DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
MAKE WAVES.

Resume and Cover Letter Workshop For Computer Science Students

Filip Jagodzinski*

* Past co-presenters have included See-Mong Tan, who added invaluable content about mentioning in your CV what impact and role you specifically had in past experiences

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Attend ALL Of the tech talks

Attend ALL of the career fairs

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Goals of this workshop

Part I: Showcase a well-reasoned resume
Part II: Showcase a well-reasoned cover letter
Part III: Resume peer editing

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Resume and Cover Letter Workshop For Computer Science Students

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Part I: Showcase a well-reasoned resume

Single best format?

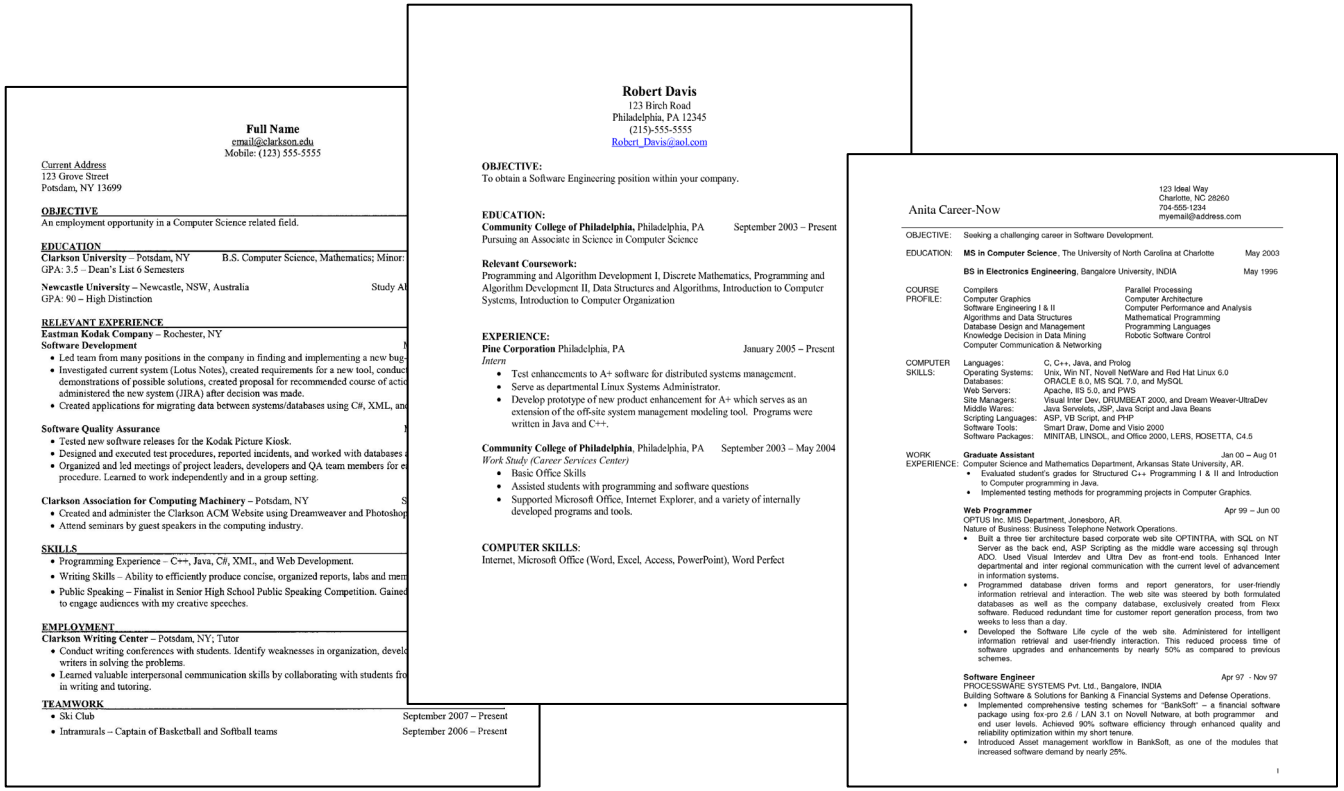
Q: What should your resume look like?

Q: Is there a best format?

Q: Are all cover letters the same?

Single best format?

- There is no one single correct format for a resume, but there are plenty of ways to write a bad one
- Good resumes come in different formats and designs …



Full Name
email@clarkson.edu
Mobile: (123) 555-5555

Current Address
123 Grove Street
Potsdam, NY 13699

OBJECTIVE
An employment opportunity in a Computer Science related field.

EDUCATION
Clarkson University – Potsdam, NY B.S. Computer Science, Mathematics; Minor:
GPA: 3.5 – Dean's List 6 Semesters

Newcastle University – Newcastle, NSW, Australia Study Ab
GPA: 90 – High Distinction

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE
Eastman Kodak Company – Rochester, NY
Software Development
- Led team from many positions in the company in finding and implementing a new bug-
- Investigated current system (Lotus Notes), created requirements for a new tool, conduct demonstrations of possible solutions, created proposal for recommended course of actio administered the new system (JIRA) after decision was made.
- Created applications for migrating data between systems/databases using C#, XML, and

Software Quality Assurance
- Tested new software releases for the Kodak Picture Kiosk.
- Designed and executed test procedures, reported incidents, and worked with databases
- Organized and led meetings of project leaders, developers and QA team members for e procedure. Learned to work independently and in a group setting.

Clarkson Association for Computing Machinery – Potsdam, NY
- Created and administer the Clarkson ACM Website using Dreamweaver and Photosho
- Attend seminars by guest speakers in the computing industry.

SKILLS
- Programming Experience – C++, Java, C#, XML, and Web Development.
- Writing Skills – Ability to efficiently produce concise, organized reports, labs and mem
- Public Speaking – Finalist in Senior High School Public Speaking Competition. Gained to engage audiences with my creative speeches.

EMPLOYMENT
Clarkson Writing Center – Potsdam, NY; Tutor
- Conduct writing conferences with students. Identify weaknesses in organization, develo writers in solving the problems.
- Learned valuable interpersonal communication skills by collaborating with students fro in writing and tutoring.

TEAMWORK
- Ski Club September 2007 – Present
- Intramurals – Captain of Basketball and Softball teams September 2006 – Present

Robert Davis
123 Birch Road
Philadelphia, PA 12345
(215)-555-5555
Robert_Davis@aol.com

OBJECTIVE:
To obtain a Software Engineering position within your company.

EDUCATION:
Community College of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA September 2003 – Present
Pursuing an Associate in Science in Computer Science

Relevant Coursework:
Programming and Algorithm Development I, Discrete Mathematics, Programming and Algorithm Development II, Data Structures and Algorithms, Introduction to Computer Systems, Introduction to Computer Organization

EXPERIENCE:
Pine Corporation Philadelphia, PA January 2005 – Present
Intern
- Test enhancements to A+ software for distributed systems management.
- Serve as departmental Linux Systems Administrator.
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Work Study (Career Services Center)
- Basic Office Skills
- Assisted students with programming and software questions
- Supported Microsoft Office, Internet Explorer, and a variety of internally developed programs and tools.

COMPUTER SKILLS:
Internet, Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint), Word Perfect

Anita Career-Now
123 Ideal Way
Charlotte, NC 28260
704-555-1234
myemail@address.com

OBJECTIVE: Seeking a challenging career in Software Development.

EDUCATION: **MS in Computer Science**, The University of North Carolina at Charlotte May 2003
BS in Electronics Engineering, Bangalore University, INDIA May 1996

COURSE PROFILE: Compilers, Computer Graphics, Software Engineering I & II, Algorithms and Data Structures, Database Design and Management, Knowledge Decision in Data Mining, Computer Communication & Networking, Parallel Processing, Computer Architecture, Computer Performance and Analysis, Mathematical Programming, Programming Languages, Robotic Software Control

COMPUTER SKILLS:
Languages: C, C++, Java, and Prolog
Operating Systems: Unix, Win NT, Novell NetWare and Red Hat Linux 6.0
Databases: ORACLE 8.0, MS SQL 7.0, and MySQL
Web Servers: Apache, IIS 5.0, and PWS
Site Managers: Visual Inter Dev, DRUMBEAT 2000, and Dream Weaver-UltraDev
Middle Wares: Java Servelets, JSP, Java Script and Java Beans
Scripting Languages: ASP, VB Script, and PHP
Software Tools: Smart Draw, Dome and Visio 2000
Software Packages: MINITAB, LINSOL, and Office 2000, LERS, ROSETTA, C4.5

WORK EXPERIENCE:
Graduate Assistant Jan 00 – Aug 01
Computer Science and Mathematics Department, Arkansas State University, AR.
- Evaluated student's grades for Structured C++ Programming I & II and Introduction to Computer programming in Java.
- Implemented testing methods for programming projects in Computer Graphics.

Web Programmer Apr 99 – Jun 00
OPTUS Inc. MIS Department, Jonesboro, AR.
Nature of Business: Business Telephone Network Operations.
- Built a three tier architecture based corporate web site OPTINTRA, with SQL on NT Server as the back end, ASP Scripting as the middle ware accessing sql through ADO. Used Visual Interdev and Ultra Dev as front-end tools. Enhanced Inter departmental and inter regional communication with the current level of advancement in information systems.
- Programmed database driven forms and report generators, for user-friendly information retrieval and interaction. The web site was steered by both formulated databases as well as the company database, exclusively created from Flexx software. Reduced redundant time for customer report generation process, from two weeks to less than a day.
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Software Engineer Apr 97 - Nov 97
PROCESSWARE SYSTEMS Pvt. Ltd., Bangalore, INDIA
Building Software & Solutions for Banking & Financial Systems and Defense Operations.
- Implemented comprehensive testing schemes for "BankSoft" – a financial software package using fox-pro 2.6 / LAN 3.1 on Novell Netware, at both programmer and end user levels. Achieved 90% software efficiency through enhanced quality and reliability optimization within my short tenure.
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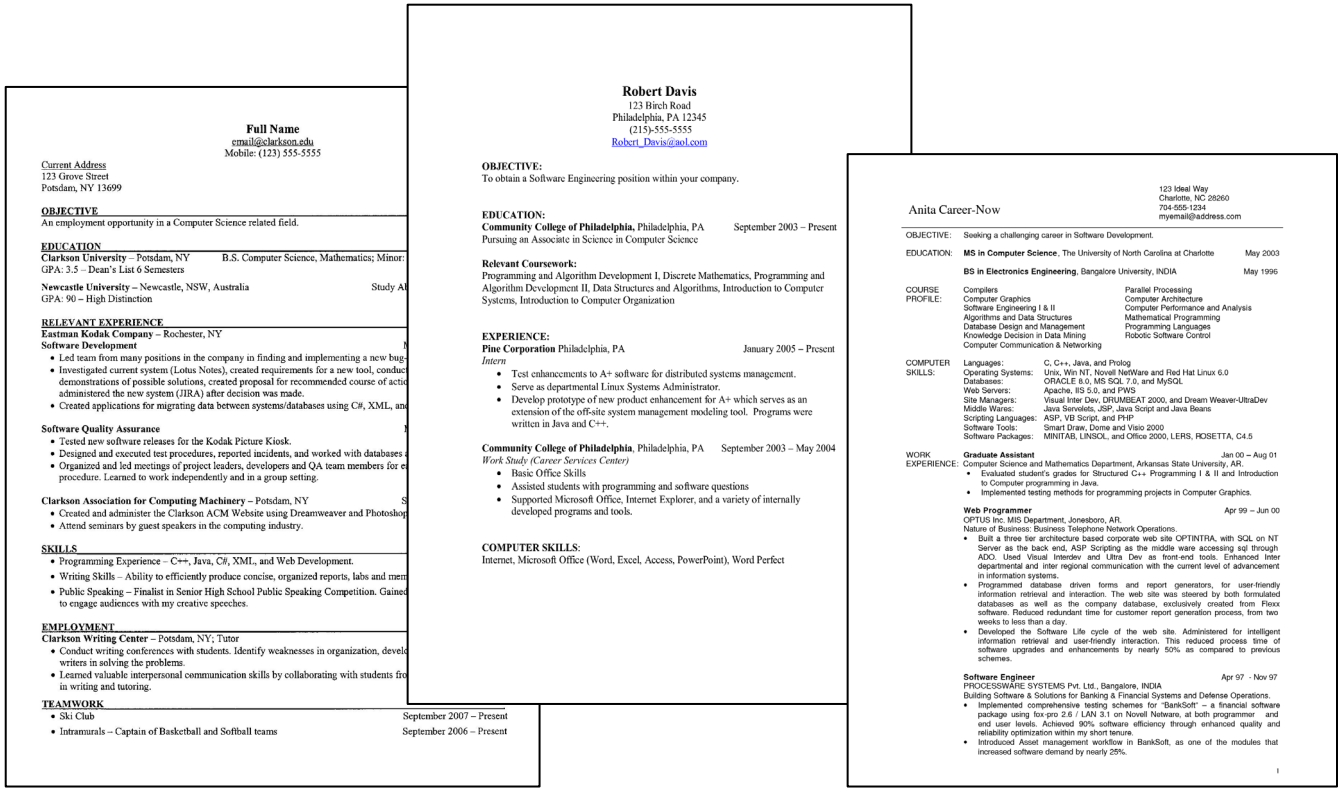

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1

Q: Does that mean that any resume will do? For CS or non-CS?

Q1 : Your resume should be brief but concise …

A. Because long resumes are for English majors only
B. Because brief resumes require less ink and are environmentally friendly
C. Because a recruiter will spend 20 seconds (or less) looking over it

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Source : Hire Right

Q2 : Your resume should target a specific job …

A. Because all employers are bow and arrow expert marksmen
B. Because you don't have anything better to do with your time and you want to spend 12 hours editing a single sentence
C. Because a recruiters for a cupcake company in need of a baker doesn't want to read about your babysitting skills, nor you winning the national badminton competition, nor how you are the bestest (yes that's a word!) competitive Frogger player 

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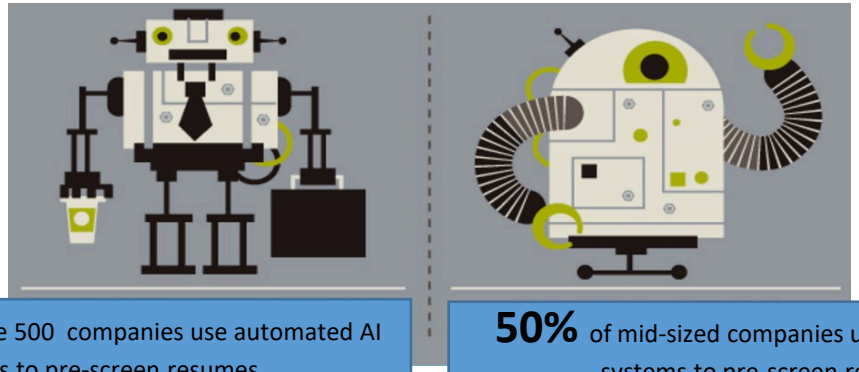

95% of Fortune 500 companies use automated AI systems to pre-screen resumes

50% of mid-sized companies use automated AI systems to pre-screen resumes

Source : Hire Right

Q3 : Your resume should distinguish you from the "other" candidates' resumes …

A. Because you want to give the impression that even after you get hired, your number 1 goal will be to compete with your co-workers
B. Because you want to make it obvious that you have a higher GPA than everybody else and that you aced CSCI301
C. Because you've worked your butt off to get where you are, so why not highlight those skills that make you the best candidate for the job

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C. Because you've worked your butt off to get where you are, so why not highlight those skills that make you the best candidate for the job

Bad news Q: how many of the 75,000 applicants to Google each week have a BS in computer science or a combination of formal and informal training?

