

# 12 Things You Can Do in College to Boost Your Resume

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Posted by [Marie Gendron](#) on November 8, 2017 in [Wheelock Community](#)

Today's college graduates face a bit of a dilemma when beginning their job searches. Employers want candidates with experience – even for entry-level positions. But how can you land a job when you haven't had experience in the workforce? It's a Catch-22 many face after graduation.

So what is a college student to do?

The good news is there are many ways for college students like you to avoid being caught in this trap. You can make the most of your time in school to help build a stand-out resume ready to make waves in your job search.

We connected with career counselors and hiring managers to learn what exactly employers are seeking in recent college graduates. Keep reading to gather some tips and tricks to help make your resume one that can't be ignored.

## 12 Resume-building activities college students should consider

Employers understand that college students won't have years of work experience under their belts. But there are several things they look for in recent graduates. [Career coach](#) Lynn Miner-Rosen points out that hiring managers often look for the following:

- Candidates with some work, internship or volunteer experience
- Candidates who possess good “transferable skills” such as teamwork, public speaking and written and oral communication
- Attentive, prepared and articulate candidates.

Students can gain the skills and experience needed for their resumes in a number of ways. Read on for some actionable advice you can take advantage of now.

### 1. Take industry-specific courses

When you're signing up for courses next semester, be strategic. Seek out courses that center around [student projects, case studies or service learning](#). Some courses may even lead to an industry certification. Employers want to see these courses outlined on your resume.

According to Peter Yang, co-founder of [ResumeGo](#). “It's critical that students take courses relevant to the fields they want to enter,”

But you should also consider taking courses that expand your skill set beyond your major. For example, a course in Nonprofit Management or Digital Marketing could show employers you're business-minded. Graphic Design or Web Development courses build technical skills that are valuable across industries. These types of skills can complement any student's resume.

### 2. Get involved on campus

College campuses across America are rife with [student organizations](#), clubs and activities. Not only do they foster friendships, but club involvement enriches student resumes. Participation shows employers you did more than the bare minimum in college. It demonstrates that you can balance school work with extracurricular activities. In many cases, it also shows your ability to work with a team. Campus involvement also builds a transferable skill set you can apply in the workforce.

“One way to gain professional experience is to join groups that have a board,” suggests Monica Kielawa, talent acquisition specialist at [Combined Insurance](#). She explains that many colleges have degree-specific groups that allow anyone to join. You can gain experience by assisting in event planning, managing the group's budget and more. “It may not be professional work, but it can be added to your resume with the skills you learned during your time there,” she says.

### 3. Gain workplace experience through an internship, practicum, or field placement

Take what you learned in the classroom and apply your knowledge in an internship.

Internships give students a taste of the working world. They can help you decide if a career is the right fit for you. They can also help you build hard skills and make valuable connections in the industry. They may even open the door to a permanent position.

“The real payoff of internships is gaining valuable real-world work experience that can beef up a student’s resume for their job search,” says Timothy Wiedman, retired professor of management and human resources. “Exposure to specific types of working environments can also provide some valuable career guidance.”

## 4. Join a professional organization

You don’t need to be a professional in the workforce to [join a professional organization](#). Joining as a student gives you exposure to your industry, shows your enthusiasm for the field and serves as a great addition to your resume. Plus, most professional organizations offer a discounted membership fee for students.

“Joining a professional organization helps new professionals learn about buzz-worthy topics in their chosen industry and can help them to make professional contacts,” says Aerielle Ludwig, [Resume Writing Professional](#). “It also demonstrates an additional commitment and initiative regarding their professional identity.”

## 5. Study abroad and international service learning trips

Taking your education overseas is a valuable experience in a student’s academic career and can be utilized on a resume. Studying abroad shows employers you took the initiative to step out of your comfort zone. If you do take advantage of this opportunity, outline the courses you took and the skills you gained on your resume.

For example, students studying abroad [must be extremely adaptable](#) to new cultures and a new school. Studying abroad provides cross-cultural experiences and global perspectives. Some students even master another language while abroad. Make sure to highlight any projects, courses or special experiences during your time abroad on your resume.

## 6. Make the most of your on or off- campus job

“Having a part-time job is very important in helping students learn transferable skills,” says Miner-Rosen.

Whether you’re giving campus tours throughout the school year or working summer jobs, don’t overlook these work experiences on your resume. Be sure to outline the transferable skills you gained on your resume, such as communication, customer service, organization and administrative skills. Any added responsibilities or initiatives should also be highlighted. Employers like to see examples of you going above and beyond.

