

Tailoring Your Resume

Applications, Resumes, Interviews and Following Up

Pathways to Success



Introduction

After building a basic resume, the next step is learning how to tailor it for a specific job.

A basic resume gives you a starting point. It contains your education, work experience, volunteer experience, projects, skills, certifications, and other relevant information. However, not every job will value the same parts of your background equally.

Tailoring your resume means adjusting your resume so that the most relevant information is easier for the employer to notice. It does not mean making things up. It does not mean pretending to have experience you do not have. It means reading the job posting carefully, understanding what the employer is looking for, and presenting your real experience in the strongest and most relevant way.

This section explains how to tailor a resume, how to use a job posting to decide what to highlight, and how to avoid common mistakes.

What Does Tailoring Your Resume Mean?

Tailoring means adjusting your resume and cover letter to better highlight the skills, experience, and certifications that are most relevant to the role.

A tailored resume is not a completely new resume every time. Instead, it is a version of your resume that has been adjusted for a specific job. You may keep most of the same information, but change what you emphasize, how you describe your experience, and which details appear first.

To tailor your resume, you need three things.

First, you need a basic resume to adjust. This is your starting document. It should already include your education, experience, skills, certifications, and other useful information.

Second, you need a job role in mind. Tailoring only works when you know what you are tailoring toward. This means you should read the job posting carefully and understand the role, requirements, responsibilities, and employer expectations.

Third, you need experience, certifications, or skills that connect with what the job is looking for. These connections do not always have to be exact. For example, if a job asks for customer service experience, your experience helping students, answering questions, supporting events, or working with the public may be relevant. If a job asks for communication skills, your experience with presentations, emails, teamwork, or customer interactions may be useful.

Tailoring is about selecting your strongest and most relevant traits and showing them in a way that connects to the job role.

How Do You Tailor Your Resume?

To tailor a resume, you identify which of your traits and experiences fit what the employer is looking for. Then you adjust your resume to highlight those points more clearly.

Start by reviewing the job posting. Look for the skills, duties, requirements, and qualities the employer mentions. Pay attention to words or ideas that appear more than once. These repeated ideas often show what the employer values most.

Next, compare the posting to your own resume. Ask yourself: Which parts of my experience match this job? Which bullet points show the skills the employer wants? Which sections are most relevant? Which sections may be less important for this role? If you haven't already, review the first video/section of this module to help learn how you can determine this information.

One way to tailor your resume is to choose different experiences or skills to highlight. For one job, your customer service experience may be most important. For another job, your event support, technical skills, class projects, or certifications may matter more.

You can also change the order of sections. For example, if your volunteer experience is more relevant than your paid work experience, you may choose to place volunteer experience higher on the resume. If your certifications are very important for the job, you may make sure they are easy to find.

Sometimes you may cut sections or details that are not relevant. This does not mean hiding important information. It means keeping the resume focused. A resume should be concise

and easy to read, so every section should have a purpose.

You can also adjust your professional summary. The summary near the top of your resume should reflect the skills and experience you have that matter for the role. If the role focuses on student support, communication, and event support, your summary should make those strengths clear.

You may also choose to go into more detail about experience that is highly relevant. For example, if the job involves supporting events, and you have event volunteer experience, you may add stronger bullet points explaining what you did, who you supported, and what skills you used.

The goal is not to make your resume longer. The goal is to make it more focused.

Highlighting Skills

One useful way to begin tailoring is to compare the job posting with your resume.

For example, imagine a job posting that values communication, professionalism, reliability, customer service, enthusiasm, event support, student engagement, Microsoft 365, teamwork, organization, and resourcefulness.

The first step is to identify those values in the posting. This may involve looking at the requirements section, the job description, and the skills the employer lists.

- Strong written and verbal communication skills with the ability to prepare to student inquiries.
- Experience or interest in content marketing, communications, social media, digital content, or promotional writing.
- Ability to support the development and promotion of clear, cohesive, and engaging student-facing communications.
- Strong customer service skills.
- Ability to work independently, take initiative, and contribute beyond assigned tasks.
- Strong organizational and time-management skills.
- High level of resourcefulness.
- Sound judgement, problem-solving skills.
- Ability to work collaboratively while also managing independent responsibilities.

**Example of skills list from a job posting.*

Determine Relevant Information

Business student with customer service, event support, and administrative experience. Skilled in communication, teamwork, Microsoft 365, and supporting students in busy service environments. Interested in student support, office administration, and customer service roles.

