

The Samples

The résumé samples on the following pages represent the best—and the worst—of what I’ve seen over the course of my career. (Names have been changed.) Good résumés are identified by a check mark; undesirable by an X. On right-hand pages, résumés are “decoded” in depth.



Clear and Organized

The format below is clear and readable. Titles, employers, locations, and dates are presented in an easy-to-follow and logical hierarchy. Bolding, italics, bullets, and varying font sizes are used to maximum effect.

KATHERINE PEARSON

19 Barclay Street

New York New York 10011

917-288-1234 (cell) • pearson@post.washington.edu

EDUCATION

WASHINGTON POST UNIVERSITY, College of Arts & Sciences, St. Louis, MO *Class of 2008*

- B.A. in History with College Honors; Legal Studies/ Classics Minor
- Recipient of the Geller Prize, awarded annually by the History Department for best sophomore essay in an advanced seminar
- Deejay, world music show on KWUR, college radio station; literacy tutor for Spanish-speaking immigrant students; peer-elected residential college representative to student government; captain of a nationally recognized debate team

PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD (Junior Year Abroad Program), Santiago, Chile *Spring Semester, 2007*

- Lived with Chilean family; traveled in Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, and Brazil
- Course work in Spanish; South American culture and history; human rights
- Taught English in a local elementary school one morning per week

MAYVILLE SCHOOL, Los Angeles, CA *Class of 2004*

Valedictorian; Captain of award-winning debate team

LEGAL EXPERIENCE

GOLD BANK, New York, NY *Summer 2006*

Legal Department Assistant

- Compiled market data used as basis for transactions with domestic clients
- Reviewed corporate policies for compliance with local and federal finance regulations

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR LEGAL JUSTICE, San Francisco, CA *Summer 2005*

Legal Research Intern

- Answered phones, copied and filed contracts

LOS ANGELES PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE, Los Angeles, CA *Summer 2003*

Intern

- Organized one murder defendant's 25-year medical and criminal histories; created materials used as part of a successful defense

COMPUTER AND LANGUAGE SKILLS

Computers: Power Point, LexisNexis, and Excel

Languages: Fluent Spanish; basic conversational French; Latin

INTERESTS

Jamaican, Latin, and African music; black-and-white photography; modern dance



KATHERINE PEARSON

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New York New York 10011
917-288-1234 (cell) • pearson@post.washington.edu

Note the use of italics, then bold capital letters.

EDUCATION

WASHINGTON POST UNIVERSITY, College of Arts & Sciences, St. Louis, MO *Class of 2008*

- B.A. in History with College Honors; Legal Studies/ Classics Minor
- Recipient of the Geller Prize, awarded annually by the History Department for best sophomore essay in an advanced seminar
- Deejay, world music show on KWUR, college radio station; literacy tutor for Spanish-speaking immigrant students; peer-elected residential college representative to student government; captain of a nationally recognized debate team

This may seem like extraneous information, but it conveys a sense of the immersion program's intensity.

PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD (Junior Year Abroad Program), Santiago, Chile *Spring Semester, 2007*

Lived with Chilean family; traveled in Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, and Brazil

- Course work in Spanish; South American culture and history; human rights
- Taught English in a local elementary school one morning per week

MAYVILLE SCHOOL, Los Angeles, CA

Valedictorian; Captain of award-winning debate team

With credentials like these, it would have been a shame if she hadn't included her high school.

Class of 2004

LEGAL EXPERIENCE

GOLD BANK, New York, NY *Summer 2006*

Legal Department Assistant

- Compiled market data used as basis for transactions with domestic clients
- Reviewed corporate policies for compliance with local and federal finance regulations

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR LEGAL JUSTICE, San Francisco, CA *Summer 2005*

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COMPUTER AND LANGUAGE SKILLS

Computers: Power Point, LexisNexis, and Excel

Languages: Fluent Spanish; basic conversational French; Latin

INTERESTS

Jamaican, Latin, and African music; black-and-white photography; modern dance

Note the effective use of detail about her work and its larger implications.



Category Problems

This résumé is in dire need of revamping. Every piece of information is equally weighted; the result is that the reader's eye skims over the whole document, landing on nothing in particular.