SEATTLE UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY of PUGET SOUND
Seattle Pacific UNIVERSITY
…

Warmup questions

If you've had a loooong week, and you remember the bare minimum from this presentation, then remember these 3 things :

Your resume should be brief but concise

Your resume should target a specific job or skillset

Your resume should distinguish you from the "other" candidates' resumes

Dissecting the job/internship posting

Looking for qualified applicants to fill two entry-level full-time computer engineer positions. Candidates must have the following qualifications:

- Majoring in mathematics and/or computer science
- 2+ years experience in Fortran and C++
- Experience with IDEs and APIs
- Have worked as part of a medium (3-10 person) development team

Candidates should also have the following preferred qualifications:

- Knowledge of computer architecture
- Ability to write formal documentations
- Experience with punch-card computers

Let us write a resume targeting the job description on the left

Although this job/internship looks generic and simple enough, there is a wealth of information being given to you that you should **use**!

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Take a close look at the job/internship posting ...

It is often said that the ONE single biggest mistake made my students is that they do not read the job posting closely enough, thinking …

"meh, just another CS job … I'm a computer science student, I cleeeearrrly know this stuff …"

Keep in mind … an HR company might get hundreds of resumes for a internships/job posting … don't give them a chance to eliminate you

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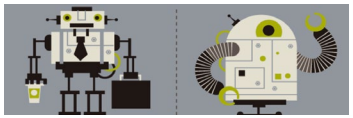
Take a close look at the job/internship posting ...

These are the "must have" qualifications ... if you don't meet the employer's criteria, then it'll probably be very difficult for you to get an interview ... You should possess at minimum MOST of these skills …

especially if the employer uses a computer program to pre-scan applicants

95% of Fortune 500 companies use automated AI systems to pre-screen resumes



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Take a close look at the job/internship posting ...

This does not mean that you have to be an expert in all of these … it is okay if you are not an expert in none of them … but you should more-or-less have heard of these, and be able to converse intelligently about them

Some good news : There is a reason why students get internships or "entry" level jobs … you aren't an expert yet … that happens 5-10 years after you graduate

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Take a close look at the job/internship posting ...

These are the "should have" qualifications ... the more of these that you can say "yes" to, the better

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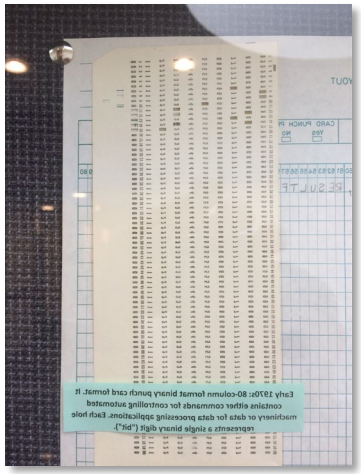
Take a close look at the job/internship posting ...

In all cases, don't fool yourself …

… you've Wikipedia-ed "punch card" … or you've glanced at the punch card posted in the foyer



Are you now the expert?

… no

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Then, look closely at what the employer is looking for … read between the lines

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Find the **keywords** in the posting ... employers are busy ... when they say they want this-and-that, they mean they want this-and-that ...

Q: What are the keywords in this posting?

Dissecting the job/internship posting

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Use the keywords to determine if you qualify ...

if you really really really want the job, but you don't meet any the qualifications, then perhaps the job posting is not a good match with your skill set ...

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Then it is time to write the resume

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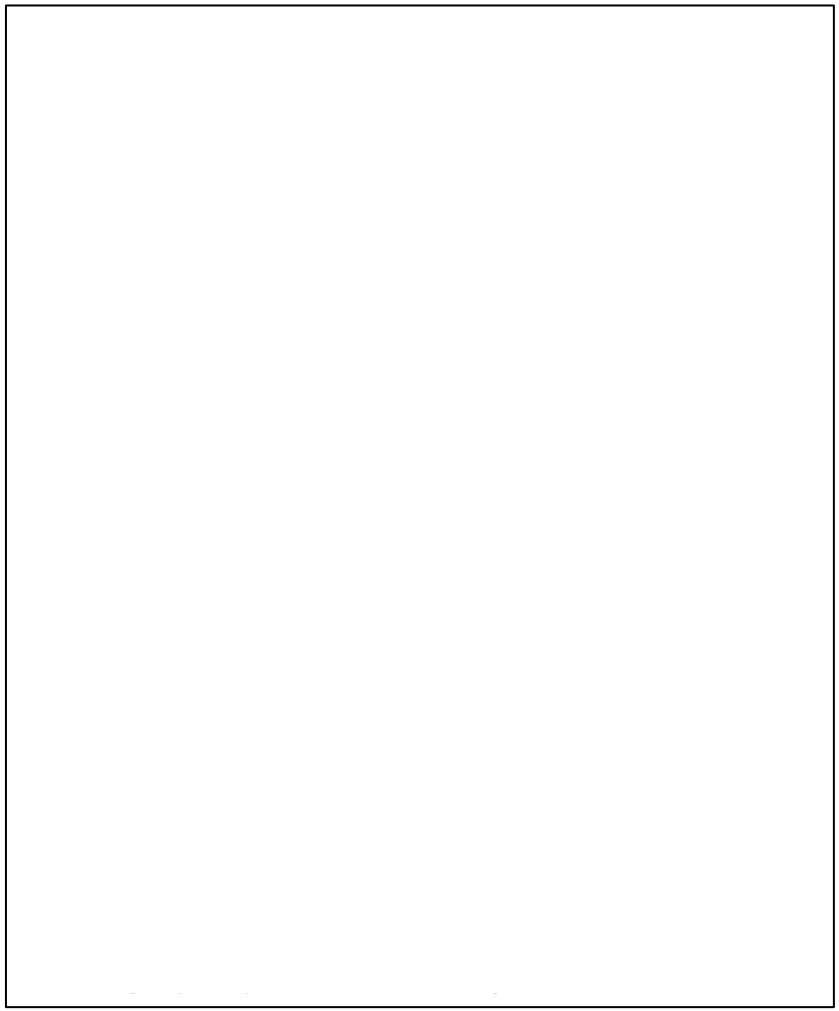
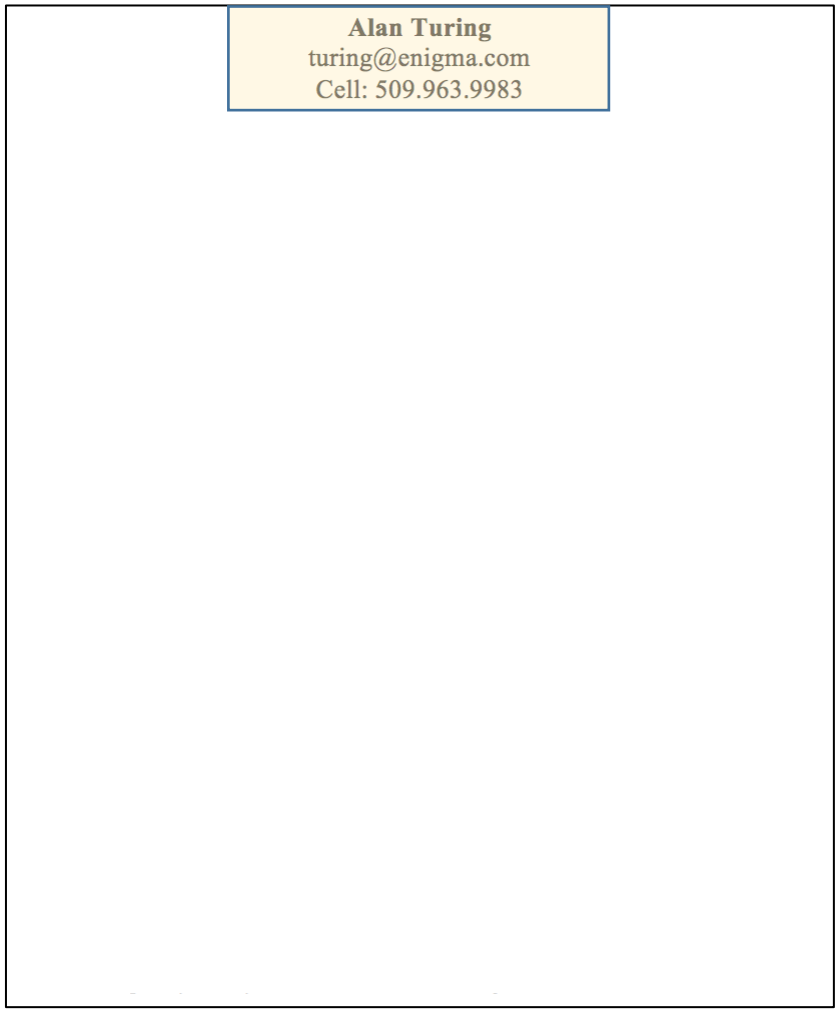
Writing the resume



Goal: create a tailor-written resume for each position that you are applying for ...

It is okay to have a standard template, but you'll need to tweak the resume for each job/internship you are applying for

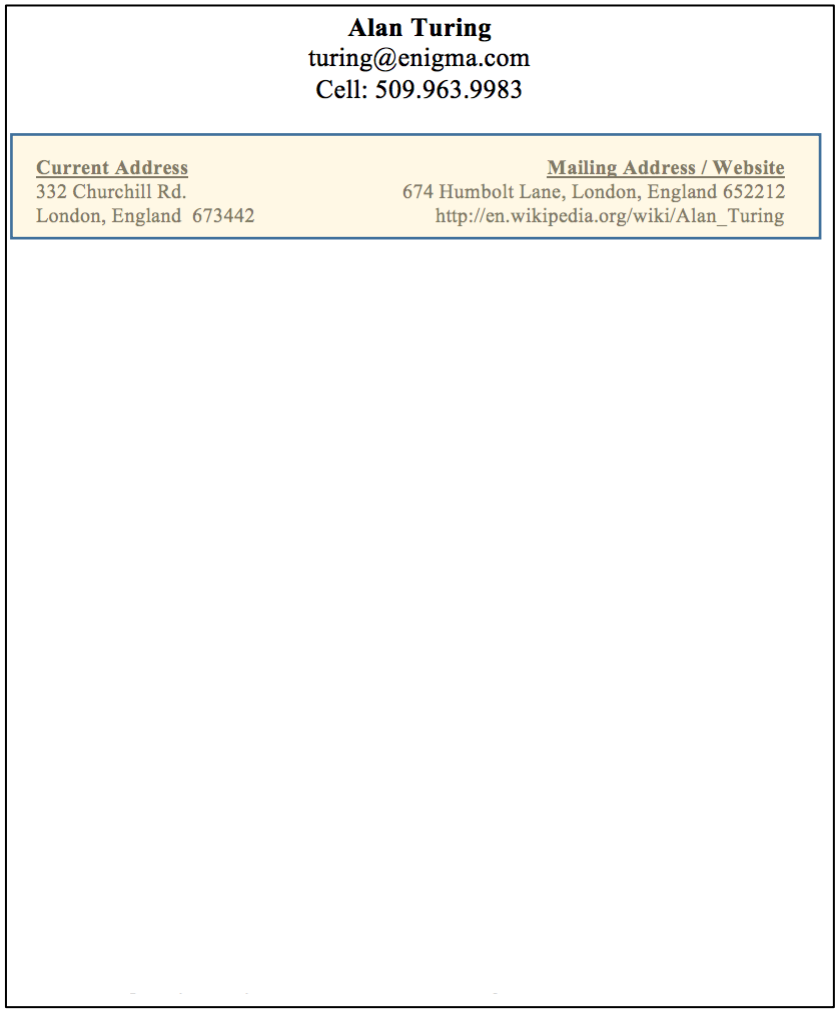
Writing the resume



The resume is about you ... you must identify yourself, and provide details for your (potential) employer to contact you …

Goal: make this part of the resume easy-to-read

Writing the resume



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Cell: 509.963.9983

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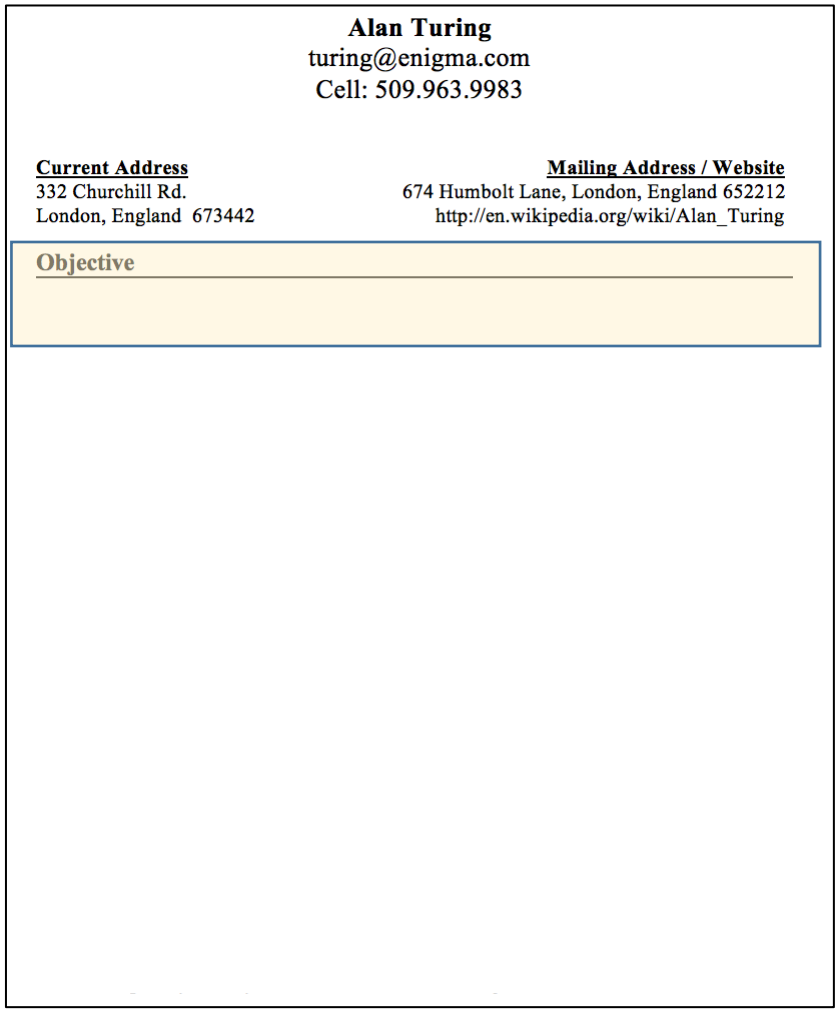
The resume is about you ... you must identify yourself, and provide details for your (potential) employer to contact you …

Goal: make this part of the resume easy-to-read

Do you need to provide a website? **No**
Do you need an email address? **Yes**
A phone number? **No, but it's nice**

Linked-in profiles are good
A GitHub with sample code is good, too

Writing the resume



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Objective

Be up front ... indicate WHY you desire the job and/or internship ...

