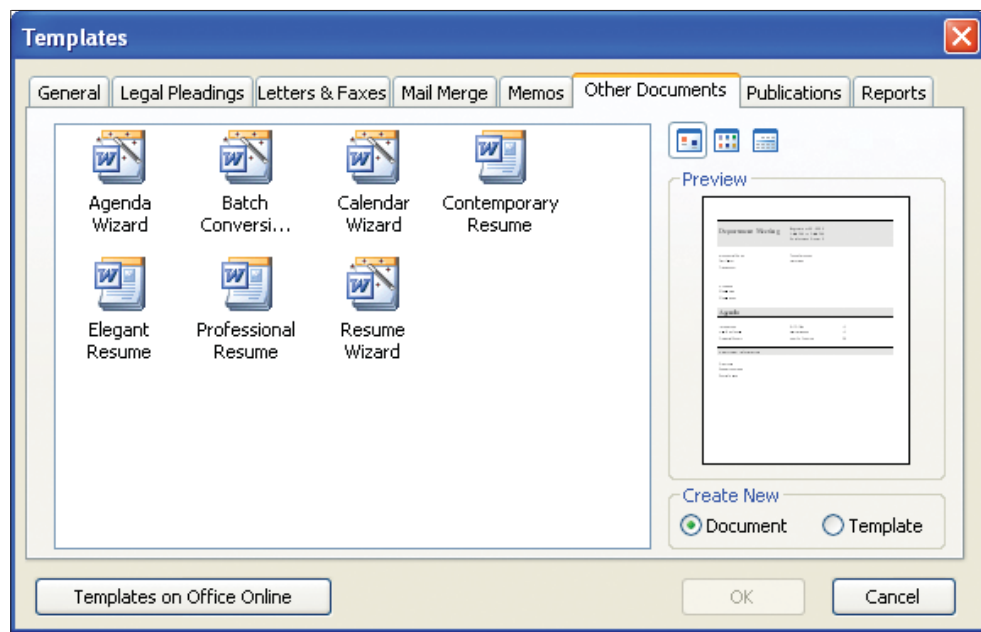
The résumé templates allow you to create a chronological résumé based on one of three styles: Elegant, Contemporary, and Professional.

1. From the **File** menu, choose **New**. The New Document task pane appears.
2. Choose **On my computer**. The Templates dialog box appears.
3. Click the **Other Documents** tab. The three résumé templates are shown, along with the Résumé Wizard. See Figure 5 on the next page.



NOTE: To preview a template before choosing it, click the résumé template icon, and then view it in the Preview box.

FIGURE 5
Résumé templates in
the Templates
dialog box



4. Double-click one of the résumé templates.
5. Replace all of the placeholder text in the document with your own information.
6. Make any formatting modifications. Save the document as *[your initials]Res1* and print it.



NOTE: Use the Résumé Wizard or résumé templates as a basis upon which to build your résumé. Modify the layout and formatting of the résumé to make it unique. Remember, you don't want your résumé to look exactly like everyone else's.

