

# First-Year Checklist

## Career Exploration in the First Year

### It's Not Too Early!

As you begin your undergraduate studies, Cornell Career Services is eager to help you understand how the choices you make now—both in and out of the classroom—can shape your future career options. You can begin the process of becoming “career ready” with this career checklist for the first year:

### Stop by a Career Office

- Explore our career libraries
- Obtain individual assistance
- Pick up publications
  - *Career Guide*
  - *Workshops and Events Calendar*
  - Topic guides
  - Handouts

### Stay Informed

- Explore our website at [career.cornell.edu](http://career.cornell.edu)
- Complete your Cornell Handshake Profile (see [career.cornell.edu...handshake](http://career.cornell.edu...handshake))
- Check for calendar listing updates online (see **Events** at [career.cornell.edu...Calendar](http://career.cornell.edu...Calendar) link)
- Create your CUeLINKS profile (see [cuelinks.cornell.edu](http://cuelinks.cornell.edu))

### Explore Your Interests

- Meet with a career counselor or specialty advisor
- Identify your interests and top-five strengths through a computer-based assessment
- Select courses that interest you
- Become involved on campus
- Engage in community volunteer activities

### Attend Programs/Special Events

- Come to the *Get Started: Career Information Fair for First-Years* held early in the spring semester
- Hear about different career paths at alumni and employer panels
- Learn about job-shadowing opportunities with alumni (Alumni Connections Program)
- Invest a little time in one of the *Success in 15-Minutes!* programs

### Prepare a Resume

- Attend a CCS *Build a Better Resume* program
- Create a draft of your resume using OptimalResume™ (see [cornell.optimalresume.com](http://cornell.optimalresume.com))
- Review the pointers for first-year students (see other side)
- Have your resume reviewed

### Plan Your School Breaks

- Arrange volunteer experiences
- Apply for the Alumni Connections Program
- Obtain a career-related position
- Use the online Summer Experience Survey database (see **Resources** at [career.cornell.edu...Surveys](http://career.cornell.edu...Surveys))

## Pointers for Presenting Your Qualifications

### Getting Started

If you're wondering how you can get a career-related position when your previous experience is limited, there's good news. You **can** impress employers with your potential to do well in an internship or summer job without having direct experience in a given field. Cornell Career Services can help you develop a resume that highlights your valuable skills and personal qualities.

The solution lies in considering the specific **purpose** of your resume, doing some careful assessment to identify the transferable **strengths and accomplishments** you'll convey in your resume, and choosing a **resume format** that presents your personal qualities most effectively. CCS's *Career Guide* has excellent information on preparing resumes. The pointers in this handout for first-year students supplement that information.

### Resume Purpose

The reason that you're writing a resume determines the focus of the document. For instance, if you're seeking a summer position working with children, it's important to demonstrate your "people skills," patience, and ability to assume responsibility. If you're applying for a job-shadowing opportunity, you'll present a broad picture of yourself and your interests.

### Your Strengths and Accomplishments

To begin building a resume, create a prioritized list of skills, personal qualities, and knowledge gained from past experiences that you could transfer to a job setting as strong work skills. Pages 3-5 of the *Career Guide* can help you identify your interests, values, and strengths. Or you can follow these steps:

- List your **activities** from the past several years in which you developed and demonstrated transferable skills. Include paid jobs, volunteer roles, leadership positions, special school projects, extracurricular activities, courses, etc.
- Consider carefully and list the **transferable strengths** each activity involves. For example, in a fast-food job you might have used your ability to work hard, function well as part of a team,

handle pressure, interact effectively with the public, and juggle multiple tasks.

- Add to this list the **evidence** that demonstrates each skill. For instance, evidence of strong writing skills could be:
  - Edited high-school yearbook;
  - Earned an "A" in Honors English; or
  - Wrote press releases for a local nonprofit.
- Now reorganize your list, presenting items in order of relevance to your goal. You'll use this prioritized list to create the main content of your resume.

### Format

If you have experience that relates directly to your purpose, you will probably use the **chronological resume format**. See some samples of this style in the *Career Guide* on pages 29, 35-37, 39, 41, and 43-44. Related experience doesn't have to be paid work. You can develop excellent skills that transfer to a work situation through unpaid activities and include them in your resume. A broad "Related Experience" section on a resume will give you much more flexibility than a "Work Experience" section.

If you have little or no experience that relates directly to your objective, a **skills-based resume** (also called "strengths-based" or "functional" resume) may be your best bet. It can go a long way toward convincing the employer that you have what it takes for the job, even though you are new to the field or position. See the samples on pages 30 and 32 of the *Career Guide*.

Other sample resumes in the *Career Guide* show how you can mix these two styles into a **combination format**.

### For More Help

CCS offers a number of resume-writing programs each semester. If you cannot attend one of them, check the CCS media site for a recording. The OptimalResume™ tool will help you develop a good resume. Once you've created a draft of your resume, bring it in for a resume review in your college career office or the University office in Barnes Hall.