J. Farrell

734 Plymouth Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103
313-345-1279
hotgirl@hotmail.com

EXPERIENCE

Assistant Manager at Pizzeria Fresca

Ann Arbor, MI

Summers 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002

Serve as Assistant manager at gourmet Italian pizzeria/restaurant

Oversee staff; worked my way up from dishwasher then waitress

• Reference: Mario, 902-123-1234

Fundamentals of Bread Baking

Norwich, VT

June 2003

Completed course with master baker (uncle)

• Reference: Joseph Reilly, 901-222-2222

Time Out Guide

New York, NY

Reviewed restaurants briefly in 2001*

• Reference: Sue Fredericks, 212-666-3333

Internship at the International Herald Tribune, Daily Supplement

Rome, Italy

2001 Academic Year

Lived in Trastevere district

Travel writer

SKILLS

Excellent verbal and written skills/well-versed in all major

software packages and internet applications/striving

creative-fiction writer/longtime musician and music-lover.

STRENGTHS

High personal standards of honesty, loyalty, integrity

* Additionally I have worked on a freelance basis starting in 2002.

A huge font screams huge ego; and unless “J.” is actually your first name, it should be spelled out so a reader knows what to call you.



J. Farrell

734 Plymouth Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103
313-345-1279
hotgirl@hotmail.com

This is far from an appropriate, professional e-mail address! See page 5.

Don't waste an opportunity for detail; in this case, “Culinary Experience” would make sense.

EXPERIENCE

“Serve as” is redundant here.

Assistant Manager at Pizzeria Fresca
Ann Arbor, MI
Summers 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002

Avoid using strings of numbers. “Summers 1999–2002” would be a much more efficient way to present this information.

Serve as Assistant manager at gourmet Italian pizzeria/restaurant
Oversee staff; worked my way up from dishwasher then waitress
• Reference: Mario, 902-123-1234

No narrative language or first person pronouns on a résumé. Save the story for the interview or cover letter.

No, no, no! No need to share this information here.

Fundamentals of Bread Baking

Norwich, VT
June 2003
Completed course with master baker (uncle)
• Reference: Joseph Reilly, 901-222-2222

This résumé-writer probably thought she was being efficient by merging her résumé and references—but in fact it looks as though she's jumping the gun.

Time Out Guide

New York, NY
Reviewed restaurants briefly in 2001*
• Reference: Sue Fredericks, 212-666-3333

Qualifiers like “briefly” don't belong on a résumé.

This is not for you to assess, and strengths and weaknesses don't belong on a résumé anyway.

Internship at the International Herald Tribune, Daily Supplement
Rome, Italy
2001 Academic Year
Lived in Trastevere district
Travel writer

Though this kind of experience is great, the real world doesn't operate on an academic calendar; and the neighborhood reference is irrelevant.

Where's the Education section? I'm guessing this candidate had some reason to leave it off—perhaps she didn't finish college, or maybe she never went. . . . In any case, her “Education” section could easily have been filled out with that breadbaking course.

SKILLS

Excellent verbal and written skills/well-versed in all major software packages and internet applications/striving creative-fiction writer/longtime musician and music-lover.

Everything about this section is off-base. Skills should appear in concrete categories like “Computer Skills” and “Language Skills.” “Striving” sounds juvenile, and now an employer is going to worry that you'll be writing your novel on the job. As for the love of music, appreciation is not a skill but an interest.

STRENGTHS

High personal standards of honesty, loyalty, integrity

* Additionally I have worked on a freelance basis starting in 2002.

Whether typed or handwritten, notes should never appear on the bottom of your résumé; you'll look forgetful, as though you rushed to throw things together and stuck some last-minute information at the bottom of the page.



Solid and Businesslike

Though this kind of format isn't a good fit for applicants with an overabundance of material, it's clear and navigable. In this case, high visibility in the left-hand "category" column serves to emphasize the candidate's unique mix of experience.