EXERCISE

2

Use the Résumé Wizard

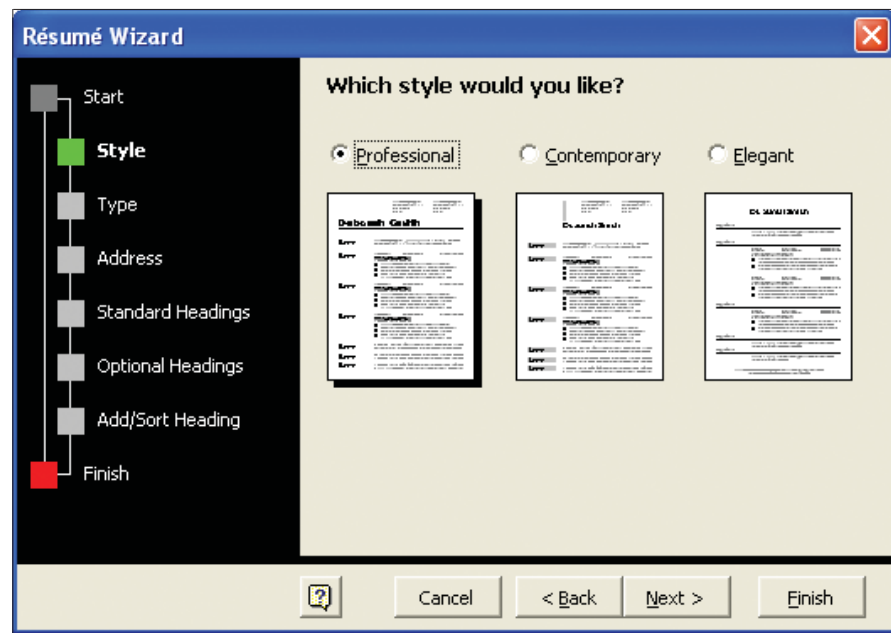
The Résumé Wizard guides you through the steps needed to create a chronological or functional résumé using one of the three résumé styles.



NOTE: Make sure that the Office Assistant is active for the following exercise. Otherwise the options presented in step 10 will not be presented. The Office Assistant may be hidden, but still be active.

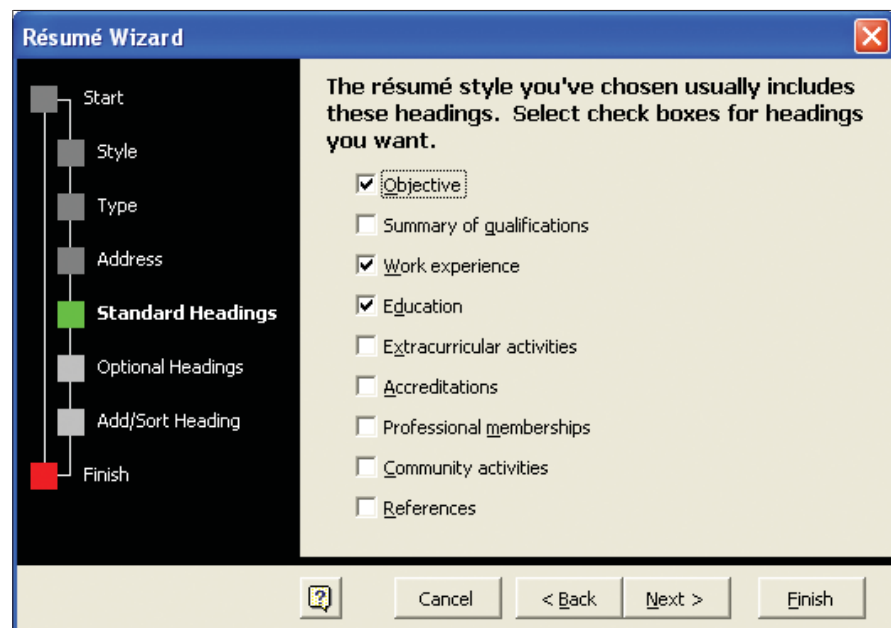
1. From the **File** menu, choose **New**. Click **On my computer** and then click the **Other Documents** tab. The three résumé templates are shown, along with the Résumé Wizard.
2. Double-click the Résumé Wizard icon. The first Résumé Wizard dialog box appears. Click **Next**.
3. In the Style dialog box, choose a résumé style. Click **Next** to display the next dialog box.

FIGURE 6
Choosing a résumé style



4. Choose the résumé type, and then click **Next**.
5. Enter your name, address, phone, fax number, and e-mail address. Click **Next**.

FIGURE 7
Choosing headings for your résumé



6. Choose the résumé headings you want, and then click **Next**.
7. Choose any optional headings, and then click **Next**.

8. Add another heading, reorder your existing headings, or remove headings. Click **Next**.
9. Click **Finish** to view the résumé.
10. At the Office Assistant prompt, choose an option or click **Cancel**.



TIP: You can click the Office Assistant option to create a quick cover letter at this point. The letter will contain sample text for you to replace with your own information. See the section “Writing a Cover Letter” in this *Career Guide* to learn about cover-letter basics.