But don't just say why you need the job

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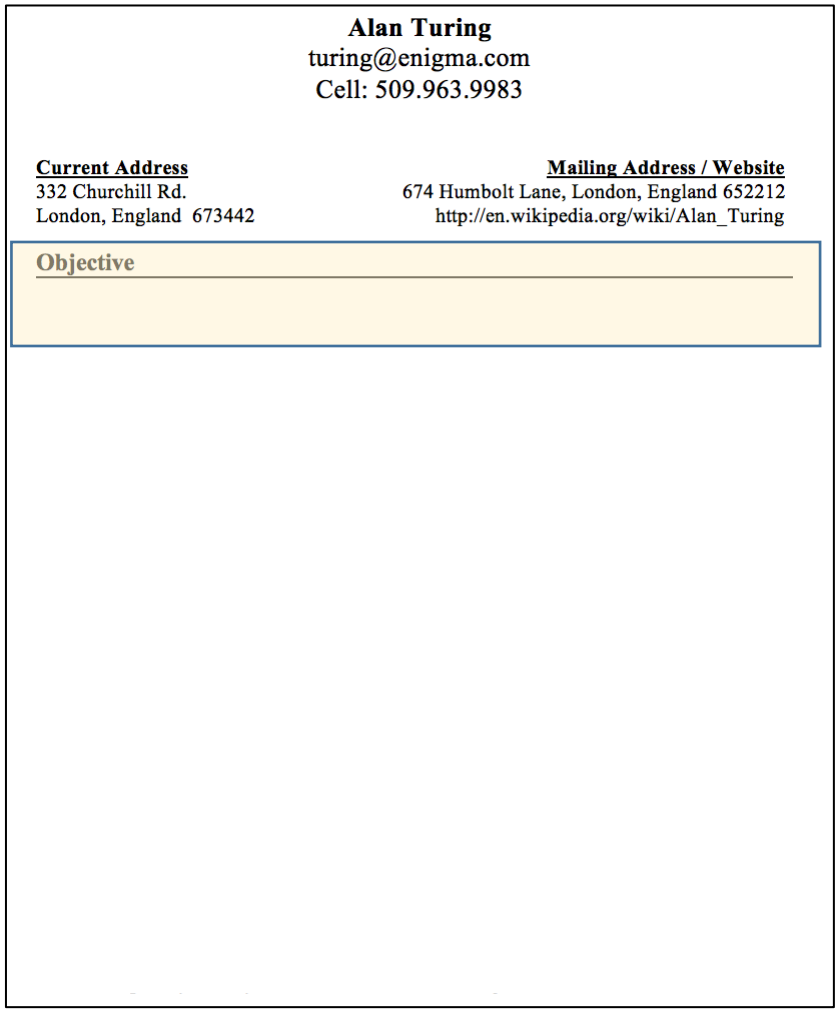

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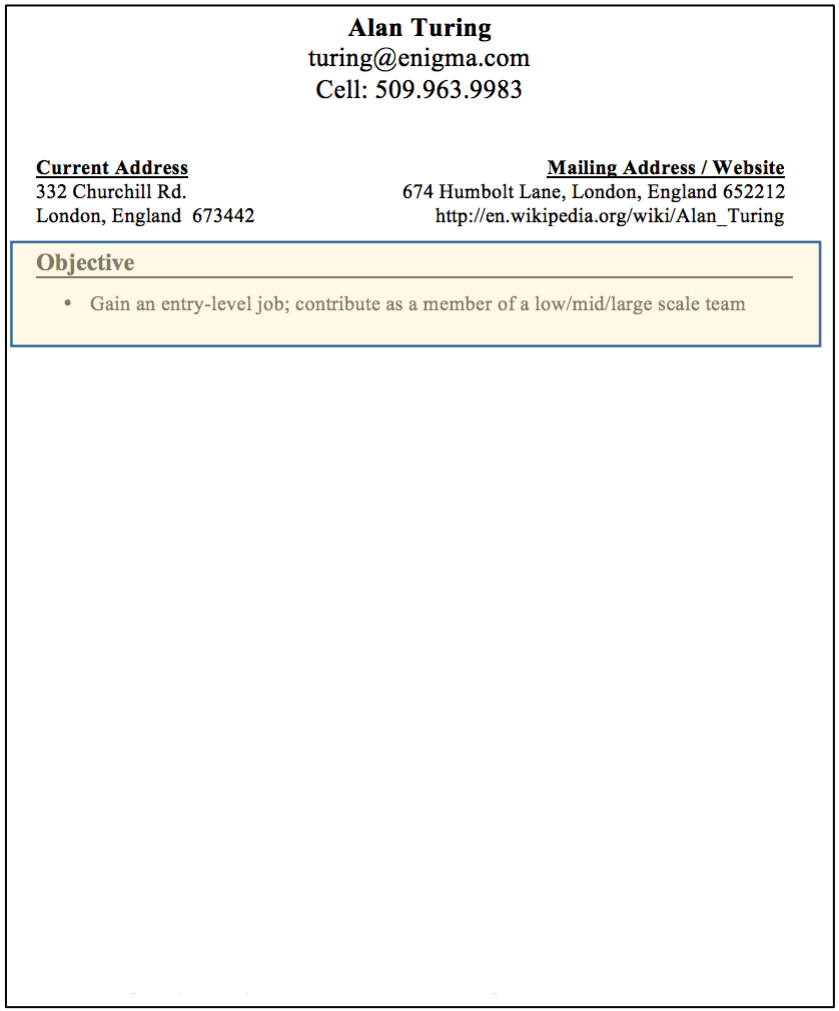
"I'd like to get a job as a computer engineer" … well, umm, yeah, you ARE applying … and there is no value added in that statement

... an employer doesn't want to hire somebody who is needy ... somebody who needs, wants, needs, and wants ...

Explain what you might offer ... what are your potential contributions?

Writing the resume



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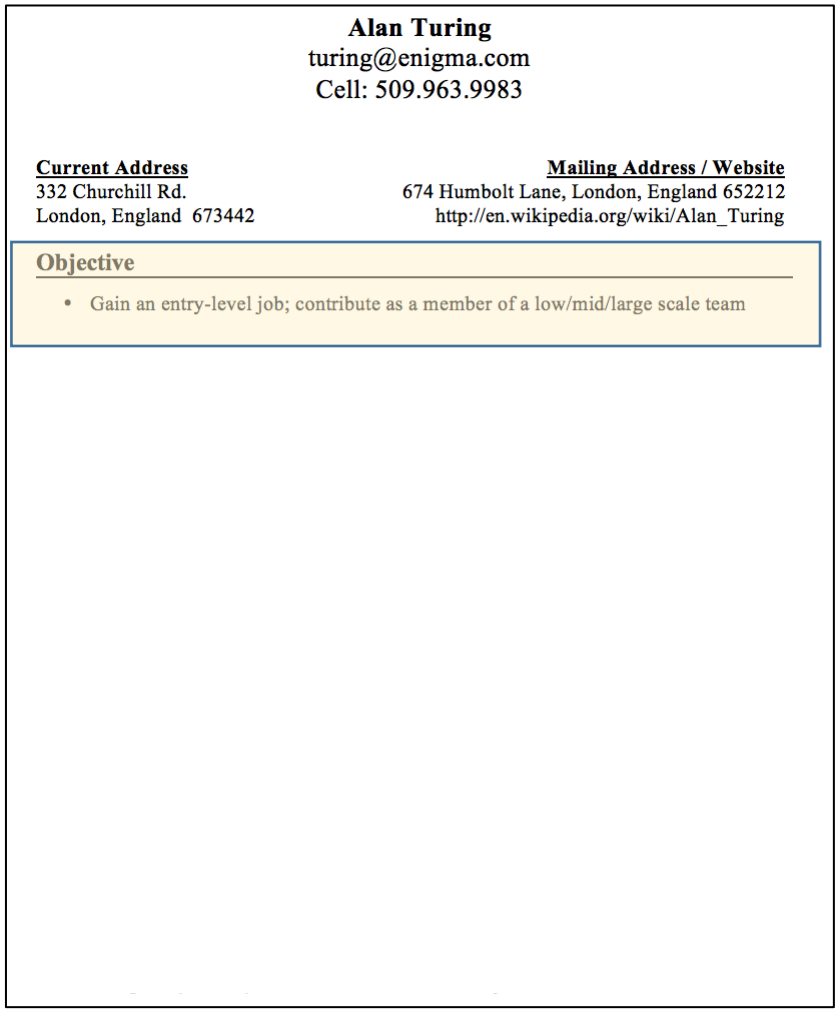
- Gain an entry-level job; contribute as a member of a low/mid/large scale team

From the employer's perspective, the ideal candidate is somebody who will contribute AND who will make everybody else's job easier ...

This section is tailor written for the internship/job that you are applying for **... no generic statements allowed!**

Writing the resume



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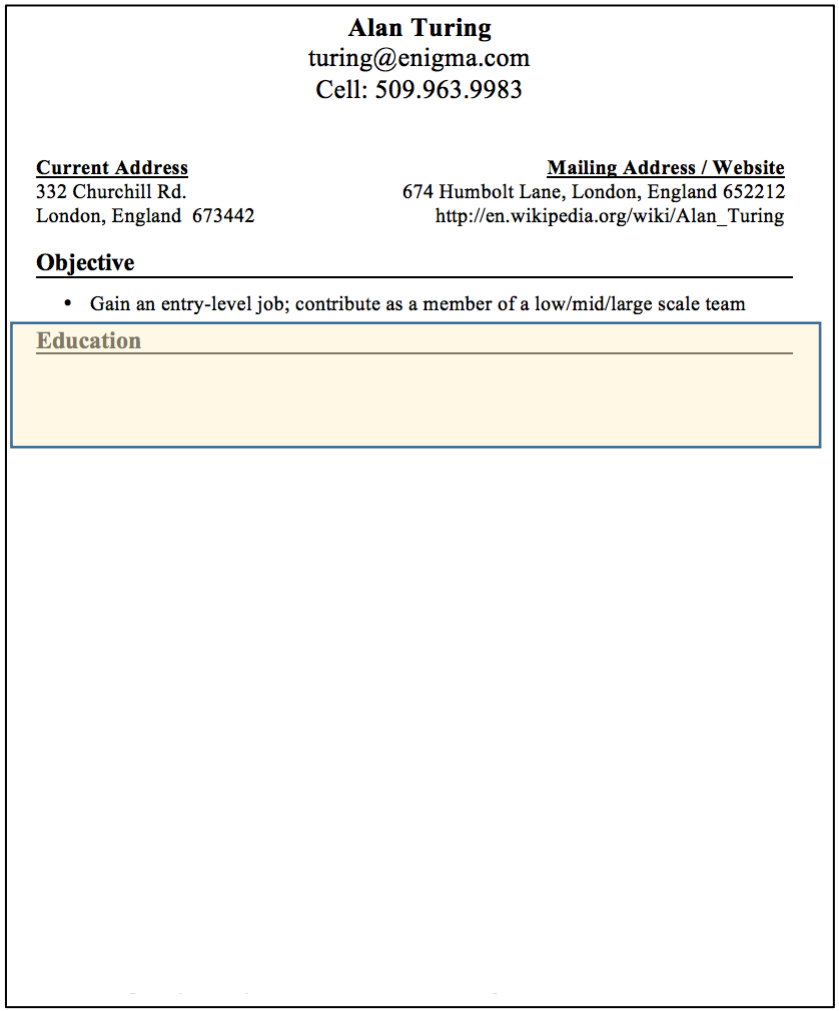
Recruiters already know what you're applying to, so this section may be redundant. You can omit this section if you need more space for experiences and later sections

Writing the resume



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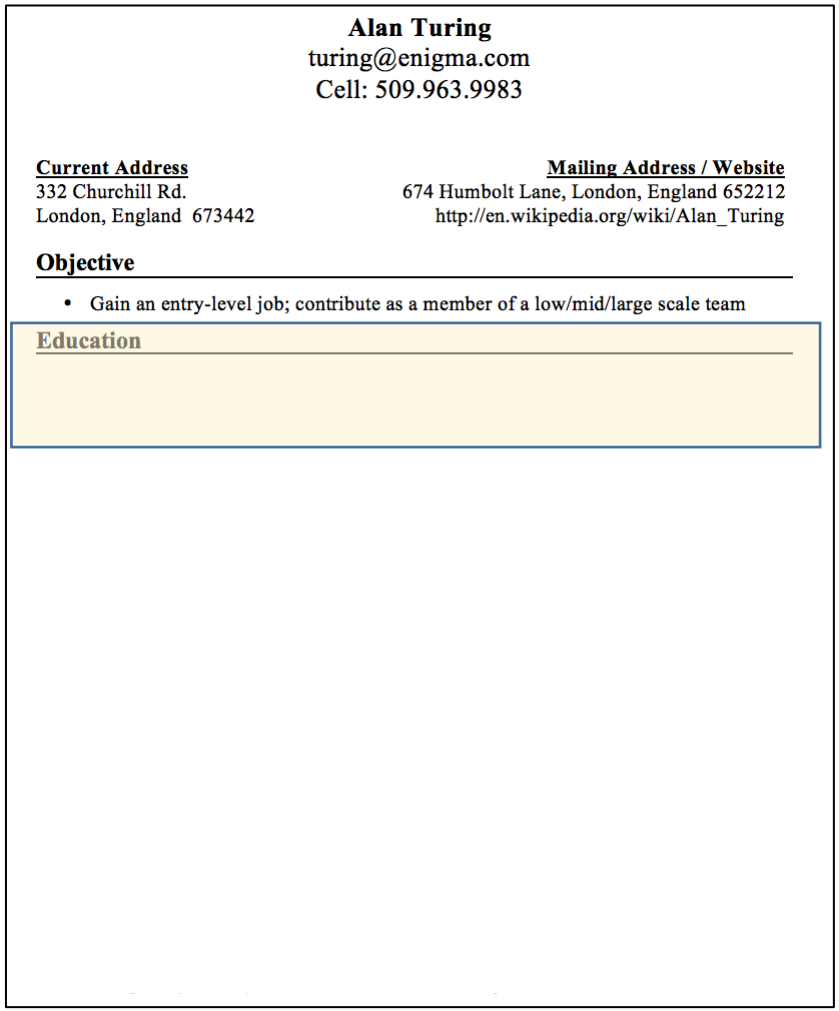

