



Fundamentals of Turning Volunteering into Résumé Experience

Volunteering provides valuable experiences that can demonstrate your skills, dedication, and character—especially when you are new to the job market. Even without formal work experience, volunteer work can reflect many of the competencies employers seek. The key is learning how to effectively present that experience on your résumé in a way that highlights your strengths and potential.

In this handout, you will learn how to translate volunteer and internship experiences into compelling résumé content. You will learn how to identify transferable skills, write effective bullet points, and format your experiences professionally. This resource will guide you in presenting your background with clarity and confidence, helping you stand out as a skilled and motivated candidate.

What is a Résumé?

- A personal advertisement showcasing your skills, qualifications, experiences, education, and attributes relevant to the job description.
- A tool to capture the employer's attention and increase your chances of being considered for an interview.

Connecting Volunteering & Internships to Your Résumé

I. Identify Transferable Skills

- Even if your volunteer work isn't directly related to your target job, the skills you've gained can still be applicable. Look for common skills that are valuable in almost any field, such as:
 - **Leadership:** Did you manage a team or organize events? These experiences demonstrate strong leadership abilities.
 - **Communication:** Interacting with people, whether you're working with a team or clients, shows you can communicate effectively.
 - **Problem-Solving:** Were you involved in resolving any issues or creating solutions for challenges? This is a critical skill in any job.
 - **Project Management:** Organizing tasks, managing schedules, and ensuring things are completed on time are all important skills.

- **Teamwork:** Even as a volunteer, working with others to achieve a common goal shows you're a team player.

II. Translate Volunteer Tasks into Professional Language

- Use specific, action-oriented language to describe what you did as a volunteer. Here's how to craft a bullet point that highlights your work:
 - **Before:** "Helped out at a food bank."
 - **After:** "Coordinated weekly food distribution for 100+ families, ensuring timely delivery and organization of supplies."
- Notice the shift in tone—using strong verbs like *coordinated*, *managed*, or *organized* shows initiative and leadership, even if you weren't in a formal "job" role.

III. Highlight Your Achievements and Impact

- Whenever possible, quantify your impact. This can include numbers, percentages, or any measurable result of your work. Adding numbers brings your experience to life and shows employers the tangible outcomes of your efforts.
 - **Example:** "Organized a fundraising event that raised \$3,000 for local education programs."
 - **Example:** "Led a volunteer team of 10 individuals to organize a community clean-up event attended by over 200 participants."

IV. Place Volunteering in the Right Section

- Volunteer work can be featured in different sections of your résumé depending on how relevant it is to the job:
 - **Professional Experience:** If your volunteer work is closely related to the job you're applying for, list it under *Professional Experience*.
 - **Volunteer Experience:** If it's not directly relevant, but still shows leadership, responsibility, or transferable skills, list it separately as *Volunteer Experience*.
 - **Skills:** For skills that you developed during your volunteering (like social media management, event planning, etc.), you can mention them in the *Skills & Qualifications* section.

V. Tailor Your Volunteer Experience to the Job

- When applying for specific positions, always tailor your résumé to the job description, even when it comes to volunteer work. Highlight volunteer experiences that align most closely with the role's required skills.
 - **Example:** If the job is in event management, emphasize volunteer experiences where you

helped plan, organize, or execute events.

- **Example:** For a role in customer service, focus on volunteer work where you interacted with people or provided assistance.

VI. Don't Undersell Your Volunteering

- Many students may feel that volunteering isn't "real" work, but this couldn't be further from the truth. Employers highly value volunteer experience, especially when it demonstrates skills such as:
 - Commitment, Organizational skills, Leadership, Problem-solving, Social awareness, etc.
- It's important to frame your volunteer work as experience that shows initiative and a desire to make an impact.

Examples of Volunteer Experience on a Résumé

Volunteer Coordinator – Habitat for Humanity, Santa Ana CA

March 2023 – Present

- Coordinated volunteer teams for various construction projects, improving project efficiency by 15%.
- Managed scheduling and logistics for a group of 30+ volunteers, ensuring smooth operations.
- Assisted in fundraising efforts, resulting in a 20% increase in donations from last year.

Marketing Volunteer – Nonprofit Awareness Campaign, Santa Ana CA

June 2022 – Nov 2022

- Created and managed social media content to promote events and share organizational updates.
- Built relationships with local businesses to support fundraising and event sponsorships.
- Collaborated with a team to implement promotional strategies that increased community engagement.

Hospital Volunteer – St. Joseph Medical Center, Orange CA

Mar 2021 – Dec 2024

- Assisted patients and visitors by providing information, escorting them to departments, and ensuring a welcoming environment.
- Supported nursing staff with non-clinical tasks such as restocking supplies and organizing patient materials.
- Maintained cleanliness and organization in waiting areas to help ensure a calm and professional atmosphere.