11. Replace the placeholder text in the résumé with your own information.
12. Make any modifications. Save the document as *[your initials]Res2*.

Identifying Prospective Employers

Now that you have prepared a résumé, it is time to think about who will view it. Your next step is to identify the companies in your area—and the people within those companies—who may be hiring people with your skills.

Always try to identify the manager in each company or organization who supervises the division, department, or group in which you hope to work. Avoid applying through a Human Resources staff member, if at all possible. In the Human Resources Department, it’s easy to become just another applicant who receives no special attention.

Help Wanted Ads

Help-wanted ads can represent a useful way to research the hiring trends of a local company. Help-wanted ads are, however, less useful as a source of real employment opportunities. They should never be used as the primary focus of your job search. In fact, some experts believe that only 10 percent of all available jobs are listed in the newspaper.

Use the back issues of your local newspapers to determine whether a company has been hiring recently, what kinds of jobs have recently been advertised, and if a particular contact person was listed in the ad.

Networking

Talk to people who are in a position to provide information about job leads and the hiring process at particular companies. They can be friends, relatives, acquaintances—anyone who can put you in touch with a job contact. Try to identify the people within a company who have the power to hire you. Get the correct spelling of each person’s name, official correct job title, department, company, and, if possible, a telephone number.

Company Research

An easy way to begin your company research is with the *Yellow Pages*. Use it to locate businesses in the field in which you're interested. (You may need to use the "Business-to-Business" section for some types of businesses.)

The business section of your local library contains reference books that can give you even more information about local companies. Some of the best sources are

- *Standard & Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors, and Executives*. McGraw-Hill. (Volume 2 lists companies by location.)
- *The National Directory of Addresses and Phone Numbers*. Gale Research, Inc.
- *Million Dollar Directory*. Dun & Bradstreet.
- *Job Seeker's Guide to Private and Public Companies*. Gale Research, Inc.
- *Peterson's Job Opportunities: Business*. Peterson's Guides, Inc.
- *Peterson's Job Opportunities for Engineering and Computer Science*. Peterson's Guides, Inc.

Some of these sources are also available in easy-to-use software versions that allow you to search for particular companies based on specific criteria. Your local librarian can often provide help in locating information about specific companies as well.

Using the Internet

Many sources of company and career information are available on the Internet. Many companies operate their own Web site or home page, and some even list their job openings there. If a prospective employer is a large company, search the Internet based on the company's name. Often, promotional materials from the company (and available in a local public library) will indicate its Internet or Web site address.

Many Web search engines (such as Google, AlltheWeb, or Yahoo) offer career-oriented services. Search for such general keywords as "career," "employment," or "job." A targeted search using more specific keywords may produce results that prove more immediately useful to your job search.

You can also use your Internet browser to search for locations with appropriate keywords. For example, one recent search showed 600,000 matches for the keyword "career." Obviously, the more targeted your search of the Internet, the more useful it may be.

Specialized employment search engines on the Internet may prove useful. Because these services list jobs from across the nation (and around the world), they may be less useful for a local job search. A list of places to look for jobs on the Internet follows (remember that Internet options change rapidly, so this list may need to be updated and new options may be available):

- HotJobs
One of the most widely used web-based job search sites
hotjobs.yahoo.com

- The Monster Board
Another well-established Internet job-search service
www.monster.com
- CareerBuilder
One-stop “mega job search” of 75 Internet job-posting sites
www.careerbuilder.com
- Jobs and Careers Web Directory
www.careers.org
- JobOptions
www.joboptions.com
- Wall Street Journal Executive Career Site
www.careerjournal.com

EXERCISE**3****Identify Prospective Employers**

1. Identify at least five prospective employers. They may be located anywhere but should represent the type of company for which you could imagine working.
2. For each prospective employer, obtain the name of a job contact. (This person would typically be a manager of the department, division, or group in which you would like to work.)
3. Key the list of prospective employers in a table. Include the contact’s name, department, company name, address, city, state, ZIP Code, telephone number, and fax number. Save the table as *[your initials]Prospects* and then print it. You’ll use this table throughout this *Career Guide*.