	<p>JOHN WINTERS</p> <p>61 Armory Road, Manchester, NH 06873 • j23winters@jmail.com • (603) 123-4567</p>
EDUCATION	<p>CANTER COLLEGE, Winterville, ME 2004–2008</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B.A. in Biology, magna cum laude, Chemistry Minor, 2008 • Honors thesis on the role of the Wnk-4 gene in developing <i>Drosophila</i> embryos • Captain, Canter Woodsmen; events included timed wood chopping and sawing, log-rolling • Member, Canter Crew <p>UNIVERSITY OF ONSWAIN, Dunedin, NZ Spring 2007</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studied native plant and marine biology; explored the North and South islands
RESEARCH EXPERIENCE	<p>ST. YORK UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS, Darien, CT Summer 2007</p> <p><i>Intern</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searched for genetic factors linked to intracranial aneurysm; assisted head researcher in lab screening; created weekly status reports <p>UNIVERSITY OF ONSWAIN DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS, Dunedin, NZ Summer 2006</p> <p><i>Intern</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searched for genes connected with autism and Tourette syndrome; sequenced and screened thousands of patient samples; results were published in <i>Science</i> magazine article
OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE	<p>MAINE OUTDOOR EDUCATION SOCIETY (<i>volunteer</i>) Summer 2008</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Led high-school seniors on four-day backpacking trips on the Appalachian and Grafton Loop trails <p>LONGSHORE SAILING SCHOOL, Westport, CT Summer 2006</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taught kayaking classes for ages 9-11 and 12-16 on the Long Island Sound <p>HABITAT FOR HUMANITY (<i>volunteer</i>), New Haven, CT Summer 2003</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gutted and constructed homes, improved property <p>STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION (<i>volunteer</i>) Summers 2002, 2003</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dinosaur National Monument, UT: Expanded the park's backcountry by creating fresh trails • River of No Return Wilderness Preserve, ID: Surveyed for invasive species of plants in the backcountry
CERTIFICATIONS	<p>Infant/child/adult CPR; Wilderness First Aid; First Aid</p>



JOHN WINTERS

61 Army Road, Manchester, NH 06873 • j23winters@gmail.com • (603) 123-4567

EDUCATION

- CANTER COLLEGE**, Winterville, ME 2004–2008
- B.A. in Biology, magna cum laude, Chemistry Minor, 2008
 - Honors thesis on the role of the Wnk-4 gene in developing *Drosophila* embryos
 - Captain, Canter Woodsmen; events included timed wood chopping and sawing, log-rolling
 - Member, Canter Crew
- Note the explanation of obscure associations or terminology.*
- UNIVERSITY OF ONSWAIN**, Dunedin, NZ Spring 2007
- Studied native plant and marine biology; explored the North and South islands

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Separating these two categories was a great move—this résumé might have seemed disjointed otherwise.

- ST. YORK UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS**, Darien, CT Summer 2007
- Intern*
- Searched for genetic factors linked to intracranial aneurysm; assisted head researcher in lab screening; created weekly status reports
- UNIVERSITY OF ONSWAIN DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS**, Dunedin, NZ Summer 2006
- Intern*
- Searched for genes connected with autism and Tourette syndrome; sequenced and screened thousands of patient samples; results were published in *Science* magazine article
- Another great example of the use of concrete detail to link your work to a greater purpose...*

OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE

- MAINE OUTDOOR EDUCATION SOCIETY** (*volunteer*) Summer 2008
- Led high-school seniors on four-day backpacking trips on the Appalachian and Grafton Loop trails
- A simple way to differentiate volunteer from paid work...*
- LONGSHORE SAILING SCHOOL**, Westport, CT Summer 2006
- Taught kayaking classes for ages 9-11 and 12-16 on the Long Island Sound
- HABITAT FOR HUMANITY** (*volunteer*), New Haven, CT Summer 2003
- Gutted and constructed homes, improved property
- STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION** (*volunteer*) Summers 2002, 2003
- Dinosaur National Monument, UT: Expanded the park's backcountry by creating fresh trails
 - River of No Return Wilderness Preserve, ID: Surveyed for invasive species of plants in the backcountry

CERTIFICATIONS

- Infant/child/adult CPR; Wilderness First Aid; First Aid
- Don't omit this kind of information from your résumé; first-aid and CPR are extremely valuable in any workplace.*



Column Crazyiness

This résumé suffers from a case of over-formatting. Instead of adding clarity, the columns create chaos and confusion. To boot, the more complicated you make your format, the more difficult it will be for you to reorganize your résumé so that it suits each job for which you're applying.

