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Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario
Career Development Centre

Resumes

A Quick Reference Guide

Vision

Nursing... one profession... many partnerships

Mission

Dedicated to quality driven decisions that enhance professional practical nursing.

To Contact the Career Development Centre

RPNAO
5025 Orbitor Drive
Suite 200, Building 4
Mississauga, ON L4W 4Y5
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fax: (905) 602-4666
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Some Resume Don'ts

Now that you have prepared your resume package (resume and cover letter), be sure to read it over before you send it out to prospective employers. You may wish to keep this handy list of "resume killers" in mind to ensure that your resume will not be ignored.

Resume Killers

(adapted from The Complete Resume Guide 4th Ed.,
by Marian Faux)

The following is a list of mistakes commonly made in resume writing, that may result in you resume being discarded

- a lie, even a small one
- any misspelling
- any grammatical error
- anything handwritten, even one added line
- forgetting to include your address or telephone number
- brightly coloured paper or difficult-to-read typeface
- a photograph
- vagueness (i.e. not giving your past employer's name)
- exaggerating your experience
- unrealistic salary expectations (note: never list your salary expectations on your resume)
- longer than 2-3 pages
- shorter than 3/4 of a page
- anything tacky

Need More Help?

Public libraries are a great source of information regarding resumes, interview skills, and job search techniques. The Internet also has some good information and for those who don't own a computer, many libraries provide on-line access. Or you can contact the RPNAO Career Development Centre 905-602-4664 x 225; we're here to help.

Follow-up

After 10-14 days, plan to follow-up your resume with a phone call. This is an opportunity to try to arrange an appointment for an interview or to ensure that your resume has been received and reviewed. Then, either following your interview or in response to information that your resume will be kept on file for future postings, send a thank-you letter. Your thank-you letter should be a short formal letter to thank the employer for considering you or meeting with you. You'd be surprised how effective this technique is for bringing you back in to the employer's mind. In fact, you may very well be remembered because *you* were the applicant who did write a thank-you letter.

(Sample thank-you letter)

Susan Brown
421 Smith Street, Toronto, ON M1E 4X9
(416) 555-1212

Ms. Joanne Duncan
Human Resources Manager
Metro Hospital, Western Site
City, Province L0K 1B0

Dear Ms. Duncan

Thank you very much for meeting with me last Tuesday to discuss the Registered Practical Nurse position in your Pediatrics Department. I wish to express my continued interest in this position and am confident that my experience will complement the team. I look forward to hearing from you regarding your decision at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Susan Brown RPN


Introduction

In January 1999, the provincial Nursing Task Force report was released which contained a number of important recommendations about nursing in Ontario. One of those recommendations was about attracting women and men to choose nursing as a career and fostering the retention and recruitment of RPNs and RNs

In June 1999, RPNAO created a Career Development Centre in response to this recommendation. The Centre's goal is to provide assistance to RPNs seeking employment in Ontario through a number of methods; CareerLine, a 24 hour toll free employment opportunity voicemail system; Career Fairs, jointly sponsored by RPNAO, RNAO and the Ontario Ministry of Health; and career development services such as resume writing, interview skills, job search initiatives, career planning and planning for continuing education.

This booklet addresses basic resume writing techniques. Further information can be found by reviewing the publications listed in the bibliography, by telephoning the Career Development Centre or by visiting your local public library.

Why write a resume



1 or 2 out of every 100 resumes results in an interview

“The purpose of a resume is to convince prospective employers that you are an outstanding candidate for employment and that it would be well

worth his or her time to interview you “(Beatty, p.44). Consider that human resource managers in large organizations such as hospital corporations may review up to 75 resumes in a day. Thus a poorly prepared, sloppy or confusing resume will quickly find its way to the “circular file” (garbage). It is essential that you communicate all of your major accomplishments and contributions in your resume, and demonstrate what you can do for prospective employers with the experience you have acquired. It is not merely a listing of your past duties, you must convey how you made a difference at your last workplace. Equally important is the presentation. Your resume is the employer’s first impression of you. It must be clear, organized and well-put-together. After all, this is exactly what you want employers to think about you!

(Sample cover letter)

*Susan Brown
421 Smith Street, Toronto, ON M1E 4X9
(416) 555-1212*

Ms. Joanne Duncan
Human Resources Manager
Metro Hospital, Western Site
City, Province
L0K 1B0

Dear Ms. Duncan:

In response to your advertisement in the Toronto Star, I am writing to express my interest in the Registered Practical Nurse position currently available in your Pediatrics Department.

