



**RESUME PREPARATION,  
COVER LETTER, & JOB INTERVIEW**

## RESUME PREPARATION, COVER LETTER, & JOB INTERVIEW

### GOALS

1. To remind student nurses and practicing nurses as to the recommended content of self-presentation documents and expected behaviors in an attempt to prepare a resume, cover letter for a resume, and successful interviewing techniques.
2. To differentiate between a resume and a Curriculum Vitae (CV) summary.

### KEY WORDS FOR APPLICATION

1. Resume
2. Curriculum Vitae (CV)
3. Cover Letter
4. Power Declaration
5. Interview
6. Mission
7. Philosophy
8. Goals

### INTRODUCTION

It has been reported that Montana is facing a shortage of practicing nurses and nursing educators as baby boomers age and as veteran nurses get close to retiring. In response to this shortage, nursing education is attempting to speed up the training of nurses to meet the upcoming expected shortage.

To help meet the nursing shortage, numerous traveling nurses are now in demand. With our current concern for health care costs and local expertise, now (more than ever), we embark on a “journey of discovery” as we mutually assess the upcoming talent and abilities of nursing students. Many practicing registered nurses, also, are willing to learn the expert skills to help meet the current health care demand. Nursing resumes are now improved by inclusion of personal health care talents, employment interests, and commitments to high technological skills (such as Telehealth).

### GOAL

The goal of this article is to remind student nurses and practicing nurses as to the recommended content of self-presentation documents and expected behaviors, e.g. resume, cover letter writing, and interviewing techniques. Whereas, a *resume* is usually the preferred application document to a new health care position, the possible request for a Curriculum Vitae (CV) will require more elaboration as to a nurse’s educational background, abilities, and skills. A request for a CV Summary requires a shortened version of a CV.

## RESUME PREPARATION

The word “resume” is a French word meaning short story, brief overview, or summary. The content can be developed and presented as a paper document or retained online. It is to show accomplishments, skills, work history, health care abilities, interests, and goals to be presented in one or two pages.

Clearly identify why a chosen health care facility/organization should hire you. Prepare a resume to be a personal document that is designed to identify a desire and readiness to become an ambassador for health care standards by performing learned nursing behaviors. The resume is a recorded history of health care work and nursing interests! Online documentation of resume content is an option for updating employers.

The health care resume should include your:

1. Name and credentials (New graduate/LPN/RN)
2. Personal contact information (phone(s), mailing address, e-mail)
3. School attended, graduation date, work availability
4. Philosophy of health care/nursing (I believe....)
5. Goal(s) related to health care employment (short and long term)
6. Talents, interests, skills, abilities, and accomplishments (e.g. care planning, leadership, medical/surgical, psychiatric, pediatric, emergency, teaching, counseling, etc.)
7. Flexibility in learning and performing in new health care situations
8. Work history of nursing behaviors starting with the most recent---(No inclusion of employment that is not health related.)
9. Knowledge of and ability to use specific decision-making resources on a phone and computer
10. References with contact information---(At least one academic, one clinical preceptor, and one personal.)
11. Ability and willingness to learn new nursing ideas, information, processes, and behaviors
12. Desire and willingness to be an effective and loyal member of the healthcare team
13. Interest in the functioning and success of the facility/organization

There are numerous resume formats that can be used to present the above information in print or online. The format type is not as important as the readability of the format. Be succinct and honest. Online examples are available for personal style selection. (Google: “Format for Resume”)

Your accomplishments are usually related to ten (10) accomplishment categories. When listing your accomplishments, start each accomplishment with your choice of an action verb in *past tense* (see examples in parenthesis for each category). Follow your selected action verb with your specific action/experience(s) relative to the verb. (See one example per category.)

1. Getting results-- (Achieved, Expanded, Expedited, Improved, Integrated, Obtained, Qualified, Realized, Renovated, Restored)  
Example: Improved the senior nursing students course on telehealth concepts.
2. Problem solving--(Analyzed, Created, Detected, Diagnosed, Formulated, Investigated, Recommended, Remedied, Solved, Synthesized, Theorized)  
Example: Formulated nursing care plans to meet the objectives of the nursing course.

3. Quantitative--(Appraised, Audited, Budgeted, Compiled, Converted, Inventoried, Maximized, Reconciled, Recorded)  
Example: Budgeted for the new nursing coordinator position.
4. Communicating--(Adapted, Communicated, Composed, Demonstrated, Educated, Interpreted, Justified, Negotiated, Reinforced, Substantiated, Synthesized)  
Example: Demonstrated the accurate process of breast examination.
5. Helping--(Advised, Alleviated, Assured, Counseled, Enabled, Enhanced, interceded, Prescribed, Rehabilitated, Served, Validated)  
Example: Counseled new registered nurses regarding computer access.
6. Planning--(Administered, Commissioned, Determined, Developed, Evaluated, Formulated, Identified, Prepared, Researched, Revised, Strategized)  
Example: Prepared patients for outpatient surgery.
7. Organizing--(Activated, Assessed, Authorized, Classified, Coordinated, Designed, Logged, Organized, Scheduled, Sought, Suggested)  
Example: Suggested the waiting room be reorganized to provide patient privacy.
8. Executing--(Administered, Completed, Conducted, Distributed, Entered, Operated, Performed,)  
Example: Completed all final nursing exams with an average accuracy score of 90%.
9. Supervising--(Analyzed, Assessed, Compared, Developed, Established, Inspected, Modified, Prohibited, Regulated, Revised, Updated)  
Example: Modified the nursing goals for the assisted living unit.
10. Leading--(Chaired, Conducted, Directed, Founded, Hired, Initiated, Managed, Mentored, Originated, Supervised)  
Example: Chaired the student nursing advisory committee.