Look for part-time or summer jobs related to your major or career path. “Boston-area employers in the education, human services, and nonprofit fields are always looking to hire students for part-time and summer opportunities,” says Kelly Graham, Director of [Career Services at Wheelock College](#).

## 7. Take on a volunteer position

Volunteer opportunities are another way to gain experience while still in school.

Volunteering allows you to try your hand at different fields and industries. It can expand your network of professional connections and help you build skills for your resume. You may even gain a reference through your volunteering experiences.

“The best thing that students can do is to volunteer,” says [career consultant](#) Dawn Boyer. “This showcases your ability to handle multiple responsibilities while in school. The higher the commitment, the better.”

She urges students to seek volunteer roles with heightened responsibility, such as an event organizer, tutor, or fundraising program coordinator. Offering your skills and time in this way also demonstrates your character and your commitment to helping others.

## 8. Job shadow your dream career

[Job shadowing](#) can serve as an extremely insightful way for students to gain understanding on their career preferences while still in school. It also shows employers you’re dedicated and driven enough to seek out these learning opportunities.

## 9. Pursue personal projects

Personal projects show employers you have the initiative to pursue your passions on your own time. Whether you created your own blog or do photography on the side, leverage these on your resume.

“It can be hard to balance more on top of your studies, but a side project relevant to your area of study looks great on a resume,” says Jamie Finnegan, Head of Talent at [Finder](#). He explains that if you’re in technology, you could contribute to [GitHub](#) or build websites on the side. If you’re interested in journalism, he suggests writing a blog or building up your social media following.

“Think of what skills you’ll be using in your dream job, then do a side project to go with that and add it to your resume,” Finnegan adds.

## 10. Take on a leadership role on campus

Serving as president, captain or treasurer of an organization or club shows employers you have leadership abilities. It demonstrates that you can take on added responsibilities and handle multiple commitments at once. Leadership roles often come with plenty of skills you can utilize in the workplace — such as budgeting, managing a group, team building, event planning and more.

“Show that you are a leader in any area of your life in college,” says Deborah Sweeney, CEO and hiring manager of [MyCorporation](#). She explains that can be in your part-time job, in your sorority or fraternity or in a volunteer position. “The work can be diverse, but show leadership and a desire to go above and beyond. Show that you are a stand-out and that you are a committed hard worker in any positions you hold.”

## 11. Teach yourself a new skill

With so many online resources at your fingertips, there are plenty of options if you’re looking to learn something new. Course platforms like [Lynda](#) and [Coursera](#) offer online classes teaching just about everything.

Maybe you’ll learn to code over spring break or take up a second language over the summer. Either way, employers are impressed by applicants who are self-starters and eager to learn. Plus, you may be able to utilize these newfound skills in your career.

## 12. Take Advantage of Career Services

Need help identifying resume building activities specific to your major or career interests? Be sure to make an appointment with your college’s Career Services office. “The Career Services staff is here to help students identify curricular, co-curricular, volunteer and work opportunities that will help them develop the skills and experiences needed to be competitive for the professional world or graduate school,” says [Wheelock College Career Services](#) Director Kelly Graham.

Not only do you need to build experiences and develop skills relevant to your career interests, you need to think about how you will articulate the value of these experiences. “Career Services will guide you in building your resume, preparing for interviews and marketing yourself to employers so that you stand-out in the application process,” Graham says.

## Don’t wait until you graduate

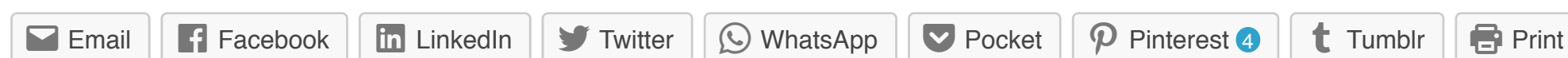
With these actionable ways to gain experience in school, what are you waiting for? You can’t build a great resume overnight, so don’t wait until you’re approaching graduation. There are plenty of ways to get started on developing your resume now and continue building it throughout your academic career.

Between the internships, volunteer opportunities, student jobs and campus involvement, you’ll gather a variety of valuable skills and experience that employers will be attracted to. So get out there and get a head start on your competition.

Did we forget anything? Leave us a comment below to share the ways you’re building your resume while in school.

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