Education

Diploma Of Business North Bay, ON
Canadore College, Entrepreneurship Academy September 2025-Present

- Relevant coursework includes business communication, marketing, accounting, and organizational behaviour.
- Developed skills in teamwork, written communication, presentations, and basic business planning.

Experience

Customer Service Associate North Bay, ON
Fresh Store Grocery May 2026 - Present

- Assisted customers with questions, purchases, and product locations in a busy retail environment.
- Operated the cash register and handled transactions accurately.
- Communicated with supervisor and team members to complete daily tasks.

Volunteer Experience, Projects, and Community Involvement

Event Support Volunteer North Bay, ON
Canadore Volunteer Support September 2025 - Present

- Helped set up and clean up student events, workshops, and cultural activities.
- Greeted students, answered basic questions, and directed participants to event areas.

Group Project Leader North Bay, ON
Canadore College January 2025 - May 2025

- Coordinated a class business project with four group members.
- Presented project findings clearly to classmates and instructor.

Skills & Certifications

Microsoft 365 Suite Certified March 2025

- Experience using Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Outlook, and Excel for school projects, communication, and basic data organization.

This is where the green/yellow highlighting works best. Green = stronger relevance. Yellow = less relevant or may need to be reduced/reworded.

Examples:

Shows customer service and prioritization.

Operating a cash register is less relevant. Think about rewording.

Event support is a big part of the role.

Job Description Mentions Office 365 as a part of the role and experience.

The next step is to review your resume and look for evidence that matches those values. You may already have experience that fits, but it may not be written in a way that is clear to the employer.

For example, if your resume says you helped with student events, that may connect to event support. If your resume says you greeted students and answered questions, that may connect to communication, customer service, and student-facing support. If your resume says you used Word, PowerPoint, Outlook, and Excel, that may connect to Microsoft 365.

This is the main idea behind tailoring. You are not inventing experience. You are finding the experience you already have that matches the posting and making it easier for the employer to see.

You should also think about language. Employers may use specific words in the posting, such as “communication,” “customer service,” “event support,” “Microsoft 365,” “professionalism,” or “organization.” If those words honestly describe your experience, it may make sense to use similar language in your resume.

However, you should only use words you can explain. If you include a skill or responsibility on your resume, you should be ready to talk about it in an interview.

Re-wording Key Sections

A resume can often be improved by making small changes to the wording.

Current:

"Helped set up and clean up student events, workshops, and cultural activities."



Tailored:

"Supported setup, delivery, and cleanup for student events, workshops, and cultural activities."

"Greeted students, answered basic questions, and directed participants to event areas."



"Provided front-facing student support by greeting students, answering basic questions, and directing participants during events."

"Assisted customers with questions, purchases, and product locations in a busy retail environment."



"Provided customer service in a busy front-facing environment by answering questions, assisting with purchases, and helping customers locate information and products."

For example, a current resume bullet might say:

"Helped set up and clean up student events, workshops, and cultural activities."

This is not a bad bullet. It is clear and honest. However, it can be stronger if the job posting values event support, planning, and student engagement.

A better tailored version could say:

"Supported planning, setup, and delivery of student events, workshops, and cultural activities."

This revised version is still honest, but it uses stronger language. "Supported planning, setup, and delivery" sounds more connected to event work than only "helped set up and clean up." It also better reflects the kind of language an employer may use in a job posting.

Another example might involve software skills. A current resume bullet might say:

"Experience using Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Outlook, and Excel for school projects, communication, and basic data organization."

A better tailored version could say:

"Used Microsoft 365 applications, including Word, PowerPoint, Outlook, and Excel, to support communication, presentations, and basic data organization."

This version connects more directly to the employer's language if the posting mentions Microsoft 365. It also shows how the tools were used.

Using Keywords For ATS

These changes do not create a false picture. They make real experience clearer and more relevant.

What Did We Change in the Tailored Resume?

In the tailored resume example, several changes were made to better match the job posting.

First, the event support experience was explained in more detail. Because the job posting valued events, student engagement, communication, and front-facing support, the tailored resume gave more space to that experience.

Second, less relevant details were condensed. Some education and work experience details were still included, but they were not given as much space if they were less connected to the role. This helps the employer focus on the most relevant parts of the resume.

Third, customer service and student-facing communication were added or emphasized in the skills section. This made it easier for the employer to see that the applicant had experience answering questions, supporting participants, and communicating professionally.

Fourth, the sections were moved or reorganized to emphasize the most relevant features. Tailoring may involve changing the order of sections so that the strongest evidence appears earlier.