Targeting Your Résumé

So far you have created a résumé that reflects your qualifications. Now it is time to *target* a specific company and tailor your résumé to that company.

EXERCISE**4****Target Your Résumé to an Employer**

1. From your list of five prospective employers, choose one as your target. Review the information you have gathered about the company. If you feel you don’t have enough information, collect additional material. Ultimately, you should be very familiar with the company—and the position—you have targeted.
2. Review Table 2 on the next page.
3. Based on the checklist shown in Table 2, modify your résumé to increase its appeal to your targeted company.

TABLE 2 Targeting Your Résumé

✓ TARGETING SUGGESTIONS	
Objectives	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Change the job type to one that more closely resembles a job type available at the targeted company.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Change the description of the industry or geographical area to a description that more closely resembles those for the target company.
Chronological Résumé	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reorder the bullets under a previous job in “Work experience” to emphasize skills that apply to the targeted position.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reorder or modify “Additional information” areas to emphasize skills that apply to the targeted position.
Functional Résumé	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reorder or modify the “Functional sections” to emphasize skills that apply to the targeted position.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reorder or modify “Additional information” areas to emphasize skills that apply to the targeted position.
Combination Résumé	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reorder or modify the “Functional sections” to emphasize skills that apply to the targeted position.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reorder the bullets under a previous job in “Work experience” to emphasize skills that apply to the targeted position.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reorder or modify “Additional information” areas to emphasize skills that apply to the targeted position.



NOTE: Modifying a résumé does not mean fabricating work experience. You can, however, increase your appeal to a specific employer by highlighting certain skills. You can also minimize potential problem areas through the design and format selected for your résumé (for example, by deciding to use a functional résumé rather than a chronological one).

4. Spell-check and save your résumé.
5. Print the final copy of your résumé on appropriate paper stock.

Choosing Paper

The most commonly used résumé papers are 20-pound bond or 50-pound offset (both weigh the same) in a linen (textured) or laid (flat) finish. A 24-pound paper is thicker, has more texture, and is usually more expensive than 20-pound bond or 50-pound offset papers. You might consider using 24-pound Nekoosa, Classic Linen, or Becket Cambric for higher-level positions.

Let your résumé speak for itself. Don't go overboard in selecting a paper that will make your résumé stand out. Such a strategy could backfire. Don't use colored stock, for example. Neutral stock in different shades of white, gray, or beige is recommended.

If you're uncertain about paper choices, visit a stationery store, an office supplies store, a printer, or a local copy shop. Buy enough paper to use for your résumés, cover letters, and follow-up letters. Your envelopes should match the stationery.

Writing a Cover Letter

It has been said that sending a résumé without a cover letter is like giving a gift without a card. It is incomplete and confusing, and it only decreases the value of the résumé that you've spent so much time preparing and fine-tuning.

The Cover Letter Recipient A cover letter should be addressed to the job contact at a targeted company—never to Human Resources or Personnel.

First Paragraph The first paragraph should explain what job you are applying for and why you are interested in it. Be as specific as you can. Describe how you heard about the job opening. If someone told you about the company or the job opening, mention the person's name (but make sure to get his or her permission first). Describe why the work of the department or company holds particular interest for you, but don't go overboard with superlatives or hype.

Second Paragraph Describe your credentials in the second paragraph. Don't repeat your résumé. Focus, instead, on the skills, experiences, or accomplishments that are most likely to appear relevant to the employer. If you're responding to an ad, incorporate language from the ad. If you've previously read a job description or had a discussion with the employer, try to use the language the employer used in describing the position. Mention two or three key credentials.

Third Paragraph Use the third paragraph to describe what you can do for the company. You need to show that you understand the employer's needs and that you have something to offer. In this paragraph (or as a separate paragraph), you should request a personal meeting. You could then indicate the time when it's easiest to reach you, whether the employer can contact you at work, and if you'll be following up with a phone call.