RÉSUMÉ

Ms. Jane Smith

42 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115

Telephone: (617) 262-3210 • Mobile: (617) 448-8792 • jsmith@myemailaddress.com

EDUCATION

St. Elmo's University
Graduated 2010
Bachelor of Arts
Major: English
Minor in History
Studio Arts Center International

Associations

Member of Pi Beta Pi Sorority
Member, Special Advisory
Committee to Admissions
Peer Tutor, UWC
Student (abroad)

St. Elmo, NC
September 2006-present

Florence, Italy
August-December 2008

Activities

Varsity Field Hockey (New England
Championship Participant),
Varsity Squash, Lacrosse,
Softball, Photography program

St. Elmo, NC
May-September 2008

GENERAL WORK EXPERIENCE

University of St. Elmo Press

Publicity Intern

As intern, duties included proofreading
copy, assembling Press kits, drafting
press releases
Updating computer databases,
Market researching, selecting
Pull quotes from reviews. Contributed
original ideas

Newton, MA
2004-2006

Vino e Mare Restaurant

Hostess

Tasks included greeting and Seating
patrons in a timely manner
Food Running, Garnishing Food,
answering phones

St. Elmo, NC
Summer 2008

INTERPERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Summer Fun Day Camp

Counselor

Tasks included leading small and Large
groups, coordinating Schedules,
organizing Activities

Canterbury Hospital

Clinical Volunteer:

Tasks included providing information to
patients and visitors; basic filing, open-
ing and sorting documents; photocopy-
ing and general office assistance

Canterbury, MA
June 2008-August 2008

PERSONAL INTERESTS

Working with people
Writing/Reading
Avid photographer www.jdoephoto.com
Passion for cooking
Athlete

Sustainability
Volunteering
Exploring and contributing
to new communities
Travel

EXCELLENT REFERENCES WILL BE FURNISHED UPON REQUEST



A résumé is a résumé—
we know what it is . . .
Your name and contact
info are all you need.

RÉSUMÉ

Name only! No titles.

Ms. Jane Smith

42 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115

Telephone: (617) 262-3210 • Mobile: (617) 448-8792 • jsmith@myemailaddress.com

EDUCATION

St. Elmo's University
Graduated 2010
Bachelor of Arts
Major: English
Minor in History
Studio Arts Center International

A more professional way to convey
this information: "St. Elmo's
University, BA 2010. English Major,
History Minor"

GENERAL WORK EXPERIENCE

University of St. Elmo Press

Don't waste space with such a
general heading. Tailor it to the
job for which you're applying.

We got it the
first time . . .

Vino e Mare Restaurant

INTERPERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Summer Fun Day Camp

Not a viable category.
Try Teaching Experience.

Canterbury Hospital

PERSONAL INTERESTS

If they're yours, they're yours . . .
"Personal" is redundant.

Associations

Member of Pi Beta Pi Sorority
Member, Special Advisory
Committee to Admissions
Peer Tutor, LIWC
Student (abroad)

St. Elmo, NC
September 2006-present

Florence, Italy
August-December 2008

Activities

Varsity Field Hockey (New England
Championship Participant),
Varsity Squash, Lacrosse,
Softball, Photography program

St. Elmo, NC
May-September 2008

How is an employer supposed to know what
this stands for?

Publicity Intern

As intern, duties included proofreading
copy, assembling press kits, drafting
press releases
Updating computer databases,
Market researching, selecting
Pull quotes from reviews. Contributed
original ideas

Newton, MA
2004-2006

This candidate had some strange ideas
about the use of capital letters. . . .

As opposed to what? Unoriginal ideas?

Hostess

Tasks included greeting and Seating
patrons in a timely manner
Food Running, Garnishing Food,
answering phones

St. Elmo, NC
Summer 2008

Nice concept, poor execution:
just say "promptly"

Counselor

Tasks included leading small and Large
groups, coordinating Schedules,
organizing Activities

Don't waste even one precious
line of a resume with this kind of
useless convention. And the proper
word is "furnished."

Clinical Volunteer:

Tasks included providing information to
patients and visitors; basic filing, open-
ing and sorting documents; photocopy-
ing and general office assistance

Canterbury, MA
June 2008-August 2008

Do you really think an employer
has the time?

Working with people
Writing/Reading
Avid photographer www.jdoephoto.com
Passion for cooking
Athlete

Sustainability
Volunteering
Exploring and contributing
to new communities
Travel

EXCELLENT REFERENCES WILL BE FURNISHED UPON REQUEST