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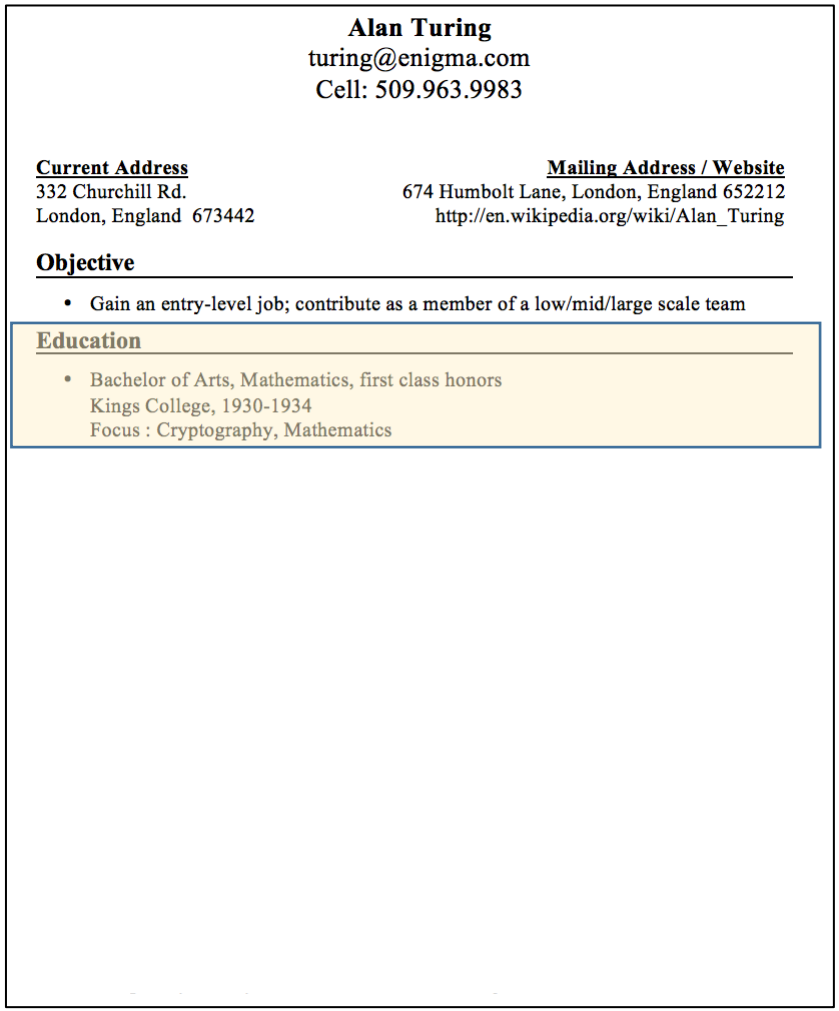
Don't allow your BS in computer science to be your distinguishing characteristic … because most likely it is **NOT**

When compared to peple with no CS training, your techy skills induce amazement and wonder ...

Among your peers and the hiring manager, `for (int i=0; i<20; i++)` is ... Yawn, no big deal

Writing the resume



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Put yourself in the mindset of the employer who is doing the hiring … how many of the applicants will have computer science experience?

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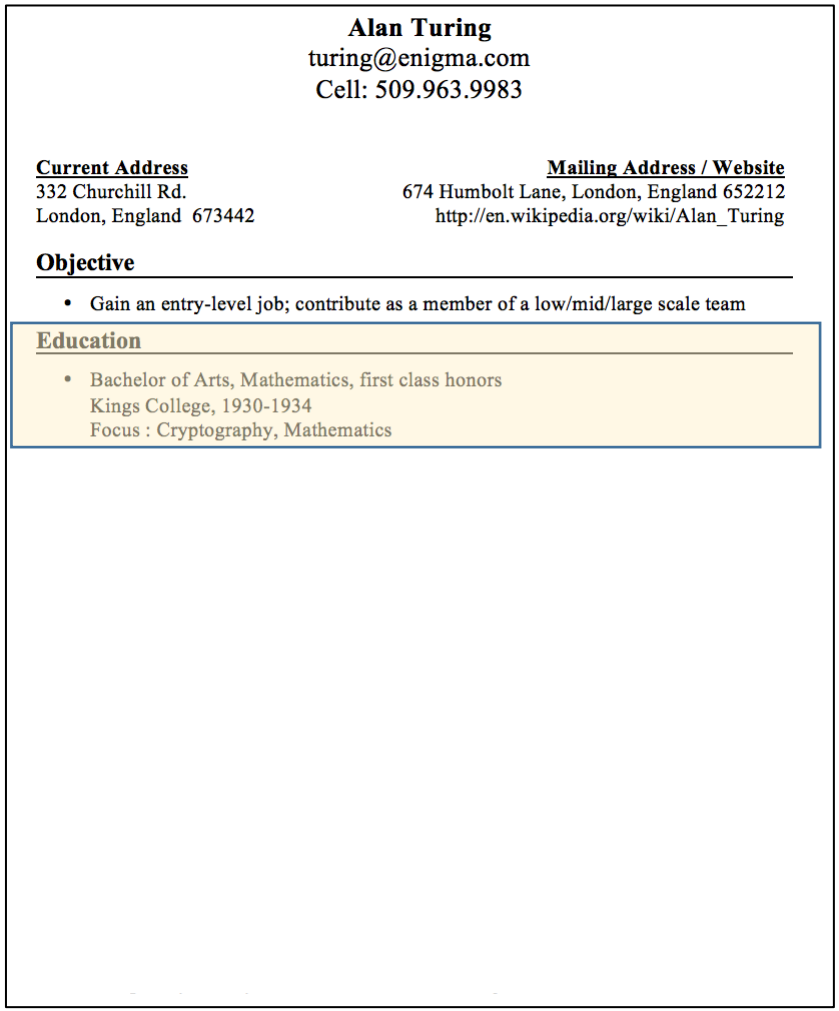

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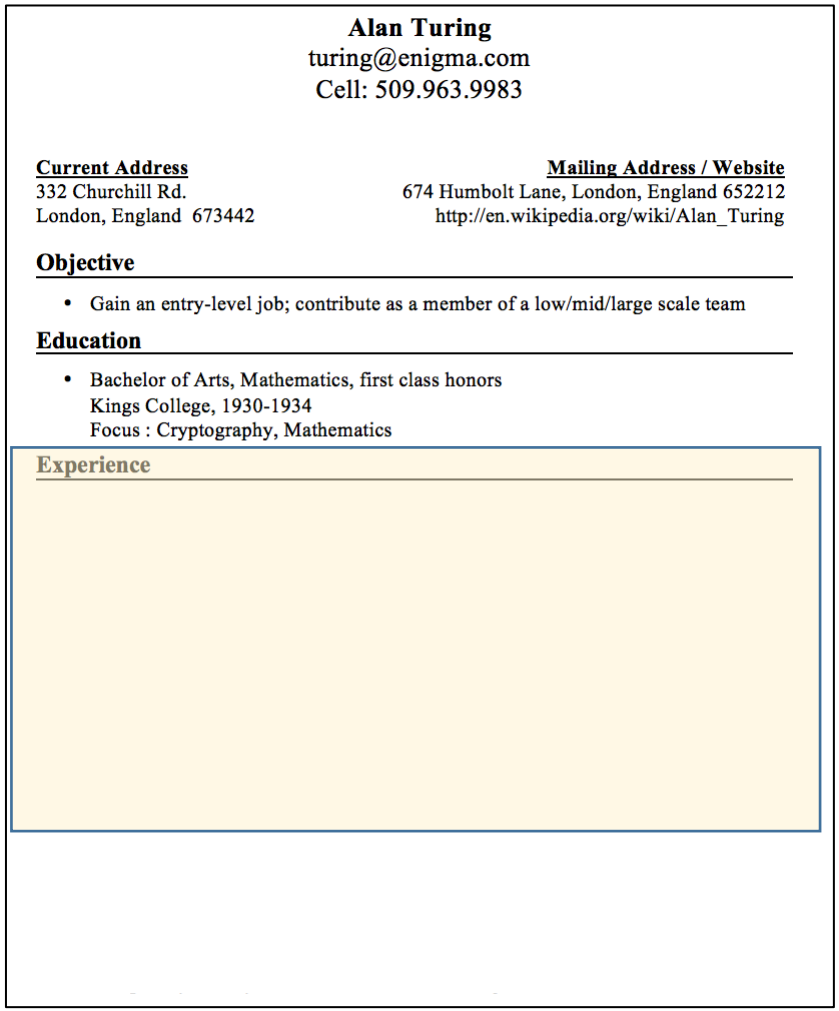
Don’t allow your BS in computer science to be your distinguishing characteristic … because most likely it is **NOT**

You can highlight here your focus/concentration of study …
If you will earn your degree in the near future, state that. For example: “expected June 2066” or something similar

Writing the resume



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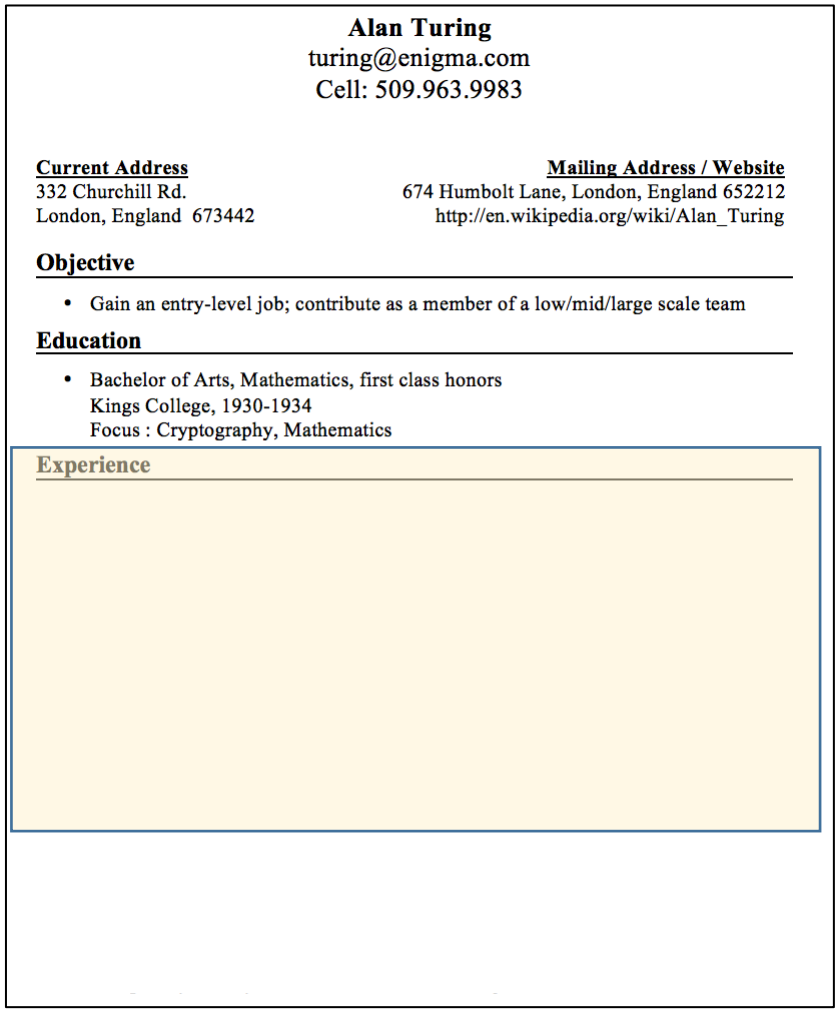
Experience

This is **THE** most important section of your resume ... it sets you apart from everybody else

Goal: describe those experiences that make you the best thing since sliced bread!

This section is also tailor-written for the job/internship ... you want the potential employer to think, “Gee, this job was created for this person”

Writing the resume



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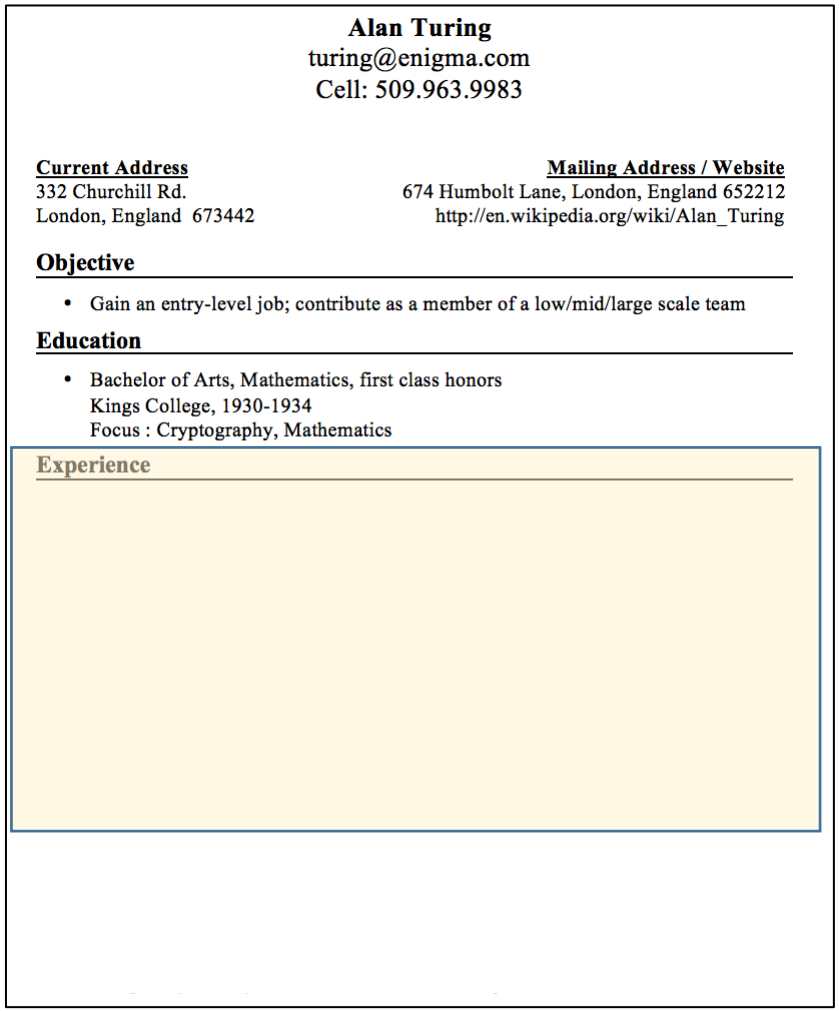
Scenario: place yourself in the role of the hiring manager … you want to hire somebody who

A. Will make YOUR job easier
B. Will need constant attention
C. Has a variety of irrelevant skills

Writing the resume



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Q: Which experiences should you (the candidate) list?

Q: How much detail should you provide?