General Tips

- Your cover letter should be printed on the same paper.
- Do not use the letterhead of your current employer.
- Use the same typeface for both your cover letter and your résumé.
- Use the standard business letter format.

FIGURE 8 Sample cover letter**Donald Martin**

12 Juniper Drive
Any Town, State 00000
(000) 000-0000

January 22, 2004

Ward T. Cleaver, Manager
The Computer Warehouse, Inc.
6 Old King's Highway
Any Town, State 00000

Dear Mr. Cleaver:

I am seeking a position as a microcomputer salesperson, and read in the *Any Town News* that The Computer Warehouse was opening a new store on Old King's Highway. I have visited The Computer Warehouse in Lincoln and was impressed with the variety of hardware and software carried by the store. The store's focus on customer service was also exceptional, both through its "Trouble-Free Technical Support" program and its wide range of software training courses.

As my enclosed résumé indicates, I specialized in the sales of computer hardware and software at the Electronics Depot on Main Street. Although the sale of computers and software constitutes only a small portion of the overall sales of the Electronics Depot, computer and software sales increased by 42 percent in the past year. Part of this increase was due to the Customer Training Program that I developed. In its first year, the program produced revenues of \$80,000.

Opening a new store and training a new sales staff is a difficult prospect. With my proven background in sales and customer training, I feel I would be an asset to your sales staff and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you personally to discuss your staff needs. I will contact you in the next week to schedule an appointment at your convenience. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Donald Martin

Enclosure

EXERCISE

5

Write a Cover Letter

Use Microsoft Office Word to write a cover letter to accompany your résumé.

1. Using the standard business letter style, write a cover letter for your résumé. Use the three-paragraph format described earlier.



TIP: You can use Word's Letter Wizard to write a cover letter for your résumé. From the **File** menu, choose **New**, click **On my computer**, and then open the **Letter & Faxes** tab. Double-click on the Letter Wizard icon. Follow the steps to create the letter. Remember to choose the page design that matches your résumé and to include "Mr." or "Ms." in the recipient's name area.

2. Ask someone familiar with your résumé and with jobs in your chosen field to review your letter. Make any necessary modifications.
3. Spell-check the cover letter and save it as *[your initials]CvrLtr*.
4. Print your cover letter using the same stationery as your résumé.
5. Print an envelope for your cover letter and résumé. If possible, use the same stationery for the envelope, cover letter, and résumé.



NOTE: Some people believe that you should use a large envelope so you don't have to fold your résumé. Others recommend a standard business envelope.

Filling Out an Employment Application

Some companies require that every applicant, at every level, fill out an employment application. Other companies don't even use one. Generally, however, companies do use some form of an employment application. Whether you need to fill out such a form will depend on the company's internal personnel policies.

Often applicants are asked to fill out an employment application when they arrive at the company for an interview. To minimize stress in an already stressful situation, prepare for the employment application beforehand by creating a reference sheet that contains any information that might be included in the application and isn't found on your résumé. (Of course, you should refer to your résumé in filling out your employment application. Make sure to bring an extra copy for reference.)

Tips for Employment Applications

- Be as specific as possible when describing the position that you are seeking.
- Be careful when listing a required salary. A salary that is too high may eliminate you for some acceptable jobs, while a figure that is too low might weaken your negotiating position. Sometimes it is better to leave this line blank.

- Be prepared to list dates (month and year) for the schools you have attended. Some applications may also ask for your grade-point average and your class rank.
- Be prepared to list the following information for your previous employers: address, telephone number, name and title of supervisor, start date and end date (month and year), and a description of your duties.
- If some questions are not applicable to the job you are seeking, it is usually acceptable to write “Not Applicable” next to the question.

EXERCISE**6****Create a Reference Sheet for an Employment Application**

1. Review the section “Tips for Employment Applications.” Note any information that isn’t covered by your résumé.
2. Key all information that you will need to fill out an employment application. Use any format that makes sense to you.
3. Save the file as *[your initials]AppInfo* and then print it.

