

Resumes & Cover Letters for Architectural Designers

Marketing Your Work

A resume is your first opportunity to “sell” your work and experience to an architecture or design firm. Most summer internships and intern architect positions will require a resume and cover letter, as well as work sample pages. Your resume should highlight the key projects and experiences that best represent the skills you will need for the desired position.

Basic Resume Content

Avoid making your resume too complicated or lengthy; it should be easy to read and show off the style of your work.

Headings for Resume Sections:

- **Personal Contact Information**

List your name, address, phone number, and email. Your email address should be professional and include your name. You may also include your personal Web site, if it professionally showcases your work.

- **Education**

Begin with the most recent degree you are pursuing or have earned. Include the institution, degree you will earn, your major(s) and minor(s), month and year of completion, and location with city and state. List additional degrees in reverse chronological order. Additional educational experiences may also be listed in this section, including study abroad and other academic programs.

- **Professional Experience**

List any professional experience relating to your field, such as summer internships at architecture or construction firms. Discuss the kinds of projects you’ve worked on, such as education or healthcare. List presentations you gave or contributed to, client meetings you attended as an intern, or the specifics on your work in a design library.

- **Skills**

Within your resume, create a detailed skills section. Brainstorm and add skills such as design, hand sketching, rendering, schematics and model building. Be sure to highlight your soft skills like customer service, communication, and teambuilding. Construction and carpentry skills are often a plus.

Include your experience with computer hardware and software applications such as AutoCAD, Adobe software, Microsoft and others. You can include your background in sustainable design, green building, museum, art history and graphic arts.

- **Awards & Honors**

You can also create an Awards & Honors section that could include awards/prizes from design competitions, GPA, and on-campus leadership activities and positions. Depending on your level of experience, you could list studio projects in a separate Selected Accomplishments section to add to the information you are presenting.

Crafting a Creative Resume

Consider the overall look of your resume. You may want to incorporate an artistic element to your resume that showcases your skills as a designer. Your resume can be more design-oriented than a typical business resume, but should include the same basic elements.

- Use a Sans Serif font such as Arial and be sure to make it large enough to read easily.
- Design your own "letterhead" to showcase your design skills. You don’t need to create your own logo, but do use your creative abilities to make your presentation unique.
- In some cases, small images of your work can be used to make your resume stand out.
- Your "letterhead" should be used on all of your marketing materials including your cover letter, resume, thank you letter, and sample work pages.
- Your entire application package may be 4-5 pages; your letterhead will insure that your name and contact information is on every page.
- In many cases, you may be submitting your application via email or the Web. When designing your materials, including sample pages, make sure your files are small enough to pass through the email file size filter. These filters are often set at 3 MB (3,000KB), at the most.

Showcasing Your Work

In addition to your resume, you should also create a one or two-page work sample document to showcase your skills. A huge benefit of using work sample pages is that they are a cost-effective way to showcase your work to many employ-

ers. This can include work from studios, internships, travel experiences, and your own individual artwork. Your sample pages are a "mini-portfolio" and should also be designed to match your resume and cover letter.

Portfolios

A portfolio is an additional way to showcase your past experience. The first step in creating your portfolio is to document your work. You should keep photos or copies of work you've done for studio, classes or summer internships. It is important that your portfolio give a brief, but consistent view of your work over time. If you are unsure of what to include in your portfolio, ask a faculty member for help.

You will most likely create one portfolio to use in interviews to showcase your work. You may decide to use a professional document portfolio or design your own binding system or case to display your work. Just make sure the cover is durable. The inside pages should include samples of your best work, as well as your resume. Your portfolio should also include artistic or design elements that reflect your style.

Writing Your Cover Letter

A cover letter is your introduction to a prospective employer. Your letter should demonstrate your ability to think clearly and write persuasively. An effective cover letter makes you stand out as a candidate. In fact, some employers consider it even more important than your resume.

Your cover letter should create a link between the needs of the organization and your skills and experience related to those needs. Demonstrate your motivation, creativity and knowledge of the organization. Rather than restating what is on your resume, enhance your qualifications by describing how your past experience will benefit the employer. A cover letter should always accompany your resume and should match the overall design and feel of your resume.

Cover Letter Writing Tips

- Write a custom cover letter for each position and print it out on the same paper as your resume.
- Address your letter to a specific person. If you do not have a name, call the organization and ask for the name and title of the person who should receive your letter. As a last resort, you may use "Dear Hiring Manager."
- In general, cover letters specifically state the position you are seeking (do this in the first sentence), tell the reader why you think you should be considered and suggest the next course of action (e.g., you will follow up with a phone call).
- Research the organization, study the position description, and tailor your letter accordingly. Your initiative and knowledge will make your letter stand out from others. Resist the temptation to use a standard letter that only changes the company name.

- Focus on the reader's needs, not yours. Make your qualifications clear and emphasize how you can help the organization.
- Limit the letter to one page. Business writing is different from academic writing. Keep it simple, straight-forward and to the point.
- Make the most of referrals and connections. Name the person who referred you in the opening sentence. The familiar name will grab the reader's attention.
- Cover letters serve as a method to help employers evaluate your writing ability. Spelling and grammar must be perfect. Ask friends, mentors and advisors to review your letter and provide feedback.