I am excited by the opportunity to participate in the development of your new adolescent program, a pediatric subspecialty in which I have practiced for the past five years. As a staff practical nurse in a busy teen clinic, I developed excellent organization skills and clinical expertise in the area of adolescent eating disorders. I have also facilitated the implementation of self scheduling on my unit, as Chair of the self-scheduling committee. My enclosed resume provides additional information about my qualifications and accomplishments.

During my clinical practicum, I had the opportunity to spend some time on your Pediatric Unit and was impressed by the innovative programs, such as the music therapy program, that I saw in place. I look forward to the opportunity to speak with you further about the position within this dynamic team. I am available to meet with you to discuss my qualifications anytime, at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Susan Brown, RPN

Format of the Cover Letter

Most cover letters have 4 sections that accomplish the following:

- State your interest in working for the organization and the position applied for
- Explain why you want to work there
- Describe the qualifications you bring to the position
- Request an interview

Cover Letter Tips

- Be brief, use a maximum of 4 paragraphs
- Be as personal as possible. Get the name and title of the person to whom you are writing (i.e. Ms. Joanne Duncan, Human Resources Manager)
- Highlight the most important items in your resume (i.e. your term as student representative for your practical nursing program)
- Tell the recipient exactly what he or she wants to hear. For example, if the organization is looking for a PN able to contribute to policy development, cite an example of having done this in the past.
- Demonstrate some knowledge about the organization (i.e. "during my practical nurse program, I completed a rotation in your pediatrics department and was impressed by the caring focus of the staff. The recently expanded music therapy program was one aspect of your department that I found interesting")

What is a resume?

A resume is a concise (not more than 2 pages) outline of your employment and academic career that describes relevant skills and attributes as appropriate to the position you are applying for. It is often necessary to write a new resume for each position sought. For example, when seeking a position in the OR, you would want to emphasize related education and previous clinical experience. However, for a position in a doctor's office it may be more important to describe your computer skills and organizational abilities.

Parts of a resume

A resume usually includes the following information. Not everyone's, however, will contain all of the following:

- Heading (i.e. Resume)
- Name, Title (i.e RPN) Address, Telephone
- Objective (what position you expect to achieve with this resume)
- Detailed record of employment history
- Detailed record of education
- Any languages you know (don't exaggerate fluency !)
- Any papers, articles you have published
- Committee/ Board participation
- Relevant professional memberships
- Community service, voluntarism
- awards, certificates (i.e CPR) computer skills

Writing your resume

Take the time to make notes of your previous employment and educational courses and other data. Be specific with dates and titles, employers most frequently check these details. Gather together the specifics of your particular accomplishments in each positions. Remember - this isn't a list of your duties, it is a description of how you made a difference in that position. Determine your objective, the position you are aiming for. Once you've collected all your facts and rough notes you are ready to choose a format to begin writing. The most common format is the *chronological* approach. This format document's a person's employment history and education by date, starting with the most current information and working backward. It is by far the most widely used format, easily understood by most employers. A sample is provided on the accompanying page.

The Cover Letter

This is the part of your resume package that will first catch the employers eye. This will introduce you to the employer and create interest in your accompanying resume. It is at least as important as the resume, if not more so, as it is the tool that gets your resume noticed.

Resume Susan Brown 421 Smith Street, Toronto, ON M1E 4X9 (416) 555-1212	
Objective: Employment in a pediatric setting that emphasizes family and teen counseling	
Education:	
1994	Pediatric Assessment Certificate Name of College City, Province
1993	Practical Nursing Certificate Name of College City, Province
<i>(add other relevant education)</i>	
Experience:	
1994-present	Staff RPN, Pediatrics Teen Clinic, Name of hospital, City, Province Developed clinical competence in care of adolescents with eating disorders
	Accomplishments: contributed to establishment of care map design for adolescents with eating disorders,
	Chaired self-scheduling committee
<i>(add other previous related employment history)</i>	
Languages:	Fluent in English and German
Committee Participation:	
1994- present	Nursing Practice Committee, Metro Hospital,
<i>(add other committee involvement)</i>	
Professional Associations	
	RPNAO
Community Service	
1996-present	Annual fundraising for CNIB