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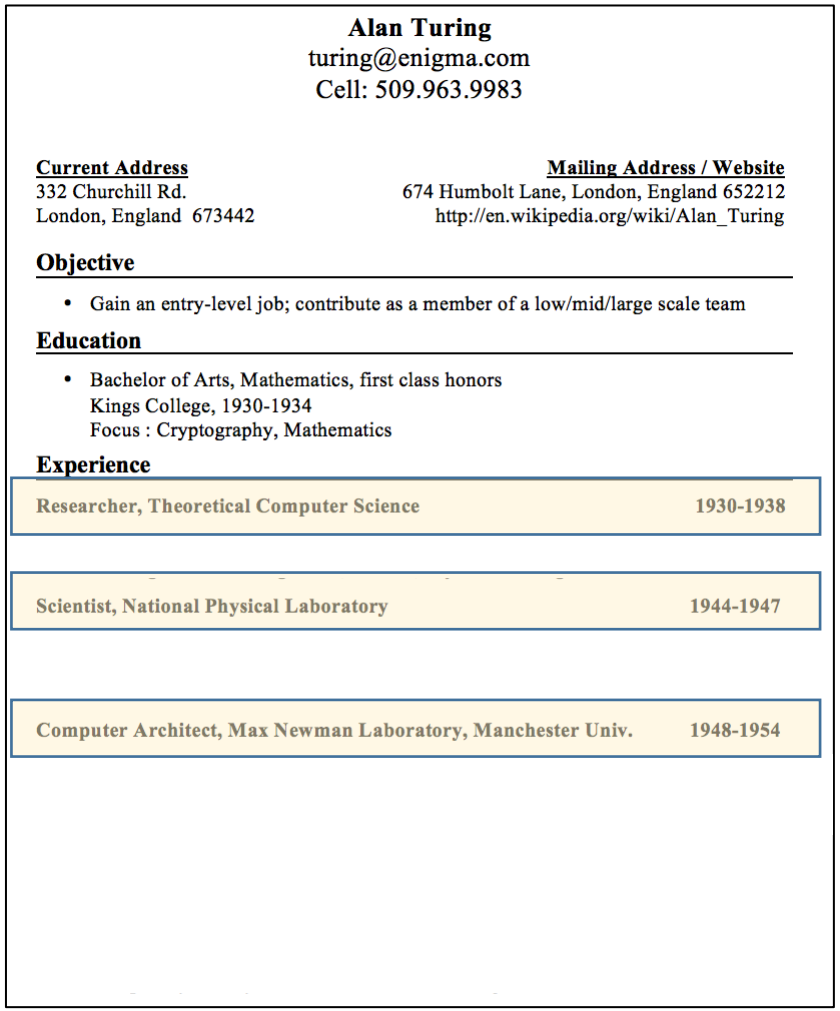

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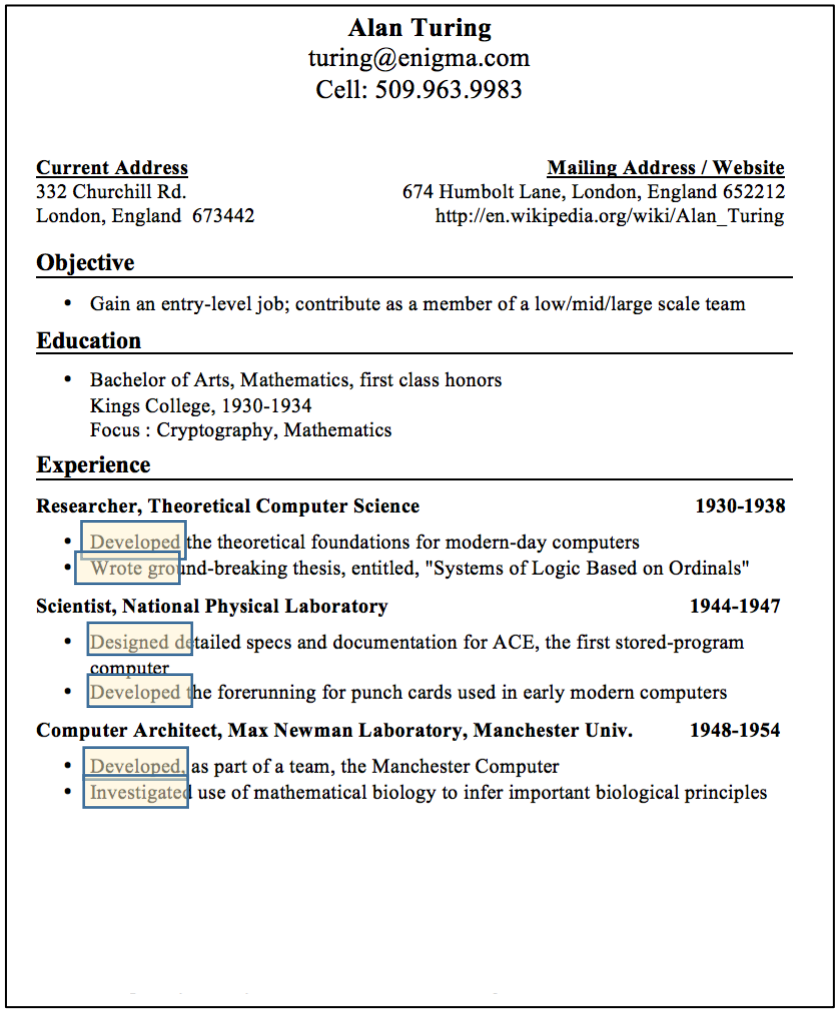
Give a heading for each experience ... include:

- **Your title/role**
- **Who/where your employer was located**
- **Duration/Time of experience**

And ... you guessed it ... this is very very tailor-written for the job/internship posting

If you were a biology lab assistant from 1990 through 1995, and you are applying for a code developer position, then it is PROBABLY not a good idea to list the biology job as the first item (or maybe not list it at all)

Writing the resume



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- Developed, as part of a team, the Manchester Computer
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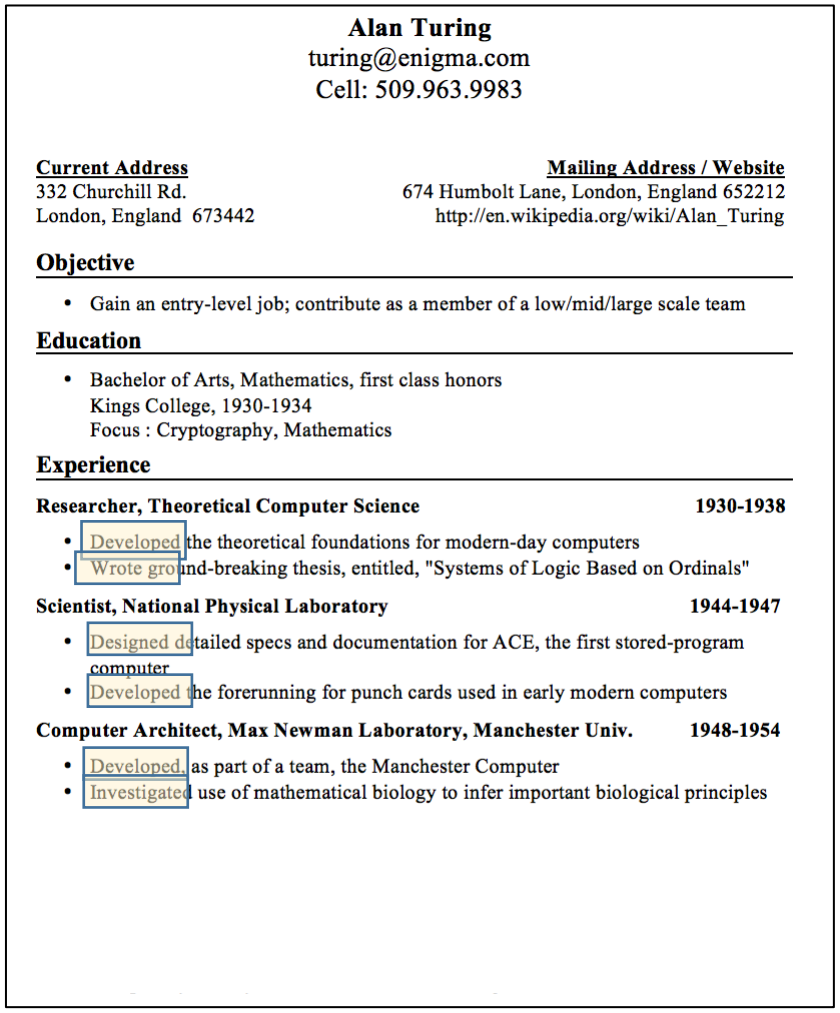
Goal: Use active verbs ... to describe what YOU did ...

don't say “Java was used to write code for a mobile application” ... give yourself credit ... highlight what YOU did ... instead, write “Designed, developed, and deployed a mobile application currently in use by 12,000 people”

Writing the resume



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Explain clearly your contribution, and what impact YOU made … technical is good … be quantitative!

Writing the resume

"Accomplished [X], as measured by [Y], by doing [Z]."

"Accomplished [X], as measured by [Y], by doing [Z]."

Before

Company, San Francisco, CA May -- August 2017
Software Engineering Intern

- Deployed company's new and improved in-house account reconciliation system
- Generated daily reconciliation report for Finance team
- Languages: Python

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After

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Software Engineering Intern

- Deployed new in-house account reconciliation system using **Python** and **improved latency by 12%** by designing and implementing new framework
- Generated daily reconciliation report for team by automating workflow of **8 different tasks**

Writing the resume

Co-Founder & VP -- Sept 2016 - Present

- Spearhead new initiative to create undergraduate data analytics community
- Grew club from **50 to 300+** members through enhanced recruiting circuits, **20+** industry visits, and **monthly** high-profile speaker engagements
- Collaborate to plan annual Data Visualization Hackathon for **200+** attendees city-wide

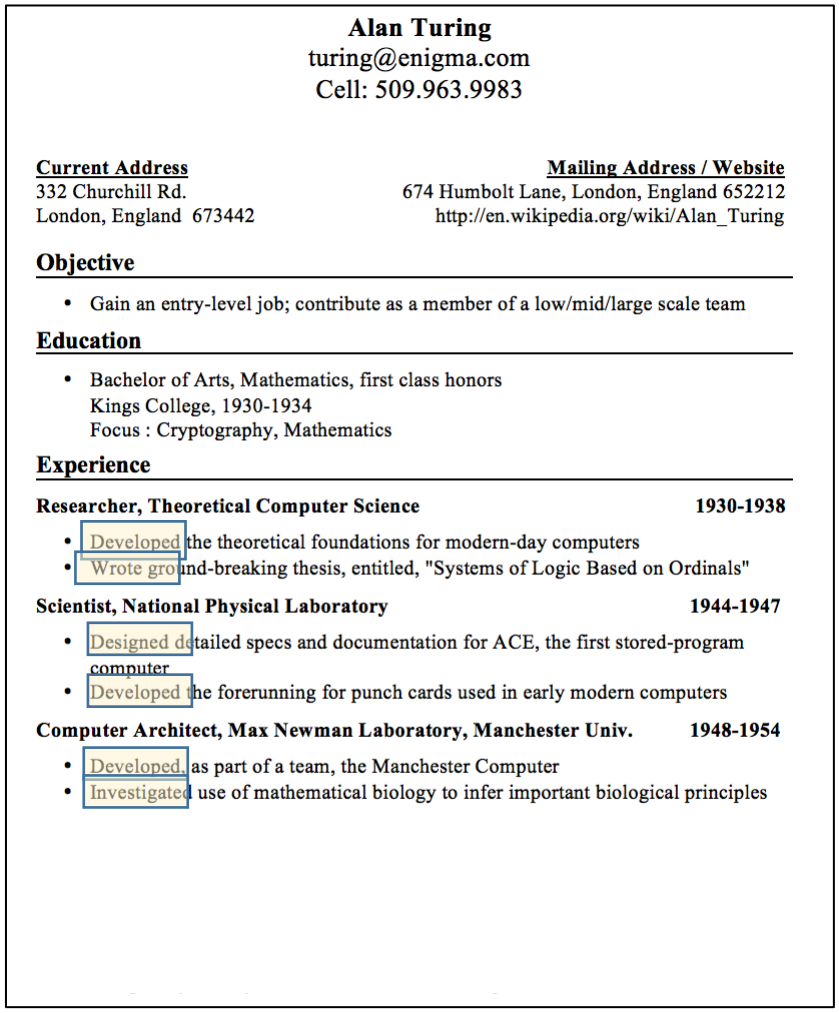
Head Teaching Assistant, *Intro to Data Structures* -- Sept 2017 - May 2018

- Led weekly office hours to **25+** students; debugging in Java, homework assistance
- Supervised **55 TAs** with curriculum support resources for **500+** undergraduates

Focus on <u>your</u> impact

<u>Quantify</u> your impact

Writing the resume



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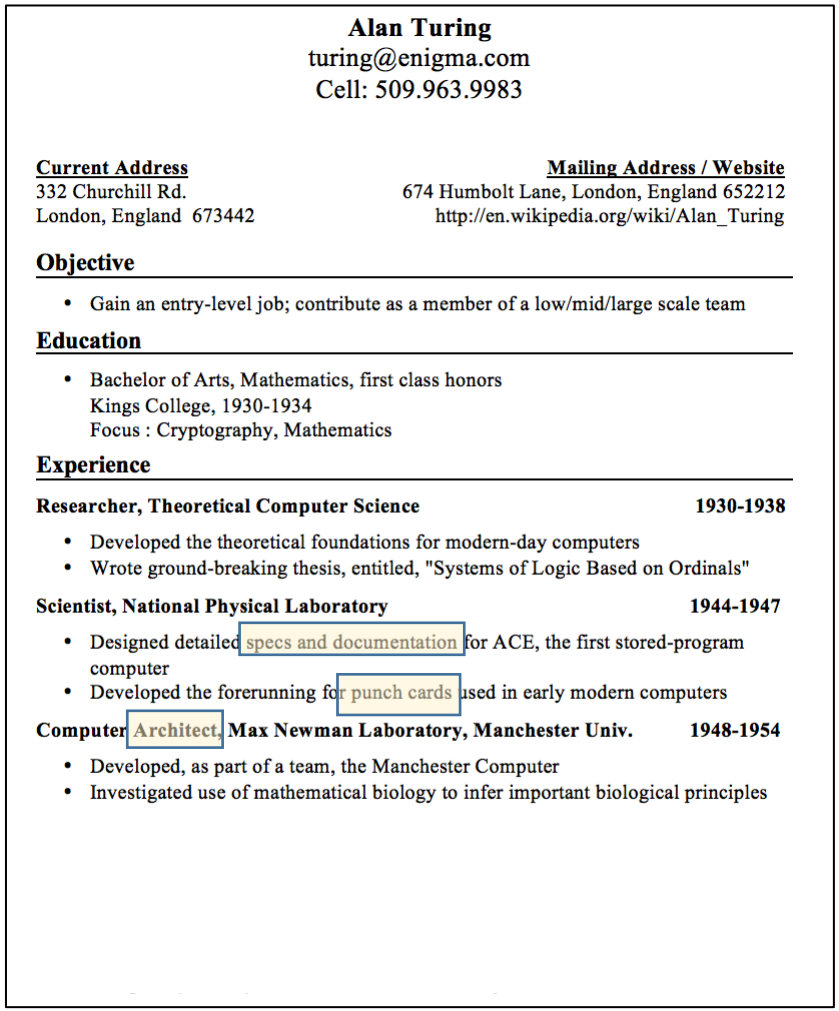
Tailor the descriptions for the job that you are applying for ... if the job requires skills in software documentation, then you should choose experiences where you wrote or used software documentation

