



Envision's Resume Workshop for Middle School Students

Even if the word “resume” currently means nothing to your students, this workshop will be both fun and beneficial. The main objective is to help them start thinking about their strengths and interests. You will also open their eyes to the concept of employment and what employers want. If students develop a rudimentary resume now, they'll be ahead of the game by the time they apply for their first summer job. They'll also be better equipped as they apply for college, and start a path toward their future careers.

Sample Resumes and Tools

In the online portion of this article, we include links to sample resume templates, which you may choose to download and print out, to use as guidelines during the workshop. You can find these templates on sites like About.com, Adventures in Education or Career FAQs. You may also choose to use online resume-building tools such as those found on the Career Kids website or Resume Genius.

Return to the main article for specific links.

Introduction – Most middle school students are probably somewhat familiar with the concept and purpose of a resume. Through class discussion, you can fill in whatever blanks you discover in their knowledge base. Once you've introduced them to the basics, ask them to explain why a resume might be important to them in the future.

Understanding Resume Components

Once they understand what a resume is, review the basic resume building blocks, as identified below. You may want to use one of the sample resumes we provided and print copies for hand-outs. Or, you can create a sample resume on the board.

The Elements of a Resume

- Name and Contact Information
- Summary Statement/Objective
- Education
- Work Experience
- Activities
- Awards
- Skills and Special Strengths

The younger the student, the more they will focus on the last three points, until they have paid work experience under their belts. When the students reach hiring age, their prospective employers won't



expect a lot of work experience, but the employers *will* be looking for experiences that translate to good employee qualities. For example:

- School awards indicate intelligence, diligence and the desire to excel
- Volunteer work indicates a desire to help others
- Participation in clubs and extra-curricular activities indicate energy, drive, involvement, experience working in groups, etc.

Identify Interests

Now the students should start imagining their future job search, starting with a list of things they're interested in, such as sports, animals, video games, drawing, dance, etc. Next, ask if they have already formed ideas for their future careers. For those who haven't yet identified specific job interests, see if they can match their personal interests with careers. For example, a student who loves animals could be a zookeeper or vet. One who loves computer games might someday be a web designer or graphic artist.

List Experience and Skills

Next, students will list all their activities and accomplishments. Examples:

- On a team or in a club
- Traveled to another country
- Taken care of a younger sibling
- Cooked dinner for the family
- Created an awesome collection, piece of art, craft or poem
- Selected for the Honor Roll
- Won a prize at the Science Fair

Anything they've done, in or out of school, has given them experience and created the foundation of a skillset. They should include any activity that required responsibility, as well as any special achievement.

Through activities like these, students are developing skills without even realizing it: people skills, communication, problem-solving, collaboration, etc. Even babysitting demonstrates patience and responsibility. After they've listed every activity they can think of, ask the students to reflect on what they learned as a result of that activity. At first they may think that playing a video game couldn't help them at all in a job, but you can provide examples that enable them to start thinking in these terms. What computer skills did they learn when they played those games? Is their reaction time faster than when they started? Did they learn to quickly identify both the dangers and the assets presented on the screen?

Most young people have technical/computer skills that may seem second nature to them, but yet might actually be impressive to an adult. Be sure they include all technical and device-related skills in their list. They may also be adept at online research, which could prove to be a valuable skill in some jobs.



Your objective in the workshop is to help students identify and articulate the skills they've already cultivated, as well as plan to fill their experience gaps through future activities. They should maintain a running record of these skills and activities, so when resume (and/or college application) time comes around, they're ready. Their activity record provides a comprehensive list of past experiences, with details on how each prepared them for the task at hand.

All past experience can help us in the future – and make us better potential employees. The trick is to help the employer see it that way, too. And that's what the resume is for.

Review Resume Writing Techniques

Obviously it's important for students' resumes to contain strong content, but good writing is the other key component of a good resume. One goal of the workshop is to familiarize your students with the special requirements of resume writing. Unlike most other academic writing exercises, resumes are built on brief, incomplete sentences, with a strong focus on action verbs and specific *results*.

A resume is more than a list – it's a carefully crafted message to an employer about why the applicant would be good at the job and an asset to the company. In essence your students' resumes are saying, "Here's what I've accomplished and why you should take note."

On the other hand, the employer is receiving multiple resumes and will seldom read them carefully. Therefore, your students' resumes must be built for easy scanning, and formatted so that the most important information stands out and is easy to find.

As you conduct your workshop, have your students practice phrasing their accomplishments with popular resume action words, such as "earned, organized, led, developed, operated, enhanced," etc. Examples:

- Organized neighborhood food drive
- Elected as class president
- Increased Spanish Club's membership base
- Collected tickets for school play
- Developed web content for school event or fundraiser pages

The Muse.com and Adventures in Education websites provide great action word lists.

Examples of summary statements:

- Middle school honors student with a genuine love for animals seeking part-time employment with a veterinary hospital, in preparation for veterinary school.
- Avid sports fan with strong organizational skills seeking internship with professional sports team.
- Award-winning student with great people skills and genuine desire to help others. Specific strengths include writing, attention to detail, and motivating peers.



Other Resume Tips for Students

- Keep it short and to the point
- Customize the resume for the specific job to which you're applying
- Make sure your email address and voicemail message are professional, to leave a positive impression when employers respond to you
- If you're applying for a part-time or summer job, include the hours or dates you're available
- Update your resume every time you take on a new job or activity. If you do it immediately, you won't forget.

Create a Resume: Summer Job or Dream Job – Now it's time for students to develop an actual resume. You may want to let them choose between a resume for a specific type of summer job, or a resume for a "dream job."

Dream Job – Students who decide to write a resume for their dream job will need to conduct research to determine what education, skills and past experience they would need in order to be successful in that career. Then, ask them to imagine an experience set that would attract an employer seeking to hire someone for that position. They will list those made-up experiences and skills in the "dream resume."

Summer Job – In a few years your middle school students will start to look for summer or part-time jobs. Direct them to research job listings for these types of jobs, and select one that looks interesting (or realistic) to them. Then they will write a resume, highlighting any relevant experience or skills they have. If they feel the resulting resume is a little light, tell them to feel free to invent additional content. That exercise will help them target productive future activities, while they practice their resume-writing skills.