Employment Interviews

Once you have contacted a potential employer and scheduled an appointment to meet, you will need to prepare yourself to make a good impression in person. No matter how good your résumé or credentials may be, only the interview can, ultimately, land you the job.

Your interviewing skills will improve with each interview you complete.



NOTE: If possible, avoid scheduling an interview on a Monday, which is often the most hectic day in a business environment.

Preparing Yourself

- Confirm your appointment the day before, and make sure you arrive at the interview on time.
- Become as familiar with the company as possible. Read articles about the company, if they are available, or talk to people who are, or have been, employed by the company. It is always flattering to a prospective employer when an applicant appears knowledgeable about the company in an interview.
- Approach the interview with a clear mental picture of your capabilities and your job objective. Review your résumé immediately before meeting the prospective employer. Think positively.

Presenting Yourself

- Come to the interview equipped with copies of your résumé, your references, and any recommendation letters you have gathered. Be prepared to take notes, so include a notepad and a pen.
- Look your best. Your attire and grooming are critical to making a good impression. Dress neatly and professionally, in a manner that is appropriate to the company you are visiting. If necessary, get help in selecting an interview outfit from someone who dresses well.
- Be yourself. Act as relaxed as you possibly can, sit in a comfortable position, and focus on the interviewer.
- Ask questions. Learn what you can about the job, the company, to whom (or to how many people) you would report, and so on. If no job is available, or the job opening is not appropriate for you, ask for recommendations about other people in the company that you might contact.
- At the end of the interview, if you want the job, express your interest in it, and be ready to explain why the company should hire you.

Frequently Asked Interview Questions

The following are frequently asked interview questions. You may want to rehearse your answers before the interview. Never offer negative or unnecessary information to an interview question.

- Can you tell me about yourself?
- Why should I hire you?
- What are your major strengths? Weaknesses?
- What are your short-term goals? Long-term goals?
- Why do you want to leave your present job? (if employed)
- Why did you leave your previous job?
- What do you enjoy most (or least) about your current (or previous) job?
- Why do you want to work here?
- What salary do you expect to receive?

Follow Up After the Interview

To be successful in the interview process, you should take two important follow-up steps:

- Send a “thank you” letter.
- Keep track of your contacts.

“Thank You” Letters

Always send a “thank you” letter within 24 hours after you have interviewed. It creates a positive impression, shows that you have good follow-up skills and good social skills, and reminds the person of your meeting.

The letter should be short and friendly, thanking the person for his or her time and for any information he or she may have provided. You may want to mention something that reminds the person of who you are, in case many people have interviewed for the position.

Even if you know that the interview will not lead to a specific job offer, a “thank you” letter demonstrates your professionalism.

FIGURE 9 Sample “thank you” letter #1

Dear Ms. Jones:

Thank you for the opportunity of interviewing for the sales position. I enjoyed meeting you and appreciate the information that you shared with me.

I am very interested in the position and believe I could quickly become a productive member of your sales team.

Thanks again for the interview, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

FIGURE 10 Sample “thank you” letter #2

Dear Ms. Jones:

Thank you for the interview and the information you gave me yesterday. I really appreciate your recommendation that I meet with John Doe in the Marketing Department.

I have scheduled an interview with Mr. Doe and look forward to meeting him. If this contact eventually leads to a job offer, I will be most grateful.

Thanks again for your time and help.

Sincerely,

Keeping Track of Contacts

Be organized in your job search. Keep track of everyone who has received your résumé by creating a contact log.

FIGURE 11 Sample format for contact log

Date Sent	Contact Name	Company	Telephone	Comments

In addition, develop a system for organizing your contacts so that you can follow up with telephone calls as appropriate. You can use a computer application of your choice or simple index cards to create the system.

If you use index cards, enter all pertinent reference information for each contact on the card. Place the cards in a box, and then sort them in the order that you want to contact the individuals. You can use tabs as date markers.

FIGURE 12 Sample format for contact reference card

Company: _____

Contact Person: _____

Position: _____ Department: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Notes: _____