See the handout for a list of **active verbs**

Writing the resume



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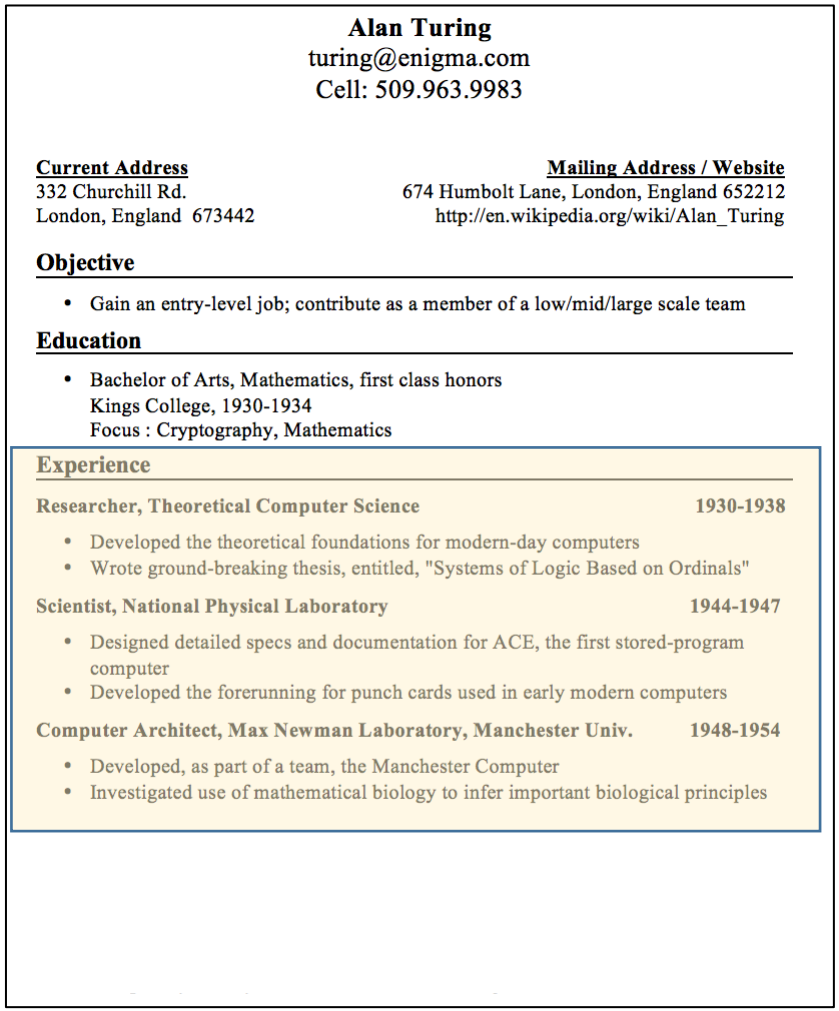
Remember those keywords that you extracted from the job posting …

If I were the employer, I'd say, "wow, this job opportunity is EXACTLY for this person"

Writing the resume



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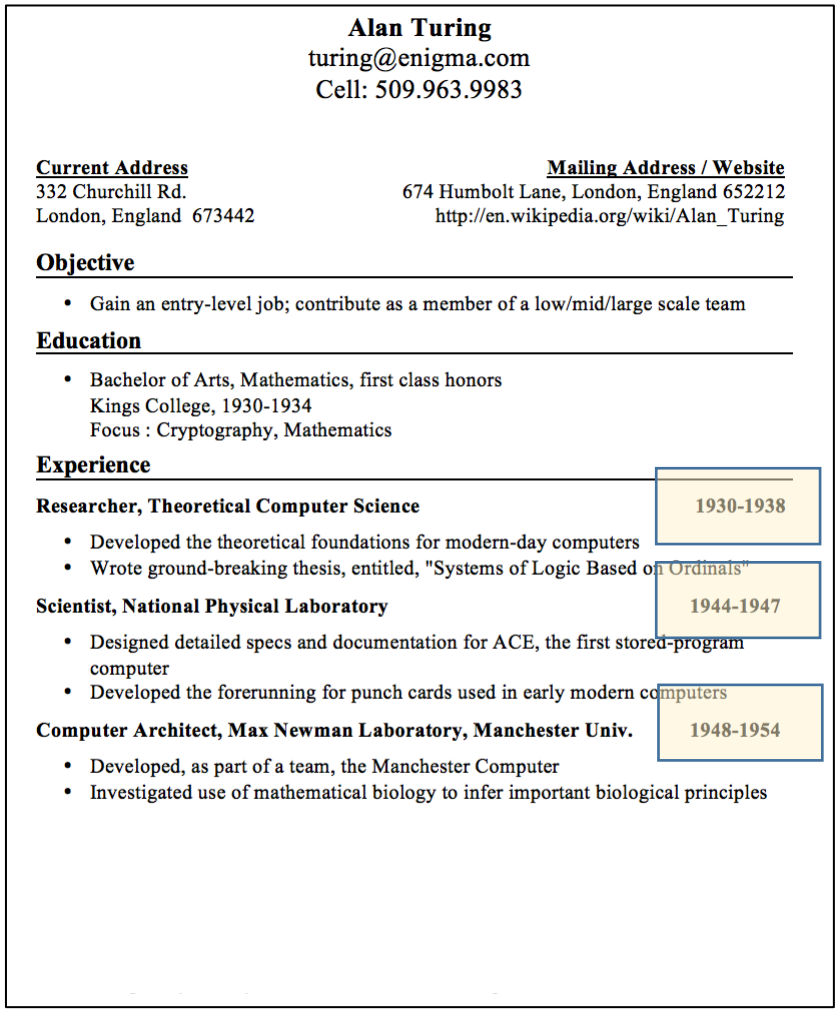

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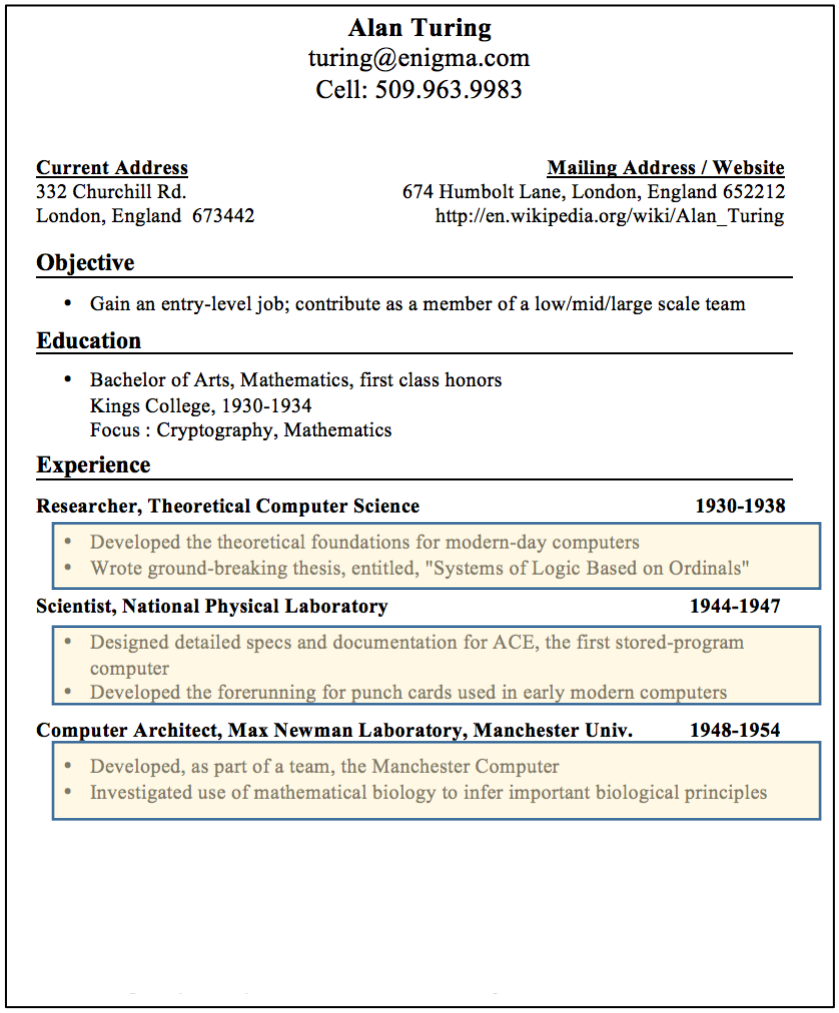
Q: Which experiences should you list?

- Experiences lasting 2 or more months
- Course-long projects are okay
- CSCI 491, 492, 493 projects are perfect (but describe the project, and NOT the class)
- Any multi-faceted project involving design, development, testing, etc.

Q: How much detail should you provide?

Writing the resume



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Q: How much detail should you provide?

- Enough to entice the reader
- Leave your essays at home!
- List YOUR contributions, and what impacts they had/have … improved run time by 10%? In use by 1M people?

Remember : 20 seconds!

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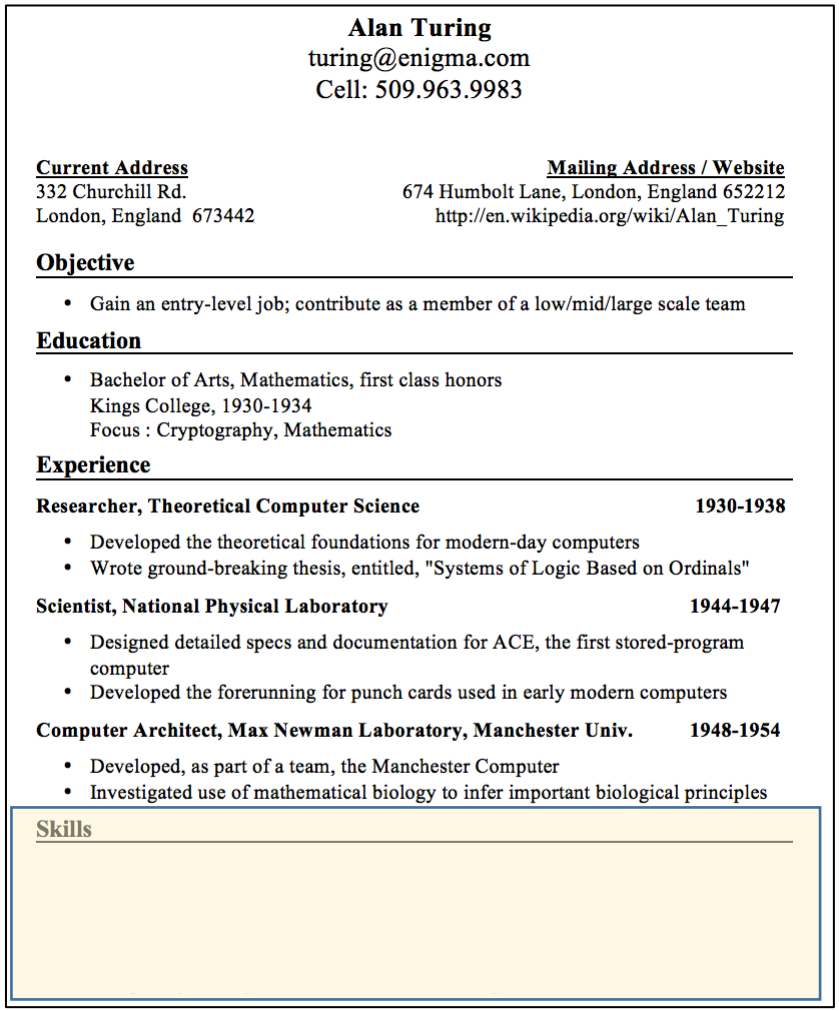
Skills

Place here your skills ... but not just any skills ...

Writing the resume



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Skills

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emphasize those skills that you have and which the employer is **looking** for ...

If you are a Perl guru (you are the uber bestest awesomest Perl programmer in the world) but the job description does not require Perl programming, you probably shouldn't highlight the fact that you are a Perl genius ... you can still include that part, but that shouldn't be the focus ...

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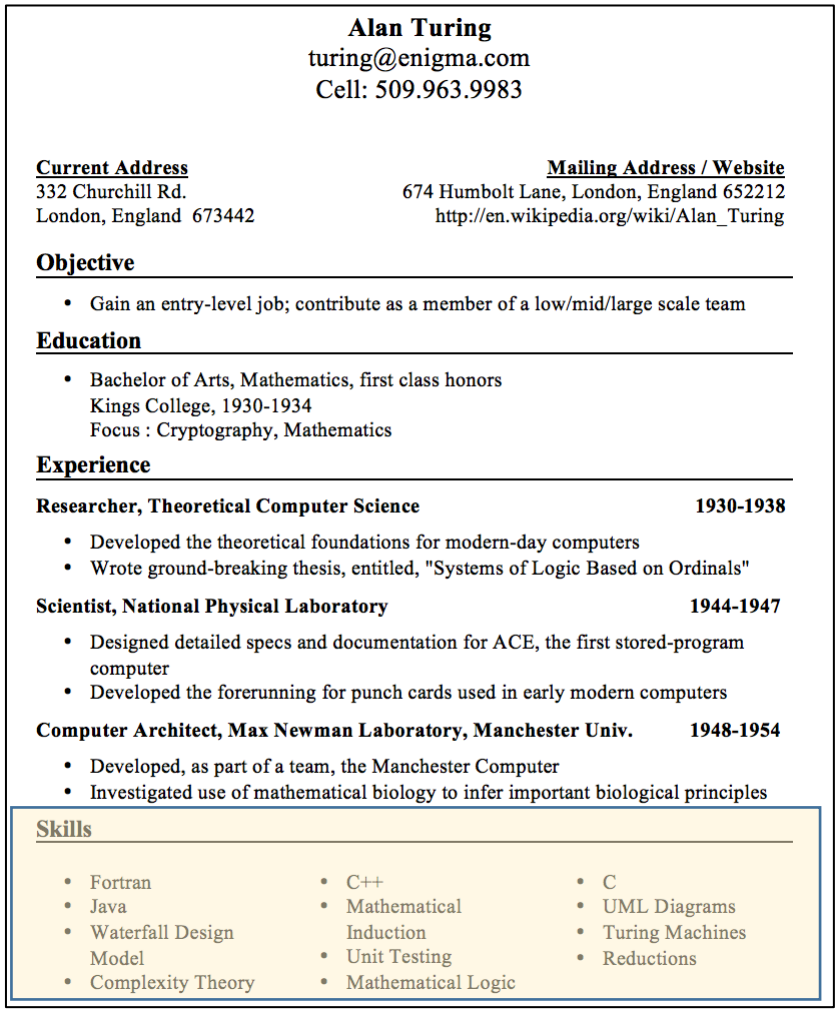

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Consider indicating how proficient you are at each skill ... 1, 2, or 5 years of C++ experience? Or, use words such as "working knowledge," "expert," or "basic understanding" ...