Fifth, the resume was kept concise. Tailoring should not make the resume too long. A strong resume should usually stay focused, clear, and easy to scan.

**This is the same example resume after being tailored. The main changes are highlighted in blue.*

**Notice how less relevant information, such as the business diploma, is given less space. More relevant information has been expanded and moved higher up in the resume to emphasize its importance to this specific application.*

**Some information that is less relevant to the position, such as First Aid training, has been removed to keep the resume focused.*

**Please note that this is a fictional example showing how a resume could be tailored for the International Student Navigator job posting discussed earlier in this module. For a different job posting, or based on your own experience, skills, and qualifications, you may choose to emphasize different sections of your resume.*

Business student with experience in customer service, student event support, and administrative communication. Skilled in Microsoft 365, teamwork, organization, and supporting students in busy front-facing environments.

Education

Diploma Of Business

Canadore College, Entrepreneurship Academy

North Bay, ON
September 2025 - Present

- Developed skills in teamwork, written communication, presentations, and basic business planning.

Volunteer Experience, Projects, and Community Involvement

Event Support Volunteer

Canadore Volunteer Support

North Bay, ON
September 2025 - Present

- Supported setup, delivery, and cleanup for student events, workshops, and cultural activities.
- Engaged with students in a front-facing environment by answering questions and directing participants to event areas.
- Assisted staff and volunteers with event organization, student participation, and general event support.
- Demonstrated professionalism, teamwork, and reliability while supporting student-facing activities.

Skills & Certifications

Microsoft 365 Suite

Obtained March 2025

- Experience using Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Outlook, and Excel for school projects, communication, and basic data organization.

Customer Service and Student-Facing Communication

- Experience answering questions, providing directions, supporting participants, and communicating professionally in customer and student-facing environments.
- Experience supporting student events, workshops, cultural activities, setup, cleanup, and participant assistance.

Experience

Customer Service Associate

Fresh Store Grocery

North Bay, ON
May 2026 - Present

- Assisted customers with questions, purchases, and product locations in a busy front-facing environment.
- Communicated clearly with supervisors and team members to complete daily tasks accurately and on time.

The result is a resume that still uses the student's real experience, but presents that experience in a way that better matches the employer's needs.

What to Avoid When Tailoring

Tailoring should make your real experience clearer. It should not create a false picture of your skills.

When tailoring your resume or cover letter, avoid adding skills, jobs, certifications, or experience you do not have. This can cause problems if the employer asks about it in an interview or checks your references.

Avoid copying large parts of the job posting directly into your resume. It is acceptable to use similar language when it honestly describes your experience, but your resume should still be written in your own words and based on your real background.

Avoid using keywords you cannot explain in an interview. If you write that you have project management, data analysis, event planning, or advanced Excel skills, you should be able to explain what you mean and give examples.

Avoid exaggerating your role or responsibilities. For example, if you assisted with an event, do not write that you managed the entire event unless that is true. Employers value honesty and may ask follow-up questions.

Avoid removing important information just because it does not match perfectly. Tailoring is about focus, not hiding your background. You should still present your experience honestly.

Avoid making the resume too long or unfocused. Adding too much information can make it harder for the employer to find what matters.

Finally, avoid applying without checking whether the job fits your schedule, eligibility, and transportation. A strong resume will not help if the job is not realistic for your situation.

Tailoring means presenting your real experience in the strongest and most relevant way. It does not mean making things up or trying to trick the employer.

What Should You Do Next?

Before moving to the next video, choose a job you want to apply for and try tailoring your resume using the tips from this section.

Start by reading the job posting carefully. Identify the main skills, requirements, duties, and qualities the employer is looking for.

Then review your resume. Ask yourself:

- Which parts of my experience match this posting?
- Which skills should I highlight?
- Does my professional summary fit this role?
- Are my strongest examples easy to find?
- Can I adjust any bullet points to better connect with the employer's language?
- Is everything still honest and verifiable?
- Have I kept the resume clear, concise, and easy to read?

The next section is **Creating Cover Letters**. That section will explain how to use a cover letter to explain your interest in a role and connect your experience to the employer's needs.

Final Takeaway

Tailoring your resume means adjusting your resume for a specific job. It helps the employer see how your real skills, experience, education, certifications, and strengths connect to the role.

A strong tailored resume is focused, honest, and relevant. It uses the job posting as a guide, highlights the most useful information, and presents your experience in a way that matches what the employer is looking for.

Tailoring does not mean making things up. It means helping the employer understand why your real experience may make you a strong fit for the job.