(Google: "Images of Verbs for Resume" —bing.com/images)

To the nursing instructor and clinical preceptor: Usually, the new nursing graduate's resume preparation begins at the onset of the second year of nursing education, *not* as a portion of a course at the end of a nursing education. All nursing students are different—each with unique individual interests and abilities. Help the student recognize their health care talents! Verbally commend well-defined talents and encourage and suggest health care opportunities that will support these recognized talents. Encourage students to be willing to place these talents, interests, and abilities on their resume. You never know—nursing students with continued excellent in-facility clinical preceptors (after graduation and registration) could serve in an outstanding way to meet the specific nursing needs of their own communities and possibly help replace the need for so many traveling nurses!

## **COVER LETTER**

Your unique and specifically tailored letter should accompany each online resume or typed resume. Send the cover letter to the attention of the specified hiring manager. Keep a copy of the cover letter.

The format should be an approved letter format. Letter formats are available online for your choosing. The cover letter can be a typed copy or prepared and retained online—not handwritten.

Following the inside address, state the job specific title or job general category. Your contact information is not necessary, as personal contact information is to be stated on the resume, and it encourages the reading of the resume.

The content of the first paragraph should introduce yourself by name and, possibly, a power declaration (see below). Refer the reader to the enclosed resume for his/her review.

Refrain from using long paragraphs, untrue statements, salary recommendations, negative comments, unimportant information, “stepping stone” to future goals, qualifications you do not have, excuses for leaving past work or education, arrogant comments, or begging for work.

Regardless of the information provided or the format selected, correct spelling of every word and sentence structure is a MUST! Have another cohort read the letter to help with potential spelling errors and clarity of your message.

*Power Declaration: This is a personal statement of job commitment as an introductory or closing statement. The statements are specific to each facility/organization. It will declare to the employer in a powerful way what skills you intend to bring upon employment to the facility/organization. Start with a statement of your education or practice, then add to the statement the positive outcome/behavior you will provided as a new employee.*

*For example: (Determine your beginning statement and then select your personal “I will” comment after the beginning statement)*

- 1. As a new registered nurse within the State of Montana, I will energize and support the problem-solving activities of the facility/organization.*
- 2. As a practicing and successful registered nurse of 12 years, I will share a history of positive nursing interventions that will promote facility/organizational success.*
- 3. As a nursing instructor in an acute clinical situation, I will be an available source for clinical teaching and nursing process activities that will improve educational outcomes.*
- 4. As an advanced-practice nurse, I will increase the health care opportunities for community members.*

At the end of the cover letter, write a “thank you” for the opportunity to apply for the position and consideration for employment.

Close the cover letter by selecting an appropriate word(s) followed by a comma.

For example: (Suggestions for closure)

1. Sincerely,
2. Best regards,
3. Yours truly,
4. Respectfully,
5. Thank you,

For example: (Do not use for closure)

1. Emotional emojis (e.g. smiley face)
2. Love,

3. Take care,
4. Best wishes,
5. Cheers,
6. Warm regards,

## INTERVIEW

This experience for any potential nursing employee (nurse) can be most enlightening—as it is to the individuals doing the interview. The interview can occur in front of a group of existing employees/board members and/or individually with a specified employee/administrator. Whereas, the interview process provides information to the facility/organization about a nurse, it provides the nurse information about the personality of the interviewing employees, the working relationships between employees, and the employee's understanding of discriminatory/nondiscriminatory questions.

Come to the interview with knowledge about the mission, philosophy, and goals of the facility/organization. An on-line access of information about the facility/organization is usually available. This is your opportunity to describe your abilities and focus on your strengths that can support and meet the goals of the facility/organization. Highlight your important accomplishments and how it relates specifically to the job. Know the job for which you are applying. Match your job qualities and strengths with the job expectations desired by the interviewer(s).

If you come unprepared for the interview, it tells the interviewer that you are probably not prepared for the job! Come to the interview looking professional, poised, and with a sense of confidence.

The most common unexpected and open-ended question by an interviewer during an interview is: “Tell me about yourself.” (The answer is **NOT**: “Well, what do you want to know!?”) Your response should be strictly formal, related to your passion, experience, or even, if you are so inclined, presented with a sense of humor; however, it should be thoughtfully considered before the interview. Even though the written resume is very important, a job interview is usually required and becomes, usually, the determinant of employment. The nurse's knowledge about how he/she should and intends to respond to this question is the “telling” aspect of job readiness.

It is important for the nurse to ascertain and prepare for an effective response to the above stated question—because—the interviewer is trying to covertly determine the answer to:

1. “How well does this nurse handle him/herself under scrutiny and in an unstructured situation?”
2. “How confident and articulate is this nurse?”
3. “How quickly does this nurse intellectually process an unexpected question?”

You want the interviewer to think: “WOW, THAT IS THE BEST ANSWER I HAVE EVER HEARD!”

The employer should know that one of the unspoken questions of the potential employee might be whether the interviewer has read his/her resume because of the questions asked by the interviewer. It is important to realize that the scrutiny process is not to be questioned by a potential employee—but allowed (with grace) to spontaneously happen.

Intellect, ability, education, and recognition by the employer as a “high achiever” candidate with talents to provide success is *not always* the determining factor for employment. There are many *unspoken and personal covert reasons* that determine employment.

**REGARDLESS—BE GREAT AT WHATEVER YOU CHOOSE TO DO OR WHAT UNEXPECTED PATH YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN!!**

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