You may also categories skills into easy-to-read sets. For example

IDE: netbeans, eclipse, jGRASP
Languages : C++, java, python, C#
OS: Mac, Linux, Windows XP

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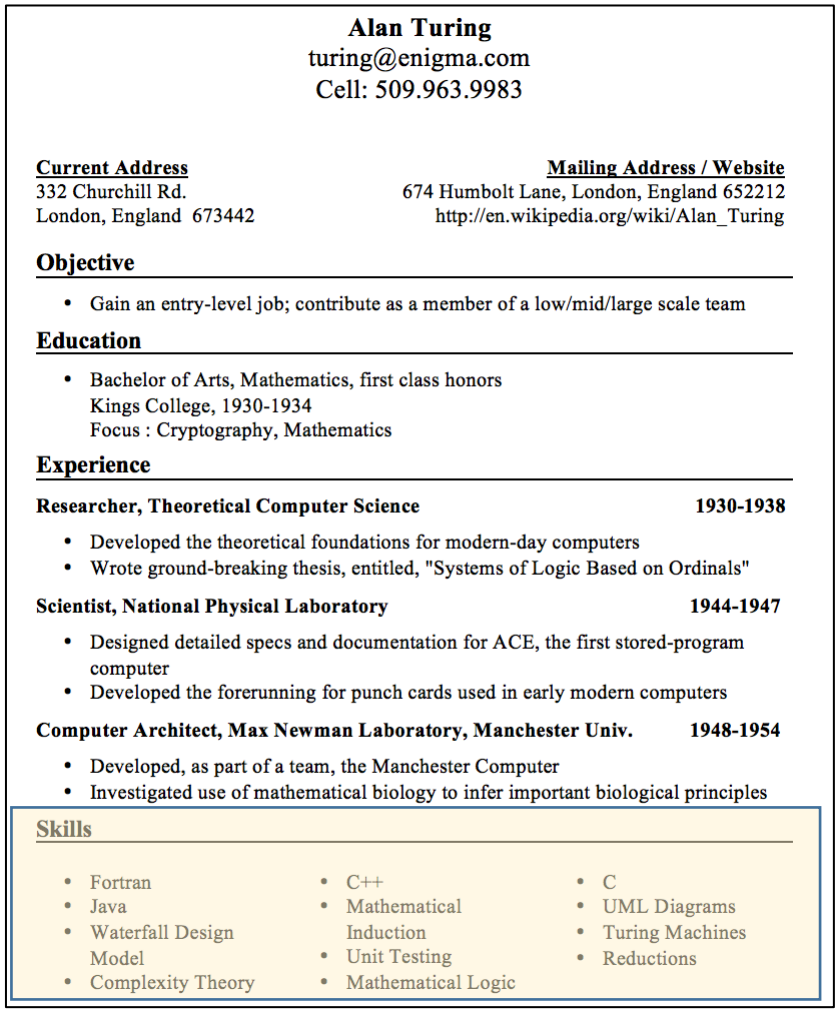

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You don't need to explain further these skills. They are usually the run-of-the-mill buzzwords

but you MUST include them to showcase your technical prowess

Here's a good rule of thumb : any skill that you list you should be able to chat comfortably about without needing to reference a book, calling Bill Gates, emailing Linus Torvalds, etc.

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Q: Should you list courses completed?

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Q: Should you list courses completed?

It is up to you – but especially consider "cool" courses that you have taken which might distinguish you from other candidates

Thus, it is okay to mention that you have completed …

algorithms, database, OS, networks, bioinformatics, machine learning, etc.

but don't mention course numbers (CSCI301), which are meaningless to anybody external to WWU

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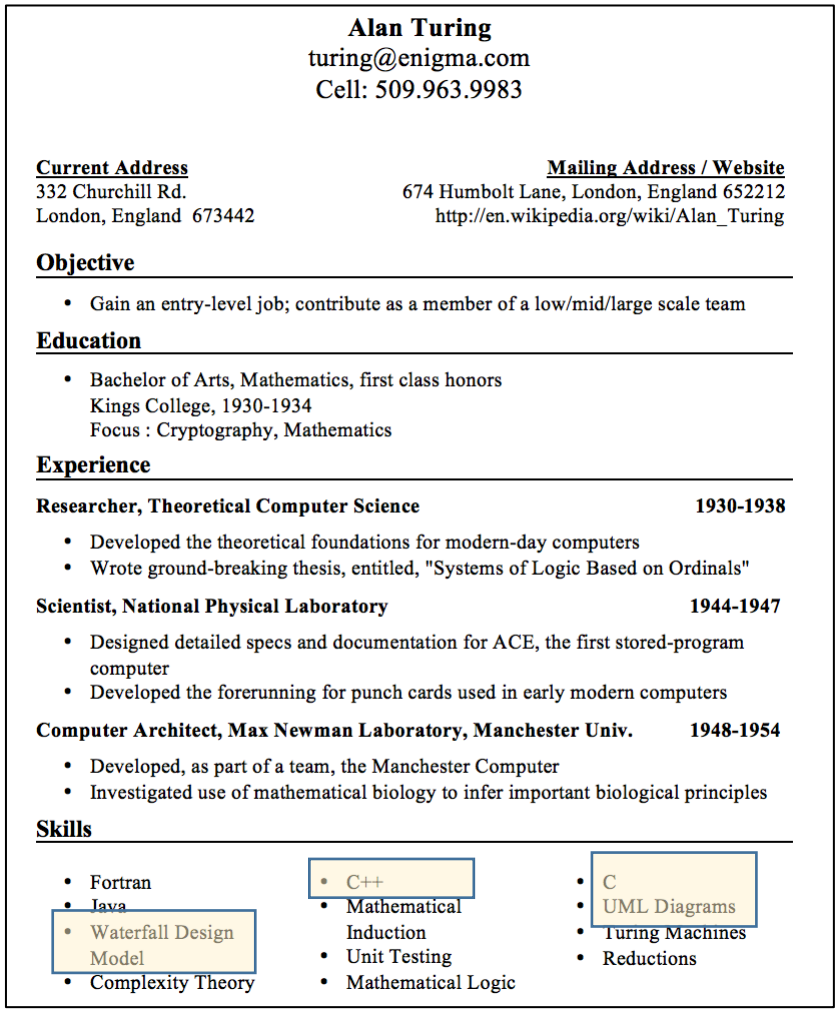

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You don't have to be an expert in all the skills that you list, but in this case, because you've listed them, then …

- You should know what UML stands for
- Be able to describe aesthetic and underlying differences between C++ and C
- Be able to discuss the differences between the waterfall and agile design processes

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Q: How much detail about your technical and non-technical skills should you provide?

Just the technical stuff (ie, you are a robot)

Just the non-technical stuff (code … what's that?)

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Q: How much detail about your technical and non-technical skills should you provide?

Companies are looking for people that are tech savvy

Just the technical stuff (ie, you are a robot)

but nobody wants to hire a robot (teamwork, anyone?)

Companies hire PEOPLE

Just the non-technical stuff (code … what's that?)

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Q: Should you include references?

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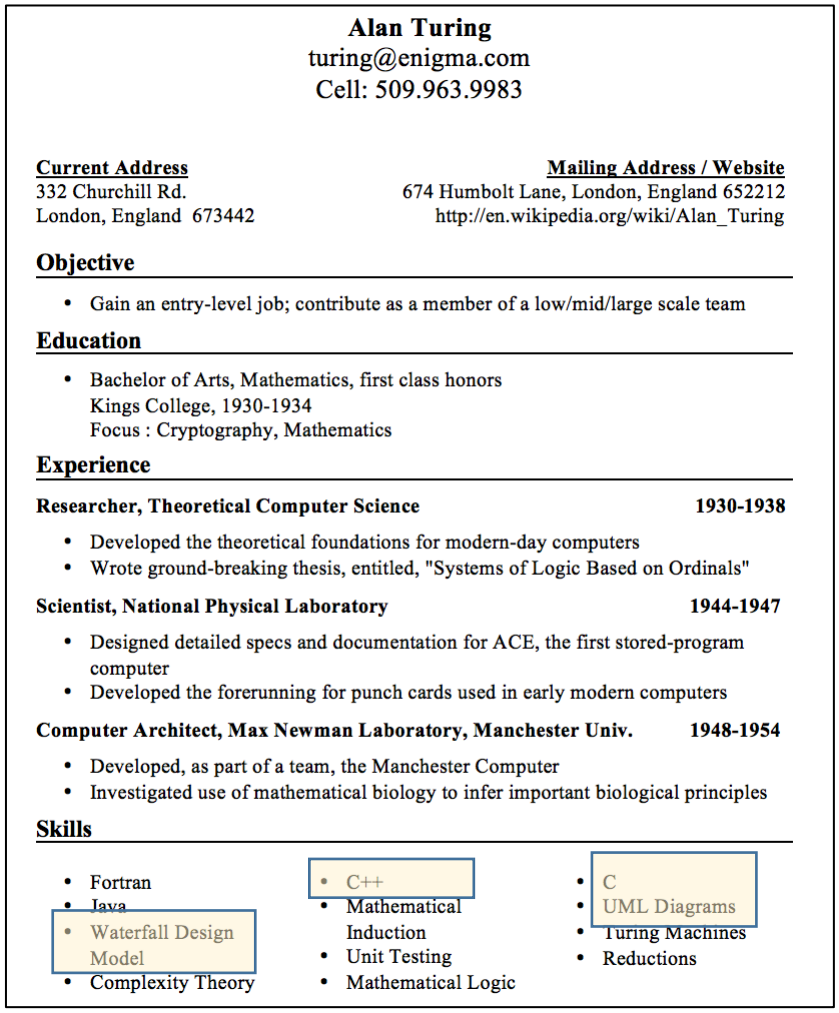

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Q: Should you include references?

Generally …. no

References are contacted only AFTER a candidate has progressed to the offer stage, at which point the HR department would contact you to ask you to identify references*

Again put yourselves in the shoes of the employer … are they going to contact every reference for every resume received (even those resumes that are clear rejects)?

* It is unethical (and some argue illegal) for a company to contact references without your explicit consent

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Q: Is writing a resume that simple?

Well, yes … but there are several pitfalls that you should be aware of …

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Pitfall 1 : Font is too small!

A recommended font size is 11 or 12.

Use universal fonts - the ones that open the same on PCs and Macs of all ages.

Times Roman
Arial
Century
MS Sans Serif
Book Antiqua
Century Gothic
Calibri

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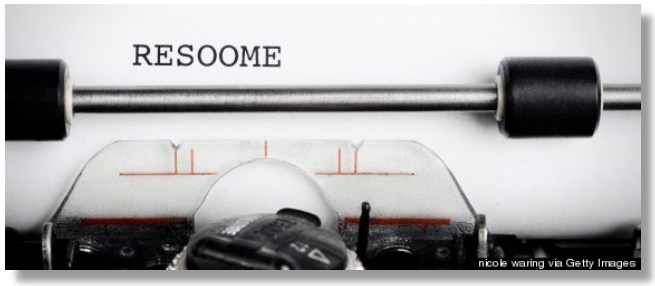
Pitfall 2 : Spelling mistakes



Nothing shows an inattention to detail like glaring spelling errors!

Use the spell-check tool, but remember that the best proofreader is another set of eyes

Be sure that there are no spelling errors, poor word choice, or misuse of language…

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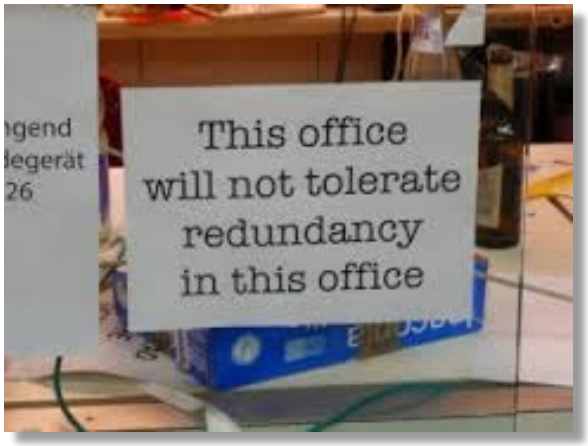
Pitfall 3 : Redundancy



Use a <u>variety</u> of action verbs to prove your transferable and diverse skills.

Utilize <u>different</u> action verbs to highlight the wide range of skills and knowledge that you possess.

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Pitfall 4 : Having just one version

Resumes need to be "fluid”

You may have several different versions depending on the jobs you are targeting. You can :

- Change the order of things
- Emphasize different things
- State different objectives…

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Pitfall 5: Clutter!

Filter out information that might seem irrelevant to the position. Be wise in choosing certain facts to be included on your final resume.

Use fewer but more encompassing words. Keep it brief and to the point.

Writing the resume

Alan Turing
turing@enigma.com
Cell: 509.963.9983

Current Address
332 Churchill Rd.
London, England 673442

Mailing Address / Website
674 Humbolt Lane, London, England 652212
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Turing

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Pitfall 6: Including Personal Information

Personal information, like age, gender, and head shot should not be included on your resume (unless you are a performing art student).

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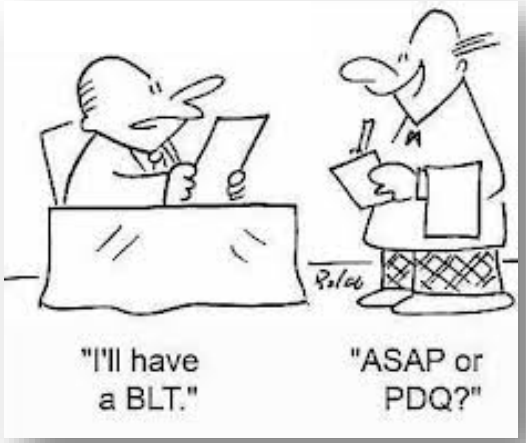
Pitfall 7 : Using too many abbreviations



Your resume is a formal document … be sure to omit esoteric abbreviations or contractions in your words or sentences

Just because you KNOW what CSCI301 and CSCI141 are, you cannot assume that the employer does

DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
MAKE WAVES.

Resume and Cover Letter Workshop For Computer Science Students

Filip Jagodzinski*

Part II: Showcase a well-reasoned cover letter

Cover Letters

And is a cover letter required?

Cover Letters

And is a cover letter required?

- A cover letter gives you the opportunity to personalize your application.
- In the cover letter you may want to include things that cannot be placed into the resume.

The cover letter is often required, and/or often takes the place of an in-person recruiter meeting. If you haven't met anybody from the company that you are applying to, then send a cover letter with your resume.