Cover Letter Format

Opening Paragraph: In the first sentence, state why you are writing and/or the position or type of work for which you are applying. State how you heard of the opening or organization. The last line should give a brief synopsis of who you are and what you can contribute to the organization or position. A good way to do this is to indicate the top two or three skills that make you a great fit for the position. The first paragraph should be three to four sentences.

Middle Paragraph(s): Explain why you are interested in working for the employer by demonstrating your knowledge of the organization, and tell the employer how you will perform in your desired position based on concrete references to your previous accomplishments. Enhance your resume by connecting the dots between what the employer wants and how your past experience will enable you to fill his/her needs. When appropriate, talk about the results of your past responsibilities. Write with concise, confident statements. If this paragraph starts to get long, split it into two short paragraphs to make them easier to absorb.

Closing Paragraph: Indicate that you would like to talk with the employer in person to further discuss the opportunity. Give your phone number and email address in case they would like to contact you for further information. State your planned next steps, such as calling to ensure that your application materials have been received. Close by thanking the person for his/her time and consideration.

Resume Sample #1

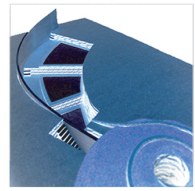
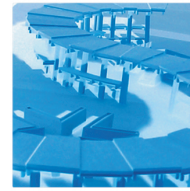


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education

washington university. st. louis, mo. may, 2005
master of architecture
cumulative gpa: 3.46/4.00

helsinki university of technology. espoo, finland
visiting student: architecture program, spring 2004

miami university. oxford, oh. may 2003
b.a. in architecture, minor in landscape architecture
cum laude & departmental honors

miami university ghana program. ghana, africa
design / build studio: abrafo-odumase, summer 2003

professional experience

legat architects. oak brook, il. dec 01-aug 03: summer and winter breaks
autocad drafting, model building, site surveying, design development.
projects worked on include: central dupage hospital life safety renovations, wwshs addition
and renovations, project proposal for st. michael's church and parish center.

community unit school district 200. wheaton, il. may 99-aug 01: summer and winter breaks
coordinated owner responsibilities while acting as liaison between construction management/
design firms and district employees during the planning and construction phases of a \$52 million
renovation project.

perkins, pryde, kennedy & steevensz architects, lts. glen ellyn, il. sept 98 - may 99
first student in wheaton warrenville south h.s. history to be awarded work/study internship in
architecture by high school administration and board of education.
tasks included: site surveying, materials library organization, cad drafting clerical.

honors

washington university
design studio teaching assistant, 04-05
millstone scholarship, 04-05

miami university
matthew derrington scholarship, 02-03
national society of collegiate scholars, 00-03
order of omega honorary society, 02-03
national dean's list, 01-02
dean's list, 4 semesters

activities

graduate architecture student council (**president**), 04-05
graduate professional council (**arch rep.**), 04-05
prograds committee (**arch rep.**), 04-05
graduate student gallery exhibition (**co-chair**), 04-05

student admissions council - dept. of arch, (**chair**), 02-03
delta upsilon fraternity (**v.p. new member ed.**), 01-03
miami university student foundation, 00-02
big brother /big sister program, 00-02

skills

proficient in: microsoft office, autocad, adobe photoshop, rhinoceros 3d

JOHN ALEXANDER SMITH

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RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

abc architects
city, state
architectural intern
historic preservation design + speci
hospitality + restaurant design
single family residential sd + construction observation
may-august 2005

yancy of architecture
city, state
architectural intern
large scale industrial design, cd + mep
single family residential design + cd
may-august 2004 + 2005

historic ville alliance, cdc
saint louis
proposed master vision plan for ville neighborhood
september-december 2005

PROFICIENCY

computer aided design
rhino/bongo animation, autoCAD, 3d studio
macromedia
dreamweaver
adobe
illustrator, acrobat, photoshop, indesign, premiere
programming
working knowledge of html + visual basic
other
microsoft of , corel packages

LANGUAGES

english
native
spanish
intermediate- comprehension and oral
french
intermediate- comprehension and oral

EDUCATION

university of illinois
urbana-champaign
school of architecture
bachelor of science in architectural studies
[may 2005]

study abroad
buenos aires, argentina
[september 2003-december 2004]

PROFILE

american institute of architects [aia]
student director of aia illinois, elected, 2004-2005
designing tomorrow's architect, internship conference; san antonio, tx
essay competition selection + participant, september 2005

american institute of architecture students [aias]
member 2001-present

[national involvement]
national membership committee, appointed 2004-2005
grassroots national leadership conference, july 2002 + 2004
attendant, FORUM 2002: chicago, il, december 2002
chapter delegate, FORUM 2004: new orleans, la, december 2004

[school involvement]
chapter at washington university in saint louis
webmaster, 2005-2006 [<http://sugroups.wustl.edu/~aias>]

chapter at the university of illinois at urbana-champaign
internal vice-president, 2004-2005
international chair, 2003-2004
co-founder of chapter in versailles, france
secretary, 2002-2003

women in architecture mentoring program, university of illinois
mentor, 2005-present
pairs female students with female alumni

elwood e. + adelaide schwenk scholarship
university of illinois school of architecture, april 2004

east st. louis action research project [eslarp]
weekend outreach program volunteer, 2001-2004