Cover Letters

If you've had a loooong week, and you remember the bare minimum from this presentation, then remember these (additional 3 things) about cover letters :

First Paragraph : Mention the job / position

Second Paragraph : Articulate why your skills are a perfect match

Third Paragraph : Discuss next steps, thank the recipient

Cover Letters

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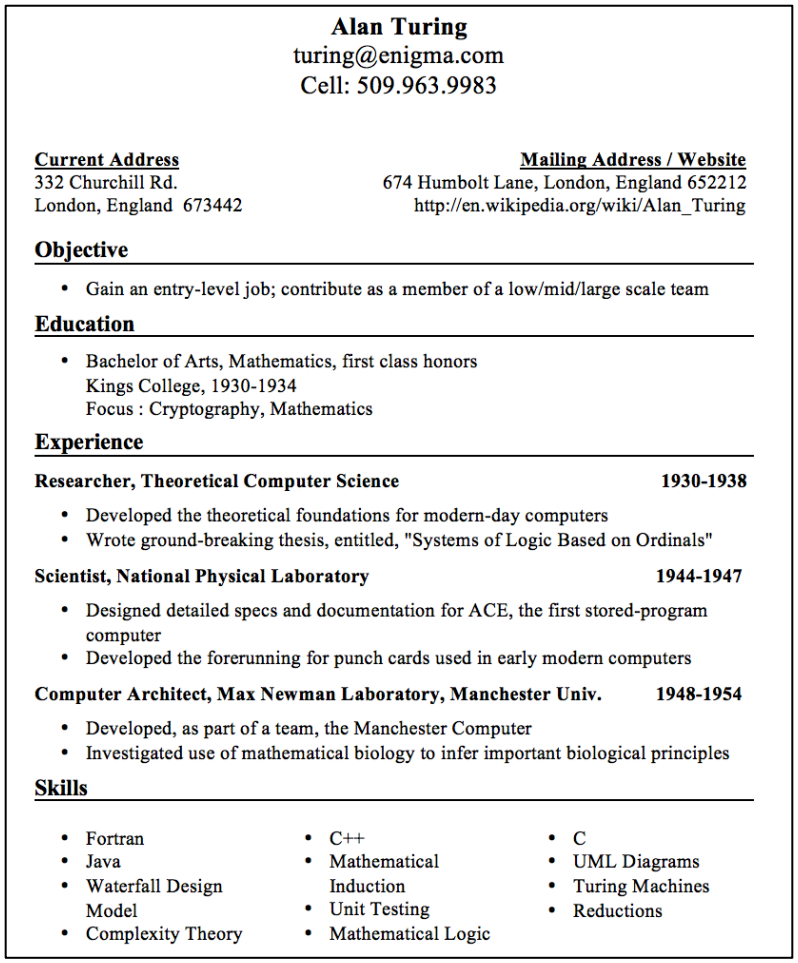

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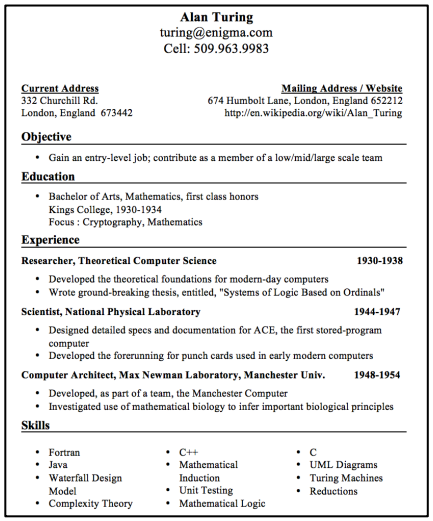

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However the cover letter has a very standard format, which recruiters are looking for, so you SHOULD stick to it.

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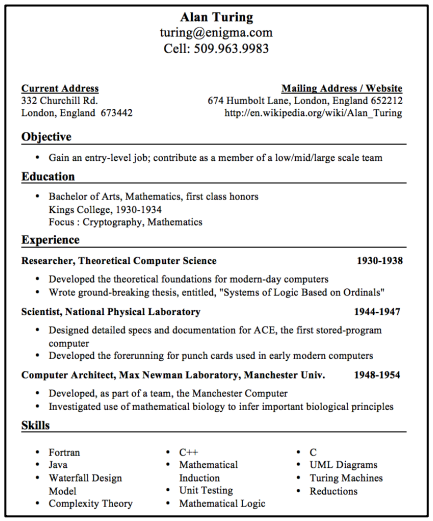

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Include a letterhead that at a minimum contains your name, and contact information.

Whether or not it is centered or left justified is up to you.

A mailing address is a good idea, too.

Cover Letters

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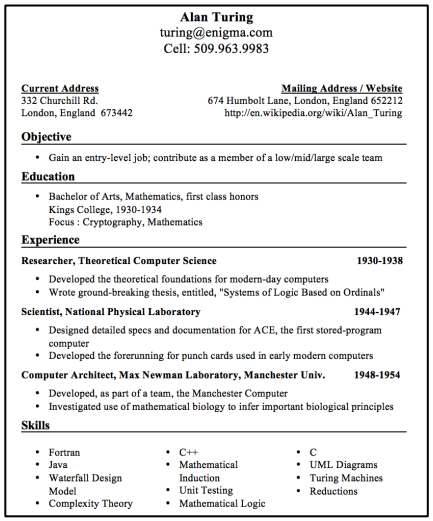

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September 24, 1949

Sally Jenkins
Comps-R-US
3242 Umptum St.
Seattle, WA 98214

Include the date, along with the recipient's name and address.

Cover Letters

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Dear Ms. Jenkins :

Address the recipient

If you know the person by name (you've chatted with them, have their business card, etc.) then include their name and title.

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Dear Ms. Jenkins :

If you are not sure who the recipient is, write (in order of “best” to “worst”)

Dear [insert name] :
Dear Hiring Manager :
Dear Recruiting Team :
Dear Comps-R-US :

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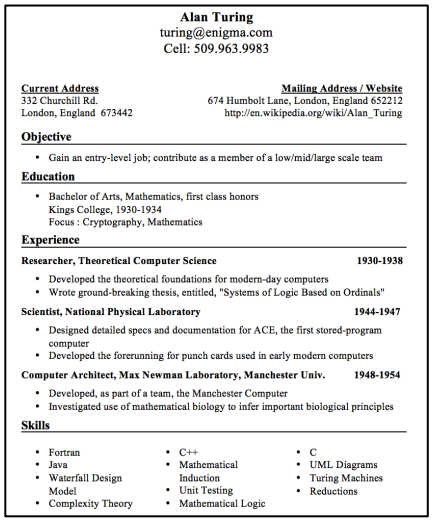

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To Whom it may concern :

as it might come across as a template letter

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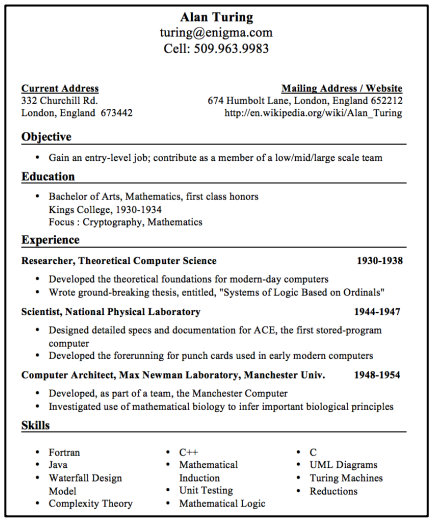

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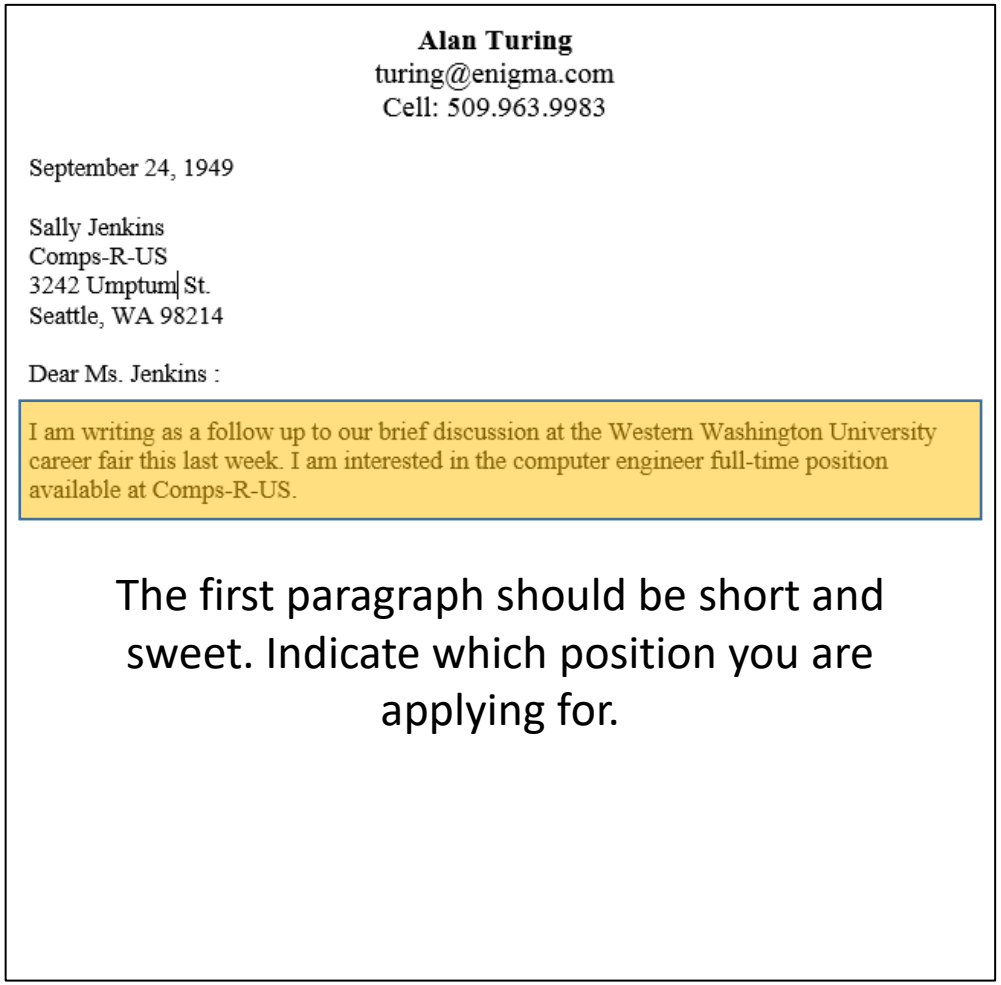

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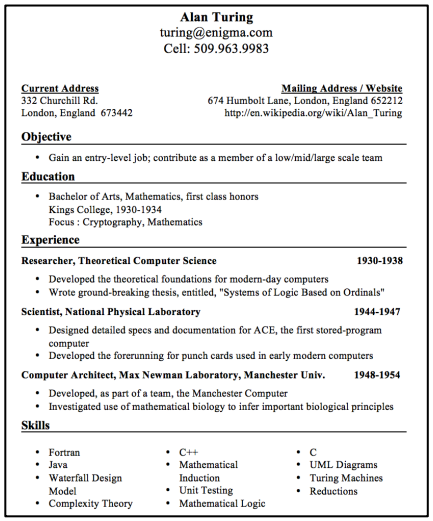

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Networking, Networking, Networking

Take advantage of your connections!

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In the body paragraph (at most two paragraphs), mention why you are qualified for the position. Mention work experience.

Cover Letters

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- Knowledge of computer architecture
- Ability to write formal documentations
- Experience with punch-card computers

Alan Turing
turing@enigma.com
Cell: 509.963.9983

Current Address
332 Churchill Rd.
London, England 673442

Mailing Address / Website
674 Humbolt Lane, London, England 652212
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Turing

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September 24, 1949

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Seattle, WA 98214

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Mention why you WANT to work for this company, and what you'd contribute …

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Focus on the keywords in the job description and mention experiences specifically related to those keywords

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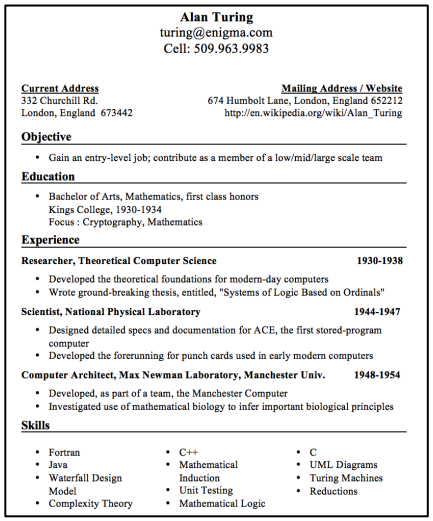

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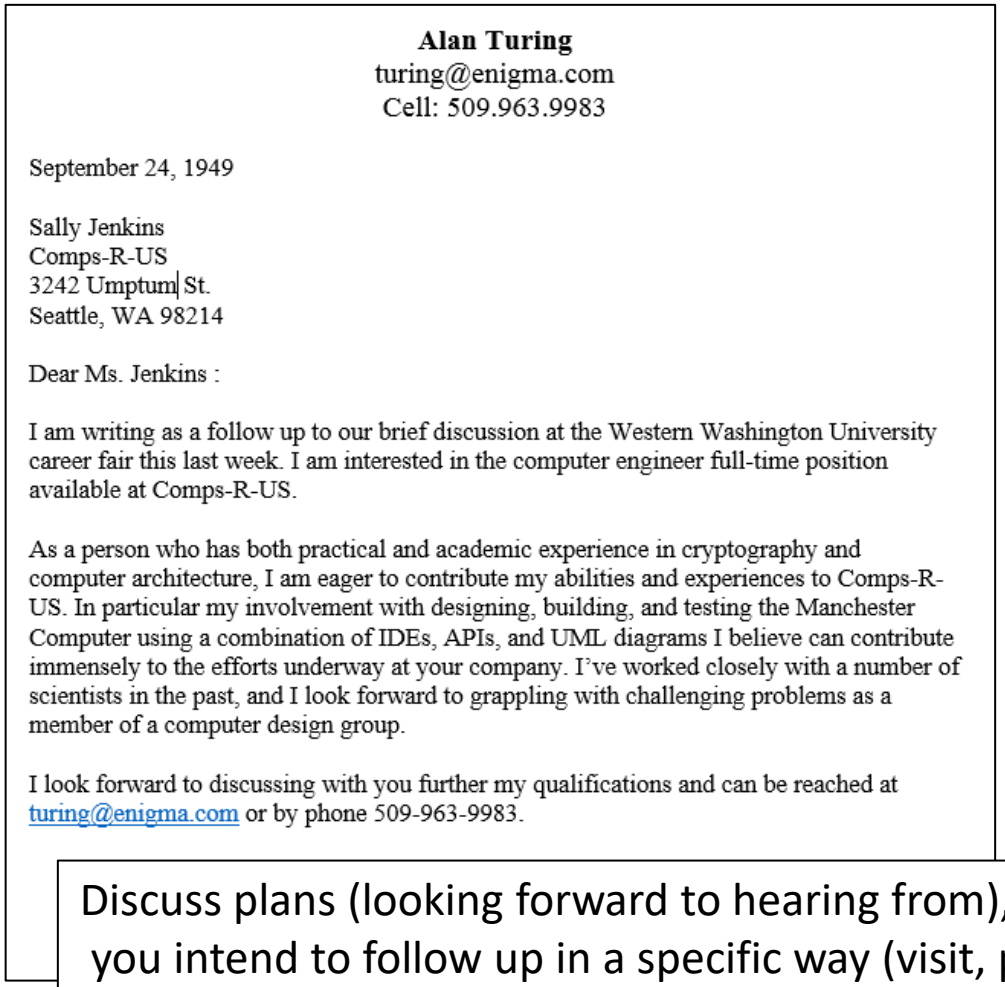

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I look forward to discussing with you further my qualifications and can be reached at turing@enigma.com or by phone 509-963-9983.

Discuss plans (looking forward to hearing from), and if you intend to follow up in a specific way (visit, phone call, email, etc.) mention that.

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Sincerely,

A. M. Turing

Close with "Sincerely" and/or thank the recipient for their time, and provide a signature. If creating a PDF, "draw" the signature and save as a PNG, JPEG, etc. and place into the document

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The same rules apply to the cover letter as to the resume.

- Write in active voice (you don't want to sound as if good things just miraculously happened to you … **you Make things happen**).
- Take credit for your accomplishments
- Use active verbs

DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
MAKE WAVES.

Resume and Cover Letter Workshop For Computer Science Students

Filip Jagodzinski*

Part III: